Chapter II

Assertion of Selfhood by the Colonized: After Orientalism

Culture is both a function and a source of identity.

- Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 88

When Goebbels, the brain behind Nazi propaganda, heard culture being discussed, he brought out his revolver. That shows that the Nazis – who were and are the most tragic expression of imperialism and of its thirst for domination . . . had a clear idea of the value of culture as a factor of resistance to foreign domination.

- Amilcar Cabral (Africa Information Centre 39)

As discussed in the previous chapter, Orientalism [1978] analyzes the development of discursive ideas about the orient which perpetuate western imperialism. Said closely observes how an essentialist orient is fabricated through the course of colonization so as to support imperial rule. But he restricts himself to the area of identity politics and its repercussions in relation to the myths of orientalism and their currency.

Despite the overwhelming response it received, Said’s seminal work has been criticized for re-embarking upon a discourse of orientalism in the absence of an alternate identity (Young, White Mythologies 167). In his refusal to accept the western idea of the orient as authentic, Said does not provide an alternate account. Furthermore, the only voices heard in the analysis are those of Said and first-world theorists. The ‘real’ orient, if there can be anything like that, still remains silent (Ahmad, ‘Orientalism and After’ 172; Moore-Gilbert 51). Moreover, in his discussion of the advance of imperial rule, Said
entirely ignores the development of resistance to it (Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation* 40). In the absence of resistance to the discourse, his account fails to provide a holistic analysis of identity politics, a task that he takes up later. Whereas the attention is centered on the construction of oriental identity and its colonial ramifications in his landmark work of 1978, its sequel, as it were, *Culture and Imperialism* [1993] focuses on the cultural aspect of imperialism, resistance to the colonial rule and the development of third-world identity with reference to it. Said emphasizes two key phenomena in this work: first, the ‘general worldwide pattern of imperial culture’ and second, ‘the historical experience of resistance against empire’ (*Culture and Imperialism* xii). This chapter is directed towards achieving an understanding of culture with reference to imperialism and resistance in order to arrive at a thesis about the identity of the orient through the course of the colonial process.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said focuses on culture as an evolving system which directs the colonial process and reflects on the identity of the colonizer and the colonized. This chapter is designed to decode the theory of culture as defined by Said so as to understand the trajectory of third-world identity through the course of imperialism and resistance. Through a critical analysis of Said’s fundamental definition of culture with its literary affiliations as explained in *Culture and Imperialism*, this chapter is directed towards liberating third-world identity, in any textual context, from the brackets of polarity and imperialism to resistance and finally internationalism. Beginning with a close analysis of *Culture and Imperialism*, the influences on Said and his foundational premise for his theory concerning culture, imperialism and resistance, the focus of this chapter will shift to the question of third-world identity.

Colonial interaction, in the form of imperial advancement and the resistance to it, bears an enormous influence on third-world identity. The colonizer as well the colonized are both indelibly transformed in the course of colonial experience. The cultural aspects of imperialism, colonial interaction and resistance are of utmost significance when discussing the development of third-world identity. So before venturing into the area of identity, it is important to understand the term ‘culture’. Like identity, culture is also defined in fluidity. It is an ever changing process and never reaches a state of final signification. Raymond Williams understands it as ‘a whole way of life’ (qtd. in Ashcroft 66...
and Ahluwalia 89). To Williams, culture is an all inclusive statement of being. Williams identifies it as

an intricate historical process of struggle, communication and negotiation, in which the dominant and the sub-ordinate “class cultures” of an epoch or society interacted of course, in very uneven ways and together with other practices (production, consumption, politics, the family, the work etc.) and created distinct “structures of feeling”. (Benewick and Green 260)

With reference to the imperial process too, culture reflects the social impetus behind the western attempt towards occupying the non-west, the various relations developed between the colonizer and the colonized and the reactions and retaliations that ensued out of the colonial experience. In this respect, culture becomes exceedingly reflective of identity. Said defines culture as

all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure. (Culture and Imperialism xii)

With Arnold, Said believes that culture is the reservoir of the best a society has known. It signifies a cleansed and glorified image of the ‘self’ against the ‘other’ and provides as a justification for the extension of colonial rule upon the latter (Culture and Imperialism xiii). He locates culture in the area of literature and arts so as to find an understanding of the politics surrounding the history of colonialism.

The historical episode of imperial annexation and the resistance offered to it through various means are both functions of culture. Imperialism is directed by a cultural acceptance of the principal of Western Enlightenment, which Jameson describes as

a part of a properly bourgeois cultural revolution, in which the values and discourses, the habits and daily space, of the ancient regime were systematically dismantled so that in their place could be set the new conceptualities, habits and life forms, value systems of a capitalist market society. (Postmodernism [1991] 96)
To Marxist thinkers like Gramsci and Williams, such cultural annexation is undertaken through hegemonic means which include the development of discursive knowledges such as can be projected to the colonized as a fact of nature (Gramsci 12; Williams, Marxism and Literature 108). It is only through a discursive projection of the native culture as inferior that the colonizer’s culture can be placed in a position of superiority. With the development of such hierarchies between the colonizer and the colonized, the entire process of imperialism is garbed in the disguise of a humanistic civilizing mission. The process of what seems to be the ‘progressive assimilation of native peoples’ is in fact an ‘attempt to deny the culture of the people in question’ (Africa Information Centre 40). Revolutionaries like Cabral identify culture as the means to counter imperialism, as it is only through culture that imperialism can be instituted or dismantled.

If imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture. (Africa Information Centre 43)

Beginning with an exceedingly national fervor, resistance movements against imperialism are primarily anti-colonial. But due to colonial interaction, the cultural space of the colonizer and the colonized becomes permeable and the stark opposition between the two is challenged. Resistance then takes the form of an inclusive reaction against imperialism and the culture supporting it. Along with forces countering the imperial occupation of colonies, resistance is also reflective of a culture that challenges stereotypes and essentialist categories.

Culture reflects on identity through all these processes. The culture of imperialism is based upon creation of identity constructs for the colonizer and colonized in water-tight compartments of the superior ‘self’ and the inferior ‘other’. Resistance begins with retaliation from the ‘other’ in an exceedingly opposing manner and a default acceptance of the discursive constructs. But the cultural interaction caused by the colonial experience reflects upon the identity of the colonizer and the colonized and brings them to a space of negotiation and reconciliation. Like culture then, identity also becomes a means of establishing as well as challenging imperialism.
With the Arnoldian premise of identifying culture with the best a society can portray and boast of, Said perceives the identity constructs of ‘self’ and ‘other’ as categories of invention and self-aggrandizement, created to mark distinction and uniqueness vis-à-vis each other. Scrutinizing the obvious ensuing hierarchies and implicit xenophobic tendencies of it, Said approaches culture as a ‘combative’ source of identity (Culture and Imperialism xiii). At the same time, imperialism brings combative cultures into such proximity that they cannot remain distinct and pure.

Because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic. (Culture and Imperialism xxix)

Said’s Culture and Imperialism heralds a new phase in the study of third-world identity. With the introduction of culture, its inherent combativeness and the resultant hybridization due to cultural interaction and conflict, the canonical polarity between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ is indelibly challenged.

Said uses the term ‘imperialism’ as ‘the practice, the theory, and the attitude of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory’ and ‘colonialism’ as ‘the implanting of settlements on distant territories’ (Culture and Imperialism 8). Quoting Doyle he defines ‘empire’ as

a relationship formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire. (Culture and Imperialism 8)

Said also insists that attempts towards colonization and imperialism are often guided by an ideological justification that ‘certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination’ (Culture and Imperialism 8).

This ideological justification is based on the received perceptions of a pure and glorious past that the colonizing west creates for itself. According to Said, the power function of colonization rests upon ‘the pure (even purged) images . . . of a
genealogically useful past . . . [excluding] unwanted elements, vestiges, narratives’ (Culture and Imperialism 16). Through a process of selective inclusion and at times even romantic fabrication, the colonizer creates a ‘self’ image which promises a space of power and superiority against the colonized ‘other’.

Peculiarly, the ideological justification that the colonizer creates for subjugating the east is not a planned strategy. It is guided by a genuine belief in the civilizing mission and a strong sense of moral responsibility that the western races harbour about themselves towards the education and control of the eastern races considered inferior by them. With reference to Conrad’s Nostromo, Said notes that ‘the rhetoric of power all too easily produces an illusion of benevolence when employed in an imperial setting’ (Culture and Imperialism xix). The west holds a position of power vis-à-vis the east, and also has an opportunity to colonize it. This position helps the former validate the extension of control to the latter as a civilizing mission. Further, the belief in the ‘mission civilisatrice’ (Culture and Imperialism 33) is so inarguably established among the western rulers that the discourse of power complicit with the imperial annexation programme and its ensuing exploitative means, all remain unchallenged.

By the nineteenth century Europe had erected an edifice of culture so hugely confident, authoritative and self-congratulatory that its imperial assumptions, its centralizing European life and its complicity in the civilizing mission simply could not be questioned. (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 87)

But the superiority of the colonizer is challenged sooner or later and in the event of such resistance, the myths of self-aggrandizing culture are revealed. Through Conrad’s characters Marlow and Kurtz, Said explains how an affirmative belief of the former in the ‘mission civilisatrice’ is turned to an acknowledgement of the ‘darkness’ (Culture and Imperialism 33) at the heart of it by the latter’s retrospective reference to ‘the horror’ (Conrad, Heart of Darkness 106) of the colonial mission.

However, in Conrad’s inability to openly criticize colonization, Said observes two visions: that the ideological impact of colonization can never be completely erased, and a fully realized or utopian alternative to imperialism cannot be found. The authoritarianism continues even after colonization ends. Said asserts with reference to narratives of
colonization and/or resistance that they reflect a stringent polarity between the ‘self’ and
the ‘other’ which may be contrary to subjective experience but is imperative for the
mobilization of forces of imperialism and liberation respectively. Such narratives must be
read ‘contrapuntally’, to analyze the political and coercive implications projected through
them (Culture and Imperialism 49). Such a reading calls for not only an observation in
counterpoint to the narrative, but also to the minute details that are included or excluded
by the author. It is through such a reading against the grain, that the various forces of
cultural and ideological beliefs related to the author’s location are brought to the fore. It
is also through contrapuntal reading alone, that the representational politics related with
third-world identity can be explored and uncovered.

With Goethe’s concept of ‘Weltliteratur’, Said elaborates that despite all the talk
of ‘comparative literature’ and ‘interactions of world literatures with one another’, the
hierarchy between the east and west is never challenged or crossed. It is maintained
throughout that the colonized did not deserve to be heard or read and that the subjugated
races could only be represented by the colonial masters (Culture and Imperialism 52).
This ideological premise of indubitable western superiority and rights of representation
glares through the various art forms of the west and creates a cultural system of thought
where the east is referred to as a silent homogenous entity with no individuality or
presence. To Said’s understanding, such a wavering reference to the colonized lands and
people in the canonical texts is occasioned by the authors’ distinct intention to write for
European readers alone. Said calls for a contrapuntal reading of western art as a reflection
of colonial attitudes and as a means of theorizing western perceptions of identity for the
colonizer and the colonized (Culture and Imperialism 79).

With the basic premise that the ‘novel’ as a genre covers the ‘general worldwide
pattern of imperial culture, and a historical experience of resistance against empire’
(Culture and Imperialism xii), Said suggests that narratives themselves make a nation and
reflect on its culture. He adds:

The power to narrate or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. (xiii)
Further:

In reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded... one must connect the structures of a narrative to the ideas, concepts, experiences from which it draws support. (Culture and Imperialism 79)

Said suggests that there is never a ‘direct experience’ (Culture and Imperialism 79), which can be complete in itself. There is always a perception regarding an experience which is narrated over time into an author’s psyche. The identity of the colonized also precipitates into the psyche of the colonial author and directs his experience of the native in a manner that the presumed oriental identity is still the fundamental representation.

Upon closer observation of the ‘inviolable association’ (Mohanty 103) of the novel with the bourgeois society, it is established that the then English novel necessarily contains colonial overtones and deems imperialism significant for the sustenance of the bourgeois society. In such a scenario, divorcing the novel from imperial history and economics would mean taking it away from reality.

[T]he novel, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other... [I]mperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible to read one without in some way dealing with the other... The novel is an incorporative, quasi-encyclopedic cultural form. (Culture and Imperialism 84)

Said further elaborates that there is a ‘structure of attitude and reference’ (Culture and Imperialism 89, 134) that is followed by the canonical English narratives. Unconsciously perhaps, the British novelists approach the third world in a structured manner guided by the discourse of orientalism and the indubitable hierarchical relation between the colonizer and the colonized. In this scenario, the attitude of the novelists and the way in which they refer to the third world are both conditioned by the ruling discourse about it. Victorian novelists nowhere question the colonial annexation of the east but rather accept it as an inert fact strengthening the universal beliefs about oriental inferiority and the necessity of empire.
Recognizing the novel as a generic medium for establishing western authority of narrating third-world identity and espousing the colonial enterprise Said demands for a contrapuntal reading of the authoritative representation of third-world identity and culture as the most significant means of resisting colonial subjugation. He asserts that representation through authoritative narrative art is a method of ‘keeping the subordinate subordinate, the inferior inferior’ (Culture and Imperialism 95) and must be challenged.

Said’s analysis of Victorian classics reveals a contrapuntal reading of popular western beliefs about the third world and the commonly accepted notions about eastern identity. With Austen’s Mansfield Park, a contrapuntal reading reveals a discursive authorial attitude towards the colonies and the colonized. The novel portrays a disciplinarian Sir Thomas Bertram as a supervisor at the Antiguan slave plantation whose authority at home in Mansfield Park is suggestive of his power in the eastern colony. His ownership and authority on the domestic front is reflective of a similar attitude towards the Antiguan slave colony. His absence causes a chaos at home and he is portrayed as the hard taskmaster who puts things to order. He is kind and magnanimous to the orphan heroine, Fanny Price, who has earned his generous patronage only after leaving her home in Portsmouth, which she herself begins to detest after living in Mansfield Park. Through such episodes in the narrative, Sir Bertram is shown as the benevolent and disciplining British officer whose presence is necessary to maintain order in the unruly colony. The colonized, symbolized by the orphan girl, can be risen from detestable poverty and uncivilized lifestyles only through the chastising control of the munificent British master. The novel serves as a ‘metaphor and metonymy’ of colonial relations (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 97) in drawing a relation between ‘domestic and international’ (Culture and Imperialism 104) authority and a contrapuntal reading of this Victorian classic reveals the relation of culture and imperialism. Further, Austen’s reference to Antigua bears testimony to her up to date knowledge of the then colonial enterprise and her strong belief that colonial occupation and control were necessary for British success.

Through a contrapuntal reading of canonical colonial texts, it is revealed that western art created a cultural environment in which colonization was perceived as an act of kindness extended to the less fortunate peoples. Victorian writers, who were a witness to this exercise of power by the colonizers, represented it as an act of philanthropism and
absolved it of the blame of exploitation and enslavement. It is through the popularity of such narratives that a culture favouring imperialism was strengthened and the notions of third-world inferiority were solidified.

The power even in casual conversation to represent what is beyond metropolitan borders derives from the power of an imperial society, and that power takes a discursive form of a reshaping or reordering of ‘raw’ or primitive data into the local conventions of European narrative and formal utterance. (Culture and Imperialism 119)

Said holds thinkers like Max Muller, Renan, Charles Temple, Darwin, Benjamin Kidd and Emer de Vattel responsible for developing and accentuating ‘the essentialist positions in European culture proclaiming that Europeans should rule, non-Europeans be ruled’ (Culture and Imperialism 120). Quoting Carlyle and Ruskin, Said elaborates how the British approach towards the colonies and the peoples inhabiting them was one of a stern but good-intentioned ruler who knows what is best for the ruled (121-6). The colonial advance required an unshakeable and unshirkable belief in the civilizing mission and at the same time a complete belief in the degeneracy that threatened the colonized. The imperial exercise was based on a number of discourses which were developed and engrained in the western psyche through such narratives of undisputed power and inarguable intention of colonial goodness. The third world was identified as an inferior group of races who must be put under the supervision and control of the colonizers, as if being subservient to the British were the only good option available to them. Such ideas of essentialist distinction between the east and the west percolated in the works of art. This art created a culture which cyclically emanated colonial hegemonic beliefs on the social front.

Taking an example from music, Said elaborates how Verdi’s opera Aida displays a strong European prejudice about Egypt as a deplorable country. The eroticism, court room cruelty, music and exoticism associated with Egypt are all derived from canonical narratives of the east and what is considered to be eastern. Aida, an opera meant for the Italians, based on Egyptian patterns, with music from grandmasters like Wagner, was in itself a hybrid form of an opera, used to project the homogenous and essentialist attributes of the orient. Verdi uses the ideas of Mariette on ‘Egyptology’, which ‘is not
The story of Aida is a clear reference to ‘rivalries of imperial powers in the Middle East’ (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 100). The modernizing attempts of Khedive Ismail, the then ruler of Egypt, came in conflict with the general Egyptian traditions and cause a split in the city of Cairo, with half of it displaying modern European lifestyles and the other half standing for Egyptian culture and tradition. The opera house built for Aida stood on the divide between the opposing halves of the city and the opera became a manifestation of the opposition between the east and the west. Just like the city of Cairo is divided into two halves to suit European sensibilities, similarly, Egyptian identity and culture is presented in a canonical form to make it palatable for western audiences.

Shifting the attention from Egypt to India, Kipling’s novel Kim, when read contrapuntally, reveals his steadfast belief in the civilizing mission and the superiority of the British vis-à-vis the colonized Indians. The adventures and boyish pranks of Kim are clear manifestations of the ‘pleasures’ of ruling the natives. Further, there is a sort of essentially male and authoritative narcissism about characterization in the novel. A similarity can be drawn between the colonizers and Lord Baden Powel’s boy scouts who were English boys trained to be of civilizing service to the rest of the community, abiding by the strictest of laws (Culture and Imperialism 166). Said highlights the absence of sexuality in the novel as a reinforcement of the purity and piety of colonial advance as a mission taken over by men to reach the ultimate truth (169). Moreover, their search for the River of cleansing has connotations of salvation that the westerner wanted to attain through the colonial practice, ideas which can be dated back to the days of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales and Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress. In this novel, the lama has been placed under the security and sovereignty of the British rule. This patronage allows him to reach the River of cleansing through Kim. The idea is clear. A native can attain his cleansing and be one with the universe only through the civilizing British rulers: essentially male and pure.

Further Kipling is simultaneously sympathetic towards the Indians and towards the cause of British colonialism. He exhibits a strong belief in the notion that the British rule was the best course for India and efforts of Indians to oppose the British are
presented by him as catastrophic. With reference to the Revolt of 1857, Kipling writes that ‘a madness ate into the army’ and the British had to call them to ‘strict account’ (qtd. in Said 178). Thus, in Kipling’s narrative, ‘the native is naturally a delinquent, the white man a stern but moral parent and judge’ (Culture and Imperialism 178). In colonial understanding then, the natives had no identity of their own, unless granted by virtue of British patronage. Kipling is a spokesman for the colonizer who has been raised into believing the divinity of the civilizing mission and the inevitability of ruling the natives.

Said explains two things: the influence of colonialism on culture, and the fact that the colonial ruler did not and could not see the inherent imperialism in its practices. With reference to Conrad and the African representation in Heart of Darkness, Said asserts that ‘Marlow’s audience is English, and Marlow himself penetrates into Kurtz’s private domain as an enquiring Western mind trying to make sense of an apocalyptic revelation’ (Culture and Imperialism 198). The orient has been projected through canonical literary texts in stereotypical images of a slavish object deserving only the so-called beneficent western rebuke.

Covering a wide space of the colonized world, Said considers the case of Camus and Algeria. In the French empire building exercise, ‘prestige’ was very important, besides the obvious profit and power motives. The French self perception guided this impulse of ruling the other, lesser communities. The supposed purity and genius of the French was the motivating factor for the imperial enterprise with France. Along with the mission civilisatrice, the French ‘vocation superieure’ (Culture and Imperialism 204) was also a driving force behind the occupation of Algeria.

Albert Camus comes out as one notable writer of French Algeria, who manages to draw an Austen-like picture of colonialism in his works. Camus’ imperial vision was guided by the French colonial venture historically and a vehement denial of Algerian independence. In Camus’ stories and novels, the French presence is not explicitly detailed but described implicitly as the only history that needs to be mentioned. In The Outsider, the Arab’s existence is purely ‘incidental’ (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 105). Existing in utter namelessness, the Arab seems to be stripped of his identity and his killing does not become the reason for Mersault’s conviction but rather the fact that the Algerian sun had put him in a situation of existential isolation that the French consciousness could nothing
but prosecute. Further, in the same novel, the institutional disciplining machinery of the office, the court, the social police are all French. The Arab finds the place of the violent and self-governed, impulsive native, committing himself to the actions governed by instinct rather than order. Further, Camus observes a ‘waste and sadness’ in the colonial exercise as it amounts to nothing significant and causes existential dilemmas (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 105).

In Said’s contrapuntal readings, canonical works display an implicit intimacy with the colonial programme and a genuine belief in the superiority of western identity and culture and a fundamental obligation to civilize what is considered to be the beastly east. The ideas regarding third-world identity and the representation of it through such a vast range of narratives exhibits the common elements of faithlessness in the capability of the native, the benevolence of the western ruler, the patronage of the west as the only source of civilization for the east and the indisputable hierarchy between the east and the west. Said’s assertion that the colonizer does not strategically synchronize his imperial mission throughout the world, but truly believes in it as a facet of his destiny and divine duty as a westerner, comes as an unmistakable feature in these readings.

However, Said’s work does not reflect only on the complicity of culture and imperialism, but also takes into account the reaction of the native to the colonial rule. His thesis ‘speaks of largely unopposed will to overseas domination, not of a completely unopposed one’. The west established its control in the colonies because of its position of power in the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural arenas (Culture and Imperialism 225). But imperialism is not met with an inert and passive native. Resistance, in some form or the other, is an inevitable corollary, in most cases even an offshoot, of imperialism. Said elaborates through readings of canonical texts that the native is represented as a homogenous unidentified entity lacking agency. But postcolonial texts reveal that some form of agency is always brewing as an undercurrent in the least, in the colonized world.

Further, this resistance is not homogenous in being totally rejecting, but rather appropriates the culture of imperialism to the native culture. It is also not directed only from the colonized. The myth of the civilizing mission disintegrates in the psyche of the colonizer too and results in the development of a resistance that covers the ‘largely
common although disputed terrain provided by culture’ [my emphasis] (Culture and Imperialism 241). Said’s reference to a common ground between the colonizer and the colonized anticipates the development of a space of mutual affiliation and negotiation rather than complete opposition and rejection. The colonizer’s disillusionment in the civilizing mission brings him to a space where he begins to question imperialism as a philanthropic endeavour. Such a strong disillusionment makes the colonizer doubt his ‘self’ image as a superior human entrusted with the noble task of reform, and by default, the inherited image of the ‘other’ as an inferior beastly being is also challenged.

Said’s theory of imperialism and resistance and his thesis on identity is not inclusive of native cultures alone, but also takes into account the culture and psyche of the colonizer. With colonial interaction and cultural overlap, characters like Mrs. Moore and Mr. Fielding in Forster’s A Passage to India, cease to be pure Europeans separated from the natives, and somehow cross the ‘anthropomorphic norm’ (Culture and Imperialism 242). The native protagonist Aziz too, comes to occupy the middle space of anxiety. There is a sort of coming closer but not a total mélange. They are together in the end, but still apart.

Resistance, according to Said, is a two-fold phenomenon of first reclaiming the physical territory through geographical resistance, and then reclaiming the cultural territory through ‘ideological resistance’ (Culture and Imperialism 252), which may also be inclined towards the pre-imperial native culture and the imaginations of a pristine past in its initial stages. This nationalistic sentiment becomes important in the resistance machinery. But at the same time, there is an urge to retain the colonial experience in the native culture and it is this native tendency along with an affiliation with colonial culture that reflects in postcolonial third-world identity.

At the core of all voyage literature of the Renaissance period, there lies the story of a western adventurer voyaging through the colonized world and then emancipating it from the slumber that had hitherto enveloped it. The colonizer seemingly perceives the colonized as a blank which can be narrated as the west fancies. It is for this reason that resistance is immediately an effort by the colonized to reclaim territorial control and to revisit the narratives of colonialism and narrate them again with direct agency. This revision of the past is undertaken so that the postcolonial future can be shaped with a
speaking and acting native who can narrate the ‘reinterpretable and redeployable experiences’ of colonialism to assert an image of his identity as perceived by himself (Culture and Imperialism 256).

Quoting Lamming’s analysis of The Tempest, Said suggests that Caliban is seen as an occasion which can be used for the development of an “other”. In such a scenario it becomes imperative that the myths of Prospero’s progress be broken and it be realized that if Caliban is consumed in an effort to create an identity for Prospero then, Caliban himself would have a history or an identity. But it is to be remembered simultaneously that ‘while identity is crucial, just to assert a different identity is never enough’ (Culture and Imperialism 257). There are three significant aspects of cultural resistance: first is the restoration of the nation to itself with its own history and narratives (259). Second, is the fact that resistance does not refer to staunch anti-colonialism alone, but also to contrapuntal revision of colonialism.

[R]esistance, far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving human history. It is particularly important to see how much this alternative reconception is based on breaking down the barriers between cultures. (Culture and Imperialism 260)

This alternative method of revisiting history inverts the narratives of imperialism not only to subvert them, but also to understand the ideology of the colonizer. And third, the decolonizing practice does not refer to moving back to national compartments, but rather to the establishment of a culture of whole worldliness. There is an integrative human quality about resistance movements (Culture and Imperialism 261) which must not be denied.

One can also note here that the resistance movements have different origins, at times even first worldly, hence, the new independent cultures have to be identified as hybrid and not nationalistically compartmentalized.

The history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings. Cultures are not impermeable. . . . Culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing or lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. (Culture and Imperialism 261-62)
Taking the example of Ireland, Said elaborates how the Eurocentrism active in the colonial occupation and control of Ireland was challenged by a native resistance full of patriotic fervor. But ironically the proponents of this resistance were the Irish classes educated in Europe. Thus the end of European imperialism heralded the creation of pseudo-nationalist leaders who ‘replicated the old canonical structures in new terms’ (Culture and Imperialism 269). Resistance movements primarily begin as nationalist, anti-imperialist endeavours. As the outsider exercises his rule through the land, it is of utmost importance to acquire the land first. The effort to regain identity and culture as the natives know it requires dealing with the colonial structures of high culture and identity created through imperial discourses. Such a resistance is based on imaginations of a pure and untainted native past that the colonizer exploited. This imagination, however leads to restating the colonial discourse of stark opposition between the colonizer and the colonized. What is required then is the adoption of a narrative of identity and culture which is neither pristine as the native imagines, nor colonial as the European would have it, but an amalgam that one can feel at home with.

Nativism, alas, reinforces the distinction [between the white and the non-white] even while revaluing the weaker or subservient partner. And it has often led to compelling but demagogic assertions about a native past, narrative or actuality that stands free from worldly time itself. (Culture and Imperialism 275)

Ironically, nativism replicates the same stereotypical images that imperialism sets for the native. The Negritude movement and Rastafarianism are examples of these incongruent resistances, which ‘accepted the dialectical structure of European ideological confrontations but borrowed from the very components of its racist syllogism’ as Soyinka explains (qtd. in Culture and Imperialism 276). In the Irish context, Yeats calls for patriotism and nativism in his early poetry, but at the same time establishes that reversion to nativism would bring in a claustrophobic identity which contains its own chauvinisms and is enclosed within itself with no room for outside influence (Culture and Imperialism 284).
Like the colonizer influences native culture and identity, native resistance to imperialism influences the colonizer to doubt the civilizing mission. The revolution against imperialism that immigrates to the first world is in the form of distinguished literature from the east which constantly breaks the discourse of eastern passivity in the western mind. Foucault calls these ‘subjugated knowledges’ (qtd. in Culture and Imperialism 293), whose language is imperial, but the invention or thought is not, and that in itself is the input the third world could give to modernism. It is with such a mélange that there comes about something that can be called an internationalization of culture (Culture and Imperialism 294). This internationalization occurs in response to the voyage literature on larger observation. This conscious effort on the part of the colonized to enter, study, appropriate and represent canonical colonial culture, as a form of resistance, is what Said calls the ‘voyage in’.

The voyage in, then, constitutes an especially interesting variety of hybrid cultural work. And that it exists at all is a sign of adversarial internationalization in an age of continued imperial structures. (295)

Said calls for a movement that no longer subscribes to an either-or situation in culture but associates with a hybridized form of identity which is at once affiliated to that of the colonizer as well as the colonized. Of course, the space of such hybridity cannot but be that of constant polemic between the forces working within it.

Just like the imperial annexation of colonies was not possible without native collaboration (whether in the form of consent or of occupying the space of the middle men, who worked as agents of the colonial exercise), the resistance to colonial rule cannot come without the residual imperial tendencies, and most post-imperial native control is replete with similar ideas of superiority and subjugation. Even the element of pride in nativity, which acts as a significant agent in resistance movements, becomes the basis of continuing divisional identification and hierarchical relations between the east and the west. Fanon calls these the ‘pitfalls of nationalist consciousness’ (Wretched of the Earth 88). Said notes that unlike Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, who see the intellectual as a person of the west guided by a psychological, economic and historical will to power,
Fanon sees the intellectual as one who can move his consciousness from nationalist tendencies to real humanism (Culture and Imperialism 324-25).

Finally, Said ventures into the territory of neo-colonialism where America is the new colonizer occupying and controlling the world with its programme of capitalism and its genuine belief that it is only through American rule and guidance that the world can be raised to prosperity and progress. On much the same lines as imperialism, American capitalism is also founded on the hegemonic discourses of American superiority and validity of American representational systems alone. With the example of the Arab world and its depiction by America as a lawless state that needs to be put to order by the American, who is ‘a kind of Puritan super-ego’ (Culture and Imperialism 357), Said explains that colonialism continues in the world still within the same hegemonic and discursive structures of discrimination, and is guided by the same compliance between power and knowledge.

The American propagation of capitalistic structures all over the world has led to the mapping of new cultural spheres which can be conducive to the international market dynamic. With such multi-national capitalism, comes the inevitable gap in the social wealth distribution thereby cyclically perpetuating American power and the need for American ascendancy. Further, within the culture of multinational capitalism, identity for the first and the third world is created in compartments of supplier and consumer, producer and service provider respectively.

But domination, as seen before, is bound to cause resistance. The stereotypical images of the third world created by colonial and capitalistic empires have received resistance from people of both western and non-western origin. What is required though is a movement towards reconciliation rather than retaliation. Said calls for the development of a postcolonial world culture which can be inclusive and can allow for a consolidation of cultural experience rather than isolating peoples in xenophobic terms (Culture and Imperialism 407-8).

Said understands culture with its literary affiliations as the focal point of colonial interaction and sees it as an important site of colonial politics. In continuation with his theory of the hegemony of literature and concerned arts in creating a discourse of orientalism, Said widens his scope of colonial observation to include the highly crucial
space of culture as well. He perceives culture as the site of constant contestation between
the colonizer and the colonized. This space reflects the many possible relations between
the two, ranging from interaction to resistance; from combat to symbiotic co-existence.
Said empowers the space of culture with the capacity to revolutionize social processes.
His analysis is aimed towards exposing the power of culture and its development in
understanding the journey from colonial subjugation to independence and finally to
hybridized affiliations and reconciliation of differences. Said advocates the creation of a
culture which is more tolerant in nature and does not venture into the regressive ‘politics
of blame’ (Representations 45) but rather liberates the society from its xenophobic
tendencies.

But Said’s thesis on the cultural aspect of imperialism and resistance and its
subsequent application to the understanding of third-world identity is disputable. Said’s
foundational definition of culture as autonomous of ‘the economic, social and political
realms’ (Culture and Imperialism xii-xiii), is elitist, canonical and rather selective. It
tends towards the Arnoldian high culture of strictly aesthetic and elevating experiences.
Moreover, the autonomy that he grants to culture makes it a concept which is at a
distance from the world of real experience (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 89). Said believes
that culture is ‘impervious’ to the ‘dialogue’ between the colonizer and the colonized (‘In
Conversation’ 7). His definition of culture then becomes exclusive of the direct social and
political impact. He treats culture as a projecting screen on which the dynamics of social
realities appear only through the via-media of literature and arts. However, this definition
makes one wonder if the cultures of imperialism and resistance can be accommodated in
the study of these arts alone. This is similar to the criticism offered to Said’s Orientalism,
where he seems to attach an exaggerated importance to literature in creating and
sustaining discourses for the maintenance of imperial control (Jalal al-Azm 14). In
Culture and Imperialism he again identifies the novel as a medium that helped ‘to keep
the Empire more or less in place’ (88).

In Orientalism, Said restricts himself to the study of the creation of an inert
category called the orient, as if it were constructed in a laboratory without any resistance
whatsoever. Said has moved from that study of identity creation, to a more dynamic
observation of identity transformation. His previous dependence on Foucault seems to
have given way to a new resonance of Gramsci and Fanon. Said clearly depends upon Foucault in relation to the construction of an essentialist orient so as to define the west in a state of power. But Foucault seems to stagnate himself in the politics of power to an extent that any possibility of resistance is entirely ignored. Said suggests that Foucault ‘more or less eliminates the central dialectic of opposed forces that still underlies modern society’ (The World 221). Foucault restricts his analysis of power to the space of strict binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized, and does not move beyond it. He sees the artist as a powerless tool in the hands of the dominant power bloc (Moore-Gilbert 62). Gramsci, on the contrary, deals with the politics of difference and of mobilizing forces to ‘modify a political situation’ (‘In Conversation’ 10) according to Said. Foucault influences Said in the study of orientalism as a discourse, but when discussing the process of mobilization of agency, Gramsci occupies a significant space.

In Fanon, Said finds an elaborate process of the development of resisting forces. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon draws out the process that underlies the mobilization of resistance to domination. Fanon identifies three stages that lead to an active phase of resistance. The resisting force comes from the native intellectual who manages to understand the politics of power and knowledge that the colonizer rests upon. In the first phase, the native tries to emulate the colonizer in his ways so as to empower himself by the same means. Influenced by the power-knowledge syndrome, the native attempts to grant himself power by rapaciously devouring the sources of western knowledge. This phase includes a description of personal ideas in a language and syntax which is imported. But very soon, the matrix of western knowledge and native psychology creates an alienating effect and the native experiences a severe need for a more personal voice. The almost neurotic need for a voice that is one’s own results in a sort of reversion with reverence for all that is essentially native. Suddenly, the language and knowledge of the colonizer becomes repulsive and there comes a violent movement from the culture of the colonizer to the pre-colonial culture of the colonized. Ironically, this includes exhuming the past and revitalizing it with a sort of exoticism which is very similar to the western discourse about the orient. The Swadeshi Movement in India and the Negritude Movement in Africa are examples of this phase. It is this sudden need to revert to the nativist symbolism that is exemplified in Ngugi’s reversion to his native
language Gikuyū, as the appropriate medium for expressing his ideas. The final phase of active resistance comes from disillusionment with the earlier phases. The tool of active aggression is offered to the masses as a sanctifying and liberating means through the works of literature. The intellectual now begins to mobilize the masses in a language of active resistance. This phase is marked by violent attacks to colonial bondage that finally lead to liberation and independence (Culture and Imperialism 176-180). Said depends upon Fanon’s model of resistance to observe the trajectory of resistance culture in literature and the arts. It is through this culture that the identity of the colonized can be mapped in the context of imperialism and resistance.

Said is also influenced by Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams in their insistence upon the potential of ‘emergent or alternative consciousness allied to emergent and alternative subaltern groups within the dominant discursive society’ (‘Foucault and the Imagination of Power’ 152). His dependence on Williams begins with Orientalism, where he attempts what Williams calls the ‘unlearning [of] the inherent dominative mode’ (Culture and Society 376). But Said’s dismantling of the dominative mode in Orientalism is restricted to questioning the identity construct in the precise moment of establishing a discourse about an essentialist orient. In Culture and Imperialism he engages in the study of identity in a much more violent and transformative process of decolonization. Whereas the study of the literary discourse of identity to establish empire can be termed academic, the issue of resistance and identity belongs to the real state of affairs.

With Culture and Imperialism, Said ventures head-on into the area of ‘writing-as-action’ (Beginnings 24). The culture of imperialism is based on the discourse of orientalism. Literature serves as a vehicle for the spread of this discourse in the culture of the colonizer as well as the colonized. A resistance to that discourse also has to come by way of literature. Said identifies literature in general and the novel as a genre in particular as a medium for the study of the culture of imperialism and its inevitable corollary: resistance. He identifies the novel as a medium that reflects the social, cultural, economic, political and ideological realities of its time and it is this ‘worldliness of novel’ (13) that provides him with the means to revisit the culture of imperialism. Further Said
develops a resistance theory based on the three stages elaborated by Fanon while unlayering the literary mode of resistance following his premise.

Said’s analysis of culture begins with a long revision of Orientalism. He restates his theory of creation of the discourse of orientalism elaborating the nuances of the process in greater detail and correcting and defending his stand in response to the criticisms offered to his previous work (‘In Conversation’ 4-5). The first half of Culture and Imperialism mirrors a returning glance to his earlier work and exhibits a strong compatibility with the Afterword to Orientalism that Said wrote in 1995.

In the epigraph from Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, Said clearly emphasizes that the drive to colonize was fuelled by a strong and unshakeable belief in the morality of colonial occupation. The colonizer was convinced that the occupation and governance of foreign lands was not an act of greed or malice, but rather an act of philanthropy. The westerner revered the belief and thought of himself as a messiah who had been entrusted with the divine task of civilizing the wild orient. This ‘idea’ (Culture and Imperialism vii) that Kipling called ‘the white man’s burden’ (280) and Said termed as the ‘mission civilisatrice’ (Culture and Imperialism 33) is the foundation of the culture of imperialism. It not only justifies the annexation and enslavement of foreign lands and peoples, but also makes the process seem like a matter of right for the colonizer. The colonizer’s craving for power works behind a façade of charity and seemingly absolves him of all tyranny.

This acceptance of the ‘mission civilisatrice’ as the primary aim behind colonization and a strong inherited belief about native degeneracy created a western ideology that saw imperialism as a divine exercise and not an exploitative ambition. The popularity of the belief in the western capability of reforming and civilizing the east created a strong culture of reckoning the western ‘self’ as a superior species, and formed what can be called the culture of imperialism.

The culture of imperialism drew upon the history of the west. The inherited myths about western superiority over the orient and a genealogically received ‘mission civilisatrice’ (Culture and Imperialism 33) justified the western occupation of the orient. The power function of the imperial process had to be situated in a pure and ‘useful past’ which was exclusive of ‘unwanted elements, vestiges, narratives’ (16). This selective and polished representation of western past could legitimize the imperial process and affirm
the discourse that ‘certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination’ (8). Since this fabricated history was used to create the discourse of the orient in stark opposition, the very idea of opposition also remains to be questioned. If the west did not represent its real ‘self’, the discursive oriental ‘other’ did not reflect the real ‘other’ either. The process of orientalism then becomes a discourse of double fabrication. The identity of the orient created in the process of orientalism had nothing to do with “The Orient” then, and was a fictional creation in imagined contexts.

In his study of Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, Said makes two observations about the culture of imperialism: first, that there is a colonial cultural residue that continues to remain in the culture of the colonized even after they are free from imperial rule; and second, that there is no utopian alternative to imperialism. The forces of nationalism take over where imperialism leaves. Further, Said discovers that both Kurtz and Marlow believe in the morality of the colonial process to begin with but ‘acknowledge the darkness’ at the heart of it (Culture and Imperialism 33) by the end of their African experience. But Conrad’s realization of this ‘horror’ (Conrad 106) does not encourage him to liberate the natives of his novel from the clutches of colonization. Said explains this split saying that there are two sides to consciousness: subjective/individual consciousness and secular/cultural consciousness (Culture and Imperialism 35). While the first offers an individual and uninfluenced reaction to experience, the second reflects a popular opinion. In the case of colonialism, the secular vision is the one that necessitates the polarity between the east and the west and makes them two distant and antagonistic entities. It is this secular consciousness that makes Conrad agency-less in the face of his subjective conclusions of ‘the horror’ (Moore-Gilbert 70). Ahmad makes a similar observation in his essay ‘Culture, Nationalism and the Role of Intellectuals’ that intellectuals are also caught, individually and collectively, in movements of history much larger than themselves despite their power to contradict those movements (425). With the colonized this secular consciousness takes the form of combative and essentially opposing forces. Said presses upon the need to harness the subjective consciousness so as to allow a comparative reading of culture and identity (Culture and Imperialism 49). He borrows the term ‘contrapuntal’ from music to define a process of highlighting one voice
among the others while not eliminating the others. He suggests that ‘[t]he effect is of a multilevel sound’ (qtd. in Bouyami and Rubin 426). Said’s insistence upon reading against the grain is related to:

[T]he formation of cultural identities understood not as essentialisms . . . but as contrapuntal ensembles, for it is the case that no identity can ever exist by itself without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions. (Culture and Imperialism 60)

Identity then becomes a constantly contrapuntal phenomenon, and not a state of being in isolation. Said establishes an infinite conflict in identity.

It is notable that Said allows a subjective voice to the colonizer here as against his erstwhile totalizing vision of a universal occidental culture and literary production. In Orientalism Said expresses his opinion that the western intellectual strictly adheres to the task of strengthening the discourse about oriental inferiority and the necessity of colonial enterprise (Orientalism 204; Said, ‘In Conversation’ 4). Here he gives a more realistic treatment to the role of an intellectual.

Said iterates upon the profound relationship between literature and the social space and observes that the literature of France and Europe bore a permanent backdrop of colonization, but never confronted it (75). With examples like Charles Dickens’ Great Expectations, Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre and the popularly quoted Jane Austen’s Mansfield Park, Said explains that the process of colonization and imperial control of far off lands was not only an accepted phenomena in these novels but also a necessary process for the maintenance of western high culture (Culture and Imperialism 75). To be able to understand the politics of this culture of colonial acceptance and support Said advocates a contrapuntal reading of ‘both processes . . . that of imperialism and that of resistance to it’ (79).

Said suggests that a ‘structure of attitude and reference’ towards the colonial process develops parallel to the novel (Culture and Imperialism 89). He identifies the novel as a genre that strategically works towards ‘keep[ing] the Empire more or less in place’ (88) and generating a ‘globalized worldview’ (90) about oriental identity and culture vis-à-vis colonialism. However Said marks an organic movement in the way
empire is perceived from the age of Austen to that of Conrad. This change in the attitude towards colonialism reflects a slow demystification of the imperial façade of humanism.

With a contrapuntal reading of Verdi’s Aida, Kipling’s Kim and Camus’ The Outsider, Said exemplifies that these texts reveal the cultural underpinnings of imperialism in the way the colonized are represented in them. There is an ‘immutable background voice’ (Culture and Imperialism 212) of colonialism in these texts. All these were written for a western readership and a reading of them from the oriental perspective reveals the politics of narration and the firm ground that the discourse of orientalism held in imperial culture.

Said defends himself against the notion that all literature is strategic in imperial occupation and changes his stand from Orientalism in accepting that ‘there are always resistances’ (Culture and Imperialism 225). In his earlier work, he denies any resistance whatsoever and suggests that the orient is inert in its subjection to oriental discourse and domination (‘Orientalism Reconsidered’ 203). But here he seems to move into a rather dynamic plane of colonial relations. He also corrects his notion about a homogenous representation of the colonized as inert and regressive in the literary work of the colonizers. He finds that in the later realistic work of Conrad and Forster one can read the failure of the presumptions about imperial humanism and the prejudices about oriental degeneracy (Culture and Imperialism 226).

The second part of Said’s work is devoted to the culture of resistance developed in counterpoint to the culture of imperialism. The culture of imperialism creates a discourse about oriental identity in stark opposition to the myths of western culture. Said’s constant attempts at questioning this discourse find a new methodology when he dismantles the cultural matrix contrapuntally. He engages in a contrapuntal reading of imperialism to unfold a culture of resistance directed against the discourse of orientalism and its application in the imperial process. Said identifies two voices in the experience of imperialism: that of the colonizer in the form of metropolitan discourses; and, that of the colonized in the form of resistance to imperialism (Culture and Imperialism 234). The simultaneous experience of these voices creates a dissonant and ‘disjunct’ scenario where various cultures contest ‘contrapuntally together’ (234). It is out of this contrapuntality that Said attempts to theorize resistance against imperialism.
Said is of the view that the issue of resistance has been unduly resolved by equating it to a force in opposition to western culture. Resistance by means of opposition tends to aggravate the polarity between the colonizer and the colonized (Culture and Imperialism 237; Ashcroft and Aihuuwalla 106). Since the ideas of nationalism are framed in absolute opposition to the projected western culture, nationalism tends to solidify the polarity between the east and the west, thereby affirming the discourse of orientalism rather than countering it, which was the real motive behind resistance (Innes 123). Said clarifies right at the outset, that his theory of resistance is not directed against a community but the culture of imperialism. His attempt is to counter the hegemonic dominant discourses and not any particular community or nation. Resistance is analyzed not in the colonial space of east and west but in the imperial space of domination and liberation. His theory of resistance is directed not only against the colonial rule, but also against the postcolonial domination of nationalism, and the current American ascendancy.

Said’s rejection of the polar identities of east and west as objects of his study for the cultural domain of imperialism and liberation suggests his movement beyond the essentialisms of orientalism and occidentalism to a resistance against the codifying forces of representation. There is a conspicuous movement beyond the boundaries that divide cultures, to place identity in the real space of influence and evolution rather than situating it in mythical arenas of warring fanaticisms. Said transcends the barrier of ‘opposition of inside and outside which inaugurates all binary opposition’ (Marrouchi 70).

Without doubt, national identity is extremely significant in the early stages of identity formation in counterpoint to dominating representations but one should be critical of the way in which national consciousness changes to nativist tendencies if not controlled in time. Nationalism is an important tool in creating a sense of ‘solidarity’ (Ahmad, ‘Culture, Nationalism’ 401) and identity between the colonized against the hegemonic control of the dominative mode, but it comes as a stumbling block in the path of ‘reconciliation between the West and the non-West’ (Moore-Gilbert 65). Nationalism needs to be transformed and adapted ‘in tangible ways’ to the larger battle against hegemony (Ahmad, ‘Culture, Nationalism’ 399) precisely like the metropolitan tools of
narration. Without such transformation, nationalism can become exceedingly separatist
and counter-hegemonic in nature (Ahmad, ‘Culture, Nationalism’ 403).

[Un]less national consciousness at its moment of success [is] somehow
changed into a social consciousness, the future would hold not liberation
but an extension of imperialism. (Said, Culture and Imperialism 323)

Referring to the Negritude movement, Said explains that nationalist movements, though
resistant in nature, are ‘trapped inside [themselves]’ (Culture and Imperialism 276). Here, Said seems to echo Fanon and Césaire in their belief that the development of a
nation as resistance is a bourgeois phenomenon which must be opposed vehemently as it
is at best a local reincarnation of the imperial process (Mohanty 123). Echoing the views
of Fanon and Wole Soyinka, he links such nationalist movements to other resistance
movements; such as, Yeats and the Irish context. Such endeavors of locating identity in
the space of a mythical past are isolating in nature.

Nationality, nationalism, nativism: the progression is more and more
constraining. [my emphasis] (Culture and Imperialism 277)

Said brings forward a theory of resistance not through opposition, but rather a
deconstructive and alternate methodology. He echoes Fanon’s warning against the
‘pitfalls of national consciousness’ (Culture and Imperialism 323) and necessitates the
appropriation of metropolitan culture to accommodate the expression of nationalism and
resistance to domination. Resistance is most effective when it acquires a place in the
mainframe of dominant culture and then transforms it to ‘establish cultural difference
within the discursive territory of the imperialist’ (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 106).

This complex area of resistance is to be read outside the scope of separatist and
fracturing categories. The discourse of orientalism is based on the politics of opposition
in timeless and universal frames. The resistance to it ought to come out of attempts to
reconcile the supposed oppositions and grant them an organic and individual rhetoric.
The idea of resisting through establishing essential oppositions is regressive in nature.
Rushdie asks about culture:
Do cultures actually exist as separate, pure defensible entities? Is not mélange, adulteration, impurity, pick ‘n’ mix at the heart of the idea of the modern, and hasn’t it been that way for almost all this shook-up century? Doesn’t the idea of pure culture in urgent need of being kept from alien contamination lead us inexorably towards apartheid, towards ethnic cleansing, towards the gas chamber? (‘Learning’ 21)

The mythology of purity and denial of acculturation leads to a violent xenophobia and further to cultural fanaticism (Ashcroft, Post-Colonial 25; Chatterjee 3). The culture of resistance cannot be backward looking and obstinately exclusive of the colonial experience. On the other hand, the culture of resistance can be progressive if it allows a ‘secular’ expression. To Said,

[The] dense fabric of secular life can’t be herded under the rubric of national identity or can’t be made entirely to respond to this phony idea of a paranoid frontier separating “us” from “them”— which is a repetition of the old sort of orientalist model. (qtd. in Sprinker 233)

Said stresses upon the importance of reading the text of culture and identity in counterpoint. In the postcolonial space, resistance can result in a fanatic and defensive recourse to tribalism or it can be maneuvered towards ‘some grand synthesis’ through a ‘clarified political and methodological commitment to the dismantling of systems of domination’ (Reflections on Exile 215).

Said has been criticized for not acknowledging forces of resistance from the colonized in his earlier work (Ashcroft, Post-Colonial 40). But he clarifies in Culture and Imperialism that imperial power was never accepted by a supine and inert non-Western native; there was always some form of active resistance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out. (xii)

This seems to reflect that imperialism subsequently results in resistance. Resonating the Foucauldian belief that ‘where there is power there is resistance’, it can be simplistically concluded that resistance is an unavoidable effect of imperialism (Said, ‘In Conversation’ 5). But Said’s theory of resistance does not end with active aggression against the
colonizer. He observes two distinct stages of resistance: ‘primary resistance’ which includes the reclaiming of the ‘geographical territory’ under siege; and, ‘secondary resistance’ which refers to the reconstitution and restoration of the ‘cultural territory’ (Culture and Imperialism 252). The active aggression against colonial rule is followed by a resistance against the mental and cultural domination against hegemonic forces. This resistance against the mental imperialism extended by the dominating ruler in the form of discourses is a means towards reclaiming the native imagination (Chatterjee 13). It is this form of liberation that Said concerns himself with in the main.

Said situates his theory of resistance in the space of literature and suggests that the act of restoring the suppressed past of the native can be materialized through a process of ‘writing back’ to the empire (260). This act of writing includes not just a contrapuntal reading of canonical texts but also a rewriting of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. This rewriting of canonical texts reflects an ‘intellectual and figurative energy reseeing and rethinking the terrain common to whites and nonwhites’ (Culture and Imperialism 256). Such an exercise is transformative in that it resists the canonical binary by subverting its canonicity. Re-writing of canonical texts in a way returns the ‘gaze’ of the colonizer and ‘transforms our view of cultural possibilities’ (Ashcroft, Post-Colonial 35) thereby diminishing the staunch imposition of imperial stereotyping. This act of revisiting the past in counterpoint is to come to a state of liberation with an acceptance that the history and culture of the colonizer and the colonized are inevitably inscribed in each other and they cannot be subscribed to a pre-colonial past. Such a study in counterpoint is vital to the development of a diversely affiliated identity and it is this space of identification in hybridity that allows for the dismantling of the essentialist compartments of ‘self’ and ‘other’.

This process of writing back includes a break down of the oppositions between various cultures. It includes entering the dominant discursive mode and transforming it to allow the suppressed voices to speak, not in the absence of the dominant voices, but in counterpoint with them. This form of resistance marks a movement towards empowerment through a denial of essentialist representations. Further Said’s insistence upon the presence of both voices and the creation of cacophony is to suggest the idea that culture and identity in the postcolonial world cannot be defined or defended in a space of
singular voices. The identity of the postcolonial world, on the other hand, can only be
defined in a state of continuous conflict. By acquiring the western means of
representation and subsequently appropriating them to reject domination, the orient, once
considered powerless, is brought into a state of challenging dialogue with the
metropolitan intellectual.

Locating the space of resistance in literature is based on a premise that narratives
themselves make a nation and that ‘[n]arrative itself is the representation of power’
(Culture and Imperialism 330). The author of a text has the authority to tell. This
authority, if acquired by the native, allows for the telling of the story from the other side
of the canon. Said’s theory of resistance is based on this thesis regarding the relationship
between power and narration. The language and the syntax remain those of the dominant
class but are appropriated to the native’s experience. This exercise of appropriation is
metaphorically significant as it represents the movement of the native into the space of
narration, hitherto reserved for the imperial ruler alone. As opposed to nativist methods
that demand a complete substitution of dominant forms with the oriental means, such an
exercise is more inclusive and anticipates a resolution and reconciliation of identity,
rather than continued exclusion and chauvinism. Total substitution of narrative
techniques with native forms would restrict the counter narrative to native readership
alone and would not let contrapuntal voices be heard in the western world. This would
result in a resistance which is isolated from the rest of the world. To make resistance a
global phenomenon of opposing human suppression, rather than a conflict between two
categories, Said insists upon a voyage in (Culture and Imperialism 295).

Resistance is then directed towards acquiring the metropolitan literary mode and
appropriating the language to suit the national expression (Chatterjee 7). This is
exemplified in Raja Rao’s successful attempt to ‘convey in a language not one’s own, a
spirit that is one’s own’ by infusing the ‘tempo’ of Indian life into an Indian English
expression (‘Foreword’ v). Rushdie’s methodology of writing ‘outside the whale’ demands a similar appropriation.

Outside the whale is the unceasing storm, the continual quarrel, the
dialectic of history. Outside the whale there is a genuine need for political
fiction, for books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new
languages with which we can understand the world. (‘Outside the Whale’
100)

Achebe similarly believes that:

English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings. (62)

The space of this hybrid work is a space of constant polemic between the forces working within it. It is in this polemical space of conflict, appropriation and attempts towards resolution, that the postcolonial third-world identity is defined.

Said is criticized for accepting the west as superior to the orient (Jalal al-’Azm 18). By insisting that the native must enter the metropolitan centre and appropriate it, Said repeats the canonical belief of superiority of the west in contrast with the orient. The orient has to voyage in to the mainframe of western culture to liberate himself. This conscious movement towards the canon for empowerment makes the native undeniably aware of western superiority. Said demands an appropriation of the western systems of narration and thereby necessitates the acquisition of western cultural and linguistic tools to liberate the orient. He accepts that the western culture is the metropolitan culture and his repeated insistence upon the native adapting to the metropolitan culture so as to transform it makes western culture an unshakeable and unchallengeable entity. On the other hand, the native is defined as extremely malleable. The native intellectual is identified as the human force capable of redirecting western sources of power against the western discourses of power. The native intellectual is empowered in Saidean theory to ‘voyage in’ to the metropolitan centre and dismantle its constructs. But Said simultaneously makes the identity of the native intellectual a fluid construct which ‘can make “the voyage over” to a new transnational cultural identity’ wherever it is located (Moore-Gilbert 72). Said identifies innumerable powers of strategic and productive resistance in the native, but at the same time defines identity for him in a space of no affiliations.

This transformative aspect of resistance is suggestive of a sort of compliance within resistance. Following the model offered by Fanon, the first phase of resistance is
the phase wherein the native intellectual imbibes the sources of western empowerment (Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* 176). There is a sort of compliance that resistance resorts to right at the outset. In the native’s attempts to resist domination, the first step is that of emulation of the western model. This emulation is personified in Macaulay’s ‘middle men’ who are in the oscillatory space of mixed affiliations. In this phase resistance is obliquely viewed as a colonially orchestrated process.

The experience of colonial domination shows that, in the effort to perpetuate exploitation, the colonizer . . . provokes and develops the cultural alienation of a part of the population, either by so-called assimilation of indigenous people, or by creating a social gap between the indigenous elites, and the popular masses. As a result of this process . . . the urban or peasant *petite bourgeoisie*, assimilates the colonizer’s mentality. (Africa Information Centre 45)

Native intellectuals like Senghor, Achebe, Soyinka and Yeats were educated in western models and their location is problematic vis-à-vis their syntax and content (Innes 123-4). The dubitable identity and culture of these ‘middle men’ most often results in the third phase of resistance where they dismantle the colonial structures by reconciling the oppositions between cultures and accepting the transformation that imperialism causes.

However, it would be too simplistic to assume that resistance through nationalism is totally compliant with imperial culture and is a ‘legacy of imperialism’ (Spivak *Outside* 281). It is believed that in emulating the west, the native borrows the western sense of nationalism, and the resisting forces directed against imperialism are in fact the greatest victory of the colonial forces. But such a supposition would become problematic if one were to observe the conflict between native and imperial identity in post-colonial terms.

Decolonization . . . required theoretical realignment in the very framework of the existing theory of state. . . . But implicit in that was another agreement: namely, that as one undertook the necessary surpassing, one could not simply bypass or take easy recourse to an infinite regress of heterogeneities; one had to go through the Marxist categories, in order to arrive on the other side. . . . One had to take stock . . . of what one had at hand, as a theoretical legacy and as a historical experience. It was at this
point . . . that the most productive disagreements began. (Ahmad, ‘Postcolonialism’ 15)

Further, had the forces of nationalism been borrowed and emulated alone, a resistance movement based on them would not have resulted in such a popular following or in the final independence of the colonized. Taking the example of India, one can observe how the systems of democracy and citizenship were established soon after Independence through nationalistic resistance (Ahmad, ‘The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality’ 4).

Third-world identity bears in it the imprint of a pre-colonial past, the colonial experience, the resistance though nationalistic means and the reconciling efforts of the native between forces of nationalism and incorporated influences of imperialism. Nationalism may primarily be a western term, but it is appropriated by the resisting native to oppose subjugation by all dominative modes: imperial as well as nationalist. The resistance to imperialism comes from an amalgam of forces which employs both opposition and incorporation. It is because of this dual movement that the space of third-world identity becomes ‘hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic’ (Culture and Imperialism xxix).

It is this multiplicity of identity and culture, without a fanatic warring of ideas within, that Said attempts to uncover through his theory. To him, such an acknowledgement of hybridity in culture and identity marks a progressive movement in the society from the separatist oppositions to an environment conducive to inclusion. It is by developing a ‘pluralistic vision of the world’ (Culture and Imperialism 277) that a true sense of ‘liberation’ can be brought about in the imperial space (278). The act of liberation suggests rising above and beyond the bonds of one’s existence. Resistance to imperialism and hegemonic control should be directed towards transcending the bonds of race through an inclusive and conciliating form of resistance (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 112).

Further Said takes the concept of imperialism to the space of American ascendancy and suggests that the representation of America as the nation entrusted with a ‘world responsibility’ because of its unsurpassable superiority over the rest of world continues the play of representations as a means of empowerment (Culture and Imperialism 345). In counterpoint, the east is defined as terroristic and fanatic (375). A
demolition of the essentialist identities created out of the American ‘will to power’ is possible only through a dismantling of these strategies to power by a greater ‘voyage in’ to the structures of power and revising them from a view in counterpoint.

Despite the inconsistent structure of *Culture and Imperialism* (Moore-Gilbert 70), Said manages to draw a theory of resistance based on conciliation rather than antagonism. He manages to break the binaries of ‘self’ and ‘other’ and find a sense of identity in the space of overlap between them. Bringing identity into the hybrid space of constant contestation, he celebrates the ideas of secularism, tolerance and acceptance as against the essentialist oppositions of constraining representations. Observing that resistance to subjugation comes not only from the colonized but also from the colonizer in the form of disillusionment in the civilizing mission, Said brings the colonizer and the colonized to a ‘largely common’ ground (241). With the native emulating and appropriating the colonial experience and the colonizer doubting the ethics of imperialism, Said populates the middle space of colonial experience with ‘differentiated’ peoples, hybridized by colonial interaction (xxix). Referring to the space of anxiety and distrust in the imperial mission shared by the colonizer and the colonized (241) Said almost explains the working of the middle space and the interstices without using the terminology in currency. He provides the ground on which the theory of multicultural identities can be developed. One can almost hear Bhabha as an expectation in Said, who claims in his Introduction to *Culture and Imperialism* that ‘because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic’ (xxix) and concludes with the idea that ‘[n]o one today is purely one thing. . . Imperialism consolidated the mixtures of cultures and identities on a global scale’ (407).

But Said seems to embark upon the idea of a common culture of difference created due to the colonial exercise and seems to arrive at a possibility of resolving the conflict between identities and cultures by passively accepting them as a matter of fact. He suggests that ‘hybrid counter-energies . . . provide a community or culture made up of numerous anti-systemic hints and practices for collective human existence . . . that is not based on coercion or domination’ [my emphasis] (406) and further that a secular realization and acceptance of difference includes ‘not trying to rule others, not trying to
classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how “our” culture or country is number one’ (408). Such a supposition seems to be a rather far fetched and utopian, which is almost impossible to envisage. His model of a global ‘common culture which also recognizes and respects legitimate differences and which does not preserve the political status quo by attempting to negotiate away real and material conflicts of interest by appeals to a “higher” reality embodied in a quasi spiritual sphere of shared texts’ (Moore-Gilbert 72) is highly unrealistic and shows strong affiliations to an imagined community of peaceful and equalitarian hybridity. Said reaches the space of hybrid identity and acknowledges its presence but rather unrealistically imagines to pacify all difference and develop a utopian and homogeneous global culture of hybridity.

In the area of third-world identity, Said’s work can be appreciated as a landmark in that he initiates the idea of a mixed identity and culture as opposed to the previous notion of identity as a pure and reclaimable form. But beyond that, Said seems to locate identity and culture in the space of hopefulness and deviates from the space of real experience. Said shifts abruptly from his study of culture as what it is to culture as what it should be. In this movement, the question of third-world identity becomes a point of conjecture in the utopian world of mutual coexistence and peaceful secularism. Identity once again gets situated in the space of homogenization and commonality. Said manages to bring forward the question of hybridity and undeniable differentiation of culture due to colonization, but he restricts himself to the cultural aspect of it. The discussion of identity in the hybridized form remains to be discussed in his work.
i. Rushdie’s term ‘outside the whale’ is explained in his essay by the same title included in Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991. Rushdie’s use of the term comes in reference to George Orwell’s ‘Inside the Whale’. Orwell describes the womb of the whale as a place of hiding, and being inside the whale would be an act of being ‘swallowed, remaining passive, accepting…’. It is a species of quietism’ (qtd. in Rushdie, ‘Outside the Whale’ 95). Outside the whale is a space of writing outside the canonical structures. It would require a revision of the ruling patterns and of writing in counterpoint with ‘rowdyism’ (Rushdie 99).