Chapter 1

Aesthetics of Post-colonialism

A search for cultural identity is a *sinequanon* of post-colonial writing which represents the experience of colonialism and the challenge of the post-colonial world. A recurring feature of post-colonial writing is the attempt to identify the differential cultural identity. As oppositional discourse, post-colonial literature seeks to undermine the European discursive tradition that has fostered and promoted the entire process of imperialisation. It annihilates the system of conceptualisation and representation that justify and help maintain imperialist power during and after the age of colonialism. In post-colonial literature, decolonizing impulses attain reinforcement through the establishment of a differential identity which is the result of the authentic assertion of the indigenous culture and an attempt to resist the totalizing western cultural hegemony.

Post-colonial theory has evolved over the last few decades. It comprises a variety of practices, performed within a range of disciplinary fields, around the globe and is now commonly identified as the post-colonial mode of cultural analysis. An attempt to draw the contours of the development of the practice over the years would need to focus on figures like the Trinidadian C.L.R. James, Frantz Fanon, originally from Martinique, but a revolutionary activist in Algeria, Chinua Achebe, the African critic and Ranajit Guha the Indian historiographer based in
Australia. Such a history would also have to examine the claims of the “Common Wealth” literary studies of the 1960s and 1970s and various kinds of aesthetic theory in non-European languages considered variants of post-colonial theory. Regarding the relevance and significance of “Post-colonialism” Bart-Moore Gilbert observes:

Given its short history as a practice in the Western academy, and literature departments in Britain more specifically, post-colonial criticism has nonetheless had on the face of it, at least – a major impact upon current modes of cultural analysis, bringing to the forefront of concern the interconnection of issues of race, nation, empire, migration and ethnicity with cultural production (6).

Before the term “Post-colonial” was coined expressions like “Common Wealth” and “Third World” were used to refer to the literatures of the erstwhile European colonies. The experience of colonization and the challenge of the post-colonial world have produced an explosion of new writing in English. This diverse and powerful body of literature has established a specific practice of post-colonial writing in cultures as various as India, Australia, Africa and Canada and challenges the existing canon and dominant ideas of literature and culture. “Post-colonial” deals with the cultural and intellectual interactions between European nations and the countries they colonised in the modern period. The term
“Post-colonial” is used rather loosely because of the widely divergent experience of these countries. The post-colonial status of the United States is problematic as it represents both the colonised and the coloniser. Australia and Canada were former colonies but they show allegiance to the coloniser. Besides, problems of racism and language are conspicuously absent in their case. The debate over post-colonial status of settler colonies exposes the inadequacy of the definition of post-colonialism.

Post-colonial writing seeks to undermine the universalist claims once made on behalf of literature by liberal humanist tradition.

If we claim that great literature has a timeless and universal significance we thereby demote or disregard cultural, social, regional and national differences in experience and outlook, preferring instead to judge all literature by a single, supposedly “Universal Standard” (Barry 191).

Post-colonialism rejects universalism. Whenever a universal signification is claimed for a work, then, white, Eurocentric norms and practices are being promoted by a sleight of hand to this elevated status, and all others correspondingly relegated to subsidiary marginalised roles. The long century of European political domination of the rest of the world being finally over, the time seems to have come to reckon with its civilizational aftermath, making it necessary to undertake a rigorous scrutiny of the continuities and ruptures in the decolonised societies.
Most of the post-colonial texts emphasize different distinctive features of the particular national or regional culture. Some are race-based and represent certain shared characteristics across various national literatures such as the common racial inheritance in literatures of the African diaspora. Often, hybridity and syncreticity form the constitutive elements of all post-colonial literatures.

These post-colonialist impulses “operate as assumptions within critical practice rather than specific and discrete schools of thought; in any discussion of post-colonial writing a number of them may be operating at the same time” (Ashcroft et al; Empire 15). Post-colonial literature and theory became acceptable to western academy because of its affinity towards the postmodern formulations of hybridity, syncretisation and pastiche.

Post-colonialism is a way of thinking and writing about colonialism as a global system to be decolonised. As a point of intersection for a variety of disciplines, it has enabled interdisciplinary dialogue. It is a confounding battleground where conflicting theories like Marxism and poststructuralism struggle to co-exist. This paradoxical situation spawns controversy over the content, scope and relevance of post-colonial studies. Its metaphysical, methodological and political concerns can be easily established. Concepts of nationality, race and ethnicity and questions of language and power and the impact of imperialism on cultural identity and subjectivity constitute vital aspects of the post-colonial condition.
Based on the exploitation of natural and human resources of the colonized nation, colonialism perpetuates itself through oppression and aggression. Jean – Paul Sartre remarks : “Oppression means, first of all the oppressor’s hatred for the oppressed” (quoted in Juneja 2). The hatred creates a petrified ideology that devotes itself to regarding human beings as talking beasts. This in turn dehumanises both the colonizer and the colonized. It is presumed that the colonizer, to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal.

The dialectics of colonialism is related to the economic and political exploitation of the colony. By circulating the myth of the inferiority of the colonized and getting it reinforced through the education system, the colonizer gets it internalised by the colonized. Once that is done this myth acquires a dimension in which the colonized views himself through the mirror of the colonizer. The internalised myth of the inferiority of the colonized eats into the fabric of the social, religious and cultural life of the colonized. Homi Bhabha comments:

Colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an “other” and yet entirely knowable and visible. It resembles a form of narrative in which the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are
bound in a reformed and recognizable totality (quoted in Juneja 3).

Thus having been thrown out of the history-making process, the colonized loses interest in his selfhood and accepts the myth of his intellectual, social, cultural, religious and even physical inferiority. With the denial of voting rights and the discharge of normal civil duties, the colonized accepts the passive roles assigned to him by the colonizer. Even education which is tailored to serve the needs of the colonizer, helps in keeping the colonized fixed to his position. The colonizer destroys the past of the colonized by changing the frame of reference of history from the colony to that of his mother country. He distorts and disfigures the historical past of the colonized to his advantage. By changing the names of streets, putting up the statues of his home heroes, designing buildings after the architecture of his home country, the colonizer attempts to obliterate everything from the memory of the colonized about his past and creates antipathy for his own civilization and culture. So the colonized remembers nothing of his past before the colonial rule. He feels ashamed of it because of the distorted version imposed on him by the colonizer.

Post-colonialism can be approached as a multi-disciplinary, often cross-disciplinary project, re-examining the history and legacy of colonialism and incorporating the perspectives of the colonized. The
shift in focus brought about by post-colonialism is changing the way scholars understand history, culture and politics. Post-colonial studies constitute a controversial field that first attained institutional consolidation in the 1980s. The term ‘post-colonial’, when first employed, designated the period following the extensive post-war decolonisation. Then it began to accrue a wider range of meaning associated with resisting and understanding colonialism. Robert J.C. Young suggests:

Post-colonialism has come to name a certain kind of interdisciplinary political, theoretical and historical work that sets out to serve as a transitional forum for studies grounded in the historical context of colonialism, as well as in the political context of contemporary problems of globalization (4).

It can be identified as an emergent twentieth century critical practice that reached full definition in the closing decades of the century.

Post-colonialism is relevant because decolonisation is far from complete and colonial mentalities, including the inequities they nurture, die hard. Decolonisation emerged as an important issue in international relations after the Second World War that witnessed the dismantling of colonial structures and the rebirth of independent nations. The process of decolonisation received a fillip and a new sense of direction through commonwealth literary studies focusing on imaginative texts produced
by writers outside England and the United States and through the growth of post-colonial theory. As a reaction against the critical privileging of texts removed from context, there emerged a new textual practice that sought to validate the dialogue between text and context. Imaginative writers were regaled by the prospect of locating their narratives in the post-colonial space. Diana Brydon makes a significant statement on the origin, nature and scope of Post-colonial theory. She writes:

Post-colonial theory arose from that dissatisfaction with imperial accounts of colonial peoples. The field is still grappling with the attempt to create a sound scientific basis for comprehensive study that will not be tainted by Eurocentric or Orientalist assumptions (2-3).

Post-colonialism describes the process of rethinking attitudes toward colonialism and its aftermath. The term works most productively when associated with a particular mode of questioning employed across established boundaries. It implies an interrogation of the demarcation lines separating traditional disciplinary practices. Post-colonial frames of interpretation are most often enabling when they facilitate distinctions among different orders of colonial experience.

It is possible to distinguish between post-colonialism and post-colonial studies though at certain point the distinctions will start to blur. Post-colonialism has been loosely defined as what happened after
colonialism officially ended including rethinking the whole complex of reactions to colonialism across the entire range of human achievement under systems of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Practitioners of post-colonialism move backward from decolonising struggle to periods marked by first contact between indigenous cultures and European traders and explorers in search of expansion. They are concerned with the multidisciplinary attempt to identify and analyse what imperial hegemonies have misunderstood or suppressed in these processes in their own cultures and in others. Post-colonial theory commits itself to a complex project of historical and psychological recovery. Diana Brydon observes:

As a contested space of domestic and international relations within a global economy, post-colonialism enables and is enabled by the academic rethinking of disciplinary structures of knowledge associated with post-colonialism and postmodernism. It has the strengths and weaknesses that characterize any generalising term (6-7).

The accelerated time-line of ‘the post-colonial’ has served as a point of entry for astute interrogations of the pitfalls of this most current term in contemporary critical discourse. ‘The post-colonial’ hastily compresses several distinct eras and arenas of colonialism and imperialism, individual struggles of decolonisation, subsequent regimes of
neo-colonialism and neoimperialism and various post-war movements of exile, migration and diaspora into a collective critical entity, that effectively homogenizes differences of history and geography, place and politics. Vilashini Cooppan endorses this idea:

Paradoxically the watchwords of this globalized post-coloniality are heterogeneity, difference, alterity and hybridity. Post-colonial studies, as several of its most incisive critics have noted, has compressed the differences of other people’s history on a methodological level which it has simultaneously asserted and celebrated those differences on a theoretical and discursive level (1-2).

Post-colonialism can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and crucially, interrogating the colonial past. The process of returning to the colonial scene discloses a relationship of reciprocal antagonism and desire between coloniser and colonised. And it is in the unfolding of this troubled and troubling relationship that we might start to discern the ambivalent prehistory of the post-colonial condition. If post-coloniality is to be reminded of its origins in colonial oppression, it must also be theoretically urged to recollect the compelling seductions of colonial power. The forgotten archive of the colonial encounter narrates multiple stories of contestation and its discomfiting other, complicity. Leela Gandhi posits:
The colonial past is not simply a reservoir of 'raw' political experiences and practices to be theorised from the detached and enlightened perspective of the present. It is also the scene of intense discursive and conceptual activity, characterised by a profusion of thought and writing about the cultural and political identities of colonised past, post-colonialism needs to define itself as an area of study which is willing not only to make, but also to gain theoretical sense out of that past (4-5).

In recent times, post-colonial studies have emerged both as a meeting point and battleground for a variety of disciplines and theories. While it has enabled a complex interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities, its uneasy incorporation of mutually antagonistic theories – such as Marxism and poststructuralism – confound any uniformity of approach. As a consequence there is little consensus regarding the proper content, scope and relevance of post-colonial studies.

However, it can be confidently stated that post-colonial studies postulates itself as a theoretical attempt to engage with a particular historical condition. Whatever the controversy surrounding the post-colonial theory, its value must be judged in terms of its adequacy to conceptualise the complex condition that attends the aftermath of colonial occupation.
Post-colonialism functions as an umbrella term to encompass literatures written in English all over the world. This has resulted in the homogenisation of the diversities of the erstwhile colonies. Literature produced in former colonies undertakes the task of interrogating the language and culture of the colonizer. *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) examines the fortunes of English language in countries with colonial history, emphasizing how the writers abrogated and appropriated English to present their experiences and express their sense of identity. Different linguistic communities have denconstructed English in a variety of ways to challenge the colonial value system that the language epitomized. The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonised place. This primacy of language in the post-colonial discourse is emphasized by Nicholas Thomas. He states: "Post-colonialism is distinguished not by a clean leap into another discourse, but by its critical reaccentuation of colonial and anticolonial languages" (7).

Focusing on the cultural concerns of post-colonialism, Helen Tiffin defines it as "reading and writing practices grounded in some form of colonial experience occurring outside Europe but as a consequence of European expansion into an exploitation of the other worlds" (170). Bill Ashcroft et al expatiate on this concept with the insightful comment that
post-colonialism covers “all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day” (Empire 2).

While the hyphenated form “Post – colonialism” is generally considered canonical and indicative of the process of decolonisation, there are theorists who share the view that the post-colonial condition that emerged with the onset of colonial occupation and the unbroken term is more suited to represent the history of colonial experience. They feel that it is irrelevant to think in terms of separating colonialism from its aftermath.

The prefix ‘Post’ complicates matters because it implies an aftermath in two senses – temporal as in coming after, and ideological as in supplanting. It is the second implication which critics of the term have found contestable if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased; it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism. Ania Loomba rightly posits:

A country may be both post-colonial (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and culturally dependent) at the same time. We cannot dismiss the importance of either formal decolonisation, or the fact that unequal relations of colonial rule are reinscribed in the contemporary imbalances between ‘First’ and ‘Third World’ countries (7).
Founded on questions about how knowledge is constituted, evaluated and preserved, Post-colonialism is at once a cultural phenomenon and an academic field. It indicates a range of global cultural developments that occurred in the post-colonial period. It represents the twilight of European imperialism. That is the reason why the beginning of post-colonialism is construed as the process of interrogating imperial rule and anticolonial resistance to European imperialism.

Frederick Jameson locates the beginning of post-colonialism in a cultural context in which all “the natives became human beings [...] all marginalized categories both within the First World and its external subjects and official natives” (71). A sudden resurgence in economic activities in the third world exposed it to global capitalism that resulted in the transition from the ‘colony’ to the post-colonial societies.

Despite the manifold success of post-colonial studies in reshaping traditional disciplinary configurations and modes of cultural analysis in recent years, they are currently beset by a number of problems, which are reflected in a growing attack from outside the field and increasing discussion within. Post-colonial criticism and theory alike comprise a variety of practices, performed within a range of disciplinary fields in a multitude of different institutional locations around the globe. The growing divide between the two has generated a lot of controversies over the nature, scope and methodologies of the two practices.
Post-colonial criticism is more positivist and empiricist in its assumptions and procedures. Its exponents like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Wilson Harris are interested in practical analysis of post-colonial texts in the connections between culture and imperialism.

Post-colonial theory on the other hand is shaped primarily by methodological affiliations to French ‘high’ theory notably that of Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. In practice this will include the work of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. According to Moore Gilbert, “It is the ‘intrusion’ of French ‘high’ theory into post-colonial analysis that has perhaps generated the most heated of the many current critical debates, provoking extremes of both approval and disapproval” (1). However it is possible to identify important continuities at both strategic and tactical levels between the work of both post-colonial critics and post-colonial theorists though differences of emphasis can be recognised in their interpretation and deployment of some of the key analytic concepts and critical procedures.

The ancestry of Post-colonial theory can be traced to Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) that represented the voice of cultural resistance to France’s African empire. Fanon argued that the first step for colonised people in finding a voice and an identity is to retain their own past. For centuries the European colonising power has been devaluing the nation’s past, seeing its precolonial era a pre-civilized limbo, or even as a historical void. Children, both black and white will
have been taught to see history, culture and progress as beginning with the arrival of the Europeans. Fanon theorised that if the first step towards a post-colonial perspective is to reclaim one’s own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past had been devalued.

In his earlier work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) Fanon examines the psychological effects of colonialism based on his experience as a psychoanalyst. The book probes the process involved in colonisation and decolonisation, focusing on the role of consciousness in it and the psychic trauma produced by colonialism. Sociological, psychological and Marxian concepts meet and mingle in Fanon’s mode of interpretation. He unravels the psychic connection between colonial wars and mental disorders incorporating racial, cultural and psychological phenomena into the discourse of colonisation. Outlining the cultural and psychological dimensions of white racism against the black under colonialism, Fanon relates one of his experiences in France:

> On that day completely dislocated, unable to be aboard with the ‘other’ the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took far off my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood (*Black Skin* 112 – 113).
Fanon describes a world order where he was made to see himself as an object, his identity defined in negative terms, subhuman, placed at the mercy of those who identify and represent him as inferior. His identity is something created for him by the French. The colonised is forced to internalise the self as the ‘other’. The imaginative distinction between the self and the ‘other’ or ‘man’ and the ‘blackman’ is a significant part of the colonial domination. The entire project of anti-imperialist nationalism is built upon the awareness of one’s self belonging to a subject people.

The question of national culture and the necessity of revolutionary violence to reach socialism are the major concerns of Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. He argues that the mere placement of white bureaucrats with coloured equivalents is no way to a better social order. Imperialism will continue to survive and pose threat to civil society if an adequate social awareness is not evolved. Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha constitute the holy trinity of post-colonial theorists. Robert Young in his ground-breaking comparative study *White Mythologies* (1990) identifies the new logic of historical writing in their work.

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) has to be situated in the context of institutional network of literary critical practices that introduced mainly post-colonial theory. Said’s importance is mainly based on the initiative
he has taken in mediating critical methods associated with certain kinds
French ‘high theory’ into the Anglo – American academic world of the
1970s. Orientalism provides one of the first examples of a sustained
application of such modes of analysis to Anglophone cultural history
and textual tradition. The book seeks to adapt elements of the new
theory to the study of connection between Western culture and
imperialism to argue that all Western systems of cultural description are
deeply contaminated with the politics, the positions and the strategies of
power. He emphasizes relationship between Western representation and
knowledge on the one hand and Western material and political power
on the other. He also takes up issues associated with race, empire and
ethnicity and skilfully applies theory in the discussion of culture –
specific, even ethnocentric ways of thinking. As Robert Young puts it in
White Mythologies :

The appropriation of French theory by Anglo – American
intellectuals is marked and marred, by its consistent
excision of the issue of Eurocentrism and its relation to
colonialism. Not until Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978)
did it become a significant issue for Anglo – American
literary theory (126).

By orientalism, Said means several things, all of them in his
opinion interdependent.
The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about or researches the Orient — and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist — either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism (*Orientalism* 2).

Regarded as the catalyst and reference point for post-colonialism, *Orientalism* focuses on the discursive and textual production of colonial meanings leading to the consolidation of colonial hegemony. Gayatri Spivak hails *Orientalism* as a source book that speaks authoritatively on matters of colony and empire. She comments:

The study of colonial discourse directly released by works such as Said’s, has [...] blossomed into the garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken to, even spoken for.

It is an important part of the discipline now (*Outside 56*).

Said views Orientalism as an enormous system of intertextual network of rules and procedures which regulate anything that may be thought, written or imagined about the Orient. Colonial textuality produced the Orient as colonisable and imposed an imaginative command over them to facilitate administrative domination that followed. *Orientalism*
unmasks the ideological disguises of imperialism to expose the reciprocal relationship between the colonial knowledge and colonial power. Said reveals that the most important problems addressed in *Orientalism* are “the representation of ‘other’ culture, societies, histories; the relationship between different kinds of texts, text and context, between text and history”. “Orientalism Reconsidered” (846).

The commentaries on Orientalism have exposed various and deeprooted contradictions in its arguments. These were explained in terms of Said’s attempt to combine Marxist tradition of cultural theory with realist epistemology and cultural vision of power as repressive and working on behalf of certain material interests together with Foucauldian theory. There is radical contradiction in *Orientalism’s* discussion of the relationship between discursive orientalism and the material practices and politics of imperialism, which derives in part from Said’s attempt to abolish the distinction between the two terms.

Another major methodological difficulty in *Orientalism* centres on Said’s own position as a critic of the system he analyses. He often strongly rejects the premise of traditional humanist criticism that the critic can remain outside the text or discursive field; that is being analysed and consequently provide a ‘disinterested’ account of it. The contradiction between Said’s humanism and his recourse to Gramsci, on the one hand, and his anti – humanism on the other, are most sharply
revealed in what is probably the knottiest methodological problem in *Orientalism*.

*Orientalism* is the outcome of such a rethinking of what had for centuries been believed to be an unbridgeable chasm separating the East from the West. Said’s professed aim was to challenge the notion that “difference implies hostility, a frozen reified set of opposed essences and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things” (*Orientalism* 352). Said examined how the knowledge that the Western Imperial powers formulated about their colonies helped continually to justify their subjugation.

Said shows that the development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego. An integral comprehension of the emergence of the ‘West’ as a system warrants the recognition that “the colonised ‘orient’ has helped to define Europe as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experiences” (*Orientalism* 2).

In *Orientalism*, Said calls for a new way of conceiving the separations and conflicts that had stimulated generations of hostility, war and imperial control. Regarding the objectives of the book Said declares:

I intend my book as part of a pre-existing current of thought, whose purpose was to literate intellectuals from
the shackles of systems such as orientalism. I wanted readers to make use of my work so that they might then produce new studies of their own. [...] I meant to cast some light on their (orientalists) practices so as to make other humanists aware of one field’s particular procedures and genealogy (Orientalism 340 – 341).

In The World, the Text and the Critic (1983), Said renounces all ambitions to provide totalising frameworks and explanations of the kind offered in Orientalism. He advances reasons for his growing unease with Foucault. He suggests that, in stressing a text’s worldly affiliations, Foucault illegitimately homogenizes quite different kinds of discourse, by stripping “the (individual) text of its esoteric on hermetic elements” (The World 212). The World, the Text and the Critic also suggests that Foucault’s often deterministic and pessimistic vision of how power operates raises insurmountable problems vis-à-vis Said’s growing conviction of the need to move beyond Western and non-Western cultures which characterized the colonial era. In “Orientalism Reconsidered” (1985), ‘Foucault and the Imagination of Power’ (1986) and Culture and Imperialism (1993), Said moves further away from the Foucauldian perspectives elaborated in Orientalism.

The essays collected in Said’s Culture and Imperialism (1993) represent both an extension and a modification of many of the arguments
elaborated in *Orientalism*. It seeks to broaden discussion of the relations between culture and histories of imperialism considerably. It gives space to a wider range of geographical areas, social formations and cultural forms and pays detailed attention to developments in the contemporary period. In the text Said gives more attention to non-western forms of cultural production, an area almost ignored in *Orientalism*.

Perhaps Said’s most radical suggestion in *Culture and Imperialism* is that the contemporary world has something approaching a ‘Common Culture’, which is rooted in this shared experience of colonialism and imperialism:

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman or Muslim, or American are no more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly exclusively, white or black or Western or Oriental (*Culture* 407 – 408).

According to Said, imperialism means the theory, the practice and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory, and colonialism a consequence of it in the form of implanting settlements. The connection between culture and imperialism as historical
experiences are dynamic and complex. People believe that the bitterness and humiliations of imperialism that enslaved them nevertheless delivered benefits as well that over time attenuated its bitterness.

The work of the US based critic of Indian origin Gayatri Spivak constitutes one of the most substantial and innovative contributions to post-colonial forms of cultural analysis. Spivak’s style at times challenges in a quite fundamental way the accepted conventions of academic discourse to which Said generally adheres. At thematic level also there are equally clear differences between Said and Spivak. Spivak reverses the emphasis in early Said on colonial discourse as the principal object of attention. Despite some quite brilliant examples of colonial discourse analysis like “The Rani of Sirmur” (1985), “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” (1985), and “Imperialism and Sexual Difference” (1986), Spivak more characteristically focuses on various manifestations of counter-discourse. She has a broad range of interests, which is in keeping with her demand that post-colonial analysis should embody a persistent recognition of heterogeneity in respect of the cultures of post-colonialism. Thus ‘The Rani of Sirmur’ warns that India cannot be taken to typify the rest of the orient and that differences within the colonizing formations must be respected. She also argues that variations in the historical experience of oppression must be honoured. For Spivak there are positive dangers in ignoring the differences or even at times conflictual relations between migrants to the metropolis and post-colonial
subjects who remain in the Third World. While *Orientalism* pays only limited attention to the position of women on both sides of the colonial divide and while *Culture and Imperialism* remains within an essentially masculinist conceptual horizon, issues of gender are central to Spivak’s writing. Whereas *Orientalism* sees colonial history as an uninterrupted narrative of oppression and exploitation, Spivak tends to offer a more complex vision of Western domination. While never underestimating the destructive impact of imperialism, she nonetheless insists on a recognition of its positive effects too, so that it is recurrently described in her work, in a characteristic paradox, as an ‘enabling violence’. At the same time more than any other post-colonial critic, Spivak subjects the benevolence of Western engagements on behalf of the post-colonial subject to rigorous critical scrutiny.

Spivak consistently and scrupulously acknowledges the ambiguities of her own position as privileged Western based critic of neocolonialism, and draws attention quite explicitly to her complicitous position in a “workplace engaged in the ideological production of neocolonialism” (*In Other Worlds* 210). In contrast to what is sometimes implied in *Orientalism*, Spivak rejects the idea that there is an uncontaminated space outside the modes and objects of analysis to which the post-colonial critic has access by virtue of cultural origin. A recurrent motif of Spivak’s work is negotiation with Western cultural institutions, texts, values and theoretical practices. She shares the view
that post-colonial counter discourse is characteristically a persistent critique of the structures of colonialism. Said and Spivak interpret their sources in different ways. They reprocess Marxist Cultural Criticism adopting different lines of approach. Spivak’s relationship to Marxism is difficult to fix. She calls herself an old-fashioned Marxist. This evasiveness can be understood as a way of drawing attention to the unorthodox ways in which she uses such theories.

One of Spivak’s principal attempts to recuperate Marxism from the kind of critique mounted in *Orientalism* comes in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1985). In “Subaltern Studies Deconstructing Historiography” (1985), Spivak pays generous tribute to the revisionist historiography of the subaltern studies group of historians, who attempt to recover expressions of subaltern consciousness in the colonial period. Her work as a whole seeks new ways to admit non-Western cultural production into the Western metropolitan canons and modes of study.

The homogenizing impulse that informs the construction of India as a nation appeals to Gayatri Spivak as a sort of internal colonisation, which subsumes the identities of various ethnic groups. To her the history of a nation still continues to be a form of elitist historiography that ignores the Subaltern. She observes: “To ignore the subaltern is willy nilly to continue the imperialist project” (“Can the Subaltern” 287).
Spivak undertakes the process of decolonisation by bringing the literary products of the non Western world into the Western academy. The recent literary trend to compromise with the western cultural institutions texts, values and theoretical discourses is viewed as part of the ingenious strategy of fighting the enemy in his own land using his own weapons.

Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) facilitates reconsideration of his contribution to contemporary analysis of the cultural and political issues raised by neo-colonialism, race, ethnicity and migration. Bhabha’s particular interest is in the cultural exchanges involved in the history of British rule in India. Since then, he has become more preoccupied with the issues raised by the cultural consequences of neo-colonialism in the contemporary era.

Bhabha’s discussion of post-coloniality assumes a relationship of continuity rather than rupture between the era of colonialism and the contemporary period. Whereas early Said concentrates almost entirely on the colonized, Bhabha seeks to emphasize the mutualities and negotiations across the colonial divide. For Bhabha the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is more complex and nuanced than Fanon and Said imply. In seeking to shift the focus of colonial analysis to questions of identity formations, and the operations of the unconscious, Bhabha’s main methodological debts are to Freud and
more particularly Lacan. The unstable psychic sphere of colonial relations is illustrated initially in Bhabha’s early work through analysis of the workings of colonial stereotype.

Bhabha conceptualises the fracturing of colonial discourse through different kinds of ‘repetition’ in a number of essays. In “Of Mimicry and Man” (1984) he introduces one of the key concepts in his first phase of work, that of ‘mimicry’. Bhabha sees this from one perspective as a form of colonial control generated by the metropolitan colonizer, which operates in conformity with the logic of panoptical gaze of power elaborated in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1975).

The poststructuralist thought of Derrida, Lacan and Foucault had definitely urged critics like Bhabha to probe the representations of colonised subjects in a variety of colonial texts. They try to locate in these texts moments when the colonised resisted being represented in relation to colonial values. Bhabha assigns an autonomous position to the colonial within the confines of hegemonic discourse by virtue of recovering modes which the natives used for interrogating the master discourse in their own tongues. It is on the margins of colonial discourse that the practice of colonial authority displays its ambivalence of being at once a civilizing mission and a violent subjugating force. Interpreting the function of this ambivalence as a discursive and psychic strategy of colonial hegemony Bhabha writes:
It is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency; ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjectures; inform its strategies of individuation and marginalisation; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in ‘excess’ of what can be empirically proved or logically constructed (*Location 66*).

Bhabha’s pronouncements regarding the notion of nation became significant in post-colonial theory since nation building and national identity have been prominent issues in decolonisation. The concept of nation as a shared community or imagined community is evolved from the Third World post-colonial societies during their anti-imperialistic struggle. Sharing the view that nations were not determinate products of a sociological condition, but had been imagined into existence, Bhabha says: “Nations like narratives lose their origins in the myth of time and only, fully realize the horizons in the mind’s eye” (*Narrating* 1).

Making a significant deviation from the established notions of colonial authority, Bhabha introduces the concept of ‘hybridity’ as a necessary condition of subjection. He envisages it as the “revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (*Location 112*).
The general assumption is that post-colonial theory provides the essential tools to study and interpret post-colonial literature. Drawing heavily on Foucault and Derrida it may offer a post-structuralist frame of mind that is useful in undertaking a harassment of the text and discovering the multiple possibilities of (mis)reading it. But it cannot be treated as inconsiderable that far from being a radical or liberatory form of cultural practice, post-colonial theory is thoroughly complicit in the disposition and operations of the current, neo-colonial world order. John Mc Leod remarks:

According to some, post-colonial may wear a radical or oppositional face, but this only masks its complicity with the continuing oppression of peoples in the present (what we have been calling neo-colonialism). How can post-colonialism be at the service of the very phenomenon, colonialism, which it seeks to contest? (246).

The institutional location of post-colonial theory is offered as prima facie evidence of its role in helping to consolidate contemporary forms of Western hegemony. Its efficacy as a mode of cultural analysis is questionable as it cannot entail an intellectual process that may foster decolonisation. It is argued that the concepts and nomenclatures of post-colonialism, fashioned in the West are not always adequate to meet the contemporary needs of countries with a history of colonialism such
as India. The imperatives of post-colonialism are being set elsewhere, particularly by migrant Indian intellectuals who have helped to make post-colonialism the fashion in Western academia by drawing upon the latest advances in literary theory. Meenakshi Mukherjee makes an appropriate comment on this:

Several diasporic Indians have been pioneers in the area of post-colonial theory, and the field is now densely populated with academics in American universities who originally came from the ex-colonies. But as of now no major theoretical contribution has come to this discourse from home-based Indian intellectuals (8-9).

Post-colonial theory is also seen by its critics as a practice which appropriates the cultural production of the Third World and requires it as a commodity for the consumption of a metropolitan elite, while allowing some to trickle back for the edification of the national – bourgeois elites in the non-Western world. From this perspective, the post-colonial theorists are sometimes represented as intermediaries between the West and the non-West who participate in the acculturation of the latter to the values and cultural norms of the dominant order. Such attacks are most notoriously associated with Aijaz Ahmad’s In Theory (1992) but elements of his critique have been repeated by figures as diverse as Arif Dirlik and others.
Said can be quite equivocal as to whether the Western university may be considered conducive to genuinely oppositional kinds of scholarship. While Bhabha is largely silent about questions relating to his institutional affiliations to her great credit Spivak consistently foregrounds the contradictions involved in working within a system which is complicit in the production of neo-colonial forms of knowledge. Ahmad holds the view that post-colonial theorists are subject to institutional pressures, inducements and constraints. *In Theory* implicitly delegitimizes and impugns the personal integrity of a number of leading migrant intellectuals including Said, Bhabha and Rushdie. By implication at least, Ahmad’s argument would mean that all those Third World writers and critics who take up temporary posts in the Western academy, from Chinua Achebe and Ngugi to Buchi Emecheta automatically become part of the system of domination.

Countries with a history of colonialism are being colonised again, this time by Western theoretical imperatives and the current focus in Western universities upon cultural difference. In terms of literary studies, the colonies provide literary texts as raw materials which are imported by the West to be processed using post-colonial theory, with the resulting intellectual product shipped back to the erstwhile colonies for academic consumption.

The neocolonial implications of post-colonialism are based on the issue of antifoundationalism. Antifoundationalism represents the
thinking of poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard and others whose work is deemed to interrogate and collapse the distinctions between language and reality. Antifoundationist thought ignores the ways in which concrete phenomena such as economic and social conditions remain the foundations of relaity and determine how we live our lives. Arif Dirlik directs his criticism on antifoundationism:

Within the institutional site of the First World academy, fragmentation of earlier metanarratives appears benign (except to hidebound conservatives) for its promise of more democratic, multicultural and cosmopolitan epistemologies. In the world outside the academy, however, it shows in murderous ethnic conflict, continued inequalities, among societies, classes, and genders, and the absence of oppositional possibilities that always lacking in coherence are rendered even more impotent than earlier by the fetishisation of difference, fragmentation and so on (quoted in Mc Leod 251-252).

Post-colonial theorists indirectly reinscribe the cultural authority of the West by virtue of a largely exclusive attention to colonial discourse as the privileged object of analysis. Their mode of cultural analysis is predominantly Eurocentric. However, there have been considerable
attempts to apply elements of contemporary European cultural theory systematically to the analysis of primary forms of post-colonial culture.

There is a strong case for seeing affinities between some ‘primary’ kinds of post-colonial cultural production and some elements of post-colonial theory. As Helen Tiffin argues: “Much post-colonial writing is not only creative but also critical and theoretical…. distinctions between the two are rendered invalid by colonial and post-colonial conditions of literary production and consumption” (128).

Evidently there exists an all-too-familiar division within post-colonialism. On the one side are those who decry post-colonial concepts and modes of analysis as unable to deal with the particular concerns of literature that often exist outside the frame of colonialism and resistance to it. On the other side are those who argue that such positions do not exist. Each critical position is condemned by the other as neo-colonialist. The antitheorists are deemed neo-colonial for refusing to learn from the insights of post-colonial theory, while the pro-theorists are seen as Western oriented, insensitive to historical context and happy to generalise.

Post-colonial criticism, that emerged in different parts of formerly colonized world, sought to construct conceptual frameworks based on the culture and history of the respective societies. While undertaking the reading of colonial and post-colonial discourses, these critics repudiate the metropolitan canons and turn the process of reading into a political
act intended to give new orientations to the struggle for cultural liberation and decolonisation of their nations. As, Ngugi puts it in *Writers and Politics* (1981): “Cultural imperialism was then part and parcel of the thorough system of economic exploitation and political oppression and genocide” (15).

Chinua Achebe, Wilson Harris, Chinweizu, R.K. Brathwaite, Ngugi, Wole Soyinka and others have used the media of creative writing and criticism as forms of cultural resistance. They uphold the tradition that criticism is a practice which can play an important role in the ongoing struggle for the political and economic, as well as cultural liberation of the Third World.

There is a long tradition of what has come to be known as colonial discourse analysis in African criticism. Achebe’s essay, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” (1976) remains one of the most sustained expositions in the whole post-colonial field of the cultural politics of a canonical metropolitan ‘masterpiece’. Achebe’s work anticipates the argument of post-colonial theory that traditional western critical values can no more necessarily be taken to apply ‘universally’ than its literature. Thus, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue in *The Empire Writes Back* that post-colonial theory primarily “emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing” (11).
The rejection of traditional Western systems of cultural analysis and critical values is most polemically expressed in the work of cultural nationalists like Achebe and Chinweizu. In *The West and the Rest of Us* (1975) Chinweizu decries the Eurocentric prejudices of metropolitan criticism of African culture and seeks to release it from the death – grip of the West.

E.K. Brathwaite’s theory of ‘Creolization’ and Wilson Harris’ conception of ‘hybridization’ are closely related to Bhabha’s theoretical formulations on ‘ambivalence’. For Brathwaite creolization involves many possibilities and many ways of asserting identity. For Wilson Harris too, quest for post-colonial identity is a major concern. Post-colonial literature attempts to subvert British English which speaks from the centre and to bring it forcibly under the influence of the vernacular. This has given rise to the new ‘English’ of the colonised place that could properly express new values, identities, and value systems in place of old colonial values.

The writers from the former colonies are seen creating new “Englishes”, resorting to strategies like distorting the English syntax using structures derived from native languages, by inserting untranslatable words and creolised versions of English into the text and by glossing seemingly obscure terms. Post-colonial writers employ such strategies to subvert and recast English and to dismantle colonialised values that standard English epitomised.
Despite its interdisciplinary concerns, the field of post-colonial studies is marked by a preponderant focus upon post-colonial literature - a contentious category which refers somewhat arbitrarily to literatures in English, namely to those literatures which have accompanied the projection and decline of British imperialism. The academic privileging of post-colonial literature is informed by recent critical attempts to postulate the colonial encounter primarily as a textual contest or a bibliographic battle, between oppressive and subversive books.

Following the impact of cultural materialism upon literary theory, critical practice has been urged to concede the material underpinnings of all culture. Literary texts came to be placed in their economic and political contexts. Literature in general started assuming new significance as it responded to historical conditions of repression and recuperation. While post-colonial literary theory invokes these cultural materialist assumptions in its account of textual production under colonial and post-colonial conditions, it goes a step further in its claim that textuality is endemic to the colonial encounter. Texts, more than any other social and political products, are the most significant instigators of colonial power and post-colonial resistance. Imperial relations may have been established initially by the strength of the army but they were sustained largely by textuality.

Textual control can be fought by textuality. The post-colonial is especially and pressingly concerned with the power that resides in
discourse and textuality. So post-colonial resistance can take place effectively in the domain of textuality. As post-coloniality has been looked upon as a literary phenomenon, the role of the post-colonial literary critic becomes crucial, for he, with his academic expertise holds the key to all oppositional and anticolonial meanings.

Cultural expatriation that follows cultural dislocation is regarded as intrinsic to the making of post-colonial literature. Post-colonial world is plagued by neo-colonial catastrophes like economic disorder, social malaise, governmental corruption and state repression. Some of the sensitive writers responded to these by migrating to less repressive and more comfortable lands.

Marked by the tension of conflicting philosophies and incongruous forms of social behaviour, the hybrid post-colonial texts created by these migrants give form and meaning to amorphous cultural translations. The hybridity of a migrant’s art signifies “a freeing of voices, a technique for dismantling authority, a liberation of polyphony that shakes off the authoritarian yoke” (Boehmer 239).

The post-colonial migrant literature foregrounds and celebrates a historical ‘weightlessness’ as Salman Rushdie puts it. The experience of cultural transplantation lends new perspectives and creative possibilities for these writers and they have fashioned astounding artistic patterns reconstructing ‘imaginary homelands’ in the process. Located in the
metropolitan West they tend to recreate the contemporary social milieu and cultural crisis in their native land and attempt to redefine it in the emerging post-colonial context.

They mix the past, the present and the future and the imperial and the colonial cultures in their fiction, dislocating time and subverting the imperial purpose in the process. Received history is tampered with, rewritten and realigned from the point of view of the victims of its deconstructive progress. They explore the residual effects of foreign domination in the political, social and economic spheres. Dispossession, cultural fragmentation, colonial and neo-colonial power structures, post-colonial corruption, cultural degeneration and the crisis of identity are some of the major preoccupations in their writing.