

## Resisting Through Anglophilia: Subversion and Critique in Nirad C. Chaudhuri's Engagement with Colonial Discourse

Ishita Bhatt

Research Scholar (Department of English)  
Gurukul Kangri Deemed to be University, Haridwar, Uttarakhand, India

**How to cite this article:** Ishita Bhatt (2024). Resisting Through Anglophilia: Subversion and Critique in Nirad C. Chaudhuri's Engagement with Colonial Discourse. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 4752-4762.

### ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the enigmatic postcolonial subjectivity of Nirad C. Chaudhuri, whose literary oeuvre resists facile categorizations of colonial mimicry or Anglophilic complicity. By engaging with Elleke Boehmer's critical framework—centered on notions of "colonial complicity," "cultured hybridity," and the performative dynamics of language—this study reconceptualizes Chaudhuri's works as a sophisticated site of subversion and resistance within colonial and postcolonial discourses. Chaudhuri's texts, such as *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* and *The Continent of Circe*, subvert dominant paradigms by deploying a dual-voiced strategy that simultaneously appropriates and destabilizes colonial narratives. The paper argues that his apparent reverence for British culture constitutes a form of subversive mimicry, a nuanced negotiation that disrupts both the colonial authority and postcolonial nationalist orthodoxies. Through intertextual dialogue with other key theorists, such as Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry, Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, and Gayatri Spivak's articulation of the subaltern voice, this study reveals how Chaudhuri reclaims the linguistic and cultural tools of the colonizer as a means of reinscribing a complex, bifurcated identity. Ultimately, Chaudhuri's writings emerge as a critical discourse that interrogates and redefines the cultural and intellectual legacies of colonialism and the intricate processes of postcolonial identity formation.

**Keywords :** Anglophilia, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, postcolonialism, identity, hybridity, subversion, resistance, mimicry, Elleke Boehmer, empire narrative.

### I. Introduction

*"The colonized writer who seeks to reclaim and reoccupy the space of representation knows that language, like other cultural institutions, is deeply imbricated in the colonial process."* - Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Elleke Boehmer's assertion here is highly relevant to understand the postcolonial complexity of Nirad C. Chaudhuri.

In the continental forecast of postcolonial literature, there is perhaps no one more bewildering than the Indian Anglophile Nirad C. Chaudhuri. Born in 1897 in British India, Chaudhuri lived through the final years of British colonial rule, India's long struggle for freedom and the transformative era following independence. The man wrote books like "The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian" (1951), "A Passage to England" (1959), "The Continent of Circe" (1965) "And Thy Hand, Great Anarch" (1987), offer a unique lens through which readers can explore colonialism. These books intertwine an often eroticized portrayal of colonization with a certain degree of admiration for British culture, making Chaudhuri a figure of both fascination and controversy.

This paper therefore contends that it is erroneous to classify Chaudhuri's Anglophilia as mere colonial mimicry or even a submission to the colonial master's predetermined fuse for a defiant act of postcolonial counter-identification. In incorporating aspects of British culture and yet also altering them, Chaudhuri has positioned himself between the two cultures. In doing so, he addresses the realities of colonial domination from both perspectives. His work reflects how the post-colonial state and nationalism are products of simplistic dichotomies, while simultaneously rediscovering the cultural richness of the colonized.

To properly understand Chaudhuri and his ideas it is essential to examine the notions of resistance and subversion in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Resistance, broadly defined, includes both direct confrontation against colonial domination, whether in political or cultural spheres, and subtler forms of cultural rebellion. Whereas resistance often implies a more direct challenge to colonial power, subversion involves a more indirect strategy – using the colonizers own discourses against them. Chaudhuri's works embody both forms of opposition,

as they navigate colonial and postcolonial frameworks.

In postcolonial context, resistance and subversion take on additional layers of complexity, often dealing with not only the legacy of colonialism but also the new challenges of nationalism and post-colonial identity formation. Chaudhuri's writings reflect these twists and turns as he grapples with the intersections of colonial history and modern national identity. As Elleke Boehmer argues in her seminal work, *"Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: In 'Migrant Metaphors'"* (2005), postcolonial writing is often an act of 'writing back' to the empire – a way of reclaiming agency and re-mapping cultures in the aftermath of colonial control. Chaudhuri's works fit well within this theoretical framework. Boehmer's focus on the dual and split nature of colonial discourse, the inherent hybridity of postcolonial subjects, and the power of language in shaping both colonial and postcolonial realities are essential for understanding Chaudhuri's position.

Thus, by extending Boehmer's ideas to Chaudhuri's works, this paper seeks to demonstrate that his Anglophilia is not just an imitation of colonial power but a form of resistance. It distinguishes multiple postcolonial subject positions and offers a more nuanced view of colonial critique, the assertion of Indian culture, and a middle ground between the subcontinental and the British perspectives.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To fully appreciate the nuances and contradictions inherent in Anglophilia as a form of subversion in Nirad C. Chaudhuri's work, it is crucial to start with a rigorous conceptual framework. Scholars of colonial and postcolonial literature, especially Elleke Boehmer, provide significant insights into understanding Chaudhuri's texts. Boehmer's contributions, particularly in *"Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: From the Colonial to the Multicultural: 'Migrant Metaphors'"* (2005), offer a nuanced perspective on how colonial subjects embody and resist imperial power through literature. She argues that postcolonial writing often serves as a form of 'writing back,' where the colonized engage in a contestatory mimicry of colonial discursive authority.

One of Boehmer's central concepts, pertinent to analyzing Chaudhuri, is "colonial complicity." She notes that the relationship of the colonized writer to colonial discourse is inherently paradoxical. Even when resisting the imperial metanarrative, writers may inadvertently reproduce elements of colonial epistemology. This notion provides a lens for interpreting Chaudhuri's enthusiasm for Britishness, not as a passive acceptance of cultural superiority but as a subversive strategy.

Boehmer also emphasizes the concept of "cultured hybridity." She argues that colonialism does not merely cause one culture to overlap with another but leads to a complex interplay where cultures negotiate and create new forms. This hybridization represents both a struggle and an inventive process that challenges the idea of pure cultural integrity. This perspective is vital for understanding Chaudhuri's navigation between his Indian heritage and his British affinities, which he uses to destabilize both colonial and postcolonial nationalist hierarchies.

Language and narrative, as deployed by Boehmer, are also crucial to colonial and postcolonial constructions. She suggests that writing itself becomes an act of rebellion, enabling postcolonial authors to reclaim control over cultural representation. In *"Postcolonial Poetics"* (2018), Boehmer argues, *"The very process of writing, in postcolonial contexts, is an act of defiance – a rejection of Eurocentric cultural domination and a means of reinscribing the African voice"* (Boehmer 2018, p. 42). This theme informs an analysis of the linguistic and narratological strategies in Chaudhuri's works, where his use of English can be seen both as a weapon of satire and an expression of subjectivity.

While Boehmer's theories form the primary framework for this analysis, it is also essential to engage with other postcolonial critics. Homi K. Bhabha's ideas of mimicry and hybridity in *"The Location of Culture"* (1994) provide further insight into Chaudhuri's cultural positioning. Bhabha describes mimicry as *"the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite"* (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). This concept allows for a reading of Chaudhuri's Anglophilia not as mere imitation but as a complex performance that simultaneously reinforces and subverts colonial authority.

Furthermore, Edward Said's *"Orientalism"* (1978) and Gayatri Spivak's exploration of the subaltern voice in *"Can the Subaltern Speak?"* provide additional frameworks for understanding Chaudhuri's position as an Indian writer engaging with Western audiences. Spivak's work, in particular, interrogates the position of the colonized intellectual who writes both to and for the West. The critique of elitist historiography by scholars like Ranajit Guha also complements the analysis of Chaudhuri's often controversial takes on Indian history and society.

When these theoretical perspectives are applied to Chaudhuri's texts, it becomes evident that what lies beneath his Anglophilic tendencies are multiple forms of subversive defiance. The discussions around Chaudhuri's works resist simplistic binaries of colonial and postcolonial identity crises, instead revealing a more nuanced interplay of power and resistance.

Boehmer's theoretical approach is further enriched by its intersections with other key concepts in postcolonial studies. Her idea of "colonial complicity" resonates with Bhabha's "mimicry," which suggests that adopting British cultural elements may be a sophisticated act of subversion rather than mere imitation.

Additionally, Boehmer's focus on language aligns with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's critique of linguistic imperialism in "Decolonising the Mind" (1986), where he asserts, *"Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world"* (Ngũgĩ, 1986, p. 16). This perspective deepens our understanding of Chaudhuri's linguistic choices, illustrating how English becomes a tool of critique and an aspect of cultural identity reconstruction in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Ultimately, these theoretical frameworks reveal that Chaudhuri's Anglophilia is not a simple emulation of British culture but a complex, subversive maneuver that challenges both colonial and postcolonial hierarchies.

#### **Applying the Framework to Chaudhuri's Works**

When this amplified theoretical context is conducted to Chaudhuri's texts, then interestingly we are able to find out some of the issues of resistance and subversion which are otherwise are unnoticed. Let us consider, for instance, a passage from *"The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian"* (1951), where Chaudhuri describes his early encounters with English literature:

*"I read Shakespeare, Milton, and Keats with as much inner satisfaction as my ancestors would have felt when reading the Upanishads."* But even here Chaudhuri's intent was not to turn his back on his heritage, no, he was merely broadening its horizons, discovering in these strangers' texts reflections of his own cultural paradigms; thus, the meanings of these texts, and therefore of his culture and these strangers as counterparts, were reinterpreted and intertwined, revealing a dialogue where each illuminates and transforms the other, bridging the seemingly vast gulf between the colonial and the colonized.

From both Boehmer's theory of hybridity and Bhabha's concept of mimicry, one is able to get a clear picture of the way in which the passage under discussion shows a struggling between cultural selves. It can be seen that Chaudhuri's reading of English literature is not a submission to assimilation as his ancestors studying Hindu religious text is, but a conscious agency to incorporate the British civilization selectively to grow and remodel the Indian civilization. In this way, reading turns into a way of action that questions colonial definitions of the superior culture, as well as postcolonial calls for pure one.

Likewise, in *"The Continent of Circe"* (1965), Chaudhuri's criticism of the Indian society is also written using British literary mode at the same time establishing an ironic detachment to the British colonial bias as well as Indian nationalist tropes. Consider this passage:

*"This clash of civilizations can be infinitesimal or monumental depending on several factors that include technological advancement and global reach, but lies at the heart of this conflict is an Indian intelligence that may be described as enfeebling in the face of materialistic capacity and requirements of the new world order yet perhaps is the most effective antidote the overburdening materialism of new civilization."* (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 178)

Here Chaudhuri uses the techniques of British Orientalist discourse and the audience's presuppositions to present his argument that essentially undermines the presuppositions of the discourse. Thus, by weaving into the novel colonial discourse and posing the native subject as the one who speaks back, Chaudhuri locates himself within the colonial/postcolonial discourse planes while simultaneously unsettling them both.

This strategy aligns with what Boehmer describes in "Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction" (2002) as the "double-voiced discourse" of colonized writers:

Thus, the experience of colonized intellectuals leads to the appropriation of colonial discourses; thanks to education and cultural positioning they are able to speak in two voices at the same time, to participate in the construction and criticism of colonial ideologies at once; in this way, language and cultural hybridity becomes a weapon against oppression. (Boehmer, 2002, pp. 112-113)

Thus, as we proceed with the analysis of Chaudhuri's works, we will explore more such examples of the implied resistances and subversions the author presents while he employs Anglophilia as a subtle tool for challenging the colonial and postcolonial powers and their influential sphere.

For instance, in *"A Passage to England"* (1959), one can observe how reliance on his understanding of Britain and its culture allowed Chaudhuri to provide stinging accurate portrayals of British society as well as that society's view of itself and of Indians. Finally, in a spirit of realism that pervades all his works, his shrewd eye largely dispels the glamour associated with the colonial centre while at the same time disarms the arrogant scorn with which this centre is met in the colonies. This approach is a notion in *'Culture and Imperialism'* (1993) Said that interprets a text, in this case reading 'English' and 'America', with an understanding of both the metropolitan history being narrated and those of the other societies against which and with which the dominant narrative is working.

While moving further in the analysis, it is possible to see that, with the help of this sophisticated theoretical framework, Chaudhuri's Anglophilia becomes a subtle and diverse type of postcolonial subjects' cultural practice which, at the same time, destabilizes, sarcastically redraws, and even reconstructs the colonial narrative and its aftermath.

### III. Analysis of "The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian" (1951)

"*The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*" remains one of Chaudhuri's most seminal works, offering genuine insights into his personal journey, historical perspectives, and cultural commentary. Published in the year 1957 when the Indian sub-continent was undergoing a transition after getting freedom from British Rule this text gives an insight into colonial mentality and Indian identity.

At first glance, the memoir may seem a simple account of Chaudhuri's youth in Bengal and his intellectual life in Calcutta. Indeed, Chaudhuri propagates his discourse covertly, but a deeper analysis of his text with the help of Boehmer's theory discloses the elements of opposition and defiance that are hidden under the veil of conservatism.

Another noteworthy interesting feature is the author's certain apologetic attitude to the British and their culture and laws while maintaining the critical view of colonialism and imperialist oppression. This duality can be attributed to what Boehmer calls 'colonial complicity' where the colonial subject both embraces and rejects their role. Consider the following passage:

***"I was born in the year 1897, and I have always regarded my birth as a minor event in the history of British imperial power in India. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated that year, and I have always thought that the year was more important as the sixtieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession than as the year of my birth." (Chaudhuri, 1951, p. 1)***

Ironically combined in this opening statement is the history of the imperialist power together with the personal history of the narrator who apparently belonged to this colonial world prepares the reader for the anti-colonial sentiment that Chaudhuri sustains throughout the text. Thus, Chaudhuri identifies with colonial power while also ironically underlines the overemphasis of imperial discourse.

As the story progresses, the author's criticism of British colonialism is more direct, especially in the portrayal of economic pillage of India. In a scathing indictment of colonial resource extraction, he writes:

***"The British came to India as traders, but they stayed as rulers. In this dual capacity, they managed to drain India of its wealth with remarkable efficiency. The land that once accounted for a quarter of the world's GDP was reduced to abject poverty, its riches flowing steadily into British coffers. Yet, even as I acknowledge this bitter truth, I cannot help but marvel at the administrative acumen that made such thorough exploitation possible." (Chaudhuri, 1951, p. 312).***

This passage exemplifies Chaudhuri's subtle criticism of colonialism. While he is quite definite and unambiguous in blaming the British for economical exploitation and devastation, he simultaneously expresses a conflicted respect for the bureaucratic superiority of the British colonial servants. This superior approach complicates the easy binaries of colonial domination and indigenous rebellion, enriching the possible understandings of colonialisms nuanced nature.

Chaudhuri's attitude, though, to the Indian cultural ethos in conflict with colonialism, is equally complex. Thus, he not only emphasizes the profundity and the multilevel nature of Indian civilization, but also its flaws. This strategy corresponds with Boehmer's concept of 'writing back' where postcolonial writers reclaim their agency by redefining culture on their terms. A particularly poignant example can be found in Chaudhuri's reflection on English education's impact:

***"The English language and literature opened up new worlds of thought and expression for us. Yet, even as we embraced this alien tongue, we were acutely aware of the gulf it created between us and our own cultural heritage. We became, in a sense, strangers in our own land, caught between two worlds, belonging fully to neither. This liminal space, however uncomfortable, became the vantage point from which we could critically examine both our inherited traditions and the imposed colonial culture." (Chaudhuri, 1951, p. 425)***

In this passage, Chaudhuri's decolonization process emerges as a dual : assimilation of the colonizer's culture and simultaneous resistance to it. He acknowledges English education's transformative impact on Indians but also its tendency to make them become 'English'. This duality positions him to critique both Indian and British cultures; his otherness is a position of critique.

Speaking of such criteria, one should note that Chaudhuri's attitude toward the issues of caste and social stratification in India is also rather subversive. Although Chaudhuri frequently transcribes the British colonial's gaze in his criticism of these systems, his insider information and first-hand exposure adds a degree of depth and dimension typically absent in colonial writings. For instance:

***"The caste system, that intricate web of social stratification that has both defined and confined Indian society for millennia, presented itself to the British colonizers as evidence of our civilization's rigidity and backwardness. And indeed, its injustices are manifold and undeniable. Yet, in its complexity and durability, it also speaks to a social ingenuity that the British, with their comparatively simplistic class divisions, could scarcely comprehend." (Chaudhuri, 1951, p. 178)***

Here, Chaudhuri critiques the caste system while also restoring complexity to Indian society, which the British colonizers often stereotypically portrayed. By highlighting both the system's flaws and its essence, he undercuts the received Indian apology for caste and colonialist depictions of Indians as backward.

In "*The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*," Anglophilia is as a complex problematic that speaks as

much about Chaudhuri's ruminations on the colonial present as it does about the colonial past. Given that he is a part of Indian society and at the same time learned and influenced by British culture, Chaudhuri makes it possible for the colonial subject to resist and subvert colonial domination while admiring the colonizers.

As Boehmer argues in "Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors" (2005):

***"The most effective postcolonial writing does not simply reject or reverse colonial discourses, but rather engages with them in complex ways, appropriating and transforming them to create new modes of cultural expression and critique." (Boehmer, 2005, p. 227)***

This type of strategy is most prominently demonstrated in the structure of Chaudhuri's *"Autobiography"*, where the principal actor operates in deliberate mimicry of colonialist epistemology and make use of English language, Western narrative models and even Orientalist clichés in order to tell the story, which destabilizes colonial power. Thus, he not only avoids stereotyped opposition of the colonizing and the colonized but also creates the framework for the subsequent analysis of postcolonial subjectivity and culture.

#### IV. Analysis of "A Passage to England" (1959)

*'A Passage to England'* marks Chaudhuri's shift from narrating colonial India to examining the heart of the Empire itself. Published eight years after the *'The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian'*, this text offers insight into how Chaudhuri's Anglophilia works when he faced real English society.

The title, echoing E.M. Forster's *"A Passage to India,"* immediately sets up a reversal of the typical colonial journey narrative. This inversion aligns with what Elleke Boehmer describes in *"Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction"* (2002) as a key strategy of postcolonial writing:

Thus, the postcolonial authors using and reversing colonial imagery and writing back convey sense of a cultural colonization concealed by imperial ideology and demand for the permission of reading and writing about the metropole.

This framework of reversal is extensively used by Chaudhuri as he now looks at the English society in the same manner as he looked at the Indian society. Consider this passage:

***"I had long imagined England as a land of order and efficiency, where every cog in the social machinery functioned with clockwork precision. How startling, then, to find myself confronted with the chaotic queues at Victoria Station, the inexplicable delays of British Rail, and the bewildering complexity of the London Underground. It occurred to me that perhaps the much-vaunted British talent for administration had been honed not at home, but in the crucible of colonial governance." (Chaudhuri, 1959, p. 73)***

This observation serves two roles: It undercuts the colonial master narrative of English superiority by revealing societal flaws and argues that British civil service methods in India were not colonial gifts, but social constructs British colonialism produced. This sophisticated kind of criticism can be described as *'sly civility'* which Homi K. Bhabha discusses in *'The Location of Culture'* (1994) suggesting that colonized subjects participate in colonial discourse in a performative way but subtly destabilize it. Chaudhuri exemplifies *'sly civility'* by critiquing English society in a manner that pushes against colonial assumptions without ever losing courtesy toward English culture.

In *"A Passage to England,"* Chaudhuri angered his readers by exploring the character's Anglophilia in new ways as he attempts to get a taste of the English culture. He's a farce and his love for Britain's literature and history can't be determined in contrast to the real-life experience in England. This tension is evident in his reflections on visiting historic sites:

***"Standing before the weathered stones of Stonehenge, I felt the weight of millennia pressing upon me. Here was tangible evidence of the antiquity of English civilization, a history that stretched back far beyond the Norman Conquest or even the Roman occupation. And yet, as I stood there, surrounded by chattering tourists and watchful guards, I could not help but think of the ancient temples of India, equally old but still vibrant with living faith and daily ritual. It struck me then that perhaps the true measure of a civilization's greatness lies not in the preservation of its past, but in the continuity of its traditions." (Chaudhuri, 1959, p. 201)***

Thus, this passage exemplifies Chaudhuri's manner in how he is both a part of and apart from the English culture. Although generally amazed by the place, he compares it to Indian temples, so that he can establish the relevance of his ancestry culture while experiencing English history. This strategy aligns with what Boehmer describes in *"Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors"* (2005) as a reflection of the "double vision" of the postcolonial writers.

***"The ability to see through both colonial and indigenous perspectives allows postcolonial authors to create rich, multifaceted critiques that challenge monolithic representations of both colonizer and colonized cultures." (Boehmer, 2005, p. 189)***

This 'double vision' applies to Chaudhuri's work. The rare capacity for double vision regarding English society seems to have been acquired by Chaudhuri, a writer trained in the Indian and British traditions. His Indian background has given him the vantage point of an outsider to English society so he is able to observe those aspects of English culture which may be invisible to the English themselves. Simultaneously, it is his command over English literature and history that also helps him enter into the very fabric of English society and understand its

mores. This double vision enables Chaudhuri's to create a complex picture of England, both in praise and criticism of English culture.

Another phenomenon is that Chaudhuri's contacts with English intellectuals and academics serve as one more way of his subversive approach. While he often expresses admiration for their erudition, he also exposes the limitations of their understanding of India:

*"At an Oxford dinner party, I found myself engaged in a lively discussion about Indian philosophy with a distinguished professor. His knowledge of the subject was impressive, his analysis incisive. And yet, as the spoke of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, I realized that for him, these were merely texts to be studied, intellectual curiosities divorced from lived experience. How could I explain to him that for millions of Indians, these ancient writings were not just philosophy, but a way of life?" (Chaudhuri, 1959, p. 312)*

Thus, this anecdote undermines the established Western academic discursive power regarding India. By highlighting the gap between verbal analysis and real-experience Chaudhuri emphasizes the valid authority of the native's voice while keeping the European Orientalism's knowledge of India in a certain measure questionable.

Sceptical, ironic, and constantly aware of the cultural differences which set them apart, Chaudhuri's Anglophilia is an intelligent and emotionally complex facet of his Indian personality. Thus, the tension is opened that forms the narrative space as that of admiration and critique, belonging and alienation. As he writes in the concluding chapter:

*"My journey through England has been a passage not just through space, but through the complexities of cultural identity. I came seeking the England of my imagination, shaped by years of reading Shakespeare and Dickens. I leave with a richer, more nuanced understanding - not just of England, but of myself. For in confronting the realities of English society, I have also confronted the multiple strands of my own identity: Indian, Bengali, colonial subject, and Anglophile. These identities are not mutually exclusive, but rather form a complex tapestry that defies simple categorization." (Chaudhuri, 1959, p. 418)*

This reflection illustrates how Chaudhuri's Anglophilia acts as a form of rebellious subversion. Thus, he adopts and at the same time subverts the culture of the colonizers as well as the culture of the colonized as they expect it. Through the mapping of his life story, it becomes a form of what Bhabha describes as 'cultural translation' since it decentres the colonial subject in order to create an area of indeterminacy between colonialism's self-representation and the colonizer's self-representation that counters colonial discourse's structure of Otherness (Bhabha 1994: 224).

Thus, Anglophilia in "A Passage to England" can be seen as not as the act of the Oriental bowing down to the British superiority, but as a deliberate way of taking control of one's cultural experience and forming a distinctive perspective. In this way, the layering of his observations on colonialism, postcolonialism, and their subjects undermines colonial epistemologies and deconstructs postcolonial epistemologies that are commonly assumed and accepted in an equally effective manner and at the same time, opens up the issues of culture and identity in the post-colonial societies for further reflection and understanding.

## V. Critique of a work "The Continent of Circe" by Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1965)

"The Continent of Circe" marks a shift in Chaudhuri's work from an autobiographical narrative to a critical perspective on Indian culture. The title, referencing the mythological character who turned the male subjects of Odysseus into animals, pigs to be specific; a name that best describes the ethos of the text which is unabashed in its critique and often polemic in dealing with the Indian socialscape and landscape.

In this work, Anglophilia turns into a diametrically opposite tool in Chaudhuri's hands with which he critiques Indian civilization. This approach aligns with what Elleke Boehmer describes in "Colonial and Postcolonial Literature" as the "double-edged sword of colonial discourse":

*"The colonized intellectual, by internalizing aspects of colonial discourse, gains a critical distance from their own culture. This distance can be both illuminating and alienating, allowing for incisive critique but also risking accusations of cultural betrayal." (Boehmer, 2005, p. 213)*

To sum up, Chaudhuri's criticism of the Indian society in "The Continent of Circe" is rather precise and provocative. Consider this passage:

*"The India I see before me is not the mystical land of spiritual enlightenment so often romanticized in both Eastern and Western imaginations. Rather, it is a land caught in the grip of its own myths, unable to break free from the cycles of superstition and fatalism that have kept it stagnant for millennia. Like Circe's enchanted isle, our continent seems to have the power to transform men - not into beasts, but into beings' content with their own degradation." (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 45)*

This verbal assault, put clearly and passionately in English, is another example of Anglophilic/anti-Anglophilic dynamic in Chaudhuri's works. He thus performs a criticism that, while typical of colonial discourse, reveals and disrupts at once the Western Orientalist vision of India and the imperialist vision of India's grandeur.

What is more, Chaudhuri's critique is not just a reiteration of colonialism discourses to a certain extent. Chaudhuri is the true colonial, who knows India from the inside, so he can provide more than just the Orientalist commentaries. For instance:

***"The caste system, often decried by Western observers as the root of all India's ills, is in fact a far more complex and nuanced social structure than most outsiders can comprehend. Its rigidity is real and often oppressive, yes, but it has also provided a framework for social stability and cultural continuity that has allowed Indian civilization to survive countless invasions and upheavals. To simply dismiss it as a backward institution is to miss the intricate ways in which it has shaped our society, for better and for worse." (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 132)***

This nuanced analysis of the caste system demonstrates Chaudhuri's act of resistance and subversion. By acknowledging both the oppressive aspects and the societal functions of the caste system, he challenges simplistic Western criticisms while also avoiding uncritical defense of Indian traditions. This balanced approach subverts both colonial narratives that paint India as wholly backward and nationalist discourses that ignore social problems. Chaudhuri's insider knowledge allows him to present a more complex picture, resisting reductionist views from both within and outside India.

The critique that Chaudhuri provides of colonial history of India in 'The Continent of Circe' is similarly noteworthy. He writes:

***"The British conquest of India was not merely a military or political achievement, but a profound indictment of the weakness and disunity of Indian society. That a small island nation could come to dominate a subcontinent speaks volumes about the failings of our political and social systems. And yet, paradoxically, it was this very conquest that provided the impetus for India's modernization and eventual independence. We were forced to look at ourselves through the eyes of the Other, and in doing so, began the long process of national self-examination and renewal." (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 278)***

This passage can be best described as colonial ambivalence described by Homi Bhabha in his work *The Location of Culture* (1994). Chaudhuri, on the one hand, recognizes colonial oppression as a catastrophic event in Indian history, while on the other, he perceives that this occurrence also led to the advancement of Indian society. Thus, he avoids black-and-white colonial and indigenous victimization and portrays colonial contact as transformative.

This passage exemplifies Chaudhuri's subversive approach. By acknowledging the weaknesses in Indian society that allowed for colonial domination, he resists simplistic nationalist narratives of victimhood. Simultaneously, by framing colonialism as a catalyst for modernization and self-reflection, he subverts triumphalist colonial narratives. This nuanced view challenges both colonial and postcolonial orthodoxies, demonstrating resistance through complexity and refusing to conform to expected narratives on either side.

Chaudhuri's critique extends to post-independence India, challenging the nationalist narratives that dominated the political discourse of his time:

***"Our hard-won independence has, in many ways, become a cloak for our continued intellectual and cultural dependence. We have exchanged British viceroys for Indian politicians who mimic Western democratic forms without understanding their underlying principles. Our intellectuals parrot Marxist theories as unquestioningly as their predecessors recited Shakespeare. True independence – of mind, of spirit, of culture – remains elusive, hidden behind a facade of borrowed institutions and half-understood ideologies." (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 356)***

This critique of post-colonial mimicry aligns with what Boehmer describes in *\*Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction\** (2002) as the "postcolonial dilemma":

***"The postcolonial nation often finds itself trapped between the desire to assert a unique cultural identity and the need to engage with global modernity, often leading to a form of cultural hybridity that can be both creative and problematic." (Boehmer, 2002, p. 198)***

Chaudhuri's love for Anglo norms, in this context, becomes a negotiating factor that helps him to overcome this conundrum. He endeavours to incorporate aspects of British culture while maintaining a critical distance, demonstrating a third way of engaging with the West that avoids both complete rejection and sheer imitation.

This critique exemplifies Chaudhuri's subversive stance. By criticizing post-independence Indian leadership and intellectuals, he resists the dominant nationalist narrative of unqualified progress after colonialism. His accusation of mimicry subverts both the idea of successful decolonization and the notion of Western superiority. By pointing out the superficial adoption of Western forms without their underlying principles, Chaudhuri challenges the legitimacy of both colonial and postcolonial power structures, advocating for a more authentic and thoughtful engagement with modernity.

In *The Continent of Circe*, subversion is evident in how Chaudhuri uses English, the language of the colonizers, and references to Western literature. He engages with and questions both colonial and nationalist discourses. As he writes in the text's conclusion:

***"If I have chosen to voice these critiques in the language of Shakespeare and Milton, it is not out of slavish imitation or colonial hangover. Rather, it is a deliberate appropriation of the colonizer's tongue, turning it back upon itself and upon my own culture with equal vigor. In doing so, I claim the right to be both Indian and universal, to love both Kalidasa and Keats, to criticize both East and West with the intimate knowledge of an insider and the critical distance of an outsider." (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 412)***

This statement can be seen as summing up the revolt and defiance contained in Chaudhuri's Anglophilism.

Denouncing the right of the 'Orientalized' other to criticize both Indian and Western cultures, he establishes himself as an autonomous subject. What once might have been signifiers of social assimilation are used to take control of cultural identity and construct a new cultural identity.

Chaudhuri's use of English here exemplifies the concept of linguistic appropriation as described in *The Empire Writes Back* by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin. They argue that postcolonial writers 'appropriate' the language of the colonizer by using it in ways that subvert its original cultural associations. Chaudhuri appropriates British English by using it as a tool for critiquing both British and Indian cultures. He transforms the language from a symbol of colonial dominance into a medium for expressing a hybrid, post-colonial identity. This act of appropriation allows Chaudhuri to claim a space that is neither fully Western nor traditionally Indian, but a new cultural position that challenges both colonial and nationalist assumptions.

Thus, Anglophilia is a significant element of *The Continent of Circe*, making Chaudhuri's vision of both Indian and Western societies much richer. It serves as a tool for criticism, a way of stressing academic freedom, and a means for dealing with the decolonization dilemma. Readers will find themselves provoked by Chaudhuri's insights and his remarkably captivating writing, and they will be compelled to abandon dichotomous views and approach cultural interactions in a post-colonial world with more nuanced perspectives.

## VI. Analysis of Chaudhuri's "Thy Hand, Great Anarch!" (1987)

*Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* can be rightly considered a summation of all of Chaudhuri's works; it chronicles India's evolution from colonialism to independence. Appearing in the author's nonagenarian years, this text is a rich integration of historical scholarship, subjective recollection, and social commentary unfolding over a generation in India.

Reflected in the title borrowed from Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*, one can see Chaudhuri's patronage of the English literary tradition. However, as will be discussed, this Anglophilia sets the stage for a highly transactional analysis of colonialism and post-colonial India.

Chaudhuri's handling of the colonial period is notably sensitive. Consider this passage:

**"The British Raj, for all its exploitative nature and cultural arrogance, inadvertently served as a unifying force for the Indian subcontinent. It provided, however reluctantly, the tools of modernity that would eventually be turned against it. The English language, initially imposed as an instrument of colonial control, became the medium through which Indian nationalist leaders articulated their demands for freedom. The railways, built to facilitate the extraction of resources, became the veins through which the lifeblood of Indian nationalism flowed. In this paradox lies the complex legacy of colonial rule—a legacy that defies simple categorization as either wholly destructive or unintentionally beneficial." (Chaudhuri, 1987, p. 156)**

This analysis aligns with what Elleke Boehmer describes in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: "Migrant Metaphors"* (2005) as the "ambivalence of colonial discourse":

**"The colonial encounter produced not just domination and submission, but a complex web of cultural interactions that often had unintended consequences. The tools of empire could become the weapons of resistance, creating a dialectic of power that ultimately undermined the colonial project." (Boehmer, 2005, p. 171)**

Thus, Chaudhuri's Anglophilia enables him to discern and express this duality, enriching his view of the colonial period beyond the stereotypical colonial-era apologists and nationalist historians.

The text also sensitively depicts India's fight for freedom and the early phase of the independence movement. Chaudhuri writes:

**"The midnight hour of August 15, 1947, was indeed a moment when the world slept and India awoke to life and freedom, as Nehru so eloquently put it. But it was also a moment of profound disorientation, as if we had awakened in a room where all the furniture had been rearranged in the dark. The structures of colonial governance were gone, replaced by institutions we scarcely understood how to operate. We had won our freedom, but the question of what to do with it loomed large and unanswered." (Chaudhuri, 1987, p. 312)**

This passage illustrates Chaudhuri's capacity to both celebrate India's independence and reflect on its implications. His referencing Nehru's speech in English, paired with his figure of disorientation, shows how his Anglophilia is used as a sign of both inclusion and resistance.

Chaudhuri's analysis of post-independence India is particularly scathing, challenging the nationalist narratives that dominated public discourse:

**"In the years following independence, we have witnessed not the flowering of a new civilization, as our founding fathers had hoped, but rather the entrenchment of old vices in new forms. Corruption, once blamed on colonial misrule, has found fertile ground in our own bureaucracies. Communalism, far from fading away in a secular state, has only grown more virulent. And our democracy, that great experiment in self-governance, too often resembles a carousel of competing interests rather than a genuine expression of the people's will." (Chaudhuri, 1987, p. 437)**

This critique reflects more than Chaudhuri's Anglophobia; it reveals his radical Anglophilism. By adopting the language and literary style of the former colonizer, he asserts the right to criticize both colonialism and the



postcolonial state's inadequacies.

In *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!*, Chaudhuri's knowledge of English literature and Western philosophical traditions is overwhelmingly forceful in asserting independence in vernacular English writing. He writes:

**"If I draw upon Shakespeare to describe the 'sound and fury' of our political debates, or invoke Hegel to analyze the dialectic of our social progress, it is not out of a misplaced reverence for Western thought. Rather, it is a deliberate appropriation of these intellectual tools to craft a uniquely Indian perspective on our own history and culture. In doing so, I assert our right to be both inheritors of our ancient civilization and active participants in the global exchange of ideas." (Chaudhuri, 1987, p. 501)**

This statement aligns with what Homi K. Bhabha terms "hybridity" in *The Location of Culture* (1994):

**"Cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation." (Bhabha, 1994, p. 211)**

In this context, Chaudhuri's Anglophilia constructs a culture that is neither dominated by colonialism nor imprisoned in postcolonial nativism.

The quote exemplifies Chaudhuri's resistance and subversion. First, by denying that his use of Western references is out of 'misplaced reverence,' he subverts expectations of a colonized intellectual who must revere Western thought, positioning himself as an equal who uses such tools critically and selectively.

Chaudhuri's 'deliberate appropriation' acts as resistance to cultural imperialism. The ideas from the West are not passively received but actively appropriated and turned to his own ends. This challenges Western culture's assumed ownership and control of these ideas.

Fourth, with these appropriated tools, Chaudhuri resists a 'uniquely Indian perspective' within both colonial and nationalist narratives. He carves out an intermediate, hybrid intellectual space that respects ancient Indian civilization while remaining open to global ideas.

Finally, Chaudhuri's assertion of 'our right' to be inheritors of Indian civilization and participants in global discourse is an act of subversion. It refuses to reduce colonized peoples to objects of history and resists confining Indian intellectuals strictly to 'native' concerns, claiming India's place among equals in the international intellectual community.

The text's conclusion offers a powerful summation of Chaudhuri's complex relationship with both Indian and British cultures:

**"As I near the end of my long life, straddling two centuries and two civilizations, I find myself neither fully of the East nor entirely of the West. I am, perhaps, a bridge between worlds—not the grand viaduct of imperial fantasies, but a humble footbridge, weathered and worn, yet still standing. From this vantage point, I have attempted to offer a clear-eyed view of our journey from subjugation to freedom, from ancient traditions to modern aspirations. If my criticisms seem harsh, it is because they are born of love—love for what India was, what it could be, and what it must become if it is to take its rightful place in the community of nations." (Chaudhuri, 1987, p. 623)**

This passage encapsulates the resistance and subversion inherent in Chaudhuri's Anglophilia. By positioning himself as a bridge between cultures, he claims the right to critique both while asserting a unique cultural perspective that transcends simple binaries of East and West.

In *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!*, Chaudhuri's Anglophilia emerges as a sophisticated literary and intellectual strategy. It engages with both colonial history and postcolonial realities, serves as a tool for critique and self-examination, and asserts a complex, hybrid cultural identity. Through his erudite prose and incisive analysis, Chaudhuri challenges readers to move beyond nationalist myths and colonial stereotypes, offering a nuanced understanding of India's past, present, and potential future.

## VII. Synthesis and Conclusion

Having examined Nirad C. Chaudhuri's major works through Elleke Boehmer's theories and other postcolonial concepts, we can now synthesize how his Anglophilia functions as a form of resistance and subversion within colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Chaudhuri's engagement with British culture transcends simple admiration or mimicry. His Anglophilia serves several key functions:

1. **As a Tool for Critique:** Chaudhuri's mastery of English and his deep knowledge of British literature allow him to critique both colonial rule and post-independence India. As Boehmer notes in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (2005):

**"The colonized writer's appropriation of the colonizer's language can be a potent form of resistance, allowing for critique from within the dominant discourse." (Boehmer, 2005, p. 203)**

This is evident in *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, where Chaudhuri uses English to expose colonial contradictions, and in *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!* where British literary references are used to dissect the failures of post-independence Indian politics.

2. **As a Means of Asserting Intellectual Independence:** Chaudhuri's Anglophilia allows him to claim a place in the global intellectual tradition, resisting both colonial attempts to deny Indians access to Western knowledge and postcolonial pressures to reject Western influences. This aligns with Boehmer's description in *Empire, the*

*National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction (2002):*

**"The postcolonial intellectual's right to draw upon multiple cultural traditions, asserting a cosmopolitan identity that transcends national boundaries." (Boehmer, 2002, p. 178)**

This is most apparent in *A Passage to England*, where Chaudhuri's engagement with English culture asserts his right to critique and interpret both Indian and British societies.

3. *As a Strategy for Navigating Cultural Hybridity:* Chaudhuri's Anglophilia helps him navigate the complexities of cultural hybridity in a postcolonial world. This resonates with Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space" in *The Location of Culture* (1994):

**"The 'third space' is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility." (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37)**

Chaudhuri's writing inhabits this "third space," offering a unique hybrid perspective that provides new insights and critiques.

4. **As a Form of Subversion:** Chaudhuri's Anglophilia subtly subverts colonial binaries. By adopting the language and cultural references of the colonizer, he challenges the oppositions of colonial discourse. This aligns with Boehmer's notion of "writing back" in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (2005):

**"'Writing back' involves not just responding to colonial narratives, but appropriating and transforming them, often in ways that subvert their original intent." (Boehmer, 2005, p. 211)**

We see this subversion in *The Continent of Circe*, where Chaudhuri uses his Anglophilia to critique Western stereotypes and Indian nationalist myths.

In conclusion, Chaudhuri's Anglophilia emerges from our analysis not as colonial mimicry or cultural capitulation, but as a sophisticated strategy of resistance and subversion. By embracing British culture, Chaudhuri creates a unique perspective from which to critique both colonial power structures and postcolonial nationalisms. His works challenge simplistic binaries of East and West, colonizer and colonized, tradition and modernity, offering a complex understanding of cultural interaction post-empire.

Chaudhuri's Anglophilia asserts intellectual independence, navigates cultural hybridity, and creates a "third space" that resists easy categorization. He challenges colonial narratives and complicates postcolonial orthodoxies, paving the way for a nuanced understanding of cultural identity in a globalized world.

As Elleke Boehmer argues in *Postcolonial Poetics* (2018):

**"The most effective postcolonial writing does not simply reject colonial influences, but engages with them critically, creating new forms of expression that reflect the complexities of postcolonial experience." (Boehmer, 2018, p. 156)**

Chaudhuri's oeuvre exemplifies this approach, using Anglophilia to craft a literary voice that is both deeply Indian and globally engaged. His works serve as a powerful reminder of the complexities of colonial encounters and their impact on individual and collective identities.

Finally, I conclude with a reflection on Chaudhuri's Anglophilia as an aesthetic and as a critique of the transformative potential of literature. Thus, by adopting and imitating the English language and using the references to the British colonial culture, Chaudhuri at the same time claims his independence and forms a complex view on India's history, present, and future. His works remain topical up to the present; they invite the readers not to confine themselves in fixed colonial dominance/suppression and postcolonial defiance perspectives but rather embrace the continuity in the process of constructing cultural hybridity in the postcolonial global age.

## Final Thoughts

These aspects indicate that this author's attitude to British culture can be described as ambivalent, and his attitude to British culture reflected in the mentioned books helps to understand the specifics of postcolonial subject and his/her struggle. His passion for things English, instead of appearing as a facile desire to emulate the colonizer, becomes an effective and elaborate literary device that enables him to deal with the challenges of cultural creolization, express high intellectual individualism, and deliver profound social commentaries both on the colonial and on the postcolonial societies.

In this way, Chaudhuri's work unveils the clichés that are associated with concepts of pure culture and genuine nationality. His capacity to reference European, Latin American, African, and Caribbean cultures as well as writing sometimes 'for' specific ethnic groups but, at the same time, critically challenging all of them provides a mode of theorising cultural difference that is not restricted by a colonial centre and periphery or postcolonial original authenticity.

Also, there is something that reflects from Chaudhuri's writings, the essence of the power of language and literature in subversive strategies. He mastered the language of the colonizer and was able to use the same language to articulate sophisticated deconstructions and hence portrays how the colonizer's instruments of domination can be turned into tools of emancipation and enlightenment.

Concerning colonialism and globalization at the heart of both challenges and opportunities in the contemporary world, Chaudhuri's works are thought-provoking. They urge the reader to look for ambiguity, not for simple dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed, and for creation of subversion where it may be least

expected – in a colonial subject's loving admiration of Anglo culture.

Thus, one can suggest that Chaudhuri's Anglophilism is a vivid example of what Elleke Boehmer terms as 'resistant interaction' where colonized subject does not dismiss colonial culture completely, nor does he embrace it without questioning, but it reworks it into a potentially 'liberating' idiom. His works remain popular up to this date enriching the readers with the situational analysis of identity and culture struggles in the contemporary postcolonial context.

#### References

1. Almond, Ian. "Four Ways of Reading Nirad C. Chaudhuri." *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2000, pp. 171-180.
2. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, 1989.
3. ---, editors. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2006.
4. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
5. ---, editor. *Nation and Narration*. Routledge, 1990.
6. Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford UP, 1995.
7. ---. *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction*. Oxford UP, 2002.
8. ---. *Postcolonial Poetics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
9. ---, editor. *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870-1918*. Oxford UP, 1998.
10. ---. *Indian Arrivals: Networks of British Empire*. Oxford UP, 2015.
11. Chaudhuri, Nirad C. *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. Macmillan, 1951.
12. ---. *A Passage to England*. Macmillan, 1959.
13. ---. *The Continent of Circe*. Chatto & Windus, 1965.
14. ---. *Thy Hand, Great Anarch!*. Chatto & Windus, 1987.
15. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979.
16. ---. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf, 1993.
17. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Macmillan Education, 1988, pp. 271-313.