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Locating postmodern epistemology, organizational structure and postcolonial workers in the knowledge rhizome

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Locating Postmodern Epistemology, Organizational Structure and Postcolonial Workers in the Knowledge Rhizome

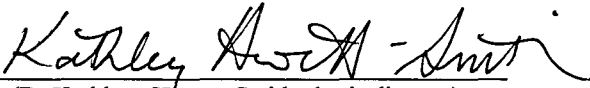
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Honors Thesis
Department of English
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The signatures below certify that with this essay Viren Mascarenhas has satisfied the thesis requirement for Honors in English.



(Dr Kathleen Hewett-Smith, thesis director)



(Dr John Marx, departmental reader)



(Dr Robert Nelson, English honors coordinator)

‘Every institution has its own logic, and the British Indian army has always functioned on the understanding that there was to be a separation between Indians and Britishers. It was a straightforward system: they stayed apart, and obviously both sides felt that this was to their benefit. The British found a way of doing it, and they made it work. But now, with us being inside the officer’s mess, I don’t know that it can go on.’¹ (*The Glass Palace*)

‘Because she actually believed that the link between the bug and the human mind was so close that once its life cycle had been figured out it would spontaneously mutate in directions that would take her work to the next step. That was what she believed, I think: that every time she reached a dead end, the way ahead was by provoking another mutation.’² (*The Calcutta Chromosome*)

‘At that moment, despite the vast gap that lay between us, we understood each other perfectly. We were both traveling, he and I: we were traveling in the West. The only difference was that I had actually been there, in person...I was crushed as I walked away; it seemed to me that the Imam and I had participated in our own final defeat, in the dissolution of the centuries of dialogue that had linked us: we had demonstrated the irreversible triumph of the language that has usurped all the others in which people once discussed their differences...Instead, to make ourselves understood, we had both resorted, I as a student of the ‘humane’ sciences and he, an old-fashioned village Imam, to the very terms that world leaders and statesmen use at great, global conferences...of guns and tanks and bombs.’³ (*In An Antique Land*)

The three excerpts from Amitav Ghosh’s novels find the main characters

speculating about the relationship between organizational structures, epistemology and knowledge production. In the first excerpt, Arjun tells Dinu that he does not believe that the colonial bureaucracy known as the British Army will continue to exist if the policy of separating Indian and British officers persists. Anticipating the problems created from Indians holding leadership positions, he doubts that the British Army “can go on.” Murugan explains how the counter-scientists operate in the second excerpt, noting that members were revising epistemology by distorting knowledge through mutation. They were not following the traditional trajectory of accumulating knowledge, like capital, in a linear sense. Finally, the narrator of *In An Antique Land* notes with despair that he and

¹ Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* (New Delhi, India: Ravi Dayal Publisher, 2000) 283.

² Amitav Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1995) 252.

³ Amitav Ghosh, *In An Antique Land* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) 237.

the religious leader, the Imam, had collapsed a centuries-old dialogue between Egypt and India by articulating the vernacular of Western academic historiography. Renouncing topics for comparison that are lodged within the differences and similarities between India and Egypt like religion and agricultural production, the two characters discuss development in Western terms. Ghosh's three novels illustrate that the bureaucratic and Eurocentric configuration of colonial organizations cannot thrive in the contemporary postcolonial and postmodern service economy. Instead, new (anti)-structures should develop to encourage a *global* production of knowledge.

Recent theorists acknowledge that the distinction between culture and economy is becoming increasingly artificial and blurred. Postmodernists like Jameson speculate about the relationship between capitalism and culture.⁴ Giddens notes the growing eminence of the service and knowledge economies, to which literature certainly belongs, in economic globalization.⁵ This essay, using three works by a transnational, Indian writer, Amitav Ghosh, namely *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace* and *In An Antique Land*, explores the connections between postmodern structures in the service economy of knowledge production and reconfigured epistemologies in postcolonial texts. Specifically, the paper argues that postmodern organizational structures benefit postcolonial workers more than the Weberian, bureaucratic organizations that existed under the colonial regime. The reasons are many: postmodern organizations have anti-hierarchical structures, treat employees as specialists, employ transnational and collaborative research methods, and use information/virtual technologies to assist

⁴ Frederic Jameson, "Culture and Finance Capital," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1997) : 246-265.

⁵ Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens, eds., *Global Capitalism* (New York: The New Press, 2000).

employees.⁶ Through these strategies, postmodern organizations create the rhizome-like organizations theorized by Deleuze and Guattari,⁷ allowing employees to create new knowledges that are intimately linked to their personal identities and goals. By stressing the primacy of “individual” human capital, and the link between knowledge and identity, postmodern organizations allow postcolonial employees to escape the binary and Hegelian slave-master relationship of native worker and imperial employer. By combining their identity with knowledge production, the workers de-colonize their minds.

The study of epistemological hermeneutics receives attention in a global service economy that is driven by the production of knowledge and ideas. Postcolonial fiction lends itself to theorizing epistemology because the characters in Ghosh’s novels are extremely preoccupied with the link between their identities and the knowledge they produce from their work in the fiction’s service economy. Postcolonial fiction readily applies to economic and political issues for, as Williams explains, postcolonialism has an agenda that is extremely charged, and yet is also open-ended.⁸ Jameson contends that all Third World texts are fundamentally allegorical; therefore their symbolism should be applied, he argues, to extra-textual issues.⁹ Noting that Third World cultures are situational and materialist despite themselves, Jameson writes that telling an individual story necessarily involves collective representation. He argues that the allegorical methodology suits the postcolonial framework since allegories are profoundly

⁶ For a description of postmodern structures, see John Hassard and Martin Parker, eds., Postmodernism and Organizations (London: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1995).

⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “Introduction: Rhizome,” A Thousand Plateaus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) 3-25.

⁸ Adebayo Williams, “The postcolonial *flâneur* and other fellow-travelers: conceits for a narrative of redemption,” Third World Quarterly 18.5 (1997) : 821-841.

⁹ Frederic Jameson, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” Social Text 15 (Fall 1986) : 65-88.

discontinuous and disjunctive, possessing a dream's multiplicity rather than the singularity of a modernist symbol. Miyoshi makes the point that literary criticism hesitates to deal with extra-textual matters that concern the transfer of power and resources, noting that it was "only after the disappearance of administrative colonization from most regions of the world that the discourse on colonialism entered the mainstream of Western theory and criticism."¹⁰ He implies that literary criticism in the postcolonial era should be more adept at dealing with extra-textual issues. Slemon notes that using postcolonial literatures in a political manner is an opportunity to examine the work that literary documents perform in a culture that is constantly in flux.¹¹ Admittedly, some theorists like Coronil discourage using the texts to make political judgments. Coronil critiques Mbembe's view of the post-colony because Mbembe fails to acknowledge the difference between literary and social-science representational conventions and their related, but different truths.¹² The distinction between disciplines and also between text and reality is false. Consider, for example, the increasing number of hours spent "online," and the *reality* of speculation that sparked the 1997 Asian financial crisis. In addition, science academic buildings that housed physics, chemistry and biology in separate wings are now being rebuilt with architecture plans that promote interdisciplinary activity. Theorists illuminate the speculative and *hyper-real* nature of today's economy: a stock market subject to, well, whim, and a finance economy that does

¹⁰ Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993) : 726.

¹¹ Stephen Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World," *World Literature Written in English* 30.2 (1990) : 30-41.

¹² Fernando Coronil, "Can Postcoloniality be Decolonized: Imperial Banality and Postcolonial Power," *Public Culture* 5.1 (Fall 1992) : 89-108.

not produce but is nonetheless measured by arbitrary numeric indicators (like the NASDAQ). Economic production and imagined texts are symptoms of each other.

Ghosh's fiction also articulate types of employment organizational structures that are not witnessed in the contemporary economy. Literary critics have noted postcolonialism's ambivalence to capitalist production which, they feel, recalls a colonial era of capitalist accumulation that postcolonialism is trying to escape.¹³ Furthermore, with the collapse of Soviet communism and the failure of the working class to overthrow capitalism in the teleological fashion envisaged by Marx, economists have been struggling to develop alternative employment organizations for the twenty-first century that are not based on the accumulation of material capital. In a post-Fordist age of Multinational and Transnational Corporations (MNCs and TNCs), critics have speculated as to whether economic globalization is dominated by "flexible capitalism," "late capitalism" or, to invoke the infamous "posts" that are the muses of contemporary academic thought, "post-capitalism?" How does this era of capitalism compare to earlier stages? Lenin, for instance, thought that imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism. Attention has also been given to relationships between new types of capital and non-economic structures like the nation-state. Are MNC/TNCs encroaching upon the traditional power of nation-states, or, using the popular statist theories of the 1980s academics of international political economy, will the state still retain its power because of the superiority of politics over economics? How will immigration laws change in the twenty-first century to suit the demands of a growing service economy that requires

¹³ For an understanding of postcolonialism's anti-foundationalism, see Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Winter 1994) : 328-356, and Stuart Hall, "When was the 'Post-Colonial?'" *The Postcolonial Question*, eds. Iain Chambers and Linda Curti (New York: Routledge, 1996) 242-260.

increasing flexibility and transnationality of its employees, even at the expense of nation-state borders? Ghosh's fiction provides solution to some of these questions, showing, for instance, how the counter-scientists were working within a colonial and capitalist system to create transnational knowledge.

Ghosh's novels argue that it is useful to make some distinctions between the "postcolonial" and "colonial" workers and organizations within the service economy. Organizations that flourished under the colonial regime do not exist in the postcolonial era. For example, there is no exact equivalent for being a colonized, Indian employee in the army of the British empire. Being an Indian soldier in the United Nations peace-keeping forces is not a perfect analogy for inferable reasons. *The Glass Palace* demonstrates that none of the characters employed by colonial organizations – the British Army and also the Indian Civil Service (ICS) – succeed professionally under the tutelage of the British empire. Starting with the Collector, Ghosh introduces a man who is educated at Cambridge and has great aspirations in the ICS. The most important officer in Ratnagiri, he constantly finds himself disagreeing with King Thebaw, the deposed King of Burma, who thinks it is clear that Asian countries will soon be able to assert supremacy over the colonizing European countries. When the King mentions the defeat of the Russians by the Japanese in the 1904 Siberia conflict as evidence of his prophecy, the Collector stiffly remarks, "I must confess that I do not believe this to be an event of any great significance."¹⁴ Serving the British' purposes, the Collector believes in the superior ability of the European nations to colonize Asia.

¹⁴ Ghosh 2000, 105.

The British do not reciprocate the Collector's trust and respect unfortunately. His superiors immediately terminate his employment when he uncovers the scandal of the First Princess bearing an illegitimate child, even though he brings the attention to their notice *for their benefit*. Worried not only that Burmese support for the exiled Royal Family would be galvanized because of the birth of the prince, but also concerned that the child is a half-caste, (thereby creating hybrid members of a "new" Royal Family) the British express their displeasure by discharging the Collector, disregarding the impeccable quality of his work, and the length of his service. The Collector despondently tells his wife, Uma:

But the smell of miscegenation has alarmed [the British] as nothing else could have: they are tolerant in many things, but not this. They like to keep their races tidily separate. The prospect of dealing with a half-caste bastard has set them rampaging among their desks. I am to be the scapegoat for twenty years of neglect. My tenure here is terminated and I am to return to Bombay.¹⁵

The British employers do not regard the Collector as their equal. Although he has trained within their system, and has indeed attended Cambridge University, he is merely an Indian. Fundamentally an outsider in their hierarchical and exclusive system, the British murder the Collector's professional career, compelling him to commit suicide.

In addition to the British disliking him, the Collector learns that such members of the Asian community as Dolly and Rajkumar keep their distance from him also, preferring to communicate and associate with his wife, Uma. Similarly, the Burmese King and Queen regard the Collector as an outsider, dismissing him immediately during their initial meeting with him, even though they invite Uma to stay for longer. The Queen notes, "[she] had seen many Collectors come and go, Indian and English; she

¹⁵ Ghosh 2000, 173.

thought of them as her enemies and gaolers, upstarts to be held in scant regard.”¹⁶ The Burmese royal family dislike the Collector simply on the basis of his profession, and the fact that he is a representative of colonial hegemony. The Asian community avoids him not only because he supports the British subjugation of the Burmese royal family but also out of fear that he is a spy and an informant. Indeed, the Collector deserves such apprehensions from the Asian community, for he advises Uma to search for extra bags of rice and dal during their visit to the Burmese King and Queen. Even Uma, his own wife, keeps the pregnancy of the First Princess a secret from him, worrying that his professional duties would require him to expose the scandal. The natives are never comfortable with the Collector, and, as Uma intimates to the reader, the Collector too never liked himself, while he worked for the British. Uma notes:

He had wielded immense power as a District Collector, yet paradoxically, the position had brought him nothing but unease and uncertainty; she recalled the nervous ironic way in which he had played the part of Collector; she remembered how he'd watched over her at the table, the intolerable minuteness of his supervision... There seemed never to be a moment when he was not haunted by the fear of being thought lacking by his British colleagues.¹⁷

As a result of being employed by the British, the Collector is estranged from himself, from his community, and also from his employer. Caught in the Hegelian relationship of the slave who despises himself because he secretly hopes to become his master, the Collector discovers that the bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of the Indian Civil Service will not allow him to succeed professionally and personally.

Similarly, the Indian characters who are employed by the British army as soldiers ultimately realize that they have to abandon their jobs, become deserters – an offence punishable under British law – if they are to retain any sense of dignity and worthy

¹⁶ Ghosh 2000, 105.

¹⁷ Ghosh 2000, 186.

identity. Hardy forces his friend Arjun to examine their desire to be employed in the British army, and to question why they are both so thrilled to be the first Indian officers in the prestigious 1/1 Jats section.

'But ask yourself, Arjun, what does it mean for you and me to be in this army? You're always talking about soldiering as just a job. But you know, yaar, it isn't just a job – it's when you're sitting in a trench that you realize that there's something very primitive about what we do. In the everyday world when would you ever stand up and say – 'I'm going to risk my life for this?' As a human being it's something you can only do if you know why you're doing it. But when I was sitting in that trench, it was as if my heart and my hand had no connection – each seemed to belong to a different person. It was as if I wasn't really a human being – just a tool, an instrument. This is what I ask myself, Arjun: in what ways do I become human again? *How do I connect what I want to do with what I want, in my heart?*'¹⁸

Interestingly, Hardy here explains his alienation from his job in distinctly Marxist terminology. By describing himself as merely a "tool," "instrument," Hardy indicates that his *living* abstract labor has arguably been depleted. If one uses Light and Gold's important definition of capital as "any store of value that assists production and productivity,"¹⁹ it becomes apparent that the soldier only has human capital to assist him in his military job. The soldier creates resistance in the very logic of capital by performing martial activity that he despises.²⁰ Hardy creates nothing for himself in the course of his work, noting that he cannot reconcile his job's outcome with what he wants in his heart. He is not producing any use-value. Instead, his work only possesses exchange-value which, in turn, is appropriated from him by the British army.²¹ Offering all his (human) capital during his sojourn in the army trenches, the Indian soldier becomes a marketable commodity for the British.

¹⁸ Ghosh 2000, 497, italics mine.

¹⁹ Ivan Light and Steven J. Gold, *Ethnic Economies* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2000) 84.

²⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capital," *Public Culture* 12.3 (2000) : 653-678.

²¹ For an explanation of the difference between use-value and exchange value, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988)

By distinguishing between the desires of his heart and the actions of his hand, Hardy is disembodied from the service that he provides. That is, he cannot connect the abstract living labor he possesses with the military output that he produces. Employees who participate in extreme division of labor schemes, such as factory arrangements under Fordist or Taylorist systems, often find themselves disembodied from their work because their labor is not immediately (or ever, for that matter) apparent in the final output that is collectively produced. Alison makes this point when she tells Arjun, ““You’re not in charge of what you do; you’re a toy, a manufactured thing, a weapon in someone else’s hands. *Your mind doesn’t inhabit your body.*””²² Furthermore, the source of the soldiers’ disembodiment from the services they provide is not the fragmented production pattern of the army but rather themselves. Hardy and Arjun willingly join the British army; Arjun enrolls in training because he thinks that the army will be one way to distinguish himself from his lazy youth. Ironically, in opting to be part of the British system, by committing themselves to the organization, the two Indian soldiers find themselves alienated from it, and also from themselves.

Providing disembodied services distances the two soldiers from the benefits of being employed in the service economy. One characteristic of the service economy is that the worker is intimately connected to his work; Arjun and Hardy, however, are certainly disconnected from their work. The economist Bhagwati explains how an artist’s service can be disembodied into a good. In his example, Placido Domingo’s live performance in a concert is reproduced into commercially produced CDs. Domingo is no longer directly involved in the sensations that his listeners receive from his work. Of course, the transition from service to good does have benefits: the performer knows that

²² Ghosh 2000, 376, italics mine.

his service is reaching a larger audience, and that he is at least making a profit through copyright and creative ownership of his work. There are no benefits, however, for the Indian soldiers in the British army. As Hardy notes, the Indian workers are not acknowledged for the (disembodied) services they provide. He explains to Arjun that it does not matter that the Indian 1/1 Jats fled from the Japanese:

‘It’s as if we never existed. That’s why what happened at Asoon doesn’t matter – not to us, anyway. Whether we’d held our position or not, it would have been the same. Yaar, I sometimes think of all the wars my father and grandfather fought in – in France, Africa, Burma. Does anyone ever say – the Indians won this war or that one? It would have been the same here. If there had been a victory, the credit for it would not have been ours.’²³

Hardy, in business terms, is arguing that the Indians are not credited for the services they provide. Or, as Bhagwati might suggest, the Indian soldiers are not even mentioned in the inner jacket of History’s CDs. Their work simply does not exist, lost in the cracks of bureaucratic structure and the blemishes of imperial attitude.

Admittedly, the work of some of the characters in *The Glass Palace* exists primarily because of the British empire. Rajkumar, after securing capital from Saya John, is slowly able to establish himself in the timber trading industry, using initial profits to acquire more land. One of the central reasons for Rajkumar’s windfall success is that World War I sparked an unprecedented increase in demand for timber. Rajkumar observes, “During the last war, the profits of timber had soared. The profits he had made then had sustained him for a decade afterwards. It was not too far-fetched to imagine that something similar might happen again.”²⁴ While it would seem that at least some entrepreneurs like Rajkumar managed to triumph under colonialism, not in spite of but rather because of the British, this is not the case. Rajkumar’s profits are only short-term.

²³ Ghosh 2000, 406.

²⁴ Ghosh 2000, 315.

Towards the end of the novel, Rajkumar, old and weary, finds himself severely in debt. Hoping to recoup the kind of profits he had previously experienced, Rajkumar invests all his assets and savings in timber plantations along the stretch of the Burma – China road. During World War II, the Japanese bombed parts of Burma, including Mandalay. The result: the Japanese bombed Rajkumar's plantations, destroying not only his business but also his family, since Neel, working on the plantation when the assault began, was trampled to death by startled elephants. In a sense, Rajkumar's business is a mere pawn in the war between the Japanese and the British over the empire. Of course the argument could be made that even if the British had not controlled Burma, Rajkumar might have lost his timber yards because the Japanese were conducting an aggressive, imperialist expansion that was not confined to British areas. As the early sections of the novel show, however, Rajkumar would never have found himself in Burma were it not for the British. Accordingly, he would not have developed the timber yards that were eventually destroyed. Although Rajkumar is not managing the service economy in the contemporary application of the term, his example shows that even agricultural producers did not thrive under the British empire. While Rajkumar is not employed by a colonial organization like the British army, nonetheless he is involuntarily co-opted in the larger form of social organization, namely the colonial regime.

The situations of the Collector, Arjun, Hardy and Rajkumar suggest that Indian characters working under the trappings of a colonial regime are unable to succeed professionally or obtain satisfaction from their jobs, even though they are all different types of workers: the Collector is a specialist and an administrator, Rajkumar is an uneducated agricultural manager, and Hardy and Arjun are soldiers. None of them

succeed under colonial bureaucracy. Arjun goes so far as to note that his employment never really gave him any satisfaction whatsoever:

But if it were true that his life had somehow been moulded by acts of power of which he was unaware – then it would follow that he had never acted of his own volition; never had a moment of true self-consciousness. Everything he had ever assumed about himself was a lie, an illusion. And if this were so, how was he to find himself now?²⁵

Arjun's point is that the lack of purpose that stems from working in the British army is not confined to employment alone; rather, worthlessness permeates his entire life in a kind of perverse colonial malady. He realizes that he has no autonomy in the army, despite being one of the leading officers of the 1/1 Jats. Though he is in a position to give orders to the Indian troops in his regiment, he is thwarted directly by the British and their strategic plans. Arjun feels a nagging sense of inadequacy that he is unable to lead the troops effectively as an Indian officer. Regardless of whether one is a specialist, a soldier or an "uneducated" manager, the colonial regime prevents professional success. Imperialism colonizes the mind to the extent that the characters do not even feel that they have potential for success.

Ghosh does provide hope: Arjun gains personal satisfaction in the military branch of the service economy from the moment he becomes "postcolonial," which is when he realizes that he has the autonomy to make choices for himself regardless of the repressive orders from the British. The change occurs when Arjun and Hardy decide to leave the British army and serve instead on the side of the Japanese, not in support of the ideology of fascism but rather to resist British imperialism. Hardy tells Arjun, "That's why this is so hard, don't you see? This is the first time in our lives that we're trying to make up our

²⁵ Ghosh 2000, 431.

own minds – not taking orders.”²⁶ Arjun noted earlier that he had not joined the British army because of a burning desire to be a soldier. Rather, the training simply seemed to be an opportunity to “prove” himself. This time, however, Arjun firmly articulates the reasons why he should join the Japanese. The independence of his decision suggests that the postcolonial set-up is in fact preferable to the colonial machine: using one’s intellectual and emotional ties, the characters *choose* to work for their employer. Rajan explains to Arjun that he would rather serve in the INA than be a plantation worker for the British because the INA, at the very least, gives him the satisfaction of autonomy:

He would begin to talk about the kind of work they’d done, on the plantation – every action constantly policed, watched, supervised. . . It wasn’t that you were made into an animal, Rajan said – no, for even animals had the autonomy of their instincts. It was being made into a machine: having your mind taken away and replaced by a clockwork mechanism. Anything was better than that.²⁷

Hardy felt that the actions of his hand were severed from his heart’s desires. For Rajan, the plantation employer has surgically removed his mind, replacing it with a “clockwork machine.” Wishing that their emotional impulses could coincide with their intellectual rationalizations, these characters want to expunge the colonial malady that cripples their autonomy.

In addition to autonomous decision-making, Arjun gains other benefits from serving in the Indian National Army (INA): he becomes a hero, receiving credit and appreciation from the Indian public for his accomplishments. Hardy explains to Arjun’s family that Arjun died fighting in one of the last engagements of the INA in Burma, during the war’s final days. He notes that the resistance of the INA was more symbolic than actual, saying ““although they were never a serious threat to the victorious

²⁶ Ghosh 2000, 438.

²⁷ Ghosh 2000, 522.

Fourteenth Army they were more than a minor irritant...Arjun was among those who had died a hero.”²⁸ Two significant points can be concluded from Hardy’s remark. The first is that Arjun received recognition, while it was noted earlier that regardless of the outcome of the battles fought by the British army, the Indian soldiers would never be validated. Second, Arjun succeeded in an informally structured organization, in the sense that the soldiers were spatially dislocated, fighting an Indian cause from the Burmese jungles. The units were composed by volunteers *ad hoc*, without rigid recruitment and training procedures akin to those that Arjun went through before he was inducted into the British army. In addition, the soldiers were often ill-equipped, using obsolete weaponry and guerrilla tactics that mainly involved them scattering in the jungles. The British army, on the other hand, was tightly structured, with tiered levels of hierarchy and segregation of British and Indian officers. The Indian soldiers always looked to Lieutenant-Colonel Buckland for a formulated plan. Despite the lack of organization structure of the INA, or perhaps because of it, the soldiers were less alienated from their jobs than when they were serving the British.

The same kind of *flexibility* that has been witnessed in Arjun’s military unit can be seen in the types of organizational structures that exist today in the global economy, such as MNCs and TNCs. Economists contend that the main features of “late capitalism” include flexible production or accumulation, disorganized capitalism and global capitalism, an international division of labor, global informational technologies, transnationalism of production, cultural fragmentation, multiculturalism, weakening of

²⁸ Ghosh 2000, 480-81.

boundaries and so on.²⁹ Dirlik focuses on the lack of regulatory control over transnational capital, which makes it difficult to sustain a simple equation between capitalist modernity and Eurocentric economic forms.³⁰ Other theorists identify post-Fordist production methods that enable MNCs to relocate to any area of the world that offers tax inducements, political stability, low wages and infrastructure.³¹ The contemporary economy demands of its entrepreneurs an extreme degree of flexibility, *ad hoc* transnational restructuring and an ability to translate temporal opportunities into long-term profits. Similarly, the INA operated not by discriminating between resources but rather by opportunistically employing all available resources to their advantage. For instance, the British army had not employed Tamils, considering the group racially unfit for soldiering. After watching the Tamil plantation workers fight, however, even the most racist of the Indian officers realized that the Tamils were resilient and determined soldiers. The narrator comments that “it was only under fire that they’d come to recognize how false those myths were: experience had demonstrated the plantation recruits to be, if anything, much hardier and more dedicated than the professionals.”³² The British Army excluded the plantation workers through racial profiling, losing their potential for valuable contribution to military efforts. The INA, however, trained the workers informally, and subsequently watched them fight better than the professional soldiers. Flexibility and adaptability explain why the INA provided sustained resistance

²⁹ For a description of the changes that MNC/TNCs have instituted and taken advantage of, see Hall 1992 and Leo Ching, “Globalizing the Regional, Regionalizing the Global: Mass Culture and Asianism in the Age of Late Capital,” *Public Culture* 12.1 (2000) : 233 -257.

³⁰ Dirlik 1994.

³¹ For a discussion of MNCs relocation strategies, see Miyoshi 1993 and Madeleine Leonard, *Invisible Work, Invisible Workers* (Great Britain: MacMillan Press, 1998).

³² Ghosh 2000, 520.

against the powerful British, despite the fact that the soldiers did not have formal training and advanced weapons.

The Calcutta Chromosome explains how postcolonial structures encourage flexibility in ways that colonial bureaucracies do not. Thrust into the turn of the twentieth century, the reader finds Antar, a linear programming graduate from Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, working for the International Water Council (IWC) as a systems analyst. It is clear from the novel that Antar is alienated from his work: he has an “at-home” job, works alone with a computer that monitors his productivity, and has never stepped inside the New York headquarters of the IWC. Furthermore, his educational background is under-utilized in his position. Antar’s working goals are substantially different from those of his employers. He is simply waiting for retirement, when his pension rates will allow him to return to Egypt, while they “s[ee] themselves as making History with their vast water-control experiments...they want to load their dirt with their own meanings.”³³ Antar cannot not participate in the goals of the job as a mere data processor, nor does he seem inclined to do so. In this case, he is no better off than those soldiers who fought for the British army for mercenary reasons, and without personal attachments to their jobs. While there are important differences in the type of job – working in the trenches versus working behind a desk – and the educational skills required for it – Arjun, Hardy and Antar are all educated professionals, while most of the Indian soldiers are illiterate – it appears that alienation is necessary for the “native” worker, regardless of whether the employee is postcolonial or colonial.

One significant difference, however, between contemporary organizations and colonial bureaucracies is that the former provide and create opportunities for the

³³ Ghosh 1995, 5.

employee to come into contact with a resistance multitude³⁴ that can liberate him/her. Because of the IWC's multinational consortium of employees, and at the Swedish manager's insistence, Antar meets Murugan in a New York restaurant. Later, using office email and Ava's reconstruction techniques, Antar follows Murugan's path from the point when he is declared missing in Calcutta. Antar becomes friends with Tara because he can provide her with company-sponsored internet access. Contemporary organizations exist in a period of tremendous technological advances, and they cannot prevent employees from using their technologies. Corporations are unable to monitor employees when they are not grouped together in the factory setting described by Marx. Though they resort to standardizing the company intranet and blocking access to web-sites,³⁵ employees nonetheless find many insidious ways of connecting with each other. The Indian soldiers in the Burmese jungles did not have access to the same internet resources. They had to assess on the spot whether the Indian soldiers they met in Burma were fighting for the British or for the Japanese. The Indian soldiers could only expand their units by physically meeting new members, which was a dangerous -- whose side were they on -- and uncertain process. After all, the soldiers employed guerrilla tactics, frequently dispersing and scattering from each other in the Burmese jungles. By providing office internet, with its search engines, chat groups, email lists, and personalized web-sites, corporations allow the postcolonial/immigrant multitude to come into contact with each other in ways that satisfy the employee's personal goals. It is far easier for an employee to escape detection on the internet than it is for an Indian soldier

³⁴ For an explanation of the "resistance multitude," see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)

³⁵ Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text* 18.2 (2000) : 33-58.

to meet a conspirator at the British army camp. Consider the proliferation of terrorist web-sites that describe to amateurs complicated bomb-making procedures. Ava allows the New York based Antar to visit the paunchy Peruvian even while he is taking a shower in the privacy of his bathroom, located in the middle of Calcutta. Similarly, Jaya is only able to find Dinu by using the internet to search for “U Tun Pe.”

Another feature of MNC/TNCs that make them more suitable to postcolonial workers is that they commonly have affiliations or offices in many parts of the world. This is particularly useful to postcolonials who have an agenda that is increasingly “post”-national, in the sense that their residential and professional aims are not necessarily located in the same nation-state or geographical area. Sassen discusses how MNC/TNCs often need to transfer their service employees to different offices because of language or technical requirements.³⁶ MNC/TNCs sometimes need to hire more foreign or local workers depending on the legal corporate structure of the nations from which they are operating, creating more opportunities for relocation. International laws insist on a minimum number of foreign employees or foreign currency reserves before organizations qualify for multinational benefits. Egyptian-born and Russian-educated Antar was employed by LifeWatch in New York because of his linear programming skills. Finally, MNC/TNCs are challenging existing definitions of nation-states, forcing national governments to revise their regulations by asserting their international flexibility over territorial dividers.³⁷ Many theorists forecast the demise of the nation-state as a political unit. The assertion of supremacy of MNC/TNCs over national governments and

³⁶ Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flows* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

³⁷ For discussions and predictions on the impact of MNC/TNCs on nation-state definitions, see Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver, *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Hardt and Negri 1988; Miyoshi 1993.

domestic politics, an approach often criticized by theorists like Coronil who does not subordinate politics to economics,³⁸ is liberating to postcolonials who often have an international agenda that is not nation-state specific.

The “international” and “non-national” strategies of postcolonial entrepreneurs adopt many forms. Some economists explain that “ethnic economies” can be both local and international; in the case of the latter, businessmen abroad establish social networks with counterpart entrepreneurs in their “country of origin” to create business trade.³⁹ Ong uses flexible citizenship and passport mobility to describe entrepreneurs in China that have offices in Hong Kong and residences in the United States for their wives and children.⁴⁰ Lowell explains how the United States Immigrations Act of 1990 acknowledged the existence of a class of “global citizens” who do not necessarily want citizenship but only working opportunities in the country.⁴¹ Appadurai discusses the creation of virtual neighborhoods that are Diasporic and “no longer bound by territory, passports, taxes, elections, and other conventional political diacritics, but by access to both the software and hardware that are required to connect to these large, international computer networks.”⁴² He creates new terms like “ethnoscapes,” “technoscapes,” “financescapes,” “mediascapes” and “ideoscapes” to describe the disjuncture points of imagined social spaces in globalization. Other theorists discuss how citizens can form associations with a nation from abroad. For instance, Jeganathan studied several web-

³⁸ Fernando Coronil, “Towards a Critique of Globalcentrism: Speculations on Capitalism’s Nature,” Public Culture 12.2 (2000) : 351-374.

³⁹ Light and Gold.

⁴⁰ Aihwa Ong, Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁴¹ Lindsay Lowell, Foreign Temporary Workers in America: Policies that Benefit the United States’ Economy (Connecticut: Quorum Books, 1999).

⁴² Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 195.

sites about Sri Lanka to argue that one particular web-site, www.eelam.com, constituted a form of “nation-as-territory” for those who accessed it.⁴³ Rabinowitz, theorizing a postnational Palestine/ Israel, explains how a Diaspora can create a nation-state without visiting it.⁴⁴ These critics imply that the nation, long seen as a territorially bound unit, is on the decline. Rather, new constructions are emerging in which, ironically, citizens who live abroad can actually gain better benefits than those citizens living within the defined boundaries. For instance, Appadurai notes that Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) are often afforded privileges with regards to taxation and mobility in and out of India that resident Indians do not receive. This is an interesting reversal of the nation’s duty, which formerly gave most protection to its citizens inscribed within its boundaries. The concluding point is that both the employer and the postcolonial employee have common supra/super/multi/hyper and international goals, and so they will function better together. MNC/TNCs want a Diasporic, “rootless” employee to conduct transnational business.

The two preceding paragraphs have structured a positive correlation between the international needs of postcolonials and those of MNC/TNCs, implying that such a correlation is useful because both employee and employer can satisfy their common goals. The correlation, while not incorrect, is overly simplistic. First of all, some theorists argue that for all the supposed hype of the internationalism of MNC/TNCs, never before has the concentration and centralization of wealth been placed in so few nations. Nawal El Saadawi notes that five hundred MNCs account for 80% of world trade and 75% of investment, and their number is dropping each year as a result of

⁴³ P. Jeganathan, “eelam.com: Place, Nation and Imagi-Nation in Cyberspace,” *Public Culture* 10.3 (1998) : 515-528.

⁴⁴ Dan Rabinowitz, “Postnational Israel/ Palestine? Globalization, Diaspora, Transnationalism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Critical Inquiry* 26 (Summer 2000) : 757-777.

mergers and the elimination of the relatively smaller ones.⁴⁵ In addition, the unfounded inference should not be made that only *contemporary* MNC/TNCs operate on an international agenda; international trade existed even before colonialism. Ghosh illustrates this point to the reader in his novel, *In An Antique Land*, which revisits ancient trade routes between Egypt and India. Colonial organizations like the “British East India Company” also had international agendas. However, these corporations employed an exploitative, mercantilist methodology that is not necessarily seen in today’s MNCs – though some have argued that contemporary MNC/TNCs constitute a form of neo-colonialism. Emphasizing the internationalism of today’s corporations should not come at the expense of forms of internationalism in earlier economic organizations. One defining feature of contemporary organizations is that the predominance of finance capital and transnational banking forces them to adopt an international outlook in order to succeed.

Similarly, one should not infer that colonial citizens did not have an international agenda. This is most certainly untrue, for Rajkumar in *The Glass Palace* is an example of an entrepreneurial Indian who established venture capital structures in Malaysia and Burma to become wealthy. The point to note, however, is that few Indians, for example, could afford to travel abroad beyond the confines – or expanse – of the Empire. Mongia describes how the Canadian government tried to restrict Indian immigrants, and explains that the British government often denied Indians passports.⁴⁶ Visa restrictions and immigration laws still restrict travel. Not all of the forms of capital that constitute MNC/TNCs are equally flexible: human capital faces barriers to travel, like immigration

⁴⁵ Nawal El Saadawi, *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader* (New York: Zed Books, 1997).

⁴⁶ For a description of the passport’s evolution for colonial citizens, see Radhika Viyas Mongia, “Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport,” *Public Culture* 11.3 (1999) : 527-556.

laws, that finance and material capital can often escape. While it is true that MNC/TNCs and postcolonials both have international agendas, one must also consider that MNC/TNCs are more likely to transfer “highly skilled workers,” and that immigration laws are less rigid for migrant professionals. Workers may be described as having different degrees of mobility depending on individual circumstances, such as educational background and country of origin. However, those Indian voyagers who have the means to secure their travel, like students whose academic institutions will vouch for their F-1 visas or businessmen whose companies have legitimized their H-1 visas, will presumably be able to travel. Under the colonial regime, even those who had wealth and status could not travel easily. Dinu, for instance, cannot escape with Alison from Malaysia because he is not white-skinned, even though the Japanese are invading. Mongia explains how the Canadian government denied entry to Indians who had made multiple stops during their journey. Yet necessity demanded that the travelers stop at many ports during the lengthy and arduous sea-journey from India to Canada. Therefore the type of traveling and the facility of traveling are different under colonialism and postcolonialism. At the very least, air transportation has made traveling much faster; postcolonial immigrants can move from India to Canada within a day. Indians cannot be denied entry now because their journeys consisted of multiple stops.

Ghosh suggests that building rigid distinctions between colonial and postcolonial workers and organizations may be unnecessary. Rather, he engages the dual forms in dialectical conversation in *The Calcutta Chromosome*. Antar, an Egyptian, is probably unaware of how drastically his life is going to change as a result of coming into contact with the Calcutta-based counter-scientists. Murugan’s decision to move from New York

to Calcutta (a transnational decision, incidentally, that was not rational in a capitalist sense since he accepted a lower salary) embroils him in a mystery of intrigue and, ultimately, liberation. Meeting strange characters along the way, such as Sonali, Urmila, Mrs. Aratounian and Phulboni, Murugan explains that the glamorous British scientists, such as Ronnie Ross who won the Nobel Prize in 1902, did not find the cause and forms of treatment of malaria. Rather, it was a group of illiterate, “untrained” researchers, working for the British scientists like Ross and D. D. Cunningham, who set the circumstances in place for those scientists so that they could make the discoveries public. Therefore, collaboration was required between the Indian employee and the British employer because the latter had the agency and clout to validate the discoveries that, as Murugan explains, the Indians actually made.

In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Ghosh creates a multinational system in which Antar is making discoveries about Murugan’s life at the same time that Murugan is explaining, and living, his story to Urmila and the reader. Murugan describes to Urmila the precise manner in which the counter-scientists operate:

‘Let me tell you how this works: they have to be very careful to pick the right time to turn the last page. See, for them, writing ‘The End’ to this story is the way they hope to trigger the quantum leap into the next. But for that to happen two things have to coincide precisely: the end credits have to come up at exactly the same instant that the story is revealed to whoever they’re keeping it for.’⁴⁷

These characters in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, while employed in service jobs of their own – Urmila is a journalist and Murugan is a specialist on early malarial research – are also employed by the counter-scientists. Interestingly, these figures become so interested in their role in the counter-scientist project that they forsake their commitments to their formal employers. For instance, Murugan, against the advice of his colleagues in the

⁴⁷ Ghosh 1995, 218.

New York office, chooses to travel to Calcutta. Similarly, Urmila does not attend the Minister of Communication's meeting; instead, she opts to travel with Murugan. Antar's only fulfilling project at the IWC is researching Murugan's history. This task has only use-value for him and no exchange-value for the IWC. The counter-scientists, like the INA, do not have a formal recruiting program. Rather, employees become interested in the organization through word-of-mouth, chance encounters and "accidental" coincidences. They follow their intellectual curiosities and life goals to become co-opted in the counter-scientist agenda in a way that does not appropriate or subsume them.

The formal organizations to which the characters belong, like the IWC, provide the employees with skills and opportunities that the counter-scientists will utilize. For example, Cunningham hires Mangala not because of an educational pedigree but because she is uneducated; yet Mangala uses the laboratory resources to further her own research. Similarly, when the owner of the shop that makes clay objects is being non-responsive and unhelpful, Urmila uses her professional skills to intervene: "I am a reporter for *Calcutta*," she said, in a crisp, firm voice. 'And I'd like to ask you a question.'"⁴⁸ When the secretary refuses to let her see Romen Haldar, she interjects, "I don't think you know who *I* am...Let me tell you: my name is Urmila Roy and I am a *Calcutta* reporter. Perhaps you should think a little before you do anything."⁴⁹ Urmila is authoritative because her journalism experiences have made her more aggressive and articulate. Furthermore, she manipulates the power that is associated with working for a prestigious newspaper to find her answers. Likewise Antar only comes in contact with Murugan, as explained earlier, because the Swedish manager, himself unable to deal with Murugan's

⁴⁸ Ghosh 1995, 133.

⁴⁹ Ghosh 1995, 185.

decision to leave New York, asks him to do so. The Swedish manager probably asked Antar to intervene because he thought that Antar would be able to strike a kinship with Murugan. Antar himself notes, "He'd always been good at placing people, he prided himself on it, it was a talent you developed when you spent a lifetime working for a global agency."⁵⁰ Antar has a "transnational" capital that the Swedish manager realizes will be useful; Antar has lived in Egypt, Russia, and the United States. Antar's membership in the tea-shop clique, composed of Bangladeshi, Guyanese friends and immigrants of other nationalities indicates that he is comfortable with expatriates. Accordingly, Egyptian Antar has lunch with Indian Murugan, which is the beginning of his involvement with the counter-scientists. This meeting was arranged through the IWC.

The characters want to be involved with the counter-scientists because it gives them access to a kind of immortality that is derived from interpersonal transference and chromosomal mutation. Murugan desperately wants to be part of the group because he hates the lonely futility of his life. The counter-scientists never force involvement, though. They introduce themselves to prospective employees who are ultimately free to decline participation. For example, it is only because of Antar's own personal curiosity that he so avidly retraced Murugan's history, which is how he becomes embroiled in the plot. Despite the exclusive and promising goals of the organization, the members are not elitist. Rather, they seek characters that have traditionally been unrecognized, like illiterate Mangala and Urmila, often criticized by her family for not marrying. The counter-scientists only intervene when such characters as Farley try to thwart their research. Antar, lonely and isolated, lives in a deserted building in New York City, his wife having passed away during childbirth. He observes that the counter-scientists are a

⁵⁰ Ghosh 1995, 20.

very nurturing and comforting group. When they appear to him, they say, ““We’re with you; you’re not alone; we’ll help you across.””⁵¹ Their approach is far different from the IWC, which has not even invited Antar to visit the New York headquarters. Formal organizations screen applicants through recruitment procedures, and then alienate them from each other. The counter-scientists recruit informally, and then provide collaborative and nurturing environments. The counter-scientists offer the characters a chance to be part of their utopia, but do not force them into accepting their offer. The IWC offers retirement funds, and then monitors productivity to see whether the pension rates should be lowered. The British empire co-opted Rajkumar’s business into their history regardless of his personal, entrepreneurial agenda; he was simply subsumed by colonization.

Why are the counter-scientists so successful? One answer is that despite being such an exclusive group, their members are all extremely different from each other in terms of the skills that they bring to the organization. For example, Murugan, hoping to expand his knowledge of malarial research, travels to Calcutta to become part of the group. Similarly, Urmila, after examining the drawing that Murugan shows her, uses her knowledge of Calcutta to take him to Kalighat, which is where the artisans reside. None of the types of knowledge that each worker possesses is privileged over the other. Rather, each of the workers constitutes an indispensable piece of the overall puzzle, making them equally valuable to the organization. This firm has a primarily horizontal employment structure, though admittedly certain characters, like mythical Mangala, are venerated over the others. Yet the organization itself does not discriminate among workers because of their employment backgrounds. Not all the counter-scientist

⁵¹ Ghosh 1995, 311.

members are scientists: Urmila is a journalist and Sonali is an actress. Yet the counter-scientists treat them all like specialists, validating them for the skills that they bring to the job, and not degrading them through hierarchical classification.

The counter-scientists do not have *a priori* expectations of the skills that their workers should possess. Rather, they encourage innovative thinking. Murugan notes that Cunningham probably did not give Mangala much training, saying, ““He may have taught [her] how to read a little English and he probably showed [her] a couple of things.””⁵² Accordingly, it can be inferred that Mangala was unfettered by Western paradigms of scientific thinking that would condition her own research. In fact, Murugan attributes the reason for Mangala’s success in using the malaria bug to treat syphilitic paresis to her “MBA out of the box” thinking.

‘You also have to remember that [Mangala] wasn’t hampered by the sort of stuff that might slow down someone who was conventionally trained: she wasn’t carrying a shit-load of theory in her head, she didn’t have to write papers or construct proofs.’⁵³

Unlike Ronnie Ross, Mangala was not researching with the objective of finding the malaria bug. Instead of following standard scientific procedure of hypothesis, controlled experiment and conclusion, she was simply thrust into science by becoming Cunningham’s laboratory assistant. Unconstrained by scientific goals, she discovers the cause of malaria, a way to treat syphilitic paresis and the Calcutta Chromosome, all during the early twentieth century when chromosomal structures were unknown both by the medical establishment and also by Mangala herself. Her “out of the box” thinking was obviously useful in her research.

⁵² Ghosh 1995, 244.

⁵³ Ghosh 1995, 246.

Ghosh has created an organizational structure that satisfies its employees even more than the Indian National Army in *The Glass Palace*. All the members in the INA were motivated by a single goal – Indian independence – which prompted their whole-hearted participation. The members were largely fighting a symbolic battle against British forces for a goal that would presumably only be enjoyed by subsequent generations of independent Indians. Considering their lack of ammunition and weapons, the INA members knew that their disadvantages would translate into a military loss. Yet the soldiers were willing to voluntarily sacrifice their lives for the organization's goals. Death, highly regarded among terrorists and spiritualists, represents the irretrievable loss of a resource in neoclassical economics, and is therefore undesirable. On the other hand, participating in the counter-scientist group is not sacrificial but liberating. The employee uses his/her skills to solve the mystery for him/herself; thus, s/he is the primary recipient of the benefits of the organization. At the same time, by participating in the organization without knowing – at least initially – that one is participating, the employees effect a mutation in the organization that moves it towards a more significant realization of its goals. Therefore the employee does not have to subordinate himself to the goals of the organization. S/he can benefit both him/herself by realizing his/her goals and also the organization by “mutating” the knowledge production in the needed direction. In this case, resources are not being destroyed but applied more fully, with multiple returns to scale.

The counter-scientist movement spans both the colonial and postcolonial eras. Mangala works for Cunningham in the early twentieth century, while Murugan returns to Calcutta much after Indian independence, towards the end of the twentieth-century. The

novel articulates the differences between being a counter-scientist at the IWC and in Cunningham's laboratory. For instance, Murugan describes how the foreign researcher, Farley, constantly monitors Mangala when he visits Calcutta. He is so curious about her work that he purposely stays in the laboratory quarters during the day's length, preventing Mangala and her crew from performing their research. The outcome is that Mangala's assistant finally convinces Farley to accompany him on a journey; Farley is next declared missing. Similarly, one of Ronnie Ross's friends, Gregson, becomes extremely curious about the role that Ross's assistant, Lutchman, plays in Ross's work. After analyzing Lutchman's pronunciation of words, Gregson concludes that Lutchman has lied to Ross about his birthplace. About to warn Ross, Gregson unfortunately finds himself almost run over (magically) by a train; the next day, he flees. The Calcutta workers under British colonization have to contend with British medical officers who can authoritatively direct the goings-on of the Indian assistants when they are suspicious of them. On the other hand, the IWC management team realizes that they cannot prevent Murugan from going to Calcutta on a lower salary. They do not want to fire him, however, since he is a respected specialist in his field. The difference between employers in the IWC and the Calcutta laboratory is that members like Murugan are appreciated by the former for their expert knowledge while, in the latter, Indian geniuses like Mangala are not considered to be the equal of the scientists. The British scientists simply assume authority and superiority, presumably because of the colonial mind-frame. British officers in the Army certainly assumed that the Indians were not capable of managing and directing themselves, and therefore instituted a hierarchy that was the basis of colonial bureaucracy.

Yet Ghosh suggests that despite the differences in organizational structures and management hierarchy during the “colonial” and “postcolonial,” the counter-scientist movement cannot be dissected into two separate eras. Mangala’s commitment to developing the Calcutta Chromosome can only be achieved through generations of work. Murugan asserts to Urmila and Antar that he really cannot prophecy the end of the project, noting that each stage’s conclusion is the impetus for a mutation to the next stage. Ghosh has developed an organization in which the past radically informs the present, but not in such a way that the present is fundamentally predicated on the past.

Murugan, trying to explain the functioning of the group, tells Antar:

‘Not making sense is what it’s about – conventional sense, that is. Maybe this other team started with the idea that knowledge is self-contradictory; maybe they believed that to know something is to change it, therefore in knowing something, you’ve already changed what you think you know so you don’t really know it at all: you only know its history. Maybe they thought that knowledge couldn’t begin without acknowledging the impossibility of knowledge.’⁵⁴

Murugan tells Antar that it is necessary to know the past, but in the process of knowing the past, one mutates or *revises* it. In the process of learning, one is creating something new, and yet the new product cannot be separated from the existing body of (historical) knowledge. In this way, the past and present are inextricably connected, not in a linear, accumulating sense, but in a constantly-being-revised model that is not always improving itself (for that would privilege the future in a teleology). Rather, knowledge is simply *mutating*, a word that does not lend itself exclusively to positive or negative connotations since it has flexible implications. Mutating knowledge creates gaps of disjuncture, similar to those articulated by Appadurai. Out of these gaps arise knowledge solutions and paradigm shifts. The excerpt also alludes to the power of epistemology, for “to know

⁵⁴ Ghosh 1995, 105.

something is to change it.” Keepers of knowledge are not passive; they can effect change, which is why postcolonial workers need to have epistemological representation.

The counter-scientists are also flexible about place: Mangala and her crew are not working towards an essentially Indian nationalist aim by excluding the participation of transnational human capital. After all, Antar, an Egyptian residing in New York, is invited to join the group. Similarly, the group realizes that when a dead-end has been reached, then they must make well-known British scientists like Ross publish their research so that an international community dialogue can continue their work. The narrator in Ghosh’s novel, *In An Antique Land*, also relies on transnational communication in order to recover the unspoken history of the “Slave of MS H.6.” The narrator, an anthropologist named Amitab, finds researching the history of the slave extremely difficult because of the sparse body of knowledge available about him, and also because he operates only in the Western research ethic. Amitab notes that most of the historical analysis of trade in the 1100s comes from letters written by trading partners to one another. He comments that the slave is usually mentioned in letters by Ben Yiju and Khalaf ibn Ishaq in mostly gratuitous ways. There are no letters written by him – since the slave was presumably illiterate – and he is not the subject of many letters. Amitab realizes that the Western methodological approach to studying history privileges written documents, thereby excluding illiterate members, which is an application of Appadurai’s insightful connection between social exclusion and epistemological exclusion.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Arjun Appadurai, “Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination,” *Public Culture* 12.1 (2000): 1-19.

By researching the slave's life, Amitab brings him into epistemological existence. And Amitab realizes that the slave played an important role in medieval trade between India and Egypt. Bomma is like Mangala, who was instrumental to the research of malaria, even though written history largely ignores her except for brief mentions in Cunningham's diaries. The point that Ghosh is making with Mangala, her crew, and Bomma is that contemporary researchers should be aware of the misrepresented and unrecognized contribution of those who are actually responsible for work conducted. The economist Sassen argues that in today's global economy, too much emphasis is placed on those workers engaged in the production of finance and services. Sassen argues that the economy fundamentally relies on workers who exist *behind* the command functions, namely the secretaries employed by investment banks and the truckers who deliver the software.⁵⁶ Hardy made the same observation when he noted that Indian soldiers would not be given any credit, regardless of the outcome of the wars that they fought on behalf of the British. The novel *In An Antique Land* makes the argument that researchers like the narrator need to find and display such important characters as the slave who are often disregarded in traditional historical analysis, but may be fundamental to a narrator's research objective of unearthing a hidden picture. The study of malarial research cannot ignore Mangala; the examination of medieval trade in Asia should not disregard Bomma despite, or perhaps because of, his un-privileged status as a slave.

Amitab only understands the Diasporic pattern of the slave's life by embarking on a transnational journey himself. He has to rely on letters written by Khalaf ibn Ishaq that have been translated and edited by Professor S. D. Goitein of Princeton University, USA.

⁵⁶ Saskia Sassen, "Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims," *Public Culture* 8 (1997): 205-223.

He reads Professor Goitein's book of translations in a library in Oxford, England, in 1978, when pursuing doctoral studies. Within a few months, the narrator studies in Tunisia. In 1980, officially affiliated with the University of Alexandria, Egypt he is installed in the village of Lataifa. He also reads an article published in India, visits Princeton University to see colleagues in the Department of Near Eastern Studies, and "follow[s] the Slave's trail from library to library."⁵⁷ In order to complete all the missing parts of the puzzle, the narrator has to make his research transnational, just as his subject was Diasporic.

In the ten years that had passed since I first came across Goitein's brief reference to Abraham Ben Yiju and his Slave, my path had crossed theirs again and again, sometimes by design and sometimes inadvertently, in North Africa, Egypt, and the Malabar, until it became clear that I could no longer resist the logic of those coincidences.⁵⁸

The pattern of coincidences is reminiscent of the "accident" system employed by the counter-scientists to meet employees. The narrator needs to encounter certain people to make progress in his research, such as Mark Cohen at Princeton University who encourages him to read the Judæo-Arabic letters from the Geniza store-house despite the fact that the narrator would have to learn Hebrew. Amitab is studying an "obscure" topic; yet his research, no matter how focused and specific, undoubtedly requires the sought-after and fortuitous guidance of an international team of collaborators. Research is not confined to the ivory tower, a term that ostensibly discusses the isolation of a Western research community to the "real world" but is also implicated in colonizing elephant tusks and peoples' minds.

Amitab realizes that he too needs to use the "out of the box" thinking to finish his research. Apprehended at the tomb of Sidi Abu-Hasira, the narrator explains to his

⁵⁷ Ghosh 1993, 105.

⁵⁸ Ghosh 1993, 99.

interrogator that he is simply interested in visiting the tomb as a tourist. The interrogator tells the narrator that the tomb venerates a Jewish saint, and would therefore be significant to only Jewish or Israeli visitors; other tourists are discouraged from visiting for fear of upsetting the fragile peace. The narrator then realizes that the writing of History distinguished the indistinguishable, separating the fundamentally intertwined histories of India and Egypt, Hindu and Muslim. Western imperialists succeeded in colonizing the mind of the Egyptian officer to the point where he believes that the tomb of Sidi Abu-Hasira is meant for only Jewish or Israeli visitors. Amitab, thinking along these lines, uses terms like “religion” and “Judaism” when searching for information about the tomb. This search yields no results. Later, he understands that “the 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.”⁵⁹ The Western academy categorizes research on the tomb under “folklore” and “superstition.” Both Muslims and Jewish peoples venerated the saint, but Western methods of delineation cleave such hybridity asunder. Accordingly, research on the tomb is placed under “superstition,” for the tomb is considered an anomaly because of its appeal that is not religion specific. Recall the British fear of the “half-caste” child of the First Princess; imperialists kept the histories of the colonized subjects apart. Imperial power lurked within that segregation. Amitab needs to remember the inadequacies of Western history in its re-presentation of Asia. “Religion” and “tradition” assume the underprivileged – at least to the Western academy – forms of “folklore” and “superstition” when the subjects of study are not category-specific. That which does not make sense is “superstition,” even though the

⁵⁹ Ghosh 1993, 342.

Egyptian people might have formerly considered the subject, the tomb in this case, to be “religion.”

Chakrabarty argues that all versions of European history are nation-state specific. The narrator of *In An Antique Land* realizes that all identities that stem from belonging to a nation-state are ultimately predicated on Europe. At one point in the novel, both the narrator and the Imam Ibrahim, a religious leader, have an argument about which country, India or Egypt, is more developed. The criteria for assessment are developed exclusively from Western ideas of development – guns and science. Amitab notes:

We had acknowledged that it was no longer possible to speak, as Ben Yiju or his Slave, or any one of the thousands of travelers who had crossed the Indian Ocean in the Middle Ages might have done: of things that were right, or good, or willed by God; it would have been merely absurd for either of us to use those words, for they belonged to a dismantled rung on the ascending ladder of Development. Instead, to make ourselves understood, we had both resorted, I, a student of the ‘humane’ sciences, and he, an old-fashioned village Imam, to the very terms that world leaders and statesmen use at great global conferences, the universal, irresistible metaphysic of modern meaning.⁶⁰

The implication is that Asian specialists that represent academics (Amitab) and religion (the Imam) employ a hermeneutical framework that sees countries in terms of how developed Western countries view them. It can be inferred, furthermore, that traders in the Middle Ages *understood* the Diasporic and intertwined nature of their lives with travelers of other nationalities. The narrator notes that Ben Yiju and Bomma were able to speak a truly transnational language that did not see the world in terms of the epistemological subject and predicate. The colonized can only think of themselves in relation to the Western countries that imperialized them, usually perceiving themselves to be the weaker partner in the relationship. Amitab pitifully notes that he had subsumed a centuries-old dialogue that was once truly global, or at least not predicated on the West,

⁶⁰ Ghosh 1993, 237.

to a dialect that is global only in its pretensions. He speaks the slogans of the Western conferences that capture the world in an Enlightenment discourse revolving around “modern meaning,” as though previous paradigms of meaning had no significance at all. Those in the pre-colonized age spoke a transnational dialogue more fluently than the twentieth-century Imam and Amitab. Amitab must remove himself from the ivory tower.

Amitab makes these insights after immersing himself in Egypt, where he witnesses the competition for “development” between India and Egypt. Without performing his multinational research and staying in Egypt for an extensive period of time, he would not have been able to conclude his research effectively. Several postmodern thinkers have noted the importance of an open-minded approach to researching and creating new knowledge. For example, Appadurai argues that the Weberian notion of value-free, scientific research has been too generously followed. Instead, Appadurai contends that researchers should be transnational, and engage communities and conventions of research that do not follow the *a priori* assumptions of the Western research ethic.⁶¹ Foucault, in turn, creates an archaeology of knowledge, arguing that academics should focus on mis- or under-represented ideas. He observes that Western historiography cannot deal with inconsistency. Instead, Foucault advocates an archeological approach that “[tries] to take such differences seriously: to throw some light on the matter, to determine how they are divided up, how they are entangled with one another...in short to describe these differences, *not to establish a system of differences between them.*”⁶² Chakrabarty calls for a revised way of conceptualizing history, contending that the current mode “places an emphasis on the nation-state, and to

⁶¹ Appadurai 2000.

⁶² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, A. M. Sheridan, trans. (New York: Harper and Row 1976) : 169, italics mine.

go back to this means to reveal a sense of European modernity, meaning that one can never describe Indian history...since it is inextricably connected to a Eurocentric discourse.”⁶³ Deleuze and Guattari also argue that “History is always written from a sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus...even when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history.”⁶⁴ These theorists advocate an international rhizome-like structure or, more fittingly, an anti-structure, that allows cross-fertilization, random selection, interdependent assortment in the (re)production of knowledge. Research cannot be nation-state specific (remember the Cold War laboratories); rather, research needs to be global. Economic globalization may be uneven but in the revision of epistemology, all global citizens producing knowledge must be viewed as equally skilled specialists.

Specialization implies depth and density, creating visual spectacles that are predominantly vertical. MNCs, while discursive and sprawling, are fundamentally hierarchical: parent companies include the accounts of subsidiary companies on their financial statements, but the practice is not observed in reverse. Stock indices limit the number of firms in each group; they are measured by whether their numbers go *up* or *down*. Yet specialization in a postmodern conception of social organization is distinctly horizontal and anti-hierarchical. All participants in Ghosh’s novels function as a result of their individually configured capitals, regardless of whether they are symbolic, cultural, transnational and, always, human. The horizontal assortment of specialists increases the available contact points between them. As Rajan argues, postcolonial intellectuals abroad and “native” academics are different for several reasons; one does not constitute – but

⁶³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for “Indian” Pasts?” *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992) : 1-26.

⁶⁴ Deleuze and Guattari 23.

should engage – the other.⁶⁵ Horizontal assortment allows new forms of interdisciplinary knowledge to be unearthed, reconfigured and presented at faster rates of success. A capitalist system of production that is centered around the creation of specific products cannot be ideal. Thompson notes that horizontal structures best deal with the ambiguity and disorganization of contemporary, postmodern life, in which a single term is incapable of dealing with in-flux-meanings. Knowledge is Diasporic and people are transnational; production cannot be vertical when consumption is diffuse.

These arguments beg the question: is production in the knowledge economy the same as production in the service economy? Will Hutton critiques Anthony Giddens stance that one substitutes for the other.⁶⁶ In response, Giddens insightfully notes the pervasive influence of and need for Information Technology (IT) in all production ventures, regardless of whether the production is of the service or knowledge type. Furthermore, Giddens contends that the idea or concept (a type of knowledge) must always precede production in today's postmodern economy. One cannot simply open a restaurant; rather, one must create an image of the specific dining-out "action" and "sensation" that s/he is providing. Ghosh's fiction adopts a similar stance: the distinctions between knowledge and service economies are pointless. After all, Antar uses Ava's "Technology" to provide "Information" about Murugan; that "Information" becomes part of the "Knowledge" that Antar creates. Similarly, in the "Author's Notes" section of *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh lists the information and knowledge sources that he used to produce the novel; the dedication of the novel to the memory of his father suggests that the book provided a service. Jumping from author to character, the reader

⁶⁵ Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, "The Third World Academic in Other Places; or the Postcolonial Intellectual Revisited," *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Spring 1997) : 596-616.

⁶⁶ Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens.

learns that Jaya's son uses the information that his mother had unearthed to "write" the epic biography as a service to her. Knowledge cannot be separated from production in the service economy of Ghosh's novels. Consider internet start-up companies: eager entrepreneurs disavowed or terminated their MBA, college or even high school degrees to translate intangible ideas into virtual production. Investment bankers only provided capital and financial assistance to these firms. The true determinant of the companies' success was the ability of the central idea to capture the social imagination, to cater to the consumers' tastes and preferences. Interestingly, internet firms also sought to erase hierarchical bureaucracy, believing that horizontally-structured organizations promoted innovation among colleagues.

Terms like "taste" and "preference," "action" and "sensation" convey images of products that have a short shelf-life. True, consultants might provide on-going services to their clients but each performed service is different. Finding potential buyers for a client's business and monitoring the client's cash-flow performance are different services that can be performed by the same investment banking analyst. In assembly-line production, however, final goods are indistinguishable from each other. Sassen notes that finance capital promotes the celebration of the temporal, the privileging of the "now," or at least the day's close of the stock market. Yet those who produce in the service economy often have to belabor – act – extensively before they can produce the ephemeral "sensation." Murugan has devoted his life to malarial research, Mangala toils in the laboratory during the after-British-officer-hours, Urmila is an enterprising journalist who wakes up early to prepare dinner for her family, Jaya stumbles across a photograph of her ancestors while completing her doctoral thesis on the history of photography in India, and

Amitab travels with his research to several nations. It is important to remember that effort and endeavor exist behind the finished product. Human capital is intimately involved in today's growing service and knowledge economies. Yet human capital has not been praised like finance capital or material capital. There is certainly a tendency to forget human contribution as finance capital becomes "iconic, possessing a "natural" capacity to yield value without human input, to grow and expand of its own accord, to reward speculation."⁶⁷ Human capital lags far behind the flexibility of other material types of capital. Immigration laws need to change if the service economy's production of knowledge is to be boundless and inclusive. As Hardt and Negri argue, workers should have full rights of citizenship in the country where they work and live. Immigrant workers in the US should not be treated as aliens when they pay taxes.

Hardy warns that regardless of the *outcome*, the Indian members of the 1/1 Jats will not be remembered. Amitab observes that without his research endeavor, the *subject* of his project, slave Bomma, would remain forgotten. Mangala demonstrates that even the *process*, her participation in malarial research, can be excluded from history. Process, origin, outcome, subject – perhaps these are terms that belong to an outdated history that, in its revision, must always be aware of its inadequacy in recounting the past. And so, postcolonialism and postmodernism remind academics to be self-conscious of the hermeneutical frameworks they employ to produce knowledge. This paper has focused on (mostly) postcolonial specialists and the fundamental roles they play in the postmodern production of knowledge. And the reader has probably realized that

⁶⁷ Jean and John Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," Public Culture 12.2 (2000) : 291-343.

“identity” formation and “knowledge” production cannot be separated from each other for one is a symptom of the other.

The characters in Ondaatje’s novel, *Anil’s Ghost*, demonstrate the duality of identity and knowledge well: “native” archaeologist, Sarath, and international forensics expert, Anil, engage a collaborative team of transnational experts to uncover Sri Lankan government war crimes. Mixing archaeological and scientific procedures, the past lives of the two characters focus the lens through which they approach their work. Personal histories also mediate and inform how they analyze their research findings. They work tirelessly to uncover Sailor’s identity, for, as Anil states, “*One village can speak for many villages. One victim can speak for many victims.*”⁶⁸ The beauty of their complex work is that Anil and Sarath “represent” the killed voices, synonymous with identities.

Archaeology uncovers those voices, and contact points spring between lost voices and contemporary Human Rights work. The knowledge production of Sarath and Anil also fuels the growth of their own identities, for the novel’s end is ambiguous as to whether Anil – a new Anil with rekindled Sri Lankan reattachments created from her work – returns to America or remains in the country. The sadness of their work is its inherent fallacy: only the Sailors can best represent themselves, speak with certainty about the government war crimes committed against them, and drastically increase the knowledge awareness of the Civil War in Sri Lanka. But, to invoke Spivak, the subaltern – and also the dead – cannot speak. A microeconomic production of knowledge utilizes a human capital that is fundamentally predicated on self. Postmodernism and postcolonialism promote the validation of human capital. The macroeconomic production should, as Ghosh’s novels suggest, locate a service economy in the rhizome of knowledge, so that

⁶⁸ Michael Ondaatje, *Anil’s Ghost* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000) 176.

“self-knowledges” can cross-fertilize to provide both epistemology and postcolonial characters with a multitude of sweet sensations and actions that suit their multiplicities.

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