Introduction

The essentially performative character of naming is the precondition for all hegemony and politics.

- Laclau xiv

Throughout the history of mankind, identity has been one of the most pertinent issues of debate and deliberation. Starting with the colonial encounter up until the culture of global capitalism, identity has been constructed multifariously so that it has come to occupy a significant place in academic and social circles. But unlike other issues which are primarily academic, this debate takes centre stage not only in theoretical terms but also in performance.

The construction of identities in post colonial terms refers to the creation of systems of identification. This construction is undertaken at two levels: by the colonizer in the form of myths about the subject races and a simultaneous belief in the notion that the subject cannot represent him/herself; and subsequently, by the colonized in an attempt to resist colonization and establish a sense of solidarity against the rulers. Likewise in the global context, the third world becomes a market place where identities are framed by the laws of consumerist dynamics. Identities are again constructed here on two levels: by multinational economics, in the form of globally hybridized, homogenously differentiated communities; and, in counterpoint, by the myths of unique national cultures.

The current study is an attempt to examine the politics of representation of identities in post colonial theory by focusing on selected works of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. An interrogation of the theories of identification in these areas would obviously challenge the existing methods of ascertaining third-world identities on the grounds of
objectivity and universality which they ostensibly claim to have achieved. But the intention here is not to give any substitute formulae for identity determination, for the fear of closing the process which finds its definition in a continuum. What is intended here is an exercise in deconstructionist criticism of the theories regarding third-world identity.

Critically analyzing Said’s system of binary oppositions, which necessitates the fabrication of an ‘other’ to define the ‘self’, and Homi Bhabha’s concept of postcolonial ambivalence, which forms the basis for a hybrid identity, the discourses of identity can be analyzed and their authenticity and applicability in post colonial contexts can be questioned. Taking a cue from postmodernist philosophy, this research focuses on the demystification of those theories which privilege certain kinds of identity constructs. This work is designed to revisit the definitions about third-world identity and interrogate the premise upon which they have been modelled. The argument is grounded in the belief that identity formation is an endless process and that any theory that creates constructs about the experience of third-world identity is an unreal stagnation of that process. Identity can be defined only in a state of flux and continuity. Through this research the theories of Said and Bhabha shall be critically analyzed and it will be demonstrated how third-world identity has been stagnated in time and space and isolated from real experience. But before conducting an analysis such as this, it is of utmost significance to elaborate how the key terms in this context are perceived and intended and how they are theoretically and practically related with each other.

Identity is the term used to denote who or what we are collectively as well as individually. The concept of identity serves the dual purpose of establishing affiliation and belongingness on the one hand and distinction and uniqueness on the other. The politics of identity lies between the construction and reception of identity in these two aspects. Where the collective idea of identity is a macroscopic grouping together of people in a category based on one or more common factors such as origin, nationality, time, place, education, economic status, ideology, gender, class, caste, religion, sexual preference, and the purposeful ignoring of other differences, the iteration of individuality through identity entails a microscopic underlining of these (and/or other) differences.
Identity as category creates a sense of homogeneity and sameness, while as an individuating factor it rests upon the assertion of heterogeneity and difference. Barring exceptions, the homogenizing aspects of identity create discourses about communities and people belonging to them, while the aspects that demonstrate heterogeneity dismantle these and are often regarded as postmodern reactions or counter-narratives.

The politics of identity is designed through the conflict that erupts between identity established on sameness and that on difference. The discursive construction of identity gives preference to those narratives of identity fixation that are based on homogeneity, timelessness and popular belief. A perception of discursive identity is created out of traditional and inherited definitions and is often depictive of a sense of doubtless permanency and lack of transmutability. It is such definitions of identity that support the global discourses about Americans and progress, Islam and terrorism, women and oppression, third-world cultures and backwardness, and so on. It must be noted however that identity in terms of discourse theory is not ‘essentialist’ without purpose and is more ‘strategic and positional’ (Hall, Introduction 3). To counter such universalizing discourses and their politics, the counter-narrative of individuality is developed and often the two stands on collectivity and individuality are situated differently vis-à-vis temporality. While theories of collective identity tend towards past traditions, collective experience of generations and historical cultural values, blurring the differences of lived experience and a strategic will to maintain certain definitions, individual identity is sceptical of inherited ideologies. It is rather contemporary in its constitution and mutates with time.

The desire to identify one’s ‘self’ is one of the most primitive impulses of human beings. Identity refers to the establishment of affiliation as well as individuality. It is an effort to assert a sense of belongingness with a group and establish a singular recognition for the ‘self’ in counterpoint.

Identity of things, people, places, groups, nations and cultures is constituted by the logics of both sameness and difference. (Curie 3)
Similarly Weeks observes:

Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. (88)

Identity is never undifferentiated. It is always fragmentary. The uniqueness of identity then lies in a unique conflict and negotiation of differences and fragments each time.

Identities are not neutral. Behind the quest for identity are different and often conflicting values. By saying who we are, we are also striving to express what we are, what we believe and what we desire. The problem is that these beliefs, needs and desires are often patently in conflict, not only between different communities but within individuals themselves. (Weeks 89)

Identity is then a ‘patchwork [that] lives no less from its seams and ruptures than from individual patches of social affiliation of which it is made up’ (Meyer 16). Identity is not only an attempt to negotiate conflicts without, but also to negotiate the conflicts that exist and erupt within. Further identity includes not only what one projects the ‘self’ as, but also what the ‘other’ perceives this ‘self’ to be. It is an ‘open process of negotiation between the self-image that the individual conjures up of himself and the image that his partners in social interaction form of him in changing contexts’ (Meyer 15).

But this idea of fragmentation shouldn’t be led to a total denigration of any sort of collectivism. A collective identity denotes ‘those feelings and values in respect of a sense of continuity, shared memories and a sense of common destiny of a given unit of population which has had common experiences and cultural attributes’ (Smith 179). Whereas such ideas of common identity are often thought of as unrealistic and discursive in nature and abandoned in the theoretical process of debunking meta-narratives, such collective identities are of utmost significance for communities that have faced ‘brutal ruptures’ in the form of colonial encounters, and their resistance movements (Shohat 175). This is to suggest that collective or fragmentary, identity in all discursive and counter-discursive forms underlines a politics of representation.
The attempt towards identification comes as a natural instinct and is informed with the desire to fight isolation and alienation. It is an effort to fit in the matrix of human relations and exercise one’s power from that location. The attempt towards establishing identity is an attempt to assert power. Identity provides a voice that allows one (at the level of a community or an individual) to emphasize a stand point or a discourse. It is through identity that the politics of power can be executed or countered.

An ethics of the name allows for the possibility of politics. The questioning of the singularity of the name enables us to rethink and displace its discursive grip, thus opening the way for other names, other political possibilities. (Li 8)

The history of the world is the story of representations and discourses based chiefly on the attempt towards attaining and executing power. The politics of identity and representation is informed by three distinct modes; the Gramscian instinct of ‘know[ing] thyself’ (Forgacs 326); the inherent narcissistic impulse to superiority; and the Nietzschean ‘will to power’ (Nietzsche, Will to Power). The history of imperialism (colonial or economic), is driven by the reins of discursive practice and hegemonic control. Be it the imputed Darwinism of ‘survival of the fittest’ (Spencer 444), the so-called civilizing mission that forms the ‘white man’s burden’ (Kipling 280), or the current popular/mass culture of cosmopolitanism, representation is never a ‘non-power laden discourse’ (Kahn 7).

The broad understanding of identity refers to the location of one’s ‘self’ in order to describe who and what one is. But this act of locating one’s ‘self’ is not simple. It is underlined with an all-pervading sense of paradox and politics. The construction of a sense of identity involves the creation of systems of identification which are wrought with complex and often contradictory strains. To begin with, any idea of an identity includes both positive and negative aspects. Identity is an attempt of subscribing one’s ‘self’ to a framework of affiliated structures. This location is done in terms of origin-bound and received or inherited revelations and provides with a sense of positivity in terms of who/what we are. Along with the received perceptions, this form of establishing
a sense of sameness with allied constructs includes the lived experience of the ‘self’ within the surrounding environment. To use Derrida’s terminology, identity, at any moment, carries within itself the ‘traces’ of all experience and influence (‘Differance’ 12). All these aspects grant a sense of tangibility to the ‘self’ and constitute what can be called a positive conception of it.

Along with structures of affiliation, identity is also defined by aspects that are opposite or different from the perception of the ‘self’. These aspects are used to constitute an opposing or differing entity which is construed as the ‘other’. Identity is defined by not only what it is, but also by what it is not. This default mechanism of defining the ‘self’ by defining the ‘other’ in opposition or a state of difference is the negative definition of identity that tells what or who we are not.

Identity as defined by signifiers or names simultaneously reflects what it is and what it is not. Any attempt to identification is evocative of terms of affiliation and terms of difference or even opposition. As Derrida observes:

[When a name comes, it immediately says more than the name: the other of the name and quite simply the other whose irruption the name announces. (‘Khôra’ 89)]

The simultaneous reference in a name or an identity to what it is and what it is not is reflective of the presence in ‘every proper designation [of] its different and thus disruptive double’ (Li 6). This dichotomy of ‘self’ and ‘other’ forms a primary basis in the attempt to ascertain identity. It is this idea of dichotomy that Said’s theory of orientalism is founded upon.

Further it is this dichotomy that allows for the creation of counter-narratives. If identity as discourse is created by the process of screening out the ‘other’ that is already informed in its name, and politically manipulating the signifier to exercise power, then the counter-narrative or the counter-discourse can be orchestrated by exercise of articulation by the ‘other’ that has been hitherto silent.

The name is an expression of power that shapes and directs our perceptions and understandings, thus helping to constitute the reality we
know. But the name’s performativity, its power to classify and construct our reality is also its limitation, because its act of screening out or excluding other realities returns to challenge its putative singularity. (Li 7)

The dichotomy of identity informs both discursive and counter-discursive exercises. Not only is identity relevant in the construction of power, it is also enormously significant in the disruption of power.

But the conception of ‘self’ and ‘other’ changes temporally and spatially and this makes identity a constantly transforming concept. Identity is conceptualized as a referent for an ‘enlightenment subject’, that highlights the evolutionary and reactionary individualism of every subject, a ‘sociological subject’, that necessitates social interaction and influence, and a ‘postmodern subject’ with multiple and overlapping or conflicting affiliations and a plurality of being (Hall, Held and McGrew, Modernity 275-77). This conceptual framework renders identity and its foundational premise of defining ‘self’ by defining the ‘other’ and vice-versa, as a transforming and mutating concept. Identity is not a ‘possession but a social process’ (Meyer 15). In such a case, identification (as a process) rather than identity (as a final definition), is more suited to the current context. With reference to this mutability and essential dynamism, identification as a process informs the politics of identity and its representation.

At this point one must note that identity and representation are not reflective of the same process. Identity defines what one is. Elusive as the concept may seem, it is inclusive of the originary influences, the shared or individual experiences, the evolution at the level of the community at large and/or the individual and those ‘traces and left overs’ that are constantly differing and deferring (Sethi 141). Identity then, is only a suggestion of paradoxical aspects: simultaneously static and changing, referring to individual and social, pointing out sameness and difference. This suggests that identity is a state of being which is beyond the scope of definition. This does not mean that it does not exist, but rather that it can be realized only in the absence of a final definition. This is to say that every act of representation can be politically orchestrated or be received as a misrepresentation, but that does not mean that there is no reality whatsoever. Any attempt to define or temporally and spatially locate identity is called representation which is
depictive of a politics of identity that functions through the semantic play of signification that representation allows.

The act of representation stands for the dual action of 're-presenting' or presenting again, and representing or politically standing for. The act of politically “speaking for” as well as that of ‘re-presentation as in art or philosophy’ includes a certain politics and arbitrariness and in both these aspects the act of representation becomes a function of power (Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ 28).

The politics of identity is a hermeneutic process that entails ‘the expropriation of meanings rather than materials’ (Rutherford, Identity 11) which suggests that the object being represented is used to signify strategic meanings within the political framework of identification and its allied discourses, the unity of the object withheld nevertheless.

The name would only be a ‘title’, and the title is not the thing which it names. (Derrida, ‘Aphorism’ 427-28)

This aspect of identity that it is defined by signifiers which only hint at the signified and do not represent them in totality allows for the play in signification that Derrida calls ‘differance’ (‘Differance’). The process of signification of representation defines the politics of power. This politics is a crucial factor then not in defining

“who we are” or “where we came from”, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. (Hall, Introduction 4)

Identity is not so much about revival of roots but more about ‘coming-to-terms-with our “routes”’ (Hall, Introduction 4). The process of representation guides the politics of identity and this act of representing by constructing methods of identification is founded upon the dictum of ‘will to power’ (Nietzsche, Will to Power). Meyer observes with reference to the politics of difference that ‘cultural self-awareness comes as a lever of political enmity in the pursuit of power’ (8). Representation and within its context, identification as sameness or difference, does not remain ‘an ontological act of reference
but a thoroughly political intervention’ (Li 8). Identity then acquires immense significance in the study of relations of power and control.

The colonial process has always been acknowledged as an important factor in shaping the identity of the colonized. The influence of colonialism on identity first became apparent in the form of the discourse created about the orient by the west. The essentialist orient created by the west not only supplied as a suitable justification for the colonial advance as a mission in philanthropy, it also served as a means of categorizing the subject races in absolute opposition to the western ‘self’. This entailed a process of identification by default for the west as well. The colonial process then becomes not just a political or economic pursuit for the west, but also a sort of self revelation and affirmation. The fact that the ‘self’ is pitted against an ‘other’ which is dominantly a western invention makes it a narcissistic venture.

In the study of third-world identity with reference to the discourse of polarity between the colonizer and the colonized and its application in the process of creating systems of identification that support the exercise of colonial expansion, Edward Said occupies a significant place. In his seminal work, Orientalism [1978], Said provides an elaborate analysis explaining how the creation and promotion of the discourse about an essentialist orient perpetuated the imperial exercise. The discourse mechanism supporting imperialism comprises of the process by which a stagnant and universal belief is created about an orient in keeping with the interests of the imperial powers. Orientalism, as a discourse, is the representation of the colonized as a homogenously regressive group, as opposed to the dynamic and progressive west.

The colonial perception of the world situates the west in a discursive space of progress and development. The perception that the west signifies advancement and is considered to be the trendsetter for the rest of the world to follow, carries on even in the current jargon of globalization which is seemingly suggestive of neutralization of hierarchy. In the dichotomy of west and the rest, the former occupies a space of development in temporal terms as well. At any given time, the west represents a sense of being ahead in time and the rest of the world is seen to be trudging along the standards set
by it and trying to catch up desperately. In this sense then, the imperial context places the west as the first world and the developing world as the third world.

The term ‘third-world’, though vastly criticized and almost rejected by academic circles for its political overtones, is used here for three specific reasons. First, in geographic and political terms, ‘third-world’ groups together all those countries which have been colonized or have faced colonial rule. The use of the term ‘third-world’ then is to clearly and plainly denote the communities that were included therein. Secondly, even in the current context, the neo-colonial activities and invasions conceive of the euphemistically termed developing world as the world that follows as an inferior entity to be controlled by the superior west. In this context then the term ‘third-world’ may be rejected for its semantic obsoleteness in the absence of a second world, but it is still quite alive in terms of grouping together subservient nations and communities with reference to American capitalism. The term ‘third-world’ in this sense, has come to symbolize a sense of marginality and minority. It is not only inclusive of imperial colonies but also developing nations in the era of globalization. The rejection of the term ‘third-world’ may be euphemistically liberating but in the current scenario too, the hierarchies, imperialisms and the self/other dichotomies exist and govern the politics of identity. The term ‘third-world’ then occupies a significant space in the context of identity politics as it is evocative of subservient and regressive communities. It brings memories of the myths of oriental inferiority and the colonial ‘mission civilisatrice’ (Said, Culture and Imperialism 33) to the continuing western claim to supremacy. Thirdly, and on a slightly different plane, in the multicultural context, the prefix ‘third-’ offers the occasion of being used to denote the literal ‘third space’ of subalternity (Grossberg 91) along with the historical significations of the term. In the context of colonization as well as globalization, the third world inhabits a metaphoric ‘third space’ of ambivalence and negotiation and the prefix ‘third-’ there acquires greater complexity of symbolizing the third entity: the ambivalent ‘self/other’ for the canonical ‘self’ and the canonical ‘other’.

Identity is constituted by various important factors and it is imperative to explain the important terms that surround its construction. In the context of identity in social and historical terms, the first important factor is nationality. The idea of belonging to a certain
nation with a history, marked political geography and a collective system of traditions and culture is exceedingly significant when determining the location of identity.

The nation-state, nationalism and national identity are not “naturally” occurring phenomena but contingent historical-cultural formations. . . . National identity is a form of imaginative identification with the symbols and discourses of the nation-state. (Barker 252)

Nation provides the ‘self’ as opposed to the ‘other’ which collectively embodies all that is excluded from the idea of that nation. It is the sum total of the imagination of its people, which makes it a celebratory vision of greatness and embarks upon it a sense of uniqueness and invincibility. With its symbols, a nation is developed from a bound geographical location to an organic whole, providing its people with a self appropriated and cleansed history and a belief in the authenticity and credibility of its narcissism. It is this fabrication of a nation that has been defined as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, Imagined Communities).

The imagination of a national identity that is at once unified and charismatic and manages to draw its citizens to a sense of common identity irrespective of differences constitutes the discourse of nationalism. As Hall, Held and McGrew suggest:

Instead of thinking of national cultures as unified, we should think of them as a discursive device which represents difference as unity or identity. They are cross-cut by deep internal divisions and differences and “unified” only through the exercise of different forms of cultural power. (297)

The common cultural and historical experience of the peoples of a nation is discursively employed by the means of ‘stories, literature, popular culture and media’ and together creates a shared imagination which manifests itself in the form of national identity (Barker 253).

Ordinarily it is presumed that the idea of a nation is just as old as the nation itself. But as McGuigan notes with regard to identity politics in America, the significance of defining the ‘self’ is not felt till there is an ‘other’ to mark difference from (81). Kobena Mercer also observes on similar lines:
Identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty. (43)

The idea of a nation is also created when it is seen as a part of the world, where there are other nations too. The idea of a nation, then, or nationalism as an individuating feature develops as a response to the ‘international process’ (Greenfeld 14; Robertson 30), the ‘other’. This marks the second important factor of defining identity: the ‘other’.

Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave outside. . . . (T)he ‘unities’ which identities proclaim are, in fact, constructed within the play of power and exclusion. (Hall, Introduction 5)

Similarly nationality develops not from within a nation but from outside. Identity is constantly driven by the impulse to mark sameness as well as difference. But the aspects of sameness and difference derive significance only when there is something to mark difference from and establish sameness against. In fact identity is constructed ‘through, not outside, difference’ (Hall, Introduction 4). Identity continues to be of central importance because of the never-ending eruption of difference that challenges the unconscious traditional beliefs and urges the discourse of identity to be renovated. National identity and culture are defined by categorizing the popular and common beliefs of people within a geopolitical space in response to extra-national influence or interaction. It must be noted that this response may not necessarily be adversarial in nature but it is nevertheless to establish a sense of individuating and common ‘self’ for those belonging to a nation-state: individuating as against other nations and their national identity, and common amongst the members of one nation.

The establishment of national identity is then an attempt to delineate a sense of a common ‘self’ that can sustain the challenges of that which is outside the national boundary, and maintain a sense of immortality and superiority against it. The ‘other’ that national identity is determined against is the extra-national and the international. It is ironic though that the extra-national and the international both include the national to
some extent or the other: the former in the sense of a default opposite, and the latter as a constitutive element. Whereas the creation of an extra-national identity is analogical with the creation of an ‘other’ to underline the ‘self’, the international identity is essentially an elusive term. The term international marks a sense of interaction and inclusion but does not specify the scope or extent of its coverage. The international no doubt alludes to various nationalities and their ‘imaginations’ (Anderson, Imagined Communities), but it does not denote which and how many nationalities are interacting, how much is included and in what capacity. The response to each constituent characteristic is also not stipulated here. This marks the play and variability of the concept of the international or the multicultural identity. Identity in a state of multiculturalism has no specific geopolitics to subscribe to and no outside to determine boundary against. In a twisted system of marking boundary, internationality marks its boundary against systems that privilege the purity of national or communal identity. The boundary here wards of not outside influences but rather the attempts towards blocking them.

But this aspect of multicultural affiliation or international identity must not be construed as a celebratory and all inclusive system of identification. Far from the euphoria of equality and perfect mélange, multicultural or international behavior also has its politics that privileges certain constituents more than the others. On an ideological plane, the memory and experience of the past and inherited culture makes a deep impression upon the subject claiming international affiliations.

All diasporic communities settled outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories, acknowledge that "the old country" – a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore – always has some claim on their loyalty and emotion. (Cohen ix)

However, in the current context of globalization through capitalist means, ‘international’ signifies a sense of being affiliated to various countries and privileges those constituents of identity that establish belongingness with the tastes of the popular/mass culture.
Like nationality, internationality also has its metaphors and its systems of identification. Those who perceive a sense of affiliation with internationality cast identity in terms of international symbolism, which manifests itself in a multilayered ‘selfhood’ and observes difference and at times opposition from the ‘otherness’ of nationality or a different kind of internationalism. The internationality of identity generally connotes a sense of multicultural existence and is metaphoric of multiple affiliations.

While moving from the metaphor of the national to the extra-national, or the international, identity undergoes a change of scope and constitution. With colonial advancement identity and culture come to a space of interaction. The hegemonic discourse of identifying the west as a superior ‘self’ and the rest as its default opposite and inferior ‘other’ lays the foundation of the politics of imperial rule. The development of this binary identity gives a strong and almost unbeatable impetus to the exercise of colonial advancement. In reaction (or resistance) to the colonial discourse of binary oppositions the homogenized identity of the colonized from the colonial discourse is used to develop a unified national identity. This unified identity is ironically depictive of a sort of ‘orientalism-in-reverse’ (Jalal al-’Azm 18) but the repetition is fashioned in a way to assert a sense of strength with what was earlier presented as a cause for inferiority. This attempt towards subverting the perception as offered by the colonizers is designed to question its ostensible claim to absolute credibility and irrefutability. So the ‘Negritude Movement’ in Africa underlines the blackness of its people, hitherto symbolic of evil, as beautiful, and the ‘Non Co-operation Movement’ in India challenges the European discourse of oriental passivity with a changed perception of patience and non-violence.

Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* includes an analysis of identity as a means of resisting colonialism. Through a study of the colonial narratives in the genre of the ‘novel’, Said analyses the factors that create the cultures of imperialism, nationalism and revolt. He scrutinizes the rhetoric of power in the presumed authority and hegemony of the culture of imperialism, and the mythology of nativism in the xenophobic revolt against it. He also states that the binary codification that is rendered through the
mechanics of empire allows the two communities to interact and subsequently be ‘hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic’ (xxix). Said critically evaluates the dynamics of revolt and resistance but nevertheless defines ‘resistance’ as the effort of the native against the colonial power. While re-affirming the polarity between the colonizer and the colonized Said lays the foundation of resistance as a means of subverting canonical perceptions and creating new methods of understanding culture and identity.

The fact remains however, that a universal appeal and acceptance of these discourses (as aids to imperialism and/or resistance or anti-colonialism) is central to the credibility and efficacy of discursive formations (Said, Orientalism 7). The discourse of orientalism and that of ‘orientalism-in-reverse’ (Jalal al-’Azm 18) as resistance reflects the possibility of discernible opposing or at least differing perceptions of the same identity. These perceptions may be arbitrary and politically manipulated but their bases were nevertheless apparent in the subject being identified (Said, Orientalism 6). However the possibility of manipulating these bases makes identity elusive and any attempt towards defining it would also be arbitrary and not absolute or final.

With colonialism came varied reactions, ranging from adoration and idolization to rejection and repudiation. But simple as they sound, these reactions were complex in their results. While adoration and idolization often took the form of mimicry, rejection and repudiation resulted in denial and disavowal. Interstitial as these positions are, they cause the creation of ambivalent identities oscillating between the binaries of ‘self’ and ‘other’ and attempting a negotiation of affiliations. Homi Bhabha observes this ambivalence in his work The Location of Culture. The colonizer and the colonized develop an association of simultaneous attraction and repulsion as a result of colonial interaction. This ambivalence defines the hybridity in third-world identity. Bhabha’s theory of hybridized identity locates it in a space of constant conflict and negotiation. Further the global identity defined in the interstices is characterized by constant pulsation between
the polar ends which makes any final signification impossible. Theoretically then, third-world identity in the hybridized state becomes an amoebic category.

The state of ambivalence develops out of a process of transgression beyond the boundaries of native and original affiliations into a space of in-betweenness that is marked with influences evocative of the native as well as the foreign culture. In this space of duality identity can be defined by ‘neither’ one ‘nor’ the other (Bhabha, Location of Culture 182) and marks belongingness with the local as well the extra-local. The process of negotiating identity in a space of ambivalence is not a finally approachable end and identity in this third space of being is constantly differing and deferring, to use Derrida’s terminology of ‘differance’ (‘Difference’).

Like the dynamics of polarity, ambivalence is also politicized. In the absence of a final signified there are greater means of manipulation which make identity infinitely complex and elusive. This hybridized identity with its lack of final signification works as a flexible entity in the era of global capitalism. In the name of cultural internationalism and global existence, capitalist entrepreneurs create a mixed identity for their target consumers by forging a discourse of globally hybridized peoples desiring the same kind of hybridized products. This application of Bhabha’s theory of hybridity in the global scenario to create a neo-imperial capitalist empire forms the focal point of the politics of globalization. The politics of capitalism and globalization requires the construction of identity in a state of flexibility and flux. The nation-state which was designed to promote imperialism in the initial stages of colonial history and became a vital tool in the process of resistance later, is a stumbling block in the post World War II era of ‘supranational ideologies’:

In the postwar world, a world of power blocs and ideological camps, humanity was re-divided, but in such a way as to give rise to the hope of transcending the greatest obstacle to a truly global politics and culture: the nation-state. (Smith 172)

The promotion of the politics and culture of supra-nationalism serves as a means to promote American capitalism and its global expansion programme: a neo-imperialism,
which demands the fundamental base of a culture that is defined in a constantly mutating and flexible code.

The advancement in the area of networking and global telecommunication systems further provides a space for global interaction which defines identity in terms of universally locatable identity codes: IP addresses, email ids and the timeless and space-less virtual identities of homogenized citizens of the Internet, or “netizens”. The World Wide Web brings with it a parallel and seemingly liberating identity of a recognizable yet anonymous subject that occupies a space of power owing to its inaccessibility outside the virtual world. Bauman writes of the ‘stranger’ as a possessor of power in the capacity of being beyond the binary codes of ‘self’ and ‘other’ and inhabiting a space of uncertain identity in the polar set. Referring to strangeness as a ‘hermeneutic problem’, Bauman states that the strangers

question oppositions as such, the very principle of opposition, the plausibility of dichotomy it suggests. They unmask the brittle artificiality of division. (‘Modernity’ 148)

In so questioning the basis of social hierarchy, the virtual world of the World Wide Web occupies a space of power and ostensibly defeats the system of ‘either-or’ distinctions that support all prior politics. This virtual example of identities that are at once homogenized, hybridized, changeable and mutating, irrespective of time and space, in a constant state of travel and migration and simultaneously liberating and powerful, explains the sudden rise and adoption of systems of globalization, multiculturalism and hybridity in physical, economic and ideological worlds. This explains why the culture of hybridity and supra-nationalism appeals on a global level.

But outside the virtual world, the hierarchies and politics of internationalism once again define the dynamics of the power systems. Euphoric in its imagination of replaceable and equal identities, the culture of globalization has perpetrators globalizing the colonized world to perpetuate their power and control. No way different from the earlier theories of colonization, the late capitalist theory is based on cultural imperialism in the prime.
Whether the imperialisms are ideological or political or economic, their cultural base is always technical and elitist. They are . . . cultures of state or states, promoted “from above”, with little or no popular base and with little or no reference to the cultural traditions of the peoples incorporated in their domain. (Smith 176)

The creation of such cultural domains that are propagated strategically to win power and sustain it is brought about through the generation of mass support and following. In a so-called consumerist atmosphere, myths of customer control are created on the traditional economic patterns and the politics of globalization works on the subversion of the demand-supply equation. Global mass culture depends upon the creation and mass production of goods that will attract universal folk attention. The manufacturing of such ‘eclectic’ (Smith 176) products that Baudrillard calls ‘kitsch’ (Consumer Society 12) is done in a manner that they depict various cultures and tastes in a most celebratory manner of unity in diversity: the popular culture of the ‘United Colours of Benetton’.

Their supply is enhanced to levels that it begins to control demand and establish popular culture. On the lines of Baudrillard’s theory of simulacrum (Simulacra and Simulation), a globalized consumer identity is manufactured through the promotion of products that are strategically produced and advertised in the jargon of inclusivity and consumer choice. The methodology of capitalist imperialism is to create a target consumer by generating myths of agency and choice, while controlling supply to drive demand. This facet is achieved through the exercise of ‘micromarketing’ which implies:

the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets. . . . [But it also] involves the construction of increasingly differentiated consumers, the ‘invention’ of ‘consumer traditions’. . . . From the consumer’s point of view it can be a significant basis of cultural capital formation. (Robertson 28-9)

It is through this process of controlling supply and then demand to constitute a sense of popular culture, that identity of the multicultural and multinational is created and utilized for the perpetuation of international power systems.
Once again however, it is relevant to note that the culture of globalization can gain such currency only on the basis of popular acceptance and celebration. The fact that globalization and the culture of mélange can acquire a position of power reaffirms the theory of multicultural identities. The politics and culture of globalization could not have succeeded without a popular clientele, which puts the anti-globalization movements and attempts towards nationalist or cultural revivals in a space of criticism on the grounds of fundamentalism and anti-establishment terrorism.

This thesis is divided into four chapters which include a description and critical analysis of the structuring of identity and culture and the politics that informs it. Centering on the concepts of ‘polarity’ and ‘in-betweenness’, the idea of cosmopolitan or global identity will be deconstructed in the wake of capitalist consumerism and multinational politics.

The first chapter, which is titled ‘Orientalism: The Discourse and its Application’, is focused on Said’s study of polarity created as a discourse to support the process of imperial annexation, and his attempt towards analyzing it. In Orientalism [1978], Said establishes the significance of projected identities and the power function associated with these representations.

Said observes that the idea of an oriental identity is created by the west based on inherited perceptions about it. Profusely referring to Foucault and Gramsci, Said explains that the construct of oriental identity is re-iterated to create a discourse of oriental inferiority upon which the project of colonial annexation can be designed. Said explains the stereotyping of oriental identity and suggests that no one can give an authentic account of culture and identity. Raising issues of ‘reality’ and their philosophical inaccessibility, Said refuses to offer a ‘real’ orient (21) to refute the colonial discourse of it. Following the Nietzschean principle of truth being an illusion of which one has forgotten that it is an illusion (‘On Truth’ 359), Said questions if there is any true representation of the orient which is possible.

The real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are
Said observes orientalism as a discourse about third-world identity created in an environment of colonial prejudices and exaggerations. Founding his argument in the rhetoric of postmodernist scepticism, Said questions the authenticity of the so-called oriental identity.

Critics accuse Said of resolving the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized, and bringing the process of the structuring of identity to a closure (Bhabha, ‘Difference’ 200; Young, White Mythologies 167). Young suggests that Said only points at the politicization of knowledge but does not offer any solutions for it (167). This further raises the idea of what Jalal al’-Azm calls ‘orientalism in reverse’, that is, the acceptance of the oriental definition as construed by the colonizer and the subsequent use of the same to counter colonial rule (6). Said is criticized for not countering the polarity between the colonizer and the colonized. However, in his Afterword to Orientalism, he suggests that his analysis was intended as a means of bringing the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ to a point of negotiation (352).

The second chapter is titled ‘Assertion of Selfhood by the Colonized: After Orientalism’, and it is designed with Edward Said’s theory of culture, imperialism and resistance in central focus. In his work, Culture and Imperialism, Said attempts to provide a holistic analysis of identity politics within the context of resistance narratives. This work comes partly in response to the criticism levelled against Said for ignoring the resistance offered by the colonized and situating the orient in a state of passivity (Ahmad, ‘Orientalism and After’ 172; Ashcroft, Post-Colonial Transformation 40; Moore-Gilbert 51). This chapter is designed to deconstruct Said’s theory of culture in order to trace the development of third-world identity with reference to imperialism and resistance. Through a critical analysis of Said’s thesis of culture and its literary affiliations, this chapter is designed to dismantle those constructs of third-world identity which situate it in polar opposition to the western self image. While exploring the impact of colonial
interaction on third-world identity, the struggle of identity to break through the shackles of discursive definitions is revealed.

The third chapter ‘The Global Identity: What Lies Between’ focuses primarily on Homi Bhabha’s theory of hybridity and ambivalence as explained in The Location of Culture [1994]. The colonial experience is observed by Bhabha as an opportunity for identity to mutate and develop ambivalent attitudes. With colonial interaction, the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ shed their polar opposition and come to a middle space of multiple affiliations. This chapter analyzes the ambivalence of the space of ‘negotiated’ identities as explored by Bhabha (The Location of Culture 2). Within the colonial experience, the polarity between the colonizer and the colonized evolves into a hybrid state where identity is defined in terms of the space between. Bhabha’s early essays, ‘Of Mimicry and Man’ and ‘Sly Civility’, in which identity is placed in a sort of magnetic field phenomena, reveal that there is constant attraction and repulsion at work which leads to an in-betweenness, which cannot be finally signified.

In Derrida’s account of signification, explicated in his 1968 essay ‘Differéance’, difference is opposed to presence. On the syntagmatic chain of identification, Bhabha locates the postcolonial identity in the ‘interstitial space’ (the term is used by Levinas), where a final signification is not possible and identification is constantly deferred. Bhabha further explains that within the third space of ambivalence, there is a simultaneous attraction and repulsion at work which finally creates the ‘neither-nor’ identities. He employs Lacan’s idea of ‘mimicry as camouflage’ (qtd. in Location 85) and the Freudian theory of ‘fetishization’ to understand the ambivalence of colonial experience. He elaborates on the creation of an ‘other’ which is simultaneously the object of ‘desire and derision’ (Location 67). Resistance also works in a Freudian method here. Samuel Weber elaborates that in an ambivalent state one must set oneself against what he/she is not, but simultaneously be haunted by what is being excluded (33).

With close reference to Bhabha’s theory of ambivalence and identity defined in the interstitial space between the colonizer and the colonized, this chapter aims to elaborate the concept of identity with respect to the question of hybridization. Bhabha’s
treatment of identity and its attributes and his theory about hybridization are closely observed in the colonial context and the key terms of hybridization are critically analyzed through a postmodern methodology.

The fourth chapter is titled ‘Identity and the Culture of Globalization’. Referring closely to Bhabha’s theory of hybridization, this chapter aims to deconstruct the politics of capitalist imperialism which works through the creation of a consumer identity that is hybridized in a standard format globally. Global hybridization is achieved through the dynamics of international capitalistic trade and thrives on the creation of a standard hybridized consumer. The standard hybridized identity of the potential consumer is further popularized through advertising strategies to perpetuate the hierarchies of capitalist multi-nationalism.

Capitalism has created the idea of a world culture which rests upon the myth of universal demand and supply. The theory of hybridity is considered a universally negotiated fact and identity is marketed to the third world in the form of a standardized mixture. Under the new colonialism of economic forces, the third world is again being subjected to a discourse: that of “homogenous hybridization”. There is a simultaneous effort towards resisting this discourse, which is reminiscent of the resistance offered to colonial rule. Under these circumstances, the power function of representation and the discourse mechanism again comes to the fore.

In the contemporary context of globalization, culture is driven by the reins of capitalism and discourses about identity have become more economic in nature. All social, political, cultural and environmental issues are governed by market dynamics and capitalization indices. In such a scenario identity in its hybridized form of being ‘neither here nor there’ (Bhabha, Location 182) is abused by capitalist entrepreneurs to create a loyal clientele for their products. The identity of the consumer is designed to suit the discursive category of the cosmopolitan citizen. In the imaginaries of global identity, the hyperreal manifestations of consumption based systems are emphasized to fabricate a fluid identity homogenized in its interstitial existence.

Further, with the advent of information technology and the development of the World Wide Web, identity has come to occupy a space of virtual existence. With
globalization, the concepts of space, time, self and other have also undergone a change and with this transformation, the understanding of identity and its parameters has also altered. While there is a constant effort to locate a sense of identity, multiculturalism and hybridization on a global scale make it ever more obscure.

Through the interrogation of identity in selected works of Said and Bhabha, the thesis is directed towards the collective study of identity and its development through various stages of colonialism and capitalist imperialism. Said and Bhabha are often construed as contradictory to each other and as chronological stages in the development of the theories relating to third-world identity. Indeed there are a few marked differences between them with regard to their approach towards the issue of identity. Where Said engages in challenging the western construct of the orient, Bhabha is not associated with the issue of the authentic orient or a truer representation of it. Rather, as Stuart Hall seems to echo the concern of deconstructive approach of bringing the ‘key concepts “under erasure”’, instead of attempting to ‘supplant inadequate concepts with “truer ones” . . . which aspire to the production of positive knowledge’ (Introduction 1), Bhabha is associated with the idea of identity within the matrix of colonial relations and it’s dynamic. He claims to separate his analysis from the task of defining identity. Further, while Said restricts his study to the colonized (especially the Arab world) alone, Bhabha conducts his analysis of identity centering on both the subject positions of the colonizer and the colonized. Finally, where Said resolves the polarity between the colonizer and the colonized within the discourse theory, Bhabha splits the categories individually, and in relation to each other thereby intensifying the conflict in ascertaining an identity.

Upon closer analysis however, a strong and undeniable likeness is observed in Said and Bhabha. Not only is their approach towards third-world identity and representation politics similar, their resolution of the conflict in identity is also based on analogous foundations. From the theoretical premise of defining identity as an articulation of power to the ostensible claim towards debunking the canonical understanding of identity; from defining the role of the critic in detachment and distance, to underlining the evolutionary nature of identity and culture, Said and Bhabha run on
parallel lines in the attempt to theorize identity. The overlap between their theories goes on to the extent of pointing at a sense of hybridization in Said’s work. He seems to move away from binaries when he gives immense importance to the dismantling of the structures of power so as to find a synthesis of opposing identities. In ‘Orientalism Reconsidered’, Said demands a much greater and stronger ‘crossing of boundaries, for greater interventionism in cross-disciplinary activity’. Said suggests that it is only through a thorough deconstruction of the existing dominative structures that the identities of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ can be reconstituted (215). Bhabha also seems to invoke the theory of polarity in the development of the state of ambivalence in a Saidean manner.

While describing the interstices, Bhabha situates the hybridized identity in the space of ‘transit’, beyond the border-lines. It is the flux that informs the space between polarities (Location 1). Bhabha suggests that singular identities collaborate in the spaces between to lead to hybrid identities (2). His concept of ‘beyond’ or ‘transit’ leads to the inevitable question: Beyond what? Or, transition from what? This implies the acceptance of the border lines as the definite point of break between essentially different (if not oppositional) identities. Here Bhabha seems to believe that on both sides of the border an un-adulterated pure culture exists, a concept which is problematic in that it points at there being a pure and authentic original identity.

Further, if Said’s attempts to question the polarity between the crystallized categories of self/other, white/black, occident/orient, west/east, and his repetitive efforts towards breaking the dichotomy (Orientalism 350-2) fail in the absence of an alternative theory, Bhabha creates a new polarity between presence and difference to replace the Saidean binary. Bhabha privileges difference as a factor in identification, as a mark of hybridized interstitial existence. But the idea of presence necessitates some state of stability from which difference can be marked which is reminiscent of the static identity of self/other cast in timelessness and homogeneity.

Despite inhabiting contrasting realms of theory and offering starkly incongruent theses regarding third-world identity and its representation, Said and Bhabha exhibit a marked similarity. This is not to suggest that theories regarding identification as given by these stalwarts of postcolonial theory are repetitively erroneous and need not be offered
the academic obeisance they command. The errors that are commonly shared by identity theories offered by Said and Bhabha will be constantly and inevitably present in every theory that attempts to define identity.

Identity and its representational politics, when studied through the matrix of human interaction, exhibit a constant deferral of location. Any attempt to define identity fixes it in a category and closes the process which is at best defined as a state of continuum. Identity, and with it culture, can only be perceived as ‘knots’ in the global flows, ‘a constellation of temporary coherence’ (Barker 42). Representation is only a temporary closing of the act of identifying. Any theory about identity tends to create discourses which are reflective of the modes of power and imperialism. If in the colonial context, polar identity serves as a discourse to help colonization forward, in the capitalist era, the globalized/hybridized identity is the necessary hegemonic tool required to establish a world-wide rule of capitalist imperialism.

Identity should then be observed not by politics or power motives, but rather as an individual experience and enunciation, changing with space and time and never coming to a final signification. To use Derrida’s terminology, it carries within it the ‘traces’ of all experience (‘Differéncé’ 12). Identity derives not only from the mutating ‘self’ and ‘other’ but also from the individuating experience. It is this experiential tangent that informs the unending play of signification vis-à-vis identity.

As we venture into the politics of globalization and multiculturalism, the question of locating identity becomes all the more important. It becomes highly imperative then to understand the politics surrounding representation and its discourses.