1. Introduction

We may divide the history of Africa into three main phases: pre-colonial past, colonial period, and the postcolonial present. These are merely the convenient phases that have been constructed by historians. The chronologies for one part of the continent vary greatly from those that apply to others; and the length, the nature, and the depth of consequences of colonial rule have varied from one region and country to another. For the pre-colonial past, the earliest African civilization of which we have reliable knowledge is that of Egypt, which linked Africa and Western Asia. During this period, spread, expansion and consolidation of Islam is noticed. During the same period we also notice the dispersion of the Bantu peoples which led to the development of many kingdoms and empires.

Colonialism refers to an area of the world acquired by conquering the territory or settling it with inhabitants of the nation holding it in control, thereby imposing physical control over the region and its population. The classic example for colonialism is the British rule of India for several centuries. It had a vastly different culture and social and political institutions, held India under its control until 1947. Imperialism is similar to colonialism but it is not necessary for a country to exercise imperialism over another country only by holding political or geographical control of the latter. The policy and practice of a country extends to another country, whether distant or near. Usually such influence makes the recipient country to subserve the interests of the imperialist power.

Neocolonialism is yet another important concept which includes retention of military bases, exploitation of resources, preferential trade treaties, imposed unification of colonies, conditional aid, and defense treaties. It also includes artificially created countries or combining countries into a group or
federation. Every part of Africa has at one time or another come under the imperialist and colonialist overrule of Asia and the West. Today every part of the continent except for one or two small and remote islands has become politically, even if not in all cases economically, independent. The brutality of colonial rule may have been exaggerated and mythologized, but there is no doubt that the colonial period had deep-seated consequences for the development of Africa

1.1 Colonial Rule in Africa

Apart from the early colonial incursions by Rome along the coast of northern Africa and those by Arabian states along the eastern African coast, the first colonial rulers were the Portuguese, who, from the twelfth century onward, set up small colonial trading settlements southward down the western African coastline from present-day Senegal, the Cape Verde Islands, and Guinea-Bissau to Benin, Congo, and Angola. At the end of the fifteenth century, they rounded the Cape and reached eastern Africa. Other countries Holland, France, Britain, Brandenburg, Denmark, Sweden, Oman, Belgium, and Germany sent colonial expeditions to Africa in the wake of the Portuguese. All established trading outposts and then moved inland to take over the remainder of the continent. However, they could rarely take over internal kingdoms and other societies without force. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Africa was the scene of continual warfare and economic exploitation.

The most obvious series of events was that involving the trade in slaves to the Americas from western and south-central Africa and from eastern Africa to Arabia, Persia, and India. Slaves were captured by indigenous African rulers themselves and sold to Europeans and Arabs. The trade conducted alongside was
commerce in ivory, gold, and other items, the collection of which required people to be diverted from farming and their settled peasant livelihoods.

The third phase of African history is the contemporary era, a period of some thirty years in the middle of the twentieth century during which political independence was taken by, and in some cases rather grudgingly given to, the present African nation-states. It is still too early to evaluate the post-colonial history of Africa, which has been characterized by a series of attempts to construct new democracies that have in most cases failed, combined with a few examples of destructive dictatorship. In addition, this period has been marked by the process of neo-colonialism and development, of the continued exploitation of Africa by the outside world not in the form of carrying off of human beings, but of the grabbing of material resources in return for manufactured products.

In pre-colonial times, African nations had their own legal systems based on their customs and practices. These customs were enforced by elders, clan leaders who performed both civic and spiritual duties. The community determined the powers exercised by the clan elders. These powers included keeping peace, settling disputes involving marriage, divorce, the marital status of women, the rights of children, inheritance, election of customary heirs and land, performance of rituals, protection of gods and shrines.

Land tenure systems were communal. Communities shared land under the authority and advice of community elders, clan heads and kings. Bundles of rights in the same land could be held by different persons, and group rights in particular areas of land, or common property rights also existed. These different rights in land could be transferred from one generation to the next. Decisions about who farmed a particular piece of land were made by clan heads, but often resulted from discussions in the family and clan, guided by customs that took into account the
needs of various persons in the group. Gender, age and position in the clan and the family were all factors that played a role in these discussions. Although the notion of land ownership as exclusive ownership did not exist in pre-colonial times, there was a difference between primary and secondary interests in land. Most of the tribal customs were based on patrilineal systems, and the male elders usually managed the land. Women generally had only secondary rights or interests in land, and these were often of uncertain duration, subject to change and dependent on the maintenance of good relations with the clan, family or person through whom women obtained their access to land.

An example of such a secondary interest is the right to use the land and benefit from its produce, also called usufruct right. Women were therefore secondary users of land, whether as daughters, sisters, wives, or mothers. These secondary rights could either apply to family fields, common land and in some cases a plot of land women could use as their own and from which the benefits of the produce would be brought to the family group as a whole. In the kingdoms the land was vested in the kings who held the land in trust for their people who in turn enjoyed occupancy rights. Other secondary users would be young men, migrants and pastoralists. If a man would die, divorce his wife or take another wife, the social ties linking the widow or wife to the land as secondary user could still provide her with access to land.

However, if social ties deteriorated, or if a woman for example refused to be inherited by her late husband’s brother, she risked being forced off the land she had been allowed to use. Women’s status with regard to land was therefore not equal with that of men. In practice, as long as land was available and land was not seen as the property of individual owners to the exclusion of others, women would usually not be entirely excluded from land, in accordance with traditional obligations within the clans. While control of land was vested in men, houses were
controlled by women, especially married women with sons. Most pre-colonial agricultural social groups were organized around satellite households, which were usually composed of a wife and her unmarried children. Sons who had reached maturity would build their own houses in a specific spatial relation to their mother’s house. In polygynous marriages (a man having more two or more wives at the same time), each wife had a separate house within the homestead. Each of these households formed a separate economic unit with agricultural produce controlled by the wife. This separate economic unit represented the starting points of the developmental cycle of the family. Thus the house was both a social and an economic term and fell under different rules from the land on which it was built. Houses were identified with women, although women inherited neither houses nor land; daughters were expected to get married, and their husbands to build a new house for them upon marriage. Access to land and housing, therefore, mainly existed through male relatives. In general, gender relations were more complementary than hierarchical.

As there was a blurred distinction between public and private life, women were not confined to the private or domestic sphere alone. This allowed them to participate either directly or indirectly in decision-making, although men dominated positions of political, economic and social power. There are several examples of women in pre-colonial patrilineal societies who tried to find alternative ways to access land. Woman to woman marriages existed, and still exist, among the Kikuyu, Kipsigi and Nandi people in Kenya. A wealthy woman without children of her own may marry another woman who is then free to have a sexual relationship with a man of her choice in order to produce children for her husband. The function of the wife is to bear children to ensure patrilineal property inheritance and to bury the husband.
Among pastoral cultures, however, women are often entirely responsible for house building, whereas this is classed as a male task among the agricultural peoples. Although the common inheritance system in today’s Tanzania was patrilineal, some of the ethnic communities followed matrilineal systems of inheritance. Land and other inheritance claims would be passed on through a woman’s descent group. Many variations existed in the functioning of these matrilineal systems, but in general, women in matrilineal societies used to have better access to land than those in patrilineal societies. Today, inheritance patterns in matrilineal societies seem to be changing towards the patrilineal model. East Africa was divided among Germany and Britain in the 1886 Anglo-German Agreement.

In 1894 the British Crown declared Buganda to be a British Protectorate. One year later, British East Africa (today’s Kenya) was declared to be a British Protectorate. Germany extended its control over German East Africa. In 1922, the League of Nations formally entrusted German East Africa to Britain. Tanganyika, as it is now known, became an internationally mandated territory, administered by Britain in the interests of the material and moral well-being and the social progress of its inhabitants. After the Second World War, Tanganyika was declared a Trust Territory of the United Nations, with Britain’s role to ensure its progress towards self-government and eventual independence.

With the adoption of the Africa Order-in-Council in 1889, the British Protectorate authorities introduced English law in East Africa. The Order-in-Council stated that jurisdiction should so far as circumstances permitted be exercised upon the principles of and in conformity with, the substance of the law for the time being in force in England. African customary law became subjected to an undefined code of ethics referred to as the repugnancy clause. Around 1897, the East Africa Land Regulations were adopted; these enabled the British Protectorate
authorities to alienate land for settlers. Contrary to earlier opinion, it was now believed that the British Crown could obtain radical or ultimate title to the land in a British Protectorate if there was no settled form of government present. The British Protectorate authorities assumed full ownership over all land. Customary rules, as developed and applied by the various ethnic groups in Uganda, Tanganyika and Kenya, continued to apply but became subordinated to the received British law.

Thus, all existing rights in land were at the mercy of the colonial power and customary landholders were often regarded as tenants of the state. Customary tenure was treated as inferior to statutory and common law tenure. It was seen as a form of tenure that lacked security and hindered investment. In general, the local population in Africa only enjoyed temporary rights on small plots of land. Even where statutory laws recognized customary land rights, they usually did not protect such rights. The land occupied by customary landholders remained public land under the control of the state. Customary titles required consent from the Governor. If he withdrew his implied permission, customary occupants could be evicted purely by the administrative action that followed his decision. Therefore, no legal security of tenure existed for customary land rights.

Compulsory acquisition of native land for the benefit of immigrants continued. In the Crown Lands Ordinance as applicable in Kenya, the rights of the African population were seen in terms of actual occupancy only. When Africans would cease to occupy their land, it could be sold or leased as if it were waste and unoccupied land; no prior requirement to seek the consent of any tribal chief existed. In an effort to take the native’s right into consideration, the Ordinance also stipulated that land or settlements in actual occupation of the natives at the date of the lease shall, so long as it is actually occupied by them, be deemed to be excluded from the lease. Hut tax was introduced in all three countries, requiring
the local population to pay tax for the dwelling they lived in, and leaving them not much choice but to seek waged labor at settler plantations and farms.

The local population vehemently opposed the hut tax, which however continued to be imposed. In addition, cash crop production was increased and more land was alienated from customary occupants to immigrants in order to boost production from settler plantations and farms. With regard to urban land, Europeans could purchase freehold titles and obtain leases throughout the city of Nairobi, but Africans were only permitted usufruct rights in one area, Pumwani. As there was no distinction made between male and female usufruct rights, an increasing number of women who had been excluded from access to rural land moved to the city for at least some form of individual access to land. A similar situation occurred in Buganda, where the 1900 Buganda Agreement made no distinction between male and female usufruct rights. As a consequence, a category of self-employed women who owned their own homes or paid their own rent emerged. In areas outside the Native Reserves, all African claims and interests were extinguished. African customary law was to apply to the native areas and the Native Lands Trust Board was to protect native interests.

By the 1940s the reserves had grown overcrowded and insecure, and massive landlessness had become a serious problem. In 1955, the East African Royal Commission recommended that government policy in the region would move towards advocating individualized freehold tenure. Kenya was the first country to take such a step. The Swynnerton Plan of 1955 laid the basis for consolidation of fragmented holdings, or the enclosure of communal lands, through which some African farmers were to be provided with economy-size farming holdings. Individualization of title and the creation of private property rights in tribal land were supposed to provide the farmers security of tenure. From
1957 on, rules on demarcation, adjudication and consolidation of areas of native land were adopted and applied.

The freehold title was then conferred on the registered owner of land. The right of occupation under native law and custom, if shown in the register, was deemed converted into a tenancy from year to year. If not shown in the register, it was extinguished. A first registration could not be challenged, even if it had been obtained by fraud. All parties involved in the disposition of land had to first obtain the consent of the Land Control Board of the district in which the land was situated. In practice, after 1959, registration of land effectively extinguished all existing rights and interests under customary law. Demands for the restoration of stolen lands became commonplace, even before the Mau Mau revolt, leading to the state of emergency in 1952. The reason for this decision by the colonial government was impelled as much by political factors associated with the Mau Mau as by the economic factors considered by the Commission.

The Plan was drafted by the then Deputy Director of Agriculture, R.J.M. Swynnerton. Its objectives were to incorporate the peasantry into colonial production processes and to create a politically conservative landed middle class. Although there was awareness of the risk that farmers would incur debts through mortgaging land to secure credits, and that the creation of a land market could lead to a landed and landless class among the peasantry, it was stated that this was a normal step in the evolution of a country. In 1967, a Land Control Act was adopted which retained the basic principles and administrative structures of the two Ordinances. The remaining provisions of the 1959 Ordinance were incorporated in the Land Consolidation Act of 1968. Also in 1968, the Land Adjudication Act was adopted. In 1960, with negotiations for independence of Kenya ongoing and pressures from the settler community rising, the Land Order-in-Council of 1960 was adopted.
It provided for the conversion of native leaseholds into freeholds and for the acquisition of land in the Highlands by Africans through purchase on a willing buyer, willing seller basis. The original occupiers and other persons in need of land could regain access to the White Highlands through purchase of land under willing buyer, willing seller schemes or through purchase by the post-colonial state for resettlement and re-distribution. The programme of land settlement and re-distribution schemes was to be financed through a loan granted by the United Kingdom, the Colonial Development Corporation, West Germany and the World Bank. Since most Africans were too poor to buy land, the majority of the people who were actually settled were not the dispossessed people. Instead, a social category of people with vested interests in the continuity of colonial property and political processes had emerged, while millions of Kenyans became landless squatters in their own country. This in turn resulted in a large influx of landless people migrating to urban areas in search of jobs.

British structures and policies focused on making a clear distinction between public and private life, guided by an ideology that perceived men as public actors and women as private performers. Moreover, land and the houses built on that land were treated as one unity of immovable property. The many different nuances and aspects of rights in land under customary land tenure systems were conjoined in a single right of absolute land ownership. Since men still had control of the land, they increased their control over the houses on that land. Men, now more and more the sole public actors, could develop a direct relationship to capital and were taught modern agricultural techniques. Increased focus on cash crop development also accelerated male ownership and set the stage for further marginalization of women.

Women were increasingly branded as private performers; they lost control over their productive and reproductive labour and were no longer owners or at
least controllers of houses. With men holding economic power over land and housing, the stability of the marital relationship, or rather the relationship of the woman to her husband’s family became the primary link for women to land and housing. The trend towards individualization of customary rights was accompanied by an erosion of traditional obligations and the social security value for women that had previously existed. The relative position of women was also severely affected by colonial policy on education. As was the case in Britain at the time, educational opportunities were disproportionately provided to boys and men.

Missionary education for women focused primarily on how to be good wives and homemakers. This lack of educational opportunities combined with a political system based on educational credentials played a big role in reproducing gender inequalities. Women thus played only marginal roles in decision-making processes and in the designation of political priorities at the time. In pre-colonial Africa, women had secondary rights or interest in land, which they had to exercise through their father, brother, husband or son. However, as land was not exclusively owned by any individual but was shared by communities with a high sense of solidarity and tradition, access to land and housing was generally provided. Colonial rule disrupted this communal land tenure system and introduced new individualized forms of land tenure, which were given a superior legal status by the colonial powers. Communal land was defined in terms of occupancy, and was not protected by law from alienation and conversion into freehold or leasehold titles for settlers.
1.2 The Troubled Encounter between Post-colonialism and African History: the Post-colonial Challenge

Post-colonial period refers to the time after the elimination of the colonial rule. The term is defined for its value in different ways. Although in terms of time involved, it is easy to define as done above, interpretations of its application and the values attached to it vary from one scholar to another. Employed in a wide range of cultural and literary disciplines, the term has become so diffuse and heterogeneous that it defies definition as to whether it refers primarily to texts and discursive practices, the construction of subjectivities and identities, or concrete historical processes. Its proponents have different preoccupations as can be seen with the famous trinity – Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak.

Said, whose book *Orientalism* is considered by many a foundational text of post-colonial studies, concentrates on discourse analysis, showing the Eurocentric inventions of others and the discursive machinations of imperialism, and believes in the liberating potential of nationalism and the diasporic condition. Bhabha’s psychoanalytic post-colonialism rejects Said’s emphasis on domination and the binary between the colonizer and colonized, self and other, speaking subject and silent native. He celebrates hybridity and suggests that the colonial encounter was full of ambivalences, slippages, and mimicry out of which fluid identities were transacted and negotiated. Spivak’s Marxist and feminist-inflected deconstruction has steadily moved from colonial discourse analysis to international transcultural studies and has become increasingly critical of postcolonial studies as practiced in the US academy, which she regards as “bogus” (Spivak 1999:358).

It seems that debates about post-colonialism centre on five key issues: its genealogies, boundaries, fields, locations, and ideologies. Genealogies refer to the
theoretical and historical origins of post colonialism as a theoretical construct; boundaries refer to the temporal and spatial scales of postcolonial discourse; fields refer to the units and frameworks of analysis; locations refer to the places where postcolonial discourse and theory are mainly produced and consumed; and ideologies refer to the political orientations and effects of post colonialism. Needless to say, the import and flavor of these debates have shifted over time and according to location and context.

Postcolonial theory emerged in the Anglo-American academy in the mid-1980s in the wake of the rise of post-structuralism and postmodernism. This raises questions about the relationship between post colonialism and the other posts. There are those who argue that the three are quite different, that the postmodern is an apolitical description of conditions in advanced capitalist societies, while the postcolonial is concerned with global inequalities and is liberatory. To some, coupling the post-colonial with the post-modern, then, is theoretically, ideologically, and empirically misleading and unproductive. Others believe that post colonialism and postmodernism are interlinked, but disagree on the nature and productivity of the linkage.

Aijaz Ahmad’s critique of post-colonialism’s emphasis on the centrality of colonialism as a marker of time involves a resenting on capitalist modernity as the primary engine in determining historical change. He implies that colonialism is almost incidental to this history insofar as modernization took place whether or not particular nation-states were colonized by the Europeans (Ahmad 1995:7). One of the few areas of agreement between the friends and foes of post-colonialism concerns its culturalist thrust, which is derived from its post-structuralist underpinnings and disciplinary base in English studies. Ania Loomba offers a measured evaluation of post-colonialism for the study of colonialism as a whole and for the study of literacy criticism. She argues that the prefix ‘post’ complicates
matters because it implies an ‘aftermath’ in two senses-temporal, as in coming
after, and ideological, as in supplanting (Loomba 1998:12). A post-colonial
studies intensify and sharpen debates about the social fabric and make it
imperative for us to weave the economic realities of colonialism with all that was
hitherto excluded from hard social analysis sexuality, subjectivity, psychology and
language. They remind us that the real relations of society do not exist in isolation
from its current or ideological categories.

Post-colonialism, moreover, expands our analytical vocabulary, so that it is
not just a fancy new term for colonialism; it indicates a new way of thinking in
which cultural, intellectual, economic or political processes are seen to work
together in the formation, perpetuation and dismantling of colonialism. It seeks to
widen the scope of studies of colonialism by examining the intersections of ideas
and institutions, knowledge and power. As for literature, post-colonial criticism
encourages the complex reading of texts, including of metropolitan fiction, which
was deeply imbued with the imperial structure of attitude and reference, and the
importance of literary texts as materials for historical study.

In the early days frantic attempts were made to define postcolonial writing
and other forms of cultural production, which some said were distinguished by an
oppositional attitude towards colonialism or an ethic of resistance, or by allegory,
experimentation, and innovation, or hybridization of cultures. In short, these
characteristics are neither necessarily common to the so-called postcolonial
literatures nor confined to them. The term post-colonial is often used in
chronological, epistemological, and concrete senses by the same author. Post-
colonialists usually discuss the experiences associated with colonialism and its
present effects for both the imperial powers and the ex-colonial societies.
1.3 Post-modernism versus Post-colonialism

Post-modernity is a historical condition that is said to have emerged out of the contradictions of over-developed modernity in Euro-America. Post-colonialism, on the other hand, is time-space after colonialism. Thus, both post-modernism and post-colonialism are seen to be inapplicable to African realities because Africa has transcended neither modernity nor colonialist tendencies. Postcolonial theory emerged in the Anglo-American academy in the mid-1980s in the wake of the rise of post-structuralism and postmodernism. This raises questions about the relationship between post colonialism and the other “posts.” There are those who argue that the three are quite different, that the postmodern is an apolitical description of conditions in advanced capitalist societies, while the postcolonial is concerned with global inequalities and is liberatory. To some, coupling the postcolonial with the postmodern, then is theoretically, ideologically, and empirically misleading and unproductive (Barker 1994:23).

Others believe that post colonialism and postmodernism are interlinked, but disagree on the nature and productivity of the linkage. For Ato Quayson, the two can be analytically and beneficially deployed with respect to questions of marginality and identity. Besides their shared prefix “post” and the attendant temporal and epistemological problematic this raises, both are concerned with representational discourses and offer second-order meditations upon real and imagined conditions; only by appropriating each other can they “fully explain the state of the contemporary world” (Quayson 2000:154). Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik suggest a more sinister and unproductive union between the two. For Ahmad, literary post colonialism emerged as postmodernism’s wedge to colonize literatures from the global South, so that “what used to be known as ‘Third World Literature’ gets rechristened as ‘postcolonial literature’ when the governing theoretical framework shifts from Third World to postmodernism”(Ahmad
1992:276). Repudiated were older and more radical conceptions of post colonialism used in the 1970s, “with specific reference to the type of postcolonial states that arose in Asia and Africa after postwar decolonization” (Ahmad 1992:276).

Questions about the geographical and historical scales of post colonialism have been tied to debates about its analytical fields and frameworks. One of the few areas of agreement between the friends and foes of post colonialism concerns its culturalist thrust, which is derived from its post-structuralist underpinnings and disciplinary base in English studies. This has been a source of both its strengths and its weaknesses. Ania Loomba offers a measured evaluation of post colonialism for the study of colonialism as a whole and literacy criticism itself. Postcolonial studies, she argues “intensify and sharpen debates about the social fabric, and make it imperative for us to weave the economic realities of colonialism with all that was hitherto excluded from hard social analysis sexuality, subjectivity, psychology and language. They remind us that the real relation of society does not exist in isolation from its current or ideological categories (Loomba 1998:37).

Post colonialism, moreover, expands our analytical vocabulary, so that it “is not just a fancy new term for colonialism; it indicates a new way of thinking in which cultural, intellectual, economic or political processes are seen to work together in the formation, perpetuation and dismantling of colonialism. It seeks to widen the scope of studies of colonialism by examining the intersections of ideas and institutions, knowledge and power” (Loomba 1998:54). As for literature, postcolonial criticism encourages the complex reading of texts, including of metropolitan fiction, which was deeply imbued with the imperial structure of attitude and reference, as Said calls it, and the importance of literary texts as materials for historical study (Said 1994:184).
1.4 Colonial Library

Most discussions of African intellectuals tend to focus on the intellectuals produced within the tradition of the colonial library, who dominate contemporary Africa and Africa’s worldly transactions. Much has been written about the double consciousness of these intellectuals, the alienation and ambivalence of their loyalties and ambitions as a caste or a middle-class fraction that straddled, often uneasily, colonialist tendency and its modernist claims and nativity and its supposed atavism. They learned to talk in both indigenous and imported languages. As embodiments of the African-European confrontation and compromise, they were supremely confident of their mission, despite the endless assaults of colonial condescension, as progenitors of an African narrative of renewal, a narrative of African modernity. The bilingual, indeed, multilingual intelligentsia had a trinity of dreams, for purity, parity, and personhood for African difference from Europe, equality with Europe, and humanism denied by Europe.

The nationalist imagination sought Africa’s political, cultural, and economic renewal. This entailed independence and nation building, which, in turn, rested on and raised larger cultural and civilization questions. The project of cultural revival and reconstitution was complex and contradictory. Some sought to strip the native of the alienations of Euro-American modernity and force her to return to the authentic and pristine values of a pre-colonial past, one that was, however, more often than not invented through the conceptual registers of colonial anthropology. Others sought to create a new cultural synthesis out of Africa’s indigenous and imported cultures. Underlying the discourses on African modernity or culture and society is the question of what constitutes Africa. This question has exercised the minds of African intellectuals for generations.
The great 19th century Liberian intellectual Edward Blyden introduced the notion of Africa’s triple heritage, Africa as a constellation of Islam, Christianity, and indigenous cultures, a concept that was later reworked by Ghana’s celebrated philosopher president, Kwame Nkrumah, and popularized by the eminent Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui. The overriding ambition of Africa’s colonial and postcolonial intellectuals has been to overturn Europe’s cognitive apparatus of itself and by affirming the historicity and humanity of Africa and Africans. Decolonization and development, nation building and democratization, cultural renewal and diversity, and Africa’s regional integration and global presence seem to dominate intellectual discourse among African thinkers. Nationalist humanism has withstood new theoretical waves. More often than not, new ideas and ideologies, from Marxism to dependency to feminism have been incorporated.

Clearly, post colonialism is a house of many mansions, whose diffuseness makes it difficult to define or to critique. The term “postcolonial” is often used in chronological, epistemological, and concrete senses even by the same author. Post colonialists usually discuss the experiences associated with colonialism and its present effects for both the imperial powers and the ex-colonial societies. Post colonialism longs to be a theory of colonial and postcolonial social formations, of concrete historical processes, as well as an ideological interrogation of texts, images, and discourses. Thus, as with postmodernism, there is a tension, a creative one in deft hands, between the temporal and typological tendencies, and the spatial and social scales of post colonialism. Maintaining the balance between the descriptive and critical inflections, and the analytical and political agendas, is not easy for any theory; some postcolonial scholars are unable to walk the tightrope without tripping.
1.6 Africa’s Ambivalent Post colonialism

It has been widely noted that many African and Africanist scholars tend to be ambivalent or utterly hostile to postcolonial theory. On the surface this is surprising in so far as Africa and African studies have been central to the political, ideological, and intellectual insurgencies that led to the dismantling of European empires and the disintegration of Eurocentricism celebrated by post colonialism. This is to suggest that African studies, together with other area studies, and developments in Africa associated with decolonization and struggles against Western hegemony played a role in the deconstruction and decomposition of the modernist mentalities and methodologies that the “posts” rail against so much.

One could even argue that the fragmentations, ambivalences, contingencies, hybridities, and multiplicities associated with the “posts,” as conceptions and conditions, were articulated and experienced, with unsettling urgency and persistence, from the bloody dawn of colonial conquest and the violent negations and negotiations it entailed for the cultural cartographies of African peoples. In a sense, then, Africans saw some of the “posts,” through historical forces that were not entirely of their own making, before they were belatedly discovered in Euro-America. In short, African scholars and scholarship are deeply invested in the destruction and deconstruction of European hegemony, economic and epistemic, political and paradigmatic. Ironically, it is precisely this ideological and intellectual investment that accounts for the unease with which post colonialism is regarded. Many African writers, artists, and other cultural producers do not describe themselves and their work as “postmodern” or “postcolonial.” The observations by Olaniyan Tejumola, the Nigerian literary scholar, underscore the ideological thrust of African responses to post colonialism:
I know no African scholar and perhaps very few scholars of Africa who would invoke the ‘posts’ in my title without an automatic rush to qualification, if not outright dismissal. Post modernity, a historical condition that is said to have emerged out of the contradictions of overdeveloped modernity in Euro America, cannot possibly have much to say to societies upon whose backs that modernity was built and for whom it still remains a mirage today....

As to Postcoloniality, whose literal meaning is time-space after colonialism, what greater evidence of its inapplicability to Africa can we find than the continent’s world-historical debt peonage to its former colonizers, its chokehold by foreign-owned multinational corporations, and its invasion by ever more irresistible weapons of Euro-American imperialism? (Tejumola 2005:41)

Thus, both postmodernism and post colonialism are seen to be inapplicable to African realities because Africa has transcended neither modernity nor coloniality. Tejumola argues that African critics of postmodernism find fault with, first, its decentering of the subject; second, its privileging of culture; third, its use of abstruse language; and fourth, its preoccupation with colonialism. Postmodernism deconstructs not just the imperial European Subject but all claims to subject hood that would authorize or be the rallying point of knowledge or collective action or policies. This is where African critics interested in constructing a resistant subject or identity against unending Western imperialism part with postmodernism (Tejumola 2005: 42).
Moreover, for scholars committed to the project of African emancipation, postmodernism is troubling for its apparent cynicism against all truth claims, against revolutionary projects, against collective politics. According to Tejumola:

*Postmodernism privileges culture since it focuses on the instruments used by culture to produce meanings, such as narrative, discourse, and other institutional regulators of symbolic interactions.... It holds that whoever controls the realm of cultural meanings controls the means of self-perception and, therefore, power.... However, many African critics see in postmodernism’s cultural turn culturalism that dehistoricizes culture and demeans and sacrifices the concrete sociopolitical struggles that most African scholars believe to be where the solution to the continent’s Unending exploitation by the West lies. Most strands of African anti-imperialist thought do not consider culture to be a primary terrain of such struggle. (Tejumola 2005:42)*

According to Tejumola, in the view of many African scholars the use of obscure, self-consciously “theoretical” language further underscores “postmodernism’s elitist class character and its disconnection with the lives of the masses for whom such language is nothing but another characteristic and incomprehensible indulgence on the part of university eggheads who do no real labor” (Tejumola 2005:42). For Tejumola it also seems pointless to attack postmodernism’s culturalism, for postmodernism is indeed a cultural and discursive practice, not an economic or political discourse as such. As for elitist
language, all intellectual discourses in academe, he insists, are elitist, often incomprehensible to the so-called masses that have their own discourses. And it cannot but be preoccupied with colonialism because it is about the cultural and cognitive ravages of the colonial encounter. Instead of outright dismissal, he argues for what he calls “discriminating engagement,” that is, “engagement that foregrounds our interests rather than our difference, even if our interests ultimately include implications of our difference” (Tejumola 2005: 52).

The ambivalence of African scholars to post colonialism is not engendered by epistemic considerations only; some are troubled by the ethical implications of certain key concepts and tropes of postcolonial theory. Simon Gikandi, the distinguished Kenyan literary scholar, singles out the notion of “difference”, the valorization of difference in postcolonial theory, the vilification of African difference in Eurocentric discourse, and the violence of colonial inventions of ethnic difference in postcolonial Africa (Gikandi 2001:18).

The African ambivalences about the “posts” reflect the ideological and intellectual imperatives of what is defined as nationalist humanism, the tendency to put ideas through the wringer of African historical experiences, a powerful discursive inclination to interrogate analytical paradigms, including the “posts”, through the prism of the historic and humanistic imperatives of African nationalism, the struggle by Africans to recover and reaffirm their history and humanity so cruelly seized by modern Europe through the mechanisms of imperialism and colonialism and the ever-mutating discourses of Eurocentricism. Whatever the differences among African intellectuals, and there are many, and even when they oppose elements of colonial and postcolonial nationalism as noted by Appiah, nationalist humanism, remains the foundational matrix that frames their imaginary and social thought. As Korang and Thandika Mkandawire have demonstrated in their fascinating histories of colonial and postcolonial
intellectuals, nationalism has loomed large in the minds and activities of African intellectuals (Korang 2003:490). As a professional formation, African intellectuals of course have complex histories. Given the continent’s vastness and diversities, African intellectual traditions, tendencies, and trajectories are articulated in an astonishing array of languages and idioms, indigenous and foreign, secular and religious, scholarly and popular, scientific and ideological, abstract and pragmatic.

The overriding ambition of Africa’s colonial and postcolonial intellectuals has been to overturn Europe’s cognitive apparatus of itself and its African “Other” by affirming the historicity and humanity of Africa and Africans. It is a nationalist humanism that transcends the narrow confines of nationalism as conventionally understood. In these days of indiscriminate dismissal of nationalism, either inspired by the delirious discourses of globalization or the antifoundationalist anxieties of the “posts”, it is critical to distinguish between the repressive nationalisms of imperialism and the progressive nationalisms of anticolonial resistance, between the nationalisms that led to colonial conquest and genocide and those that sought decolonization and liberation for oppressed nations and communities, between struggles for domination and struggles for freedom, and between the reactionary, reformist, or revolutionary goals of various nationalisms.

Socially, nationalism has always had diverse ethnic and civic dynamics, spatially, territorial and transnational dimensions. Its ideological and intellectual referents and representations also vary. Not only were African nationalisms diverse in their composition, objectives, and tendencies, for Africa, indeed as for much of the world, the nation-state remains a crucial site for the organization of social life, a meaningful and coherent space of struggle for emancipation and empowerment from the ravages of contemporary capitalist globalization and domestic inequalities and authoritarianisms.
Imperialist and nationalist historiographies represent almost diametrically opposed views of the place and impact of colonialism in African history, one regarding it as a decisive moment, the other as a parenthesis. To the imperialists, colonialism in fact brought Africa into history, for in their view Africa “proper,” to use Hegel’s moniker – from which North Africa was excised, was the land of the “Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit,” exhibiting “the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state” (Hegel 1956: 93). It is problematic enough to reduce world history to the last 5,000 years of recorded history, let alone subsume it to the trajectory of European history since the rise of European global hegemony only two and half centuries ago, dominance that is already waning and is unlikely to last this century. The arduous task of rescuing both African history and world history from the burdens and blindfolds of Eurocentric historiography cannot be accomplished by postcolonial theory.

The challenge now is to recentre African history by deepening and globalizing it in its temporal scope and spatial scale, taking seriously the place of Africa in world history or what some call ecumenical world history, and what I call human history. Lest we forget, Africa has always been central, and will remain so, to its peoples and to humanity as a whole, whose cradle this ancient continent is, and where much of its history on this remarkable planet resides. The larger imperative, which is as much intellectual as it is moral, is to tell the story of the entire human community in a manner that is more balanced and more accurate, that accounts for the contributions of all societies in their localities and complex interactions to the great human drama that started unfolding two hundred thousand years ago with the emergence of our species, homo sapiens.
1.6 Bessie Head and Buchi Emechta – A Voyage

Bessie Head, one of Africa’s most prominent writers, was born in South Africa in 1937. She is the child of an illicit union between a Scottish woman and a black man. When her mother, Bessie Emery, was found to be pregnant with the child of a black South African, she was institutionalized by her parents and labeled insane. Head was taken from her mother at birth and raised in a foster home until the age of thirteen. Head then attended missionary school and eventually became a teacher. Abandoning teaching after only a few years, Head began writing for the Golden City Post. In 1964, personal problems led her to take up a teaching post in Botswana, where Head remained in “refugee” status for fifteen years before gaining citizenship. All three of her major novels when Rain Clouds Gather, Maru, and A Question of Power were written in Botswana during this period. Bessie Head died in Botswana in 1986 at the age of forty-nine. The writings of Head cover many aspects of her personal experiences as a racially mixed person, growing up without a family in South Africa. Her works deal with issues of discrimination, refugees, racism, African history, poverty, and interpersonal relationships.

A hint of autobiography is present in much of Head’s writing, which often deals with poor and emotionally abused black women dealing with both racist and sexist discrimination. Head’s varieties of characters are young and old, male and female. This variety allows her to approach the same themes from different perspectives, but the focus is always on the struggles and hardships of life in postcolonial Africa. Head has also written on the effects of British colonialism in South Africa. She once explained that she begins her stories for herself, but finishes them with universal truths that can be shared by everyone. The novels portrayed seem simple on the surface, the language direct and uncluttered, but
when you start to think about them, you find that their meaning is complex and elusive.

They tend to start and end abruptly, throwing you into and out of the characters’ lives, leaving you to make up your own mind without offering much sense of direction or resolution from the author. Though Bessie Head’s life might be seen as somber and traumatic, her works present love and light alongside the pictures of hardship and isolation she paints. Head uses intense imagery and vividly describes the beauty found in both human and environmental nature. She praises as good as she condemns evil, and expresses her hope for peace and change with her criticism of the current political system. Head wrote that she viewed her activity as a writer, as a kind of participation in the thought of the whole world.

Among the most important female authors to emerge from postcolonial Africa, Nigerian-born Buchi Emechta is distinguished for her vivid descriptions of female subordination and conflicting cultural values in modern Africa. Her best-known novels, including Second-Class Citizen, The Bride Price, and The Joys of Motherhood expose the injustice of traditional, male-oriented African social customs that relegate women to a life of child-bearing, servitude, and victimization. Often regarded as a feminist writer, Emecheta illustrates the value of education and self-determination for aspiring young women who struggle against sexual discrimination, racism, and unhappy marital arrangements to achieve individuality and independence. While critical of patriarchal tribal culture, Emecheta fiction evinces an abiding reverence for African heritage and folklore that reflects the divided loyalties of Africans torn between the competing claims of tradition and modernization. Noted for her realistic characters, conversational prose style, and sociological interest, Emecheta is highly regarded for introducing an authentic female perspective into contemporary African literature. Widely
recognized as a leading female voice in contemporary African literature, Emecheta has attracted international attention for her compelling depiction of the female experience in African society and, in particular, her native Nigeria.

Along with Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, and fellow Nigerian Flora Nwapa, Emecheta is credited with establishing an important female presence in the previously male-dominated literature of modern Africa. Emecheta differentiates her own Afro centric perspective from that of her Western counterparts by describing herself as “an African feminist with a small f.” Critics commend Emecheta's impressive narrative abilities, psychologically complex female protagonists, and powerful social critique of traditional African culture that, as reviewers note, is largely unencumbered by ideology or polemics. This thesis mainly projects the post-colonial African Society in the novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta.

1.7 Structure of the Dissertation

The Introduction, attempts a brief survey of some of the salient features of what we mean by pre-colonialism, colonialism, imperialism, post-colonialism and neo-colonialism. The chapter also discussed the features of pre-colonialism, colonialism, imperialism, post-colonialism and neocolonialism found in Africa. Basic constructs of Post-colonialism, Africa’s Ambivalent Post-colonialism, differences between Post-modernism and Post-colonialism as well as Changing Dynamics of the Impact of the Encounter were also presented. In addition, a brief introduction to the novelists Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta was presented.
Chapter 2, “Women in Society—A Radical Approach to the Novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emechta”, encompasses the predominant role played by women in the African society, as well as in the novels of Bessie and Buchi. The woman shown by African female writers is the one that is oppressed, trodden, degraded, exploited and subjugated. A woman’s experiences encompass all that is human; a woman shares and has always shared the world equally with man. In this sense, half of the world’s experiences, half of the world’s work and many of its products have been hers. Being a part of the world and having a hand, shaping it, it is no wonder that what the world has seen and interpreted about the woman has been shaped for it through a value system defined by man. A woman’s history has been a special kind; distorted and alienated because it has been refracted through the lens of a man’s record and observation.

The African woman occupies a unique but unenviable position in the world. Her role as a wife and mother were, and still have been grotesquely, distorted by the pressure of tradition and culture and has been the heaviest burden. The woman has played different roles in African life and society and these roles have sometimes been varied and also contradictory. The feminist movement that has emerged in post-colonial Africa is basically heterosexual, prenatal and concerned with women’s rights, political and economic issues.

African women are active participants in these relationships in multi-dimensional roles, with responsibilities in the private and public domains remaining considerably gender specific. Emerging feminist actions in the region are directed at bringing existing socio-cultural ideas of gender into the open, challenging them and defending suggestions for acceptable alternative forms and resolutions. There is also a greater boldness in addressing the economic and political elements that determine social constructions of gender roles and women’s status in African societies. The term “feminism” is English, as the language itself,
but its realization is inextricably bound to the culture and peculiar backgrounds and experiences of the women. It thus becomes worthwhile at this point to show the coping strategies of some women in cultures in Africa to maintain some measure of autonomy in their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Bessie Head through *A Question of Power* and *When Rain Clouds Gather* and Buchi Emecheta through *The Joys of Motherhood* and *The Slave Girl* explore the limitations of women's roles, their disadvantages and their bruised self-image, and celebrates their occasional successes.

*Chapter-3, “Racism –An overview from the Novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta”,* describes the concept of Racism and their impact on the African society. The works of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta provide an exploration of the abuse and mistreatment of black African people and subjugation of women in pre-democratic societies, as evident in the texts. Thus, the chapter will investigate literary constructions by the authors and how they spotlight the oppression and inequality concomitant within the Southern African society during the era of unequal opportunities. More specifically, the aim of this chapter is to scrutinize the psychological fractures caused by the dual oppression of race and gender; and to investigate the inner conflict and emotional turmoil experienced by the white perpetrators and black victims, displayed in the texts.

Buchi and Head’s works present incidents of life experiences in Southern Africa, from two contrasting viewpoints. They both examine the tensions that exist between white, colored and African people who were forced to subsist in racially oppressive systems. This chapter also focuses on other theories and these theories underline how individuals are the ones responsible for change in society’s attitudes. It was the people of Southern Africa that were responsible for the racism and racist ideologies in African society, thus, critical race theory and cultural
studies allow individuals to reflect on how they have the power to rectify and change a racist and patriarchal society with the hope of an improved future.

Chapter-4, “Psychological Imbalance under the Magnifying Glass: Looking at Post-Colonial African Society in the Novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta”, projects the concept of alienation and attaining psychic wholeness in the novels of Head and Buchi. “Alienation” is the most comprehensive term to describe the mental state of some of Head’s and Buchi’s characters. This term describes both the external and the internal aspects of their problems. Alienation is a characteristic feature of the modern man, his sense of inward estrangements, of more or less conscious awareness that the inner being, the real "I," is alienated from the "me," the person as an object in society.

Many of Head's and Buchi’s characters have the status of stranger inside the society they live in, and this situation creates friction, isolation and uneasiness in the life and mind of the newcomer. Head's and Buchi’s protagonists have their inner being disturbed and shattered by different causes: difficulty with adaptation, racial and class prejudices, traumatic memories, repressed feelings and unconventional philosophical or religious beliefs. The aim of Head’s and Buchi’s protagonists is to lessen their inner alienation and find a satisfactory peace of mind. Head and Buchi explore the question of alienation and mental balance from several angles, because it is their writings that are somewhat fictionalized versions of their problems. A good mental balance brings the characters to a healthier and happier existence.

Psychological wholeness is the phrase employed throughout this thesis because it suggests putting together of all the shattered pieces of the soul into a harmonious whole. This Chapter has explored the alienation of Bessie Head's and Emecheta’s protagonists and their quest to attain inner wholeness. The solutions
the main characters find at the end of each novel are different. An exploration of the psyche is necessary to get to the heart of the matter. *A Question of Power* is Elizabeth's journey into her soul. She experiences a progressive madness and loses her mental balance, which she must at all costs regain in order to survive. She discovers her unconscious fears and hopes through dreams, nightmares and hallucinations. Elizabeth's quest enables her to cope with several psychological problems and alienating aspects of herself, but not all of them, and at the end she regains only a temporary mental equilibrium. In Buchi’s *Second Class Citizen*, the long-going-on war Adah gets out as the winner. She becomes successful in her fight with the outside world and makes England her home, thus gaining her identity. So in the immigrant experience, it is the woman who succeeds finding a place of belonging, a real home and building a secure sense of self-identity.

*Chapter-5, “Alienation in the Post –Colonial African Society-Novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta”,* slashes the theme of Madness. Madness always has been with us in African literary studies, particularly in women's writing. Sometimes it has been presented simply as a literal quality of mind, interesting for its own sake, but more commonly it functions as a trope for various kinds of social dysfunction. In the novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta, the narrative voice is able or willing to articulate the speaking subject's relationship to madness, and the influence of the slave narrative in shaping that relationship. Rather than beginning from a state of wellness, descending into behavior and ideation which are abnormal, and then returning to a state of wellness, the narrative voice in this chapter blurs the lines between the mental-emotional states of wellness and madness.

In the wake of perennial loneliness, mental turmoil, adversity and suffering, Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta’s women are made to turn inwards, in order to demonstrate how the human soul is able to rise above the parochial
boundaries of its individuality and fixed identity, to finally accept mankind. Their spirit is exiled from their physical body so that they are able to understand the workings of human society. The society the writers investigate, reaching beyond its boundaries, is found to be clearly diseased. Buchi and Head proceed from an acute awareness of the women’s condition of multiple marginality and colonization occasioned by such social totalities as race, culture, patriarchy, class, God and religion. As they investigate and make an informed appraisal of these positions, they find them truly problematic. In fact, none of the notions they examined in the spiritual journey is a categorical imperative or a transcendental paradigm for defining and understanding identity. The novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta through this chapter make it clear that madness is a common problem among black women; their problems are made worse because of the patriarchal social institution which functions on the principal that "male shall dominate female".

Chapter-6, “Utopian Quest in the Novels of Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta”, examines various attempts by Head and Buchi to put in place a perfect society through wish fulfillment. They do this at the socio-cultural, economic and political levels. This falls under what is generally referred to as Utopian literature. “Utopia” here can be defined as an ideal or perfect place or state, or any visionary system of political or social perfection. In literature, it refers to a detailed description of a nation or commonwealth ordered according to a system which the author proposes as a better way of life than any known to exist, a system that could be instituted if the present one could be cancelled, and people could start over. In this chapter, we see that Head’s and Buchi’s work represents a society that is in quest for absolute peace and harmony. They have done this by mustering people from diverse cultural backgrounds and making them work together, by eliminating from society those who promote prejudice, and by compelling their characters to turn down power if they have to acquire it by stepping on others.
The conclusion, recapitulates the history of the post-independent African state is that of monumental democratic and developmental failures. After almost four and a half decades of independence, most countries on the continent are characterized by underdevelopment. The evidence for this state of underdevelopment can be found in any social and economic indicators one cares to examine. At the economic level, Africa has been marked by the dominance of the primary sector agriculture, oil and minerals, partly as a result of the inability of the African state to foster an environment for high value added economic activities, low domestic capital formation and declining direct foreign investment, foreign aid dependence, heavy indebtedness, high unemployment and the informalisation of the economies, where the majority of its people live in poverty.

A democratic developmental state is one that not only embodies the principles of electoral democracy, but also ensures citizens participation in the development and governance processes. Thus when questioning how the democratic developmental state can be placed in the African context, it is pertinent to bring citizenship back into politics. This means placing emphasis on cooperative work and deliberative traditions by bringing people together across party lines, racial backgrounds, class divides and other differences, for the common good. Conceiving the democratic developmental state in this way is not an attempt to do away with representative democracy but rather to recast the debate by placing greater premium on the how participatory democracy compliments representative democracy.

It is imperative to emphasize that even though Head and Emcheta has projected a society in which human relationship is good and people feel for each other, work with each other in a society in which sex, race and skin color are not used as the standard for human competence or judgment, all these remain a figment of the imagination. No such society can exist. It remains a Utopian quest.
And so we want to think that art remains a medium of education for people to learn. We should, however, note that dystopias inevitably conclude by depicting unpleasant, disastrous, or otherwise terrifying consequences for humanity. We can only continue to dream but there can be no perfect society. However, people can best exploit their environment and better overcome their problems; meet their needs if they work in collaboration with each other. Instead of giving up in life, one should endeavor to exploit one’s environment for one's welfare. Hard work and human collaboration when well harnessed are a remedy to human problems and a springboard for development. The conclusion also locates the transformed role of a native writer in the contemporary society. The writers chosen for study do not view themselves as mere activists or creative producers of art, but as wise teachers who impart the lost native values to the current generation of natives. They are agents of positive transformation, who enable the youth to understand the heritage of their own community and affirm their positions in society. In this role, the authors facilitate the authentic reconstructions of identities both of the native and of the land.