CHAPTER 4
ARNOLD ITWARU AND THE CULTURE OF RESISTANCE

Conscious of the larger responsibility of artists and writers, Itwaru considered writing as a medium not merely for artistic enjoyment but for addressing larger social concerns and his training as a sociologist may have propelled him to concentrate on cultural and critical writings. His output as a creative writer is not so enormous and he is often acclaimed for his critical and polemical writings. His immediate endeavour as a cultural critic was to express his protest against and shatter some prevalent myths about Canada and its policies. He has been a constant critic of the so called civilized nation namely Canada and the shortcomings and follies of the official policy of multiculturalism which was intended to foster cultural amity and equality among the people of varied races in Canada.

According to Chelvan kanganayakam, “the politics of marginalization, the hegemony that masquerades as liberal humanism and the coercive narrative that flaunts itself as multiculturalism”, are the central concerns of his works (Configurations of Exile 34). Throughout his works he has been trying to develop “Culture of resistance” so as to make them distinctively different from the Canonical Literature and “colonized appreciation of works of art”. Resistance has become a much used word in the
discussion of third world politics and also the post-colonial discourse. It invariably connotes imagery of war and is always suggestive of physical struggle or clashes. But it need not be always like that as it can operate at psychological, moral and symbolic level. It could be even manifested in opposing the dominant ideology and the refusal to be absorbed. Resistance is pervasive in the writings of Itwaru whether it be novel, story, criticism or cultural writings and even in speeches. Itwaru considers writing as a kind of symbolic activism. Politically charged nature of his writings makes him a non conformist and a rebel among the writers. The philosophy that artists and writers have to be with the underprivileged and the suffering has been the pervading concern of Itwaru. There are trenchant images of resistance in his poetry, prose and stories. Major characters in his short and long fiction make this thematic concern immanent. He has been a controversial intellectual who belongs to this rare breed of academics who also want to be vocal public figures opposing hegemony of all sorts.

4.1.1. Colonialism, Racism and resistance

Though not greater, Itwaru’s creative writings are equally significant as his cultural writings just because of the fact he has proved his excellence as a creative writer through his novels, short stories and poems. It is proper on our part to begin any discussion of Itwaru with his first famous work Shanti as it can be read as the epitome of his literary resistance and also a work of protest.
Itwaru doesn't want to call this a “novel” but a “book” because of his objections to a term that implies a western norm. In an interview with Chelvan Kankanayakam, Itwaru says, "this is not a novel oriented at all. It is work that comes outside the European mode of novel” (Configurations 36). In Shanti and Morning of Yesterday, the setting is Guyana, his own native country. It has been described as a land that time forgot. He goes back to the world of colonial Guyana, and traces the exploitation of the indentured workers on the plantations. Itwaru himself talks about the making of the novel:

These works written at the foot of night in the pain of hope are set in Guyana where majority of the population are the descendants of the people of India who came here as indentured labourers to work in the sugar plantations after slavery was no longer feasible for the coffers of Britain and Europe. These peoples became another people in an elsewhere which sought their labour but despised nearly everything else about them. They also existed within hostility from the Africans who were no longer enslaved, who saw them as undermining their resistance to the white man's rule. The hostilities worsened in time and took on a tragic struggle for power and identity, both nationally and personally - where even within the attempts to gain independence from Britain, mutual hatreds between in Indians and Africans were deep. (Author's Note Shanti)
*Shanti* is about colonialism and its ruthless exploitation of people. Tentacles of empire have spared no aspect of human life and Itwaru further explains that "colonization is not a concept: it is the realization of the "self -fetisization of western thought" (*Critiques of Power* 25). He shows how colonialism makes it direct impact on the people and also exposes how in colonial society women have been doubly colonized. Thus in this novel, he goes back to the sordid world of colonial Guyana and describes the plight of the poor and depraved plantation workers.

Itwaru, unmindful of most of the west-centric modes of narration adopts a telltale method of narration, which is largely derived from indigenous systems. The novel is more about the eponymous heroine than about any other characters. Presenting an alternative “version” of history, which is different from that of the official, he is able to project a socio-cultural document in this work of fiction and though his immediate purpose is to talk at length about his lower class heroine, it becomes a record of colonialist history also.

*Shanti* can be read as a feminist novel, which again does not comply with the model of European feminism as unlike that of the first world, women have been “doubly colonized” in a colonial society. Kirster Hoist Peterson and Anna Rutherford in their work, *A Double Colonization : Colonial and Post colonial Women's Writing*, first used the phrase “double
colonization”, to refer to the ways in which women have simultaneously experienced the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy (qtd. in McLeod: 175). The term patriarchy refers to the systems-political, material and imaginative - which invest power in men and marginalize women and like colonialism, patriarchy manifests itself in both concrete ways and at the level of imagination. Double colonization refers to the fact that women are twice colonized by colonialist realities and representation and by patriarchal ones too. Shanti, the subaltern, has been a victim of it. The author here also addresses the questions of marginality and “othering”.

Set in colonial Guyana, against a context of struggle for existence, *Shanti* is a realistic work with poetic qualities. Chelvan Kanyanayakam describes it as a tale of unrelieved misery told with intense lyrical beauty (*Configurations* 34). The novel which is told in a mode that constantly interrupts linearity, begins where it is about to end. As it begins we see Shanti leading a settled and happy life with Latchman, her lover turned husband. She now possesses all the comforts of modern life but she feels alienated. This sense of alienation haunts her persistently and she thinks that she does not belong. She cannot cope with the changed system and is not able to resign to middle class complacency because of her miserable upbringing and past. Her husband is not interested in questioning the establishment after acquiring the job. "She felt both walled in and walled out in this roof over carpeted floors, carpeted stairs, a building over a
windowless hole in the ground called basement” (Shanti 5). She even feels, "it was an address, a domicile, not a home" (5.)

She feels nostalgic and contrasts the present situation with that of her childhood and native village as here she always keeps her doors closed and there it was done only when nobody was at home and at the time of death etc. This clearly brings to the fore the cleavage in their cultures and it assumes metaphoric significance and thus the novel becomes a portrayal of dismemberment both cultural and literal. Though named after and within OM, indivisible syllable of self in tranquility, Shanti had a miserable and pathetic childhood. She lived in a plantation village where everybody had an “ideal” vision of India, the land of their ancestors. These East Indians are the descendents of the indentured labourers who were brought for plantation work. Her very name was ironic in the sense that Shanti, a daughter of peace became a daughter of shame.

"Shame wore in the tattered dresses for childhood" (6). She was ashamed of this and herself. Both her men and colonizers (officers of plantation) equally would stare at her with lusty eyes. Shanti’s father, an old consumptive, bowlegged, emaciated caricature of a man, was another source of pain for her. He was one of the best cane cutters but in misery and illness, they offered nothing to him and he had given his youth, manhood and health to the sugar plantation but in deep distress, his name was simply removed
from the payrolls. As the mother was also not able to work, she begged for
pension. Nevertheless, her pleas were mercilessly rejected. Mr. Booker, the
yellow haired, blue eyed, heavy bowed, big nosed, red-faced white overseer
considered below his dignity to listen to her entreaties. These natives were out
rightly denied permission and were asked to speak only to divers: local agents
who ensured that laboures worked without visible unrest. Complaining
itself was considered a sign of arrogance because they are always deemed as
inferior, dependent, subordinate and subject races. Shanti's parents were
treated like commodities. Here, Itwaru tries to show that colonialism was the
means by which capitalism achieved its global expression. They followed a
“hire and fire” or “use and throw” policy in its primitive mode. “In its
economic wisdom, they removed shanti's parents from its pay rolls” (13).
Her mother’s attempts to convince Mr. Connell of their abject and miserable
condition failed because he thought it was a demeaning experience to hear
the pleas of such “unbred” people. When her attempts to regularly supply
the medicines failed, his condition deteriorated resulting in death. She has
been reduced to a wretched of human nothingness on earthen floor. The
narrator graphically and heartrendingly describes their depraved social
condition, abject poverty and peculiar predicament. After her father's death,
the mother’s condition also worsened. In utter desperation and
despondency, she was forced to quit school to work as a plantation labourer.
Mr. Kissoon, the village shopkeeper refused any more debts. There was death
in her house and it became a haunted house. It was only grinding poetry and haplessness, which threw her in to the cauldron of extremely harsh surroundings of sugar plantations, and there she had to encounter several menacing problems.

Loyd.T.Booker, the loathsome overseer was a typical colonial figure and even his name seems to be ironic. He visited her house often and she felt threatened by the very presence of this “formidable creature”. She thought he had come to destroy them because once they took away their land forcibly. Booker’s ways typified how some of the colonialists directly persecuted and harassed the natives. He was the overseer and lord there and it was his domain of power. His word was the law and he controlled them with his muscle and money power as nobody was there to raise a little finger against this civilized beast. He was always on the lookout of proud bodies of younger girls and his lusty eyes found them “fuckable” female animals at his disposal and pleasure. Almost all the young girls of the plantation were his victims, Gladys, the daughter of Rosa, being the latest. When Shanti became a cane cutter he had an eye on her also. Rosa, the mother of the twelve, the head of the cutting gang sympathized with Shanti. She was concerned about Shanti and thought that it would be not safe for her to remain there and even asked to escape from this terrible place to continue her “eddication” as it was the only way out of virtual slavery and shame. But this girl, who had sun in her eyes, was molested by Booker as her mother
helplessly watched. She was also thrown into the constituency of the discontented. But she was not going to be doomed and she even rose to take revenge. The villager that day woke up with the happy news that Booker, the white rapist, had been cruelly murdered.

Murderer's identity was not known and of course, the villagers felt relieved as they were least affected by his death. But the police, especially, sergeant Detective Felix Reid had doubts about Shanti’s involvement. Though he thought that she was not the killer, he considered her an accomplice. He is an Afro-Guyanese whose cruelty towards East Indians was proverbial. Racism was more evident here and the scuffle between blacks and Indians was based on racial superiority. Racism made the whites to press unfree labour in to colonialist service. The ideology of racial superiority translated easily into class terms. The superiority of white races clearly implied that the black men must forever remain cheap labour and slaves. Certain sections of the people were thus racially identified as the natural working classes. In the first part of the novel, the direct impact of colonialism upon natives was shown. They were made to work like bonded labourers from dawn to dusk for pittance. Demands for better facilities were easily suppressed and they were harassed mentally and physically. They became victims to the torturing apparatuses of the domineering system and the system divided people according to races.
Over and above, in spite of tortures and unequal laws meted out to them, there was internal racism. There was rift between Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese and the colonizers always banked upon this division. Indians hated Blacks and did not want to have any relationship with them and vice versa. Though nobody was ready to accept blacks as teachers there were no fights reported between blacks and Indians. The East Indians bettered themselves by being slavish supporters of his white overlords and the Afro-Guyanese worshipped the white men.

In the second part of the book, the author shows how colonial violence is represented differently. It now included epistemic aspect - this is an attack on culture, ideas and value systems of the colonized people. Colonialism actually re-shaped the existing structures of knowledge. How far colonialists are successful in selecting and training some natives to spread their own cultural supremacy is clearly described. They were made the flag bearers of colonialism when they tried to imitate the masters. People who associated with them and wanted to be one among them are typical in colonial Societies. Mr. Sookraj, the head master of the school was one such who always kept away from the common folk. He was serious, stern, intelligent and effective. This fine up standing and outstanding Christian knew how to get best out of his teachers even when most of them were Hindus and Muslims. He appears to be a mimic man as he wishes to be identified with the elite.
Sookraj undertakes the rehabilitation of Shanti through the powers of education. He came to Shanti’s with the offer of assistance. She was asked to continue her studies staying at his house. She, being a brilliant student, could even appear for the scholarship examination to become a part time teacher there. She liked it and went there, as she wanted to get out of the rotten realm of sugar plantation. Sookraj’s pure Christian faith was surely tested when he glimpsed Shanti’s half-naked body in her hammock, a typical puritanical reaction to his rising lust.

As she reached there, she felt she had entered an entirely different world where there was order and discipline. It was difficult for her to cope with the other students because some of them were frivolous, silly and unnecessarily vindictive. But she gradually gained confidence. Strict discipline was enforced there and boys only spoke to boys there. Latchman was the only one who tried to make friends with her first. He even came to her house and it was love at first sight that culminated in physical union. Latchman, assuming the figure of a male chauvinist raised doubts about her chastity.

Mr. Sookraj was a strict disciplinarian and a lover of everything British. Being an ardent admirer of the west, he proved more English than the British did. He was for, to quote a phrase from Itwaru’s *Closed Entrances*, “the approval of the atrocity of conquest”. It was he who wanted
Shanti to appear for the P.T.A examination to become a teacher. Meanwhile, Shanti's critical faculty started working and she realized the absurdity of learning an alien culture, literature and history in an uncritical manner. She thinks even the so-called educational system wouldn't liberate her from her pathetic situation. To Shanti, the English were marauders, invaders and destroyers. “Her vision grew keener, and she began to wonder. Were her teachers wrong? Were the British honourable? To her they were marauders, they were invaders, they were destroyers” (66-67).

She began interrogating colonialism and imperialism and disturbing questions were asked. The literary texts she studied were far removed from her surroundings and they did not have any local colouring at all as it had nothing to do with her culture and tradition. They represented the dominant ideology. She found herself and her culture marginalized and a peculiar kind of “othering” takes place in a sly manner. She immediately felt the need to resist and to her this rebellion seems to have two fold effects. On the one hand, it appears to be a fight against the hegemony of the patriarchal society and on the other it becomes a symbolic fight against imperialistic and colonialist forces. Latchman, who is a conformist, does not like the rebel in Shanthi. What made her react like this are her surroundings and circumstances. She at once becomes an epitome of anti-colonial resistance, as hers is the loudest cry against blatant racism.
It was the British who had destroyed her father. The British had robbed them of everything. It was the British who had violated her. Why must she sing 'Good old roast beef of England? What was roast beef and why must she sing of it? Why must she sing 'Rule Britannia, Rule, Britons will never be slaves? Why must she be the British queen's loyal subjects? What had the queen done for her? (67)

It becomes a scathing attack on colonialism. Long years of shame and humiliation under foreign rule made people suffer like this. They were attuned to it and found it extremely difficult to escape from this labyrinthine position. The writer here describes the horrendous colonial impact on the psyche powerfully. He firmly believed that legacy of the past was not something that had to be eulogized and romanticized but something that had to be critically reviewed and analyzed. Shanti's attempt was also not to idealize the past, as she had nothing in her past to be remembered with fondness.

It was difficult to understand Shanti since she was burdened by unrelieved sorrow and perplexity. Latchman often picked up quarrels and at one point, she even slapped her on the face. Yet he was charmed by her presence and nature though she ran away immediately after a scuffle, when he accused her of being a whore. She persistently defended herself speaking that she was not a bad women but all her statements fell on deaf ears. Hostile forces everywhere surrounded her. It came in the form of Garamboo, the drunken hire car driver once. Sookaraj really wanted to
bring her back to the 'system' but he found it extremely difficult to pacify her. Her refusal to learn English poetry and History and her critical analysis and perspective were found nonsensical. She was rude to the history teacher who always talked about alien rulers and kings as the upholders of civilization and culture, which was something her people did not possess. The establishment always considered culture “sweetness and light” as they never admitted that “culture is ordinary” and it is a “whole way of life”. Teachers like Mr. Mooto who has a good record of sending students for scholarship examination felt insulted and they found this an aberration that would lead her nowhere. The headmaster who was deeply stung believed that there was no order without authority and those progeny of cane cutters and rice growers had to be disciplined with the rod. Sookaraj's persistent warnings and sermons did not deter her from the decision not to pursue such a career. His referring to the British Imperialism as the greatest civilization in the world and England as the Land of Shakespeare, Dickens, Keats and English as the makers of Magna Carta was not enough to change her.

People like you are blind! You have eyes but you cannot see! You cannot respect the greatest civilization in the world, the land of Wilber force that ended slavery! The greatest Universities in the world! The land of the world! (73-74)

Sookraj, a traditional intellectual never wants to take a confrontationist approach. He is proud that he has been serving a country
where all the Universities are situated and thinks that the knowledge they possessed is something, which others could not acquire at all. This is evidently an “orientalist” approach, which necessitated a peculiar attitude towards Asians and Africans. He never thinks of “decolonizing the mind”, whereas Shanti has done that. Though a convert, he has been more loyal and pious than birth right Christians. The atrocities of colonialism find a parallel in the institution, which tried to keep the subjects in subjugation through deviant manners by engendering a slavish attitude towards English language and culture, and a feeling that this is the right thing to do.

Latchman who is a regular churchgoer has had good relationship with the people around him. He never wants Shanti to be an activist. Both took the examination and though she passed in flying colours, she was not offered a post. Latchman was appointed a teacher as Pastor Scott liked his discipline and order. Though talented, Shanti was rejected as she refused to yield to societal pressures. She did not consider this as the greatest achievement in life. However, she felt dejected and stormed past between rage and tears. It has been a meek surrender as far as Latchman was concerned but he had no other choice but to conform. By this time, Shanti’s mother died and Latchman had to marry Shanti. She was very much aware of the fact that marriage was not the end. That is why she felt a fish out of water when they started living together in a luxurious house. Though she speaks, she stammers. That the subaltern sexed subjects has no space from where she can speak seems to be partially right in
the case of Shanti because by marrying Latchman she has been saved from financial troubles but her spiritual travails never end.

It is an early work by Itwaru where he explores the racist brutalities of male imperialism as they affect the life of brilliant young woman whose name gives the novel its ironic title. What should have been the epitome of peace becomes terrible and turbulent. Though her name is indicative of absolute peace and understanding, circumstances make her child of shame and sorrow. Her endurance is outstanding in the sense that it represents the uprising of the oppressed. Even though her resistance does not materialize in direct action, it definitely sows seeds of rebellion. The fact that she remains confined to her house does not mean she has also become a confirmed conformist. The embers still flicker in her. Itwaru’s is a literature of resistance as he is at pains to show conflicting views and constant efforts of some of the colonized to free themselves from their control and domination. Itwaru is well aware of the fact that colonialism is not more than a military conquest and in Shanti he has tried to show its several ramifications. This being a realist novel, attempts to record the protest and paradox of colonial Guyanese society. It becomes a novel of the dispossessed, which has poetic qualities. Itwaru here attempts to workout images from the deep chasms between Indians, Blacks and whites and between men and women.

Whereas Shanti deals with the colonial Guyana, Un returning is a novella, which is set in post-independence Guyana. It is an attempt at exposing
the seamy side of Guyanese politics, which is teeming with corruption, and it tries to attack the dirty politics of newly independent colonies. No sphere of activity is free from evil and other ills. Deo, an East Indian migrates to Canada and then returns to Guyana after a long absence, finds appalling changes in the land of his birth. While exposing the ills of the system, Itwaru wants it to be reformed and he is always for rebellious activism because he believed unless people protest always the hegemonic forces prevail over the underdogs of the society. At the same time his novellas are not meant only for sloganeering but he discusses matters of identity and the social stratification in an artistic manner.

4.1.2. Borders and boundaries

Itwaru is also concerned about shifting identities and also the trauma of exile. He has tried to explore the trials and tribulations experienced by the people on the borders and boundaries and thereby attempted at a kind of resistance as to how they can preserve their own culture and identities. Some of the stories and poems bring to light this experience. Home and Back is his latest work of fiction, which was published in 2000. It is said that the novel is partly autobiographical. As in most of his stories, this is also set partly in Guyana and partly in Canada.

As the title indicates, the protagonist, Deo Karran comes back to Guyana after having lived in Canada uneasily for over twenty years. The very moment he had reached Canada, he longed to return to the homeland and to
his dismay he finds there a disconcerting homelessness where a token of his memory has been violated. It is about leaving and returning to Guyana. The “novel”, which makes use of first person narration, opens with a description of “return”. He always dreamt of coming home and as soon as he reached Canada he felt alienated and discontented. He feels a disturbing sense of homelessness where every totem of his memory has been violated. His ailing mother has been reduced “grotesque concoction of a mother”. He could not believe it was his ma, because a cruel disfigurement has occurred to her.

"After 20 years, the very feel of this word on my tongue was hard, this word I had always spoken in comfort” (6). His mother is dying and he appears to be a stranger to everybody. As far Deo is concerned, his mother represents a channel to past and Guyana. He wanted to go back to take care of his suffering mother and she becomes a metaphor for the country which is in tatters. His identity is formed through her. His return makes him realize that his country is steeped in corruption where even small girls are ready to “entertain” others for a few dollars. It is within these circumstances that Deo struggles to make sense of him and things which have fallen apart around him, the memory of his past clashing against a tortured present and a questionable future. The narration of the novel is interspersed between past and present.

Just as in his early novel, there is a critique of colonial educational system here also. English was regarded as the language of the educated and
civilized and the head master insisted on following the British model saying: “As all of you know, this is an Inglish school! The languig we speak here is the Inglish languig, the songs we sing here are Inglish songs!This is no backward mattaiha! (62). Deo was a rebel from the beginning and he questioned the colonial mode of education that glorified the white masters and regarded colonialism as a benevolent mission. When he was appointed a teacher he was not ready to follow the conventional modes and instead he employed a student friendly approach. To him “obedience is not based on the fear of punishment and he doesn’t want children to be afraid of the “cruel eye of the teacher” (93). He taught the students the real history about the Indians who took the initiative in the struggle for independence. “And it was Indians in this country who first started to fight for independence from the British, wasn’t it? It was Dr. Jagan not Burnham, like the government wants us to believe” (87). He was a great admirer of Dr. Jagan and was accused as a communist.

His mother is dying and for him memory and reality seem to be at different poles. A stranger to everyone else he finds himself alienated. What has been expected is shattered and only dismay; terror and sorrow are etched in the lives of everyone around. He could see houses rotting away in a shock of despair and the village seems to him a ruined vista of violated hope. The first section of the novel is a long one where Deo looks back and bemoans his loss of life that once was.
The second section of the novel deals with his life in Canada as a part of his “self imposed exile”. Like most of the educated, Deo, was also persuaded to immigrate to pursue higher studies. He was embarrassed by the tall structures of the York University library building and the enormous volumes of books. It was no longer a wish as he was actually in Canada. Third person narration is used in this section and this is an indication of the alienation he felt when he reached a country with different climate, culture and tradition. At first he found it difficult to cope with the pace of the city. He had come all the way to pursue higher studies in the university of Toronto and was really surprised looking at the tall structures and the grandeur of the architecture. The visit to the main library left him speechless. He was not approved or acknowledged by anybody and he was all alone engulfed in groaning and lonely silence. “This place I have all along thought of as home is not the place I longed for each bitter winter in Canada” (72). This home away home gave him bitter experiences weather wise and in other ways.

He found most of the Professors there casually dressed, unlike the formal stuffiness of the lecturers in his Teacher training college at home. Most of them were liberal and he found Professor Jones as an ideal liberal who considered literature as an art form with social commitment. His essay on Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as a racist novel was well appreciated by the professor. Most of his classmates addressed him a Tarzan or cheetah and he found this extremely embarrassing. In the meanwhile, he met Gopal and his wife, Sumintra. He spent one or two days with them and found that Gopal has
somehow trapped her into this relationship and harassed her a lot. Deo’s sense of alienation is expressed in the following words: “I am legally allowed to be here, and for this I am grateful. But there is an unbridgeable distance, an impassable gulf, a disconcerting gap, between these people and me” (156).

When he applied for a teaching post in a school, his application was rejected saying that he didn’t possess the necessary qualification prescribed by the Canadian Government though he was in possession of the certificates from Guyana. Indians were not regarded with respect and he experienced it while travelling in a train. It was only Prof.Jones who helped him by appointing him as his research assistant and when he proceeded on sabbatical leave, he was asked to teach a course on a fixed stipend.

Deo happened to meet Jane, a nurse working in a psychiatric clinic and they became good friends. He used to confess to her many things which she took them sympathetically, and it grew into a kind of love affair. His girl friend, Jane once invited him to visit her but her father did not like him and so he rejected the invitation. Once he even called Deo a jungle boy and that hurt him a lot. But in spite of all these he used to meet Jane but one day he met Jane with another man, Ron in her room. She justified it saying that sometimes they even slept together and this is the Canadian way. So the love affair ended there, as Deo couldn’t be that liberal in his approach to these things.
After an initial period of wonderment, he started questioning the very system of education as he used to do while he was a student at his own home and as well as a teacher. The novel also deals with the problems encountered by east Indians in Canada. The final section is a short one, which ties the other two sections.

The final section is entitled “And Back”. Reaching back, he could not understand reasons behind the poverty and miserable conditions there. Harold, one of his childhood friends, told him that there were no essential commodities like rice, dhal etc. His father was an Indian who came in a ship that carried indentured labourers and he came from Madras. Deo also desired to go once and that did not materialize. Deo’s girlfriend of yesteryears, Gladys looked emaciated because of her husband’s harassment. He was shocked to see that his country has been plunged into abysmal darkness. “It would be night again… Another night…when rapes and robberies and killings happened” (178). He was embarrassed by the doings of ruling party amidst countrywide poverty taking the dead body of President Burnham to Russia to get it embalmed. Corruption was rampant and even the so called socialists and communists were party to it.

The novel to a large extent mirrors Itwaru’s own sense of sustained pain and it is also about migrancy, alienation and racism. Partly autobiographical, Home and Back is a powerful and merciless indictment of
modern postcolonial West Indies. Itwaru brings us touching lyrical meditations on growth and loss, the departure from home and life lived between remembering and forgetting in an alien elsewhere with artistic maturity and insight. Arnold Itwaru also interrogates the colonial modes of education that have been perpetuated in almost all the postcolonial countries. His is a polemical voice, which attacks the very structure of the knowledge. He offers visceral understanding of the society and the community that he has been in. Author of the modern classic, *Shanti*, has once again proved the pain, sorrows, and the sufferings can be presented in a highly poetical and meditative manner by taking the readers to a ruminative journey through tormented mindscape. So, in a nutshell, it could be said that the novel is intensely lyrical, political, economical and passionate. Here is one writer who considers literature as something which should be regarded as equipment for living and also politically oriented.

On the one hand, *Home and Back* is a powerful and merciless indictment of post colonial West Indies; it also becomes an attack on racism that is officially prevalent in Canada. As the Blurb says, “Itwaru brings us a touching lyrical meditation on growth and loss, the departure from home and life lived between remembering and forgetting in alien elsewhere, with artistic maturity and insight.” Itwaru offers an intimate understanding of a community and pays homage to the struggles for integrity and dignity within the vicissitudes of high reality. So *Home and Back* becomes powerfully
emotional but also exceptionally thought provoking as it makes a ruminative journey through tormented mindscape.

What have been projected in the novel are the peculiar problems prevailing in the post colonial Guyana and also the adverse position of the Caribbean immigrants in Canada in particular and the ethnic minorities in general. Where ever people move to settle, sense of alienation and hostile environment hound them and this has been the same even in the so called glorious Canada, which often proclaims that it would treat its ethnic minorities as separate, identifiable bits of a mosaic. It cannot be blindly stated that there should not be any borders and boundaries but at the same time people everywhere yearn for equal opportunities and most often what we find is the abject denial of openings to the marginalized in most societies and Itwaru believes that Canada is no exception. Through the character of Deo, he registers his protest against the elite forces that silence the already suppressed in any society and literature here becomes a vehicle of resistance and rebellion in the proper sense of the term.

4.2. Itwaru’s stories

Though less in number Itwaru’s stories are marked by poignancy and strength of philosophical and political insights as he is always concerned with the immediate problems of his fellow beings who have been relegated to the arena of miseries and sufferings. As he is consciously aware of the
people that he is addressing and also for whom he is speaking for, his stance becomes politically correct.

Itwaru begins his collection of stories *Morning of Yesterday* with a preface in which he remembers Wismar, the kind of attack that took place on 24th and 25th May, on the East Indians in Guyana. They were brutally assaulted and some of them were massacred. Itwaru talks about those who survived this bloody incident. “In this divided land of our painful birth and anguished hope”, Itwaru says, Indians suffered much during this period and they sought shelter. The Wismar massacre was committed in 1965. A documented number of Indians were killed in the attack that took place during the night, the time when evil takes courage and attacked people in their sleep, women and girls beaten and repeatedly raped, men and boys seriously injured and Indian homes were set on fire. This atrocity was committed by a select group of Africans misled by a dangerous supremacist divide-and-rule racial political agenda of power in Guyana. This incident created a kind of psychological insecurity to Indians in Guyana and it works to threaten Indian personhood and dignity in the very land of their birth. Many Indians have started leaving this country since 1964 in search of safety and opportunity elsewhere. According to Itwaru, some of the stories in this collection refer to the trauma of Wismar massacre. He says: “these stories are about the enduring strength of the Indians of Guyana in their search, despite the obstacles that block their efforts” (6). The work is dedicated to this beauty,
this spirit, this strength. It is really a cause for worry to Itwaru and other writers even after years, this sort of attack against Indians continues and says it has to be stopped.

4.2.1. Trauma of Wismar

The story “Shakti” has obvious references to Wismar massacre. The title is ironic as the story doesn’t tell about female prowess and strength but instead it narrates a tale of suffering and torture. Shakti was a survivor of the tragic incident that almost destroyed the Indians in Wismar on the banks of river Demerara. She had to leave the country because of this but her psyche is wounded with the trauma of this incident though the physical anguish has gone by. The “riot” is powerfully portrayed by Itwaru in the story,

Fire, the night ablaze, burning, burning everywhere, shadows breaking down the door, her mother and father screaming and shouting, and the heavy sound of blows, of someone’s voice choked out, and curses and threats and people waiting, and gun fire and more choked out screams, and fire and more fire. (24)

She came to know that her Ma and Pa had been burned to death. Though politicians described it as a riot her father and mother were no rioters. To her and most others, it was a political attack, a massacre. She was really shocked of this incident and she couldn’t open her mouth at all. All was comparatively peaceful but things went hoary after this. Though she considered she wouldn’t be attacked if she hid in the bushes, there also she was not spared. It was a
brutal rape that she had to encounter and she was shattered to pieces. The kind of rebellious element that Shakti had while at school didn’t save her from this peril as she was helpless. Her pathetic plight is described like this:

It had already been three days since she had locked herself in, had disconnected radio telephone, television, had disconnected herself from these lines which always intruded in her privacy, had disconnected herself. She didn’t want to talk to anyone. (37)

Somehow she reached Canada to escape from the anguish of the tragedy. But “certain things refuse burial no matter how hard you try. Certain things cannot be buried, must not be buried, must never be forgotten” (25). When she boarded the flight she felt very strange and after reaching Canada also she found it very difficult to get a scholarship and admission to a University. The sense of alienation haunted her very much. “Peculiar, this. Every street and building here was alien to her. She had never been able to feel at home in any of its houses. These were alien domiciles, homeless houses… Vague rooms. Rooms of vagueness. Doors which locked you out locked you in, against which you locked yourself out….” (21). She had felt free here when she came here. She felt it as eternal release from there. “She had packed her paltry life in her new suit case…” (22). She had to leave her homeland to live but the loneliness and sadness gripped her very much. The refugee or exile here wants to go back even when circumstances were terribly hostile. Even when she was terribly attacked nobody stood in her defence and she was harassed to
the core. It was she who was blamed by the police telling that it was a civilized country.

The story, written in the background of Wismar massacre, has political overtones. It is marked by the lyrical beauty as well as its political orientation. Itwaru, as in the novel *Shanti*, makes a female the central character and she becomes the victim of untold sufferings both at home and abroad. She is doubly marginalized as an Indian and as a woman and in Canada as an immigrant and as a woman. Racism is rampant both in Guyana and in Canada and the protagonist has been victim to it time and again. The colonizers only made the Africans and Indians enemies and it was part of their political agenda. Shakti, like Shanti has been an enemy of the establishment and she questioned their so called legitimizing colonialism and domination. Whereas the novel was set in colonial Guyana, the story was set in independent Guyana which was also steeped in corruption. References to both the countries bear witness to the Caribbean Canadian identities of the author.

4.2.2. Patriarchy and discrimination

Itwaru always advocates the cause of the underdogs and the underprivileged in the society. While talking about the larger issues of colonialism and racism, he finds space to talk about the less privileged in the traditional societies whether it is Caribbean or Indian— that of the women. “Matins” has a Guyanese setting and it deals with the peculiar predicament of
an Indian woman, a victim of patriarchal domination. It is in the form of a prayer by a lady who has lost all her six children just after delivery itself. Her husband considers it as her fault and even dismisses her as evil spirit. They are East Indians and plantation labourers and their life was plunged in misery as poverty and ill health were their constant companions. She was left alone and she didn’t even have a friend to console her and she was forced to enter this marriage that she didn’t like. Women had no say in such a society and the kind of society always tried to repress them. Though her husband was cruel, she didn’t want to refer to him like that in her prayers.

This man is good man, an honest man. He didn’t know better when she did whatever he did to me. He thought he was correct and just. It was what the men around him, did, what I now certain men had always done. It was my woman’s lot, my burden in Your Divine and mysterious order, my bounden duty.

(50)

How gender discrimination is common in traditional societies is clearly shown here. This woman wants only kindness and justice from God alone. Unlike some of the vociferous heroines of Itwaru, here, the woman prays only to God that her miseries should end and her husband should be enlightened so as to stop his ill treatment here after.
4.2.3. Indo-Caribbean experience

Memory haunts every writer and with regard to Indo-Caribbean writers like Itwaru past is a vital source and their works are interlaced with Indian experience along with the Caribbeanness. “Ball” is a story, which has its epigraph from Itwaru’s poem “Body Rites”: where do you go bleeding not seen/wailing not heard/where do you go shadow of my shadow/ watching blinded… The story talks about East Indian experiences where the central figure, Krishna, has to go undergo certain experiences which are harsh and bitter. In the story we have Krishna at home and Krishna abroad and the contrast between tradition and modernity is also suggested. The tapping of the drums invoking Kali the mother goddess is juxtaposed with the faceless people tap tapping the computer key boards.

“Maze-run” is also another story which has its epigraph from “Body rites”: “this is the place/mark its name/you must learn to remember its streets/you must believe them when they say/there are no sacrificial lambs here/bless yourself/ you have arrived” (81). This story seems to be sequel to the earlier one “Balls” as Krishna is the major character here also. The scene here is urban and Krishna enters a bar namely Tributaries of lethe. He is at a loss here as he is there for the time and he felt everything alien about the place. When tired, he ordered for a pint of beer. “There was nothing here he particularly liked. He had come in because he was tired, had wanted relief
from the parade of machine bodies on the sidewalk…” (83). Here also there is the juxtaposing of the traditional and the modern. In the TV there is reference to the characters of Arjun and Krishna reminding us of Mahabharata but they are really very much of our age. Arjun’s wife committing suicide is highlighted. They talk about an important event called maze run and Krishna is introduced to another figure whose name coincides with that of a mythological character Polyphemus. Krishna was accused of being an Indian who could not cope with a woman winning an event. Racism both that of the internal and the other, which is prevalent in such a society, finds expression in this story also. Alienation, estrangement, sadness and loneliness are the features of migrant’s life and they are well portrayed in the story. Though he has been talking about the Indo Caribbean experience in these stories, he is not trying to valorize the kind of life there but adopts the role of a detached observer.

4.2.4. Migrancy and racism

Multiculturalism, officially, is Trudeau’s gift to the entire world from Canada but the real spirit of the policy has not yet percolated into Canadian mainstream which consists mostly of white and Europeans. Immigrant writers could not but write the bitter strings of racism that stifle the very purpose of multiculturalism. “RAM, Psychiatric attendant” is a story which deals with the problems of racism, identity crisis, alienation and the trauma of
immigration. Ramu was born in a Guyanese village where he used to keep a count of his father’s sheep in his childhood days. As was quite normal, he also reached Canada after his school education there to pursue higher education. To pay his tuition fees and hostel fees he had to do a part time job that was somewhat similar to his counting of the sheep. Here the only difference is that he has to count people as he has been working as an attendant in a psychiatric clinic. He found it as a really difficult and tiring kind of job but he had no other go as he had to get some money to meet his expenses there. He didn’t want to disturb his parents as he only told them that he was working in a hospital as he had never been to the madhouse while at home. Everywhere the human rights of the mentally ill are violated as they are treated like a crowd and everything about them was done with an iron hand. He was really disturbed by the keys of the prison house.

It was awkward, this key, a black iron thing on a metal hoop, larger than any key he had ever used, smooth and worn as if it had been made in another century when this asylum was built, and never changed since. This key brought him to more doors, more locked-in-labyrinths, locked in corridors, locked in rooms he didn’t want to go into. (111)

When he first received the keys he described it as the keys to the kingdom-kingdom of mad. Those who had this key were not insane and it gave him a kind of reassurance.
Even in the hospital, white staff didn’t acknowledge him as one of their colleagues and the segregation and separation is very much there in the fabric of the society. Only a few like Nancy tried to talk to him and even those people had some ulterior motives in getting acquainted with him. Many incidents here reminded him of the Guyanese parallels where he and his community faced similar problems. There are references to Wismar massacre and the tortures meted out to Indian community there. In the psychiatric hospital when Ram was attacked by a patient asking him, “Paki go home”, nobody came to his rescue and he was really shocked hearing those words. The patient shouted, “I have to free Canada of the Paki vermin! I don’t need no needle” (136). He felt thoroughly dejected when this happened and nobody consoled him except the head nurse. Ram felt completely isolated and the situation here is totally different as there was nobody to talk to him even. But at home things were different as everybody shared their feelings and emotions. The question of home haunted him persistently and he thought of going back but circumstances nailed him to this place. Even his own country man asked him to leave the room that he rented telling his wife asked him to do it. Things are difficult for Ram as he was left in the lurch. He started hunting for a place and it was too late to seek university accommodation. When he reached a place where he saw the board “room for rent”, he stopped and asked but the lady there shut the door slamming. The story ends like this:
That shimmering distant radiance, that light at once beautiful and different and knowable, that awaiting glow outside of the darkness of his life there to illuminate, to fulfill, that dream, that key which would open the welcoming doors of his future… Where was it? (148)

The story at once becomes poetical and political, as it deals with many issues pertaining to human rights, racism, segregation and alienation. The plight of the immigrants is often pathetic in the sense they have to encounter many difficulties for their survival. Here, in this rat race, that is life, people like Ram had to struggle for existence. The story has reference to the rampant racism that is there both in Guyana and in Canada. Himani Bannerji, an Indo-Canadian writer uses the metaphor of prison to describe racism and she describes visible minorities as prisoners and her observation that “prisons when furnished by trendy designers do not become homes but burial parlours” (qtd. in Uma Parameswaran 52) clearly reflects the peculiar predicament of the immigrants and exiles.

“Flight”, the final story in the collection, presents a nervous and uncertain Ali who for the first time undertakes a flight to Canada. It is with hope and joy he moved towards to that country and his experiences inside the flight make him understand several things. He is in dilemma as to whether he will be greeted and treated in the same way out side also. With a certain taste
of politeness, Ali adaptation, of becoming, of seeming "So Canadian, so modern sounding swiftly begins the process of” (194).

4.2.5. Tradition and colonial modernity

“Papa” is a story which presents the conflict between tradition and modernity as well as the west and east. How colonialism seeks institutions like religion to spread their tentacles of power is explored in the story. Unlike other stories in the collection, this story has purely Guyanese setting where a family is split in ideology and beliefs. Half of its members are Christians where as the papa, supposed to be the head of the family believes in Indian religion and ethos. It is family which has distinct Indian roots and it consists of three members- father, mother and Deo, the son. Pa, they used to call him, in an inebriated mood, after drinking daru, used to tell about Indian experiences which the mother doesn’t like much. Papa used to compose bhajans in Hindi and Sanskrit and used to be proud of the eastern wisdom. Everything there reminds us of Indian culture and tradition- Banda, the heifer and other things. The story is narrated by the son. Papa had his own mattiah in the next village and was the last of the Mahants of Siwnarinee faith here, a rare practice of ascetic questioning that came from Dravidian times long before the Aryan and the Brahmin invaders violated Dravidian people. Papa was critical of the Brahmins and Aryans where as he considered Dravidians as better lot. But the son, as most of the children who got colonial education,
was skeptical of his father’s ideas and of papa himself. He had been trained in his English education and Christian education to view him and all the others like him with suspicion. His speaking of Hindi fluently rather than English made him look at him as uncivilized as Hindi was backward and corrupt language to him. Though he was not born in India, he was very much for Indian. Papa was critical of Sanatan Hinduism and also the Arya samaj faith. “My education had planted in me distrust of my very own father” (157). His father used to be a rebel and seeker among Indians as when most of them pursued the Aryan kind of belief he was the only mahant left of the siuwarinee cult. But he doesn’t have many followers but still he carried on. His father used to treat children with breathing affliction. He used to utter a mantra after giving the medicine even in midnight to treat the children. The boy even turned a deaf ear to pa’s talk about different ways of seeing. One day they succeeded pa in convincing the necessity for a dialogue with Reverend Pastor so that he could also be turned into their line.

Ma used to refer to him as Dr.Kant ironically and even with an obscene meaning and she was sure that Dr.Parker would really put him in his place. They made all kinds of arrangements to greet Dr. Parker and he came that day. Parker the pastor talking about in an affected manner. Parker pronounced the son’s name deyo instead of Deo and even addressed Pa Kaaran. When parker greeted him saying good morning, Papa greeted back with a Namaste with his hands clasped back as if in a prayer. Father even gave him a different
version of Adam and eve eating the apple from the tree of knowledge. Gladys and Deo were eager to listen to the dialogue between the two from separate and different and differing worlds. The subtle form of mind bending indoctrination can be seen when Dr. Parker appeals to Mr. Karran to believe in the virtue of the Christian God: "We are all conceived and born in sin and must seek the mercy of the Lord in whose forgiveness lays our salvation" (178). But Mr. Karran represents one of many Indians who did not require a "following" or "group" to demonstrate his religious faith. He resists: "Maybe you conceive an born in sin – not me. Me conceive an born in love. Dr. Parka, not sin. Love”(179). His description of himself as the humble servant of Jesus irked Karran and he even retorted to his description all men are sinners. A servant is servant, according to Karran and he even asked the necessity of Jesus having a servant. Papa started talking about indenture and how cruelly they were treated. He was ashamed that his grandfather and others were coolies- bang coolies. He also told that he doesn’t want a God who was there to punish people for their sins but rather he liked God who would love everybody. So a heated discussion ensued and they realized they were on parallel lines that could never meet. Pa put up a good resistance and even Parker ailed in turning him a loyal and obedient servant of the white invoking religion. Mother was really angry and expressed her derision telling that how could a man who always with the cows understand the holy and sacramental. Pa is symbolic of the resistance of the Indo Caribbean who tried to hold on to
their faith and traditions even after the widespread reach of the supremacist ideology in the name of religion and other institutions. Pa is a foil to the character of the mother who is more loyal to the colonial and western modes and even the son who has been moulded like that even in the beginning itself.

“I looked at Pa, eating the apple and watching Reverend Dr.Parker receding alone beneath the trees...and I resented Pa, standing there so calmly in his backward coolie dhoti and kurta”(186). The story reminds us of the conversion of Indians into Christianity in the Caribbean.

Janet Alamelu Naidu in the review of the collection observes:

Itwaru's fiction is born out of a necessity and yearning to reveal the many facets of Guyana's Indian experience, spanning colonial influence and indoctrination as traced in religion, culture, race, color and class. No other Caribbean writer has dared to employ such striking technique and craftsmanship in his use of language. While his expressions scrutinize motives, reveal interactions that appear innocent, they boldly get down to the truth about the survival and transformation of the experiences of Indians inside and outside Guyana. (web.N.pag.)

The stories build upon the interplay of imagery and dramatic expressions to make a very powerful collection of writing. All demonstrate characterization and themes of resistance, survival and transformation of Indians in Guyana and the diaspora. All the stories discussed, more or less, show elements of resistance against colonialism, racism both internal and external and all kinds
of discrimination and subjugation. It is noteworthy though such articulation of
the worries of people does not have immediate impact but it will definitely
sow the seeds of change in the mindset of the human beings.

4.3.1. “bleeding heave of strangled silence” - Itwaru's poetry

Itwaru has published three collections of poems: *Shattered songs*(1982), *Entombed Survivals*(1987) and *Body Rites*(1991). Some of his poems, set in Guyana, deal with issues regarding his native country and some others deal with immigrant's sense of loneliness. Whereas most of his fictional works discuss issues concerning colonial Guyana and make a severe indictment of colonialism, most of his poems convey a sense of inertia, malaise and impotence that is more really associated with contemporary life rather than with pre-independent Guyana. His poetry sometimes becomes poetry of anguish as some of the poems abound in metaphors of violence and pain. Obviously, his poetry is different from that of his fiction and critical writings in style and content as the poems are not all explicit but seem to be indirect and oblique. This is actually a rare deviation as far Itwaru is concerned because all the time he is focused in his mission as a writer.

4.3.2. Crisis of Identity and Angst

The opening poem in *Body Rites* “Where do you go” is about invisibility and a crisis of identity. The narrator is in dilemma as to define
what is going around him. The second poem “Your face” seemingly operates through paradoxes as it is about disparities. The speaker is not able to provide what her face demands. Though the ladylove says that the speaker has abandoned her, it is not so as both of them are standing at the doorway. “we are standing at the doorway/and I do not want to leave/ yet each time I do/ I leave hiding my face lest you may asleep”(2). The incommunicability between them is expressed in the language of the poem also. The poem presents an intensely emotional experience in an abstract fashion.

“and I have come” is also typical of Itwaru’s poetry of inclusion and it deals with the peculiar predicament of the narrator who has been caught in the horns of dilemma. The first section presents a narrator who says” and I have come/ and now I must go/and the apple tree will bloom/and the door, the door I now face/ will open to the warmth of the roses/in whose dream of summer we leave”(3). Though leaving is essential, he does not want to go. A slew of paradoxes follow and the poem ends in an open manner without leaving any conclusion.

4.3.3. Anguish of uprooting

There are poems where Itwaru takes up the social issues but the treatment there also is not direct. Exile has been a painful affair, whether it is self- imposed or not but the pangs of uprooting is visible in Itwaru’s poetry. “Visit” is a poem, which mostly dwells on concrete experience and the
narration in the poem appears to be more direct than some other poems. It presents the twin world in the life of an immigrant – the home and the adopted land. Obviously, they are different. After reaching the Promised Land, the former world appears to be very hot, “under then blazing sky/ I do not remember so fiercely hot…” (60). The narrator is reminded of the explorations there in the sugarcane fields and the jamoons, semitoos, red pepper and so on. The poem smells of burnt sugar cane and the speaker is sympathetic to “these people, my people/ are still work/ their cutlasses still flashing in desperate need/ in the toiling fields of merciless sun” (60). Succinctly and tersely, the speaker tells us of the miseries, turmoil and toil “in this fertile land of waters? This land and earth of my birth”. What is at stake is he cannot go back to that place as it was steeped in corruption, riot and all sorts of quarrels nor he could not find any happiness in the new land. Therefore, his is a peculiar predicament, which is common to almost all immigrants from the non-white world. Anguish is writ large there, both physical and other psychic. How they are driven away from their own stained homes to “the places of enchantment and denial / desire and the immolation of desire / ensouled in me....” The poem is at once lyrical and political in the sense that there is veiled critique of the establishment here. It becomes a poem of protest and paradox.

“fresh water pain” is a poem which has obvious references to Guyanese history and the coming of Indians there. Indenture was a practice introduced just after the abolition of slavery and it was virtually semi-
slavery. Poor and needy people from India were brought to the Caribbean as labourers in sugar plantations. The speaker says: “fresh water pain/whose illusion i am / an indentured present i want and do not want/ and have become/ and have not…” Harshness of their suffering is stated in the expression, “dark voice in the labourings of the morning’s fall into night”. Then the speaker goes on to tell about the anguish of uprooting.

Uprooted, we have survived the piercing morning
We have survived death in the back dams and hovels of hope
We have survived we who know the snake’s fangs
The tides’ and seasons’ treachery
The boot the fist the spit of the British empire. (22-23)

The kind of harassment inflicted by the colonizers on the indentured labourers and other Indians is tersely expressed in the word, “the boot the fist the spit of the British empire”. The poet is ironic when he says, “our men are proud/ they bear handsomely them garments of their imprisonment/ our women awaken desire / cosmetized and clothed in the imaginings/ of their exploiter” (22). Protest is not kept alive and how the colonized fall to the machinations of the empire is sardonically portrayed here. Poet is all the more specific when he says that, “we have survived the breakage of speech / language which formulates us / in its curse.” People are reduced to “a parade of painted faces”. Itwaru laments the lack of protest and resistance from the part of the colonized.
“Watcher” deals with the life of an old man with its bare necessities. “I watched him wrestle with the soil/ reaping illusive yesterdays”. There is a strange collocation of the abstract and concrete here. His anguish and the struggle for existence are expressed in a few words: “an old man dim in the threatening wind / he collects his wash stores himself / and disappears” (6).

“Looking at our bodies” belongs to “body” poems in this collection. Here the speaker “I” gives expression to the uninhibited relation between the lovers. How a world of inhibition gives way to a world of transparency is described. We are reminded of Eliot’s poem, "Gerontion","After such knowledge, what forgiveness”. How carnal union itself becomes a spiritual experience and how on certain occasions everything gets degenerated are suggested.

4.3.4. Perils of war

“here and there” is a poem which has a different tone and tenor. It talks about the horrors due to the man made war and other problems. The poem begins: “here clocks explode, faces shatter/ eternal ash / burned out bodies/ word to ash/ burned out voices/ act to ash… (9). The speaker even calls God a liar and he is highly critical of the “leaders’ pustulent tongues”, as they do not make any meaningful intervention in getting these manmade quarrels averted. We see a poet seething with anger against the devastating effects of war, which is often the handiwork of the imperial and neocolonial
forces. The poet blasts the so called civilized who plan the war and sit at home and make money out of it.

“this mirror” is a highly personal poem where the speaker complains that the mirror has forgotten him. It presents the peculiar position of a man who suffers from angst of a different order due to spiritual sterility. Expressions like “museums of my unforgetting” make this poem an experimental one. “you shatter my river’s mirror” is another poem which emphasizes the personal realm. It abounds in expressions that blend the concrete and abstract. “you shatter my river’s mirror/ and my shore is now a lie/ current eddies. The poet explores a deeper kind of relationship and at the same time he talks about the failure in such a relationship also. “i ask you of nothing/ i give nothing/ I do not know what has happened to the stillness/which one grew here …” (11).

“changing return” looks like anti-poetry as he doesn’t follow the conventional modes of poetic composition. The narrator is asking somebody “to look into my mirages my songs my prayers my babbles / look into my defences my obsessions”… (57). What haunt the narrator are the angst and the agony which is expressed in the form of several doubts. He is in a confused position and needs some guidance in order to understand his own limitations. He is typical of the modern man who has lost all sense of direction.
4.3.5. Survival and agony

“entombed survivals” (33-54) is a long poem in nine movements. But at the same time each movement can be taken a poem in itself. There is only thematic unity between the sections. Elemental indictment of hypocrisy, sense of alienation, the problem of here and there, confused sense of direction are some of the concerns in the poem. As the title indicates, survival is the key issue in the poem—symbolic as well as literal. Movement one begins with a description of time reminiscent of the Bible which says that there is time for everything. But here things are different because the protagonist is doubtful whether it is time or not. Lack of understanding and realization haunt the speaker and he is unaware of many things around him. “I know and do not know him / I know and do not her/ I know the contours of each wound / the marrow of each gash and burn I seek to heal / the ceremonies of a torture a thousand thousand empires have formed”. The poem operates through paradoxes and irony as it deals with a complex kind of situation.

Movement two also continues the same kind of argument where the speaker talks about “trees that will soon be bare” and “tangled clouds against my windowed dream” (36). He goes on to describe “sunken dreams in sunken caverns” (36). Even surreal images are used and everything about the poem is uncertain: “the faces in the street are fading / the bodies in the
footpaths are vague / all the laneways have grown strange” (37). In the third movement he profusely makes use of unusual phrases which the makes the poem look experimental. “my door brings the din of rented promises I vow not to heed / I know their tenor their pitch their assaults/ they offer me the embrace of sameness…” (38). How words fail to communicate and how relationships get thwarted are suggested. Largely, throughout the poem, images of darkness and failure preponderate. Questions like, “will the dawn repeat itself/ bruised and sad / we who linger on the borders of hope” (39) abound in the poem. Expressions like “fetid dream in fetid sheets” (40) are suggestive of the general mood of the poem. Human relationships described also appear to be debased and decayed. What is expressed throughout the poem is lack of depth in relationships and mechanization of human life and so on. The speaker says, “I am mad all over again/ rivers I thought always run towards forgetting / the schools and temples of confusion” (42-43).

Though the poem mostly relies upon the personal realm, it becomes public and political also on certain occasions. There are references to the dropping of bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the poet’s anti-war, anti-racist and anti-imperialistic stance finds place in the poem occasionally. Even as the movement progresses there is no sign of recuperation of from the mentioned problems: “it is the time / the solstice of prayer and destruction / hope sealed in every dreamed of sea…” (52). Movement nine begins with the line, “no one returns…” and it is repeated several times indicating the lost
hopes and vanished glory. The poem ends, “I hurry past elusive ports and ruins/ places I know and think I know/ where searching abates in the sudden clamour abates in the sudden clamour/ of the evening hell...” (54).

“matin mornings’(55) relates a Caribbean experience. The very first line “matin mornings in cow pasture days” takes us back to the islands. References to the religious conversion that occurred in the Caribbean among Indians are also there. In a world, which is marked “calypsos, rum and Saturday night brawls”; religion in its real sense holds no sway. The speaker attempts at presenting the hollowness of faith among the modern people.

The poem “house” has also got symbolic significance. It may be interior, external, or the strange world of imagination. “unwilled this door swings/ in sleep’s invisible shadow / where the unstuck sound / unwelcome caller forces awake/ my sleeping form” (58). Attempts to explore the intricacies of existence make this poem significant. Everything appears hazy here also and the speaker’s identity is not clearly formed.

The poems included in Shattered Songs also express similar feelings of survival and the consequent agony. All the poems are untitled and in a small poem consisting of only two lines, Itwaru expresses the general mood of the collection. “each time i run i’m caught each time i run/ somewhere to somewhere”. Typical situation confronting the persona is that of entrapment, reversal and discontinuity which provoke reactions of distrust, frustration and
despair. What we see in these poems is the never ending death-in-life struggle of the persona for survival or personal identity. There are occasions when the speaker calls himself “cancer” and the images employed are suggestive of violence and destructiveness. There is a reversal of conventional morality of the hypocritical world as he dares use expressions like “cunts on a spit” and “Pickled cocks” (21). We notice an indictment of post industrial alienation throughout the length and breadth of some of the poems.

4.3.6. Rites of Being

“body rites”(65-82) is divided into thirteen chants. But each poem is separate and what unites all is the thematic perspective. From the title itself, we understand that it a celebration of body both physically and spiritually. Body is described in the first chant as something sacramental and honorific. Here, art or self expression is defined as “this bleeding heave of strangled silence” (65). The speaker tells his counterpart, “I anoint you in my gaze /you in whose eye lives the eternal moment / I anoint you? Enchanted Clay” (65). Metaphor from religious ceremony is used to make this ritual a spiritual one. Similar expressions abound in chant two also. It is also about relationships, which culminate in a festival of bodies. Creative process is again referred to as “forging speech within without word” (67).
Chant three also continues in the same line where the speaker tells us about “the anguished cry/ the silent beating distance/ and closeness …” (68). From the purely abstract and abstruse there is a shift to the concrete and direct in the fourth section. The speaker surrenders everything to his lover. “i offer you my breath at your feet/ portions from the burning face/ of ancient sun….breathe in me/ your body my body our body my body/ breathe in me / breathe in me(70). Chant five opens with a paradoxical statement, “in this festival of darkening light / i have made many fires…..” The incommunicability between the two is suggested now and then. “ i nestle in you/ a stranger you and i/ touch me/ feed me”(71).

Expressions like “precarious pathways in the loins” and “vertiginous ground of our embrace”(65) make the poem a synthesis of the profane as well as the spiritual. The speaker tells us about the loss and gain, “something gained something lost / in the departures of our meeting/ as we go from place to place / placing ourselves in our unfolding”(75). Though the poet refers to morning but it is not as fresh as we think because it is marred by unsleeping silence. Failed relationships and thwarted communications find expressions in the poem. “what can I say to you / in whose touch my living blooms/ even in this/ what can I say to you/ here where fearing my own smiling/ i fall awake in this unending light...”(77).

Though the prospect of life is not that bright, the speaker wants to
cling on to life which itself is a kind of bliss. “i want to live/ even as life 
betrays each act of life/ here in the foreverness of my doing / i want to live 
/help me as i  help you live” (78). In the ensuing chants of the poem, the 
speaker is hopeful of gathering light. “i gather light i gather  i must/ despite 
the spectral tongues’ fanged smiles”(79). Bigger questions are also asked 
about existence. “ bone of memory/ dreaming of timelessness / bone of the 
hills the mountains…” (80). The poem talks about a merger, “being in you 
being out of you/ you being in every wave”(82). Body’s ancient need is also 
hinted at. The poem is marked by its disconnectedness and the abstract 
nature.

Of course, these poems express a sense of displacement and 
dismemberment among the immigrants. They convey a peculiar sensibility 
which is communicable only to a cultivated minority. It becomes sometimes 
poetry of indirection also. In Body Rites he also attempts an elemental 
indictment of hypocrisy. A peculiar conduct, which moves from the 
anguished to the erotic in chanting celebration beyond the pain of 
endurance, is described. In brief, his poems are not emphatically explicit and 
they could be considered ‘interior or poetry of inclusion. Here he attempts to 
portray the predicament of “solitary” beings in a much more veiled and 
oblique mariner. It never becomes poetry of direct statements except on a 
few occasions where he exposes the follies and foibles of the official 
Canadian policies and the more rampant issue of internal racism in Canada.
Most of his poems included in *Body Rites* express anguish in a deeply philosophical and metaphysical vein. In some of the poems, there is a suggestion of even physical pain. The sufferings encountered by the countless number of underprivileged and the dispossessed haunt Itwaru every now and then and as a writer and human being he empathizes with them.

Itwaru, the daring innovator of language is at his best in this collection of poems. Issues like alienation, displacement and spiritual sterility, identity crisis and inertia at the subjective level characterize the volume. Use of lower case letters at the beginning of sentence, omission of comma and other punctuations marks are employed by the poet to make his poetry appear innovative and also to suit the subject matter. Appropriation and abrogation of language is made use of in order not to simply present a “distinct language”. Itwaru’s is a reaction against the idiom of western poetry as it is insufficient to body forth the immigrant’s experience of trauma, exile and consequent agony and he is particular that he should not blindly follow existing European modes and at the same time he is not becoming experimental for the sake of it. There is a large political intention also behind this revolt against hegemonic practices in the literary discourse. But, in brief it could be said that Itwaru’s poetry is not overtly political as his fiction was and at times he tried to even move away from the public in his poetry as it rests mostly upon the abstruse and metaphysical.
4.4. Itwaru as a Critic

Itwaru’s critical works are not purely literary criticism as most of them are about culture, politics and literature. His training as a sociologist made him look at culture and literature in a broader perspective and his *Critiques of Power*, published in 1989, is a study in sociology, literature, politics and psychology. In the Foreword he says he is attempting to look at power, language and society in a critical manner.

Power surrounds and engulfs us, and if it has its way, it will destroy us. It feeds on human blood and hope, fear, oppression, false promises and rationalizations of these formulated in the atrocity of dynasties and empires. (9)

He holds the Foucauldian thought that power is not simply a commodity which may be acquired or seized but rather it has the character of a network: its threads extend everywhere. Even knowledge is not that innocent as it looks because it has been profoundly connected with the operations of power. Critiques here are not ordered meditations but juxtapositions of moments of enquiry and he makes wide use of Philosophers, Sociologists and Critics to drive home his ideas. The ideas in the book are presented in a scholarly and esoteric manner. He has paid much attention to use a peculiar kind of technical language in this book as it is meant for intellectual audience.
4.4.2. Entrance as exit

But Itwaru has tried to move away from the rigidities of academic scholarship with the publication of his work *Closed Entrances*. *Closed Entrances*, published in 1994, has been widely acclaimed as the most popular work of cultural criticism from this author. It was written in collaboration with Natasha Ksonzek, his wife, who has been a regular contributor to his artistic endeavors as well. The book is about colonialism, imperialism and its insidious ways of interacting with its “subjects”.

The very title of the collection of essays is significant and ironic as it becomes largely an attack on Canadian multiculturalism as has been done by Himmanni Bannerjee in the *The Dark Side of the Nation*. Itwaru, most of the time dwells on the ironic and laconic nature of the nation and tries to expose the facade of multiculturalism. Itwaru is in the larger company of Fanon, Said, Ngugi and others when he exposes colonialism and attacks its imposing nature and contrived corridors. As Howard Mc Nughton rightly points out the impact of imperialism like this: “In education, in legislation, in books ranging the Bible to airline time tables, the textuality of the British Empire has written itself across the globe, to be interested by subjects” (qtd. in J.Begum: 43). It has been highly difficult to erase the colonial impact on the consciousness of its subjects. Globalization, which is another name for economic and cultural imperialism, has accentuated the
process of subjugation of the underprivileged.

As usual Itwaru begins his *Closed Entrances*, with an epigrammatic statement:

> Our world is full of entrances but these lead pathways ignoring and show as they do not lead us to pathways of freedom. We do not behave as we please when we enter, for example a court room, a church, a shrine, a museum or class room. (1)

We are often misled and the kind of direction the dominant classes provides us takes us to areas of darkness only. In the preface, Itwaru says that schools and colleges, “the established places of educational authority” teach us to be subservient to the system (2).

The first chapter is entitled “Literature as Cultural Imperialism in Canada, Glorious and free, You say....” It reminds us Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* where he talks how certain texts become the “bearers” of hegemonic and dominant discourse and how effectively they “erase” the identities of others. The essay at once becomes a discussion of cultural politics, the imperialization of vision. Itwaru's position is somewhat similar to that of Said whose main premise is that the institutional, political and economic operations of imperialism are nothing without the power of culture that maintains them.
The struggle for domination, as Foucault shows, can be both systematic and hidden. There is an increasing interaction between classes, nations, power centres and regions seeking to dominate and displace one another, but what make struggle more than a random tooth and claw battle is that a struggle of values involved. (*Orientalism* 36)

According to Itwaru what is happening is grave as the colonizers with their imperialization of vision also make us agree to “the approval of the atrocity of conquest” (6). As culture is rife with political interventions and invasions of hegemonic forces, literature is also not free from this as it is one of the integral parts of culture. He takes the case of Canadian Culture and literature itself and shows how they violate the codes of the official policies of multiculturalism which envisage equal opportunities to all in Canada.

4.4.2. Pathways of colonial domination

The second essay “Out of Fields of Sugar cane Blade” not only talks about Canadian situation but dwells upon the Guyanese situation also. His immediate concern here is to show how imperialism works in once colonized countries and how effectively the masters had laid the trap even after granting them political independence. Itwaru remembers the sacrifices made by their forefathers and even how their fathers strove hard to save their children from the ignoble lives in the sugar plantations but unfortunately they were not aware of the fact the schools where they
enrolled their children continued the same kind of domination, though in an ideological manner. In larger issues like education and culture they want them to appreciate Euro Ego - the dominant European code of thinking and looking at things which is largely based on obedience and silence. At the outset he describes the ruthless exploitation of indentured labourers by the British Colonizers. They did everything with nonchalance and “life in the fields is not life at all” and colonialism not only inflicted physical hardships but psychic cruelty also. The educational systems followed in erstwhile colonies were anglocentric and based on Euro Ego. Itwaru rightly says:

But, this Education never mentioned occupation, identified the occupiers as occupiers. Its educators did not talk of the rule of British Empire”- this foreign imperial force laying claim to the places of our living and our lives, even our thinking as an Occupation (12).

It always wanted the “subjects” to have “thankful servility” and they were always told they “were the children of the empire”.

Under Empire we were all equals. We are all equally infantilized” as they never expected questioning of and challenging. It ultimately becomes according to Itwaru “colonization of consciousness”. People in such places are trapped in the sense that, "existence then becomes a constant de-defining of yourself against the malignance of hateful configurations. (17)
They had been taught to obey and agree and not to question and challenge and ultimately they were forced to believe that they were inferiors and had to depend on the Europeans for everything. Apart from the economic exploitations the cultural forms were also denigrated and there was a legitimizing of colonization also.

Even the knowledge provided by the imperialists was not innocent as they had ulterior motives and it was profoundly connected with operations of power. How power works through knowledge was one of Itwaru’s concerns and he always argued for resisting such power politics through all means. But most of the times, colonized were not able to understand this problem that easily and they simply fell into their traps. Itwaru wanted to expose the trammels of power and knowledge. The ignominy of being the colonial subject makes them suffer from psychic affliction. What was supposed to be emancipating in nature rather ensnared them further.

4.4.3. Culture as imperialism

The third essay “Imitating the Gateposts of speech” continues the discussion of culture as imperialism and the peculiar ways in which the canonical literature operated to spread its tentacles on the psyche of the anguished. According to Itwaru “Literature was insidious and enchanting”. Colonialists taught the people things which were alien to them. Purity was said to be as “white” as snow and black was always associated with evil and
inferior and slavery etc., Black is a social construct. This literature and history according to Itwaru, were informed by Eurocentric philosophy and conceptions. To Hegel History meant the history of Europe and empire and he considered the Europeans as the harbingers of culture and civilization and his theories proved ample grounding for the spread of “epistemic” attack of colonialism. This literature and history never expected its people to think and react on their own and rather it asked them to be literate and to imitate and never to question and challenge.

Itwaru understands this kind of study and reading as another kind of kidnapping which results in the ensnarement of intellect."Against these protagonists of civilization, I do not exist; I am the anguished absence, a confusion of silence"(22).

The author elaborates this peculiar predicament further:

I was supposed to admire the insights of exemplars of empire, to draw instruction and lesson from the offerings of this literature. It did not matter that my word my experience, would never, could never correspond to any of these alien English Literary obsessions. I was supposed to dream them, nevertheless, to see to be persuaded to see in them virtues of truth and beauty and wisdom as the properties and qualities of white people, particularly British white people. (26)

The rest of the essay is a deconstructive and radical reading of William Shakespeare, the master dramatist and “powerful cultural token” who is the
major force behind the British Canonical Literature. Itwaru, here, tries to shatter thoughts of universalism and greatness of literary works which have an ideology behind them. He has been forced to expose the ideological masks that envelope them. Literature was used to “intensify the authority of occupier’s culture” (24). They have been making use of this as “the arrogant manifestation of English authoritarian practice on the guise of literary advocacy, literary knowledge” (24). These theories have been particularly appropriated to propagate the dominant discourse. What they have been taught and the culture presented to them seem to be alien and have nothing to do with their present day reality. For instance, Itwaru has been quoting the example of teaching “Daffodils” to Caribbean students and talking to them about eglantine.

Itwaru's attempt is in keeping with theories propounded by Alternative and Political Shakespeare theorists like Alan Sinfield, Jonathan Dollimore and others. They have tried to radically reread Shakespeare “the cultural icon” of the British Empire based on Cultural Materialism of Raymond Williams and others which has been a hither to unraveled area of Shakespeare studies. Shakespeare's ideological compatibility with the colonial masters might also have resulted in the wide spread popularity and his being an institution. Itwaru's radical rereading of *Hamlet: the prince of Denmark* is made in the light of cultural and political theories. The play is about "that noble and most sovereign state" (28) and always the superlatives
are used for the monarchy with imperial lineage. He argues, "Shakespeare’s plays are the festive-sites in which the play of Good and Evil take place within the embrasures of the 'imperium'" (30). The tone and tenor of the play also tries to justify the patriarchal reality in the ill-treatment of Ophelia. What he tries to do is to expose the idealism that masquerades the atrocities of imperium.

Time here not the action of particular human beings is depicted as the inflictor of whips and scorns and existence is seen as an act of bravery against this supposedly punishing 'Time'. In this way attention is conveniently deflected away from the real sources through which such punishment is enacted, in which princes and rules and the principalities of power hold gruesome significance. (33)

Hence these works becomes eloquent justification of oppression.

*The Merchant of Venice*, a romantic comedy, is another case in point. It becomes a racist play where Shylock has been subjected to cruelties, which he does not deserve at all. *The Tempest* is one of the last plays, which has also been reread and redefined by cultural materialists to the effect that it has been described as a play with “hidden agenda”. It is an ideologically charged text, which stands for the “approval of the atrocity of conquest”. In his “dramatic personae” (34). Shakespeare describes Caliban as “savage and deformed slave”. Wherever the colonizers went they made discoveries like this. Prospero, the man Providence, stands for the colonizers whose
mission, “white man’s burden”, is to civilize and reform Caliban. Freedom is also considered as the gift of the master to slave as a reward of his mending of errors. Itwaru concludes the essay by saying that when Canada annually celebrates Shakespeare as the great national poet whose plays embody universal truth, it also supports imperialism.

“Pathways that lead” is also an essay in the similar vein and it also begins with an aphoristic statement. “There are certain pathways that which can lead you into the abyss of your own disappearance even while you think you are doing the correct thing. They are many, these pathways, they are seductive (45).” Here also Itwaru talks about the institutionalization of reading by which people are asked to approach life and culture in the same manner everywhere that would result in homogenization of culture.

The title “Glorious and free-We stand on guard” is derived from Dabydeen’s poem “Lady Icarus” where he talks about the sad plight of an immigrant who commits suicide when she is deported for the fifth time. These words are ironically used in the sense that even if you die we stand on guard for thee. It first appeared in 1991 in “World Literature in English” and he describes his peculiar position of Inbetweenness' and existence on the margins.
I am an immigrant, the label which brands me a particular prisoner, an undesirable, a suspect, an alien, a brand which goes with me everywhere I go in this country, which I cannot remove even with having the full official status of Canadian citizenship. It is where the human being I am has been made into a negative stereotype, smeared invisible. Yet I am visible as a minority. I am a "visible minority. In the peculiarity of visibility I am unimportance, inauthenticity, a minority thing, a visible minority, conspicuous, disliked. (54)

Itwaru is here talking about his personal experience of racial discrimination. He has been interrogated several times by the police officers, as they might have doubted whether he is fit to be an intellectual.

He also turns his ire on the Eurocentric concept of art and literature. Only British and Europeans were considered writers of true worth and aesthetics and others are considered inferior or even lesser among the groups as they have not been baptized to the canon. Itwaru has reservations about “Empire Writes Back” theorists and the post-colonial theories as they somehow or other, try to legitimize the continuing extension of former empires. In Canada the expression “non-white” world is used to perpetuate the Great Divide.

The second section of the book “Echoes of Empire” consists of only one essay by the same name written by Natasha. She is arguing that every where forts, churches and museums are kept as echoes of empire and to
perpetuate the domination of the west. Natasha also shares the anti-imperialist and resistance agenda of Itwaru while exposing the very texture and structure of the ideological masks visible in various walks of culture and society. In the last essay Itwaru is developing the line of thought provided by Natasha Koscenzk and is arguing against “museumizing” history and culture to suit the needs of the imperialists. Thus, Itwaru's *Closed Entrances* is a critique of the hegemonic discourse. William Blake once wrote, “the foundation of empire is art and science. Remove them or degrade them and the empire is no more”. This statement becomes significant in the case of Itwaru's study of art and culture as means of establishing the ideological network of imperium. That even now the thought that Canada is a nation founded by British and French and supported by America is asserted by most of the mainstream writers and intellectuals. So Itwaru’s culture of resistance becomes more evident in the observations he makes in his *Closed Entrances*. Hence these essays make a scathing attack on cultural imperialism perpetrated by the colonizers and their successors like America and other countries. His critiquing of the cultural icons and the traditional notions of aesthetic appreciation makes him identify with intellectuals like Arun Mukherjee and others and formulate aesthetics of resistance.
4.4.4. Inventing the Nation

*The Invention of Canada* is another major work, which formed part of Itwaru's critical canon. Here what he explores are the problems and predicaments of immigrant writers who are caught in a peculiar vortex of indecisions. As a country of immigrants, Canadians are forced to accept their foreignness. As Jameela Begum points out: “The myths they construct, consequently become part of the ‘nationness' of Canada, for a nation is constructed through individuals who share basics in any society” (1998). Itwaru makes his position clear like this,

The invention of meaning is the continuing and the multiple reading of ever changing nature of the reality in which and of which we are. It is a reading and experiencing in which versions of ourselves in the world and moment of our living are simultaneously and constantly being invented, by ourselves and others. (9)

The book is a study of immigrant authors and their works and thereby he attempts to expound a theory of immigrant imaginary. Writers like Ethel Wilson, Henry Kreisal, Austin Clarke, Stephen Gill and Ved Devajee are studied critically and closely.

*The Invention of Canada* subtitled “Literary Text and the Immigrant Imaginary” discusses how immigrant writers settle themselves in an alien environment and dislocation and fragmentation work out to form an aesthetics
of the migrant. According to Itwaru, immigrant writers are “inadequately noted speakers” (10). Itwaru tries to dismantle the myth of the state working for the welfare of its subjects. He considers the policies as “the scabbard which conceals the blade of control” (10). He tries to find out the invention as limitation and also identity is construed in a valorizing manner which is often fallacious to the core. “It is where identity in countries like Canada is reduced to the measurements of years, income data and predictable expenditure in the political economy of growth as obsessive insatiable yet measured consumer mania”(10-11). Itwaru is doubtful of the very concept of nation and he is following, more or less, the same line of thinking of Benedict Anderson and others that nation as construct and imagined communities.

Itwaru is vocal in exposing the disparity that is often visible in the Canadian context. He says: “It is said that a person who adopts a country is simultaneously adopted by it. In Canada this is a mythology of rather high currency” (12). Immigrant confronts several problems in ascertaining what is home and non-home. Canada, being a country of immigrants, is forced to accept its multicultural fabric and thereby foreignness also. The myths that Canadians construct consequently become part the”nationness of Canada” as a nation is constructed through individuals who share basic concerns in any society. To Arnold Harrichand Itwaru,
The invention of meaning is the continuing and multiple reading of the ever changing nature of the reality in which, and of which we are. It is a reading and experiencing in which versions of ourselves in the world and moment of our living are simultaneously and constantly being invented, by ourselves as well as others. (9)

Itwaru is well aware of the limitations when fixing the location of culture. 'It involves several things like “transposition of social memory”'. He is against the establishment and its ideology.

What is attempted here is to read a number of immigrant writers, with diverse cultural baggages, from the perspective of a theoretician who sees reality as a flux. Itwaru, being a writer caught in a struggle to create meaning of a self that is related to different societal spaces, raises many pertinent issues concerned with nationhood. Identities, here, are shaped and reshaped as the changing self-struggles for recognition in the very process of becoming. Itwaru says that, “there is a becoming here, a willed as well as an unwilled transformation, a movement towards a possible consciousness which will emerge within the contexts of continuing redefinitions in a milieu of changing meanings, the fusions and confusions, in Raymond Williams’ phrase, of an unfamiliar and evolving culture”(13). The consciousness of the writer here invents “meaning” to come to terms with the ambiguities, anxieties and disorientations. Itwaru is of the view that in this attempt to create meaning of
Canada, the immigrant himself is being invented and reinvented at various junctures.

Multiculturalism as a policy practiced in Canada has limitations, according to Itwaru. Itwaru highlights its shortfalls: “It implies, like the mosaic concept, “a social situation in which members of different ethnic communities are able to retain their ethnic identity, and yet participate to the full in national life” (16). The metaphor indeed fails to represent reality as no “ethnic group existing under the domination of a macrological power different from itself maintain its traditional uniqueness for very long” (16). What is dominant, here, is Anglophone sensibility and so he argues that the retaining of ethnic identity and full participation in national life are contradictory concepts.

When one refers to the institutional tenets of the mainstream culture, one’s participation in national life appears incomplete. The maintenance of ethnic identity is the maintenance of that group’s cultural distinctiveness. Cultural integrity as way of life emanating from an entire history permeates the consciousness of its very members. In this connection Itwaru’s argument that, “the claim, that a group can retain its ethnic identity and still participate to the full in national life is a spurious one” (16) attains significance. He further points out: “Ethnic identity cannot exist in severance from the ways of thinking concomitant with its members’ history, their social memory, their
fundamental historical consciousness. What is appropriate to Canadian situation is cultural pluralism which refers to the presence of many cultural groups and this seems to have captured the imagination of Canadian people. The irony is that many glorious ideas are in paper only and their existence is only chimerical.

Itwaru, now, moves onto the larger issue of “the search for Canada” and in effect it becomes an exploration of the contrasts between the real and unreal there. He elaborates:

The search for Canada is the search for that which constitutes an arrival at some dimension of social meaning within the contours of the geographically tangible land-space named Canada…. Canada, out there, that landmass, this terrain, is also here, in us, uncreated, evolving. It is our invention which invents us. (19)

It is elusive and is inaccessible to a certain extent. He opines that Canadian multicultural state is an invention of the obscene proportions (20).

Northrop Frye tried to unravel the pastoral myths and dwelt on the romantic and ideal there. But his attempt is to discover the kind of reality there existed after the colonization and settlement of European powers. The “intricate pattern”, to use a phrase from Vincent Massey, is indicative of the chinks in that society. Itwaru concludes:
What remains clear is that there is no conception of Canada as a coherent society with an identifiable vision of a social ideal. Imaginary nationalism wrought through a collective instantly foisted by the teaching of imaginary histories in a nation of amnesia victims – the colonized unaware of their colonization – these are charges one dismisses at some risk, irrespective of the extent to which they may be deemed extreme. (23)

Canada remains a close affiliate of USA with Anglo French tradition and sensibility. Even now, Queen of England is the head of the State there.

Itwaru even interrogates Atwood’s formulation that Canadian writing thrives on the symbols of survival. He says that it is nothing peculiar to this alone as literature addresses this problem most often and there is no singularity in this claim. Atwood’s understanding of the Canadian society is partial as it doesn’t bother to look at the real problems of the natives and the immigrants from the so called developing world. What is done here is a kind of dismantling and deconstructing of the prevalent myths.

Itwaru also discusses the issue of identity in a radical manner. He differs with Atwood’s formulation that for “immigrant, there is no new Canadian identity ready for him to step into: he is confronted by a nebulosity, a blank: no readymade ideology is provided for” (qtd. in Itwaru: 26). He is well aware of the view that ” our identity is not something, which one steps into, like a pair of shoes” (26). To an immigrant, “there is an identity, which, in the form of a label, is pregiven the immigrant in the name “immigrant”.
There are several identities which await this immigrant, which will configure this person’s sojourn here.” (26)

Itwaru then undertakes a critical reading of the select novels written by immigrants from different countries and this leads him to the assumption that:

Canada is merely a synecdoche, that its existence lies in the way individuals and groups experience social life within the landscape named Canada, that it is a quality of experience out of which meanings are invented for conscious navigation in the task of living. (26)

The novels selected are literary and not popular fiction. He takes a broad historical sweep when he begins his analysis with Ethel Wilson’s Hetty Dorval in 1947 to Reshard Gool’s Nemesis Casket in 1979- a period of three decades. Immigration was at its peak during this period and over four and half million immigrants entered Canada.

Select novels of ten writers—Ethel Wilson (South African), Henry Kriesel (Austrian), John Marlyn (Hungarian), Stephen Vizinczey (Hungarian), Brian Moore (Irish), Austin Clarke (Barbados), Gabriel Szohner (Hungarian), Stephen Gill (Indian), Ved Devajee (Caribbean) and Jan Drabek (Czechoslovakian)-are analyzed and thereby he maps a geographical territory that swings between the British Columbia landscape of Ethel Wilson to Winnipeg, Montreal, Toronto and Saskatoon. In Ethel Wilson’s novels Canada is an indefinable, unintelligible, overwhelming and constricting
presence. His readings of her three novels emphasize his position that writer’s consciousness invents a Canada that is in keeping with his need to retain and review social patterns, values, and issues that are part of his upbringing. Stephen Gill, an Indo Canadian, describes the travails of Indians in Canada and Ved Davajee, a Caribbean immigrant, talks about the plight of the people on margins. Being non-whites, their attempt, is to make the voice of the voiceless heard.

*Immigrant*, a novel by Stephen Gill, presents anonymity and rejection man immigrant undergoes which culminates in the loss of self. Raghu, the protagonist, an immigrant from New Delhi, comes to a Canadian university, graduates with a Master of Arts Degree, but is denied a job, despite his efforts. He is left with no other option but to become a swindler. Rejection occurs in many ways as he is not seen a person but a type. Gill cites a number of examples in Raghu’s experience, which depicts a Canada seen as a constant rejecter of Indians.

Itwaru’s readings substantiate that there is a wide gap between the real and the unreal, the ideal and the practical with regard to immigrants. Both Stephen Gill and Austin Clarke have shown that racism is part of the hegemonic machinery that degrades and excludes people on the wrong race. Those rejected live on margins and their very presence is disconcerting to the so-called “masters”. According to Itwaru, Canada which was envisaged as
composite of opportunities is seen here as the mirror of deception – the other. What Itwaru argues is that the mapping of Canada as an exotic land of freedom and opportunities by Anglophone literature is remapped and reinvented in the consciousness of immigrants. Itwaru dismantles and deconstructs the myths prevalent about mainstream Canadian literature showing the blind spots of the glorious and free Canada in the works of immigrant writers. Therefore, in a way, he exposes what lies behind the sheen and shine of Canadian culture and policies and his critique at once becomes scathing and revelatory. Identity is major concern in Itwaru’s writings also and his stand is also not to valorize the essential identitarian stance as he exposes and redefines the very concept of the structure of the society.

Itwaru’s becomes an oppositional discourse. He believes that literary and cultural theory has been indissociably bound up with political beliefs and ideological values. Terry Eagleton talks at length about the relationship between theory and ideology:

For anybody of theory concerned with human meaning, value, language, feeling and experience will inevitably engage with broader, deeper beliefs about the nature of human individuals and societies, problems of power and sexuality, interpretations of past history, versions of the presents and hopes for future. (195)
Itwaru tried his hand at creative, cultural and critical writings. Whether it is short story, novel, literary criticism, and cultural criticism, Itwaru is always in league with the marginalized and the suppressed. To him, writing is a political act and an extension of activism. Though he has been living in the age of globalization and postmodernism where boundaries get blurred and the meanings get postponed, Itwaru never digresses from his base. His identity as a Caribbean immigrant in Canada, whose roots could be traced to India, made him explore ruthlessness of colonialists for long years both in Guyana and India. His anti-establishmentarianism and affiliation to left wing political ideology and anti colonial stance make him a rebel in Canadian academic, literary and cultural scene. Itwaru’s critical practice is very much in accordance with the cultural materialist position of Raymond Williams and others for he tries to radically expose the politics of the text as well as culture. Itwaru’s study of mass media and techno capitalism, *Mass Media and Mass Deception*, ends with a declaration that, “the critique must continue. It is now and always your turn” and it is illustrative the very philosophy and politics of resistance that he wants to embody in his writings and activities.