Chapter 1
Creating a New Cultural Space

The psychological experiences of alienation, betrayal and guilt are paradigms of the era of post-colonialism. Post-colonial literature concerns itself with the process of decolonization in the twentieth century, marked by relevant intellectual developments and fictional recreations of experiences. Through their fictive constructs, post-colonial writers relive the emotions of alienation, betrayal and guilt which they experienced, both individually and collectively before they could embark on their journey towards self-perception.

The twentieth century has witnessed the demise of colonialism, and heralded in the process of decolonization, for millions of people who were once subject to colonial authority. But, the fact remains that colonialism continues to exercise a pervasive influence on contemporary world politics and culture. Colonialism ushered in radical changes in the political, economic and cultural ethos of Third World countries like Africa, India and the West Indies. This resulted in a confusion of values, which affected both society and individual psyche. The colonial machinery unleashed forces hostile to the self-determination of the colonized people, creating in them an acute sense of alienation. K.S. Ramamurti observes: “the experience of alienation is a typical twentieth century phenomenon which is generated by a fast-changing socio-political, socio-cultural scene and by the speedy disintegration of values which had given stability to the human life and mind in the earlier centuries” (50).

The rhetoric of colonial schools and churches consciously worked to break the
native's sensibility “by engendering an inferiority complex and diffidence in him vis-a-vis his own culture and traditional values” (Viney Kirpal 12). Christianity and its mission-run education system, the two components of the imperialistic ‘cultural bomb’, denigrated and emasculated the social, cultural and moral value systems of the Africans. Alienated from their ancestral rituals and values, the African psyche was split and fragmented. The Christian church, as Frantz Fanon notes, did “not call the natives to God’s ways but to the ways of the white man, of the Master, of the oppressor” (qtd. in Kamenju 58). The native African was subjected to rootlessness and estrangement as the colonizing culture inscribed his inferiority and taught him to look negatively at his past, his gods and his people.

The colonial education systems were “monuments of lies and half-truths” (HC 49). Colonial education disturbed the equilibrium of the traditional societies by marginalizing the oral mode of transmission practised by the tribal community. Literacy privileged reading and writing and this resulted in the educated individual’s sense of having a separate existence from that of the collective. This created a ‘disassociation of sensibility’ or an alienation from society. Mala Pandurang rightly states: “Education, as an ideological system, not only disturbed the balance which social sanction had placed on excessive individualism, but also presented the problem of alienation which permeated the consciousness” (107). The educated native was forced to internalize the colonial values, which effectively disempowered him.

The colonial language, the master discourse, succeeded in creating a sense of negativity in the native’s mind and he came to regard his language and culture as ‘barbaric’ and ‘inferior’. The native’s languages were systematically destroyed by enslavement
and rendered unprivileged by the imposition of the colonizer's language and literature. According to Gauri Viswanathan, "British colonial administrators, provoked by missionaries on the one hand and fears of native insubordination on the other, discovered an ally in English literature to support them in maintaining control of the native under the guise of a liberal education" (qtd. in Ashcroft et al 3). The mastery of the colonial tongue, created in the native, a dialectic between his educated social being and his 'inner personality' or psyche, which had been conditioned by years of native traditions. The Bible and the mission school education were followed by the sword as vast areas of Africa were subjected to economic exploitation. But the worst evil generated by the black-white encounter was not the usurping of geographical boundaries or the economic exploitation, but the disintegration of the African psyche and personality. The self-alienation of the African is more acute than that of the natives in other parts of the world as he has been the victim of both colonialism and racism.

Literature embodies a creative writer's attempt to recreate the reality around him through imaginative discourse. It is also a narration of the spiritual life of a nation. In the twentieth century characterized by significant political, social and economic upheavals, the writer cannot isolate himself from what is happening around him. Mulk Raj Anand remarks: "I believe literature though universally significant, deals with a contemporary situation. [..] The writer brings his comprehension of the meaning of life and death into his work by the sheer intensity of his feeling" (qtd. in Dhawan Commonwealth Fiction 5).

Post-colonial writings attempt to create a new cultural space for themselves. They seek to privilege the margins by dismantling the nexus of power between literature,
language and dominant British culture. They have succeeded in subverting the hegemonic strand of European fiction and forming a new radical canon. They proclaim themselves central and self-determining and attempt to write back to the centre. They seize the language of the imperialists and remould it to new usages, so as to convey their resistance to the white culture.

Writers from the post-colonial world have been deeply influenced by the works of the psychiatrist, Frantz Fanon. Fanon emphasized the need to relocate the cultural centre from the assumptions of the colonial discourses. His works are mainly concerned with the creation of identity under colonialism and the formation of a national consciousness, for African people at diverse locations face different challenges. He stressed that the nation should be placed as the focal point by writers as this would allow them to address the specific historical circumstances and the challenges of their particular nation.

Writers in Africa have attempted to recreate the implications of the conflict between Africa and the West and the peculiar, traumatic experiences that is specific to each region and community. African literature reflects the widespread political, economic and cultural differences between modern African countries and demonstrates how this sense of difference constitutes each national literature's mode of self-apprehension. This accounts for the varieties of literary streams that exist within Africa.

In its relationship to society, African art is governed by a cultural ontology, which is quite different from that of the West. The western concept that literature and politics should be unconnected cannot be applied to Africa where nationalist sentiments have always dominated the ideological aspirations of writers. Chukuridi T. Maduka
observes: “The African writer cannot afford the luxury of withdrawing into a cocoon of creativity in the name of art for art’s sake” (qtd. in Sakuntala 118). In post-colonial literature, the idea of art existing for its own sake or of literature appealing to some profound human experience are both rejected.

African nationalism has always attempted to use literature as an instrument of political liberation. The leaders of African nationalism and Pan-Africanism were deeply influenced by thinkers like Dr. William Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. They attempted to establish a common Negro identity and this came to be known as Negritude. The nineteenth century Afro-American, Edward Blyden with his theory of ‘African Personality’ was the precursor of this movement. Blyden’s theory attempted an objective appraisal of African cultures and sought to rehabilitate black identity.

Literary production in Africa exhibited an upsurge of activity after the II World War. Besides Fanon, the emigrant Africans in Europe were inspired by thinkers like Amie Caesar, Amilcar Cabral and George Padmore. The literary activities of African writers were intended to assist the freedom struggles in their home countries. Harish Narang, in Politics as Fiction, states that,

literary rejuvenation in Africa became a part of a larger cultural renaissance which had evolved close links with political struggles of various countries on other continents. An African writer, therefore, used his pen not only like the barrel of a gun but he also carried a pen in one hand and a gun in the other - literally. (27)

The 1950s generated increasing attempts to question colonial domination. The creative writings of this period attempted to create a strong cultural identity and debunk
the colonialist's attempt to negate the African psyche. This period witnessed a strong cultural movement from various parts of the continent to initiate an 'African Renaissance'. Anti-colonial responses were the dominant feature of the literature of this period. As Fanon comments: "The birth of national consciousness in Africa has a strictly contemporaneous connection with the African consciousness" (WE 198).

Africa witnessed the emergence of neo-colonialism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Africa was plunged into a condition of inexpressible corruption and decadence from which it is still attempting to rescue itself. The economic-political equation between the former masters and the natives remained unchanged as the colonialists who left ostensibly through the front door crept in surreptitiously through the back. Neil Lazarus, in *Resistance in Post-Colonial Fiction*, calls it "the preliminary overestimation of the emancipatory potential of independence" (11). Greatly offended by the post-independent rhetoric and completely devastated by the deflation of their expectations, the dissident post-colonial intellectuals unleashed their severe indictment upon the neo-colonial elite. Every genre of literature in Africa began to give expression to the inadequacy of the African social structure to preserve the identity of the self. Bitter disillusionment and anger soon replaced the euphoria of independence.

Thus, creative writings of the early African intellectuals were motivated by a need to inform the world of their past and their culture, to dislodge the Eurocentric misconceptions of their history and to influence the political-ideological rhetoric of their native countries. Since they wanted to get their message across to the world, they opted to write in the languages of the European masters. The writers also aimed to 'decolonize the mind' of the educated middle class African, for their mission school
education had made them lose faith in their own culture and traditions. Moreover, many of the African languages lacked a written script and the African intellectual preferred to use the European discourse as the vehicle of his creative abilities. Early writers like Plaatje, Senghor, Tutuola and Ousmane used the colonial language as their weapon in the fight for political independence. The choice of the language of expression later developed into a dispute among the leading writers of Africa.

Though historical, geological and cultural specifics are vital to the literature from the peripheries, many post-colonial critics have discovered several thematic parallels across different literatures from the colonized nations. For example, the struggle of the individual and the community to gain independence is celebrated in novels as varied as Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). The theme of the dominating influence of an alien culture on the life of contemporary societies is evident in such works as Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and George Lamming's *In The Castle of My Skin* (1953).

The genre of the novel is the most predominant literary vehicle in Africa today, though it is relatively young when compared with the essay, poetry and drama. Maturity had been thrust upon the African novel in a relatively short period, as it did not undergo a long evolutionary process. Though the novel, as a genre, is a transplant from Europe, the post-colonial African writers altered it by incorporating and adapting traditional forms of imaginative expressions to the novel. The African soil was extremely conducive to its growth as Africa had an entrenched tradition of long narratives like the Griot singers and Gicaandi players. The early novels of Africa drew sustenance from the tradition of African folk tales, fables and proverbs. The post-colonial African writers
intermingled the form of the novel and the technique of social realism with the older traditions of orature to assert their social and cultural differences. They offered several alternative ways of conceiving narrative structures by their use of traditional oral tales. Tutuola, Achebe, Camara Laye, Ngugi and Oyono have been able to incorporate distinct Africanisms into their fictional constructs with dexterity. Tutuola with his African English and Achebe with his native Ibo speech patterns have altered traditional techniques and conventions of the novel. Achebe set an example of a new trend which was later adopted by Ngugi wa Thiong’o.

African fiction should be judged not by western literary criterion but by African traditions. Though Africa has been subjected to immense developments, its traditional social patterns remain strong in their own right. Individualism, which characterizes western society, is seen as a negative condition and a non-conformist is considered an outcast among the Africans. Novels like Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), and Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *The River Between* (1965), emphasize that heroes with individual achievement are totally at variance with their societies. Many major western writers like Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, Charles Dickens and George Orwell have depicted the social machine as a rigid and impersonal system while the African society still possesses a close-knit social fabric, which is trying to overpower the forces of disintegration working against it. Robin Cook points out that “the problem for the western protagonist is how to approach more closely to other human beings; the problem for the leading character in an African novel is more likely to be how to assert an individual viewpoint without becoming a total outcast” (16). The European creative artist pictures the individual as involved in a desperate struggle with an oppressive society
and articulates a request to his fellow men, to reassert their humanity and understanding in an alien environment. But the contemporary African writers are seriously seeking ways to prevent the transformation of their society from a close-knit community to a soulless, alienating and bleak one, which attempts to hold men apart.

The Eurocentric version of Africa was a deliberate attempt to negate the black identity and to privilege the centre. Bill Freund in his book, *The Making of Contemporary Africa*, has observed that the colonial versions of African history were heavily infused with assumptions of racial superiority that helped to buttress colonial domination (2). Several myths had been fastened on to Africa by western writers like Rider Haggard, Edgar Wallace and Edgar Rice Burroughs. They pictured a fantasy world of tom-toms, drums, witchdoctors and savages who indulged in strange rites and customs. Even men of distinction from the West have lent support to the notion of the unenlightened Negro. Thomas Jefferson, the great American theoretician of freedom, believed that Negroes had a lower level of intellect than the whites. Kipling described the Negroes as half devil and half child. The famous humanitarian, Albert Schweitzer, loved the Negro as a brother but as a ‘younger’ brother. For generations, the West has considered its own culture as synonymous with civilization and the world of the black people as the negation of civilized norms. Hugh Trevor Roper, Professor of Modern History at Oxford, observed in a Television broadcast in 1963: “There is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness - and darkness is not a subject of history” (qtd. in Mazrui 74). The Danish writer, Karen Blixen in her record of Kenya, does not concede any degree of humanity to Africans. This had aroused Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s indignation and he considers her more dangerous than any other writer of the African
situation. Joyce Cary’s account of Nigeria, had created in Achebe, the need to prove their detractors wrong. In his essay, “The Role of the Writer in a New Nation”, Achebe states:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer’s duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. (8)

The literature of post-colonial writers attempts to give back to their past its legitimate value and reclaim their identity. African novelists, and poets like David Diop and Leon Damas have expressed their sense of loss and anguish at the disintegration of their values and fragmentation of their psyche. African literature attempts to embrace the historical reality of their encounter with the West and focus on that relationship which has provided the most creative and psychological impetus in their writing. Gakwandi observes: “In their fictional interpretation of history, African novelists have been involved in the search for ways of combating the forces of disintegration that have been let loose by unhappy circumstances of history” (108). Though the early writers attempted to idolize the past, the later post-colonial writers look to the past as a means of depicting the reality of the present. The committed African novelists display a tremendous faith in the ability of their people to change their present situation and
work towards a more liberated and positive future.

The twentieth century saw the development of an intense consciousness of cultural and linguistic identity and a growing need for social and political independence in the African continent. Chidi Amuta states:

The cultural nationalist consciousness in the African novel addressed itself to the fictional recreation and reaffirmation of the social institutions, cultural and moral value systems of traditional Africa which imperialist propaganda and literature had vastly denigrated and almost emasculated. (Commonwealth Novel in English 130)

African novelists felt the need to preserve a disappearing world and to describe the experiences of a typically African milieu. Writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and others have dramatized history, transmuted facts into myths and transformed the raw materials of history into fictions. The early writers seem to be haunted by the African past and their works are replete with social and anthropological details of their societies. The writers attempt to reawaken among their people, a faith in their past and cultural heritage, for it is the most important development in rejecting the claims of the centre to exclusivity.

The African novel in European languages is sometimes criticized as a hybrid child of many cultures and genres, but the very diversity of the African novel and the variety of languages in which it is written, embody the realities of modern Africa. The conglomeration of different styles and traditions does not reflect weakness but is a source of strength and vitality, a reflection of the diverse experiences of African life. Since the publication of Amos Tutuola’s The Palm-Wine Drinkard (1952), the African
novel has been on a search for new forms in style, to record the chronic instability, anxiety and alienation in the African society. Though Amos Tutuola had very little formal education, it was this novel which contained the earliest traces of the modernist movement in African fiction, that made him the first novelist from Africa to gain extensive exposure among Western literary audiences. He cleverly manipulated the Yoruba folk material into his novel and juxtaposed the structure of the English language and the genre of the novel to create a highly individualized style. This proved to be a technique welcomed and adopted by many other African novelists.

Camara Laye resembles Tutuola in the creation of a world of mythological constructs. But, he differs from Tutuola’s magical world in his attempt to re-interpret and subvert the folk tale into a political allegory and religious parable. Laye’s novel, *The Radiance of the King* (1965), modeled on Kafka’s *The Castle* (1926), depicts how Clarence, a white man undergoes a process of initiation and comes to realize that “this land is not a white man’s land” (96). In his subtle way, Laye attempts to highlight the power of the age-old traditions that can work on the white man and make him change his preconceived notions.

Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine* (1966) and *The Great Ponds* (1969), portray idyllic pictures of self-contained societies, where traditional practices have not been denigrated by the outside world.

The Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, was the first to notice the immense possibilities of the hybridization of English with the native tongue, as had been employed by Tutuola. He replaced Tutuola’s ‘unacceptable’ English with crisp, short sentences and Yoruba folk material with his own Ibo myths, fables, customs and rituals. He wanted
to disprove the theory of Western historian-philosophers like Hegel and Hume, who equated Africa's past with "one long night of savagery from which Europe delivered them" (Achebe Morning 44). Achebe feels that the worst attitude an African can adopt is to accept a sense of racial inferiority. In his essay, "The Novelist as Teacher", Achebe declares that his fictive constructs attempt to espouse an adequate revolution so that the African can escape the pain of the wound in his soul and to help his society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement (3). Achebe feels that the past has to be viewed with all its merits and weaknesses and not to be seen as one long 'technicolour idyll'. A healthy sense of identity can be developed only by looking back into the past and trying to find out where they went wrong, where "the rain began to beat" them (3).

By foregrounding the colonization of Africa as the main theme of his fiction, Achebe became a trendsetter for many other novelists. Achebe's novels, Things Fall Apart (1958) and Arrow of God (1964), dramatize a dialogue between western values and ancestral ethos and portray the social changes and loss of dignity that had taken place during the first Ibo contact with the white missionaries. Things Fall Apart, describes a clan, which at the beginning thought, spoke and acted like one and also shared a common awareness. The unified pattern of this society falls apart as outside forces make their encroachment. Obierika, an elder says that the white man "has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (162). Arrow of God, too, explores how the thrust of foreign values creates divisions within the traditional society and makes it weak and ripe for subjugation by an outside power. The villagers who are won over by
the new religion, turn their backs on their ethnic gods.

Achebe’s novel, *No Longer at Ease* (1960) presents the alienation of traditional values and beliefs brought in by the exposure to Western education. Through the character of Obi who gives in to corruption, Achebe shows the Nigerian government as an alien institution where “people’s business was to get as much out of it as they could without getting into trouble” (29-30). By presenting his society as a combination of good and evil; “the spiritual and the mundane and finally, the glorious and the gory elements” (Reddy 29), Achebe attempts to inscribe value to his past and to analyze how those values can be restored in the present changed context of the African society.

The two Camerounian’s, Mongo Beti and Ferdinand Oyono employ satire to dispel the illusion of progress fostered by the colonial administration in Africa. Mongo Beti, through the character of Medza, in *Mission to Kala* (1958), seeks to criticize the ‘half-baked’ institutions of colonialism that produce misfits in society. Ferdinand Oyono’s novel, *Houseboy* (1960), portrays the colonial design of incarcerating the minds of its victims.

The confrontation between modernity and traditionalism led to cultural conflicts between the colonial administration and the native people. T.M. Aluko’s novels, *One Man, One Wife* (1959) and *One Man, One Matchet* (1964), treat this problem with brilliant satire. But, while Achebe and Ngugi present the villagers as people capable of serious thought and understanding, Aluko’s village community is portrayed as ignorant, superstitious and incapable of making intelligent judgments. He writes as a member of the establishment, probably because he himself was an engineer employed in the Civil Service.
Literary intellectuals of modern African states no longer feel secure in the changing socio-political milieu and they give eloquent expression to their bitterness at the degeneration of their leaders who transfer their cultural traditions into raw materials for personal aggrandizement. The multi-faced problematic of neo-colonialism has made the writers realize that the African is not merely a victim of the horrendous betrayal practised on them, but that their own people are active participants too. Critical appraisal of the new situation replaced the idealism of the early literature. The post-colonial novel now evolved from criticism of the colonizer to criticism of the society from within that society. Neil Lazarus in his essay, "Return to the People: Ngugi wa Thiong’o and the Crisis of Postcolonial African Intellectualism" says, “The representation is of a kleptocracy, the continuing prosperity of whose members implies the continuing poverty and powerlessness of the peasants, proletarians, and the marginals toiling below them” (13). The novelists satirize the comprador class’ tendency to imitate the western cultural modes, for the centre still continues to exercise economic dominance as well as cultural subjugation. In the UNESCO document published in 1980, Third World writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Richard Hoggart have noted that the effects of intellectual and cultural dependence are as serious as those of political or economic dependence.

African fiction after 1960, portrayed a society caught up at cultural crossroads. Indictment of a corrupt socio-political milieu can itself be a process of psychological liberation. Just as the early African novels formed a second front to political liberation struggles, the neo-colonial African discourse too becomes a narrative of liberation. The writers used their narratives to sensitize their people to the reality of the African
situation and to compel them to realize the need to rescue their economic and cultural space from the violations of neo-colonial manipulations.

The novels provide a perspective of those who demonstrate negative traits of behaviour, in this world that seems alien to them. The fictive constructs of this period reproduce the trauma of these sensitive individuals who are faced with guilt that gnaws at their innermost being, transforming them into complex and problematic individuals. This is especially so in the case of educated protagonists who seem to suffer from a crisis of identity. This is engendered by the duality of a situation where the educated protagonist desires to identify himself with his own people but finds that his education has resulted in a distancing of his self from them. An acute sense of guilt and compromise haunts some of the protagonists of Armah and Ngugi. The alienation and guilt, portrayed through their fictional recreations is a reflection of what the educated novelists themselves experience. Ode Ogede asserts that the crisis of identity faced by the educated protagonist is a reinforcement of “the guilt that comprises the self-inadequacy felt by the educated African” (63). The writers attempt to overcome this by embarking on a quest for the individual and the collective self, through their fictive constructs.

African novelists perceived that the crisis of mismanagement by the neo-colonial leaders and the imperialistic interference in their affairs could not be explained by a journey into a romantic or heroic past. The writers realized that they should adopt an ideological stance that would project the confrontation between the two value systems in its correct perspective and were provoked into realistic depictions of the prevalent social aberrations and political deceit.
The fictional recreations of the neo-colonial period attempt to forge a sense of solidarity among the people and to prompt them into a quest for self-perception. This quest lies in creating alternate frames of thought other than those created by the West. Their creative endeavours seek to establish a counter cultural discourse, which would emerge over the prevailing sense of disillusionment and despair, and lead their people to a higher state of consciousness that would enable them to assert their identity, their culture and their heritage. Erich Fromm in *Heart of Man*, speaks of the writers’ capacity to stimulate creativity and to give back to their people “not merely freedom from hunger but also freedom to create, to construct, to wonder and to venture” (52-53). The works of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Ayi Kwei Armah, Kofi Awoonor and others are earnest attempts to facilitate this awareness among their people and to lead them on a journey of self perception, on a quest for self-fulfilment.

Chinua Achebe realized the necessity to forge new narrative themes to offer sharp insights into the decadence of the present African society and the dilemmas of the new political order. He believed that they should not keep at the old theme of racial injustice when new injustices have sprouted all around (*Presence Africaine* 138). Achebe’s *A Man of the People* (1966) reflects the Nigerian society where the traditional moral order has been disrupted, where corrupt and degenerate leaders “press for their share of the national cake” (12). The people seem to share in this corruption. As one of them admits: “If you survive, who knows? It may be your turn to eat tomorrow. Your son may bring home your share” (144). *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) represents an embittered history of an alienated country. Chris, Ikem and Beatrice are well meaning intellectuals, but they have “no solid contact with the ordinary people of Kangan” (39),
because of their alien education and European values. As the regime turns fascist, violence breaks out. The fall of governments and the resultant coups are recurrent neo-colonial realities. Achebe suggests the motif of struggle against the various forms of neo-colonialism, but he does not recommend any alternate form of government as a solution.

Another leading Nigerian who has tried to offer sharp insights and interpret the new political situation in Africa is Wole Soyinka. Through his satirical presentation of a decadent world in *The Interpreters* (1970), he attempts to seek a solution to the problems and to create an ideal on which the future can be modeled. As he says with Dennis Brutus in the *Declaration of African Writers*, their works are a call for "the full retrieval of the African past in the quest for a contemporary self-apprehension and design for the future" (qtd. in Pandurang 145).

The Ghanian writer Armah's novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), which is a scathing attack on the regime of Nkrumah and the neo-colonial elite in Ghana, presents "a world in which the sewage pipes of history have exploded and everything is polluted" (Gakwandi 87). Armah's *Fragments* (1970) and *Why Are We So Blest* (1972) too, deal with the degeneration of social relationships in the contemporary materialistic society. The lament of the narrative voice in *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), "we have lost our way completely" (130), conveys the picture of a society that has lost all sense of direction and identity. In an attempt to debunk the myth of white superiority, he reverses the colour symbolism and presents white as the colour of death and destruction, and black as the symbol of life. The novel ends on a note of optimism that in the future, the Africans will be able to overcome their
destroyers and assert their identity. Armah's last two novels experiment with the oral
forms and reveal a movement from individual characterization to an emphasis on the
community.

The Nigerian writer, Gabriel Okara's novel *The Voice* (1964), gives a perspective
of a world where "nothing has any more meaning but the shadow devouring trinity of
gold, iron, concrete" (103). The novel suggests that Africa can rise above the present
decadent condition if men of intelligence engage themselves in a quest for truth.

Sembene Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood* (1970), a hard-hitting critique of
capitalism, is a fictional recreation of an actual account of a railway strike in the history
of former French West Africa. After this novel, Ousmane gave up fiction and has turned
to film as a more effective way of getting closer to the ordinary working people of
Senegal.

In *This Earth, My Brother* (1971), Kofi Awoonor presents a picture of the
African society as it moves from colonialism to self-determination and then finally
ends in the grip of neo-colonial bondage practised by the new African masters. Awoonor
believes that to help his people re-establish their self-esteem and identity, he has to
resort to the traditional sources of inspiration and therefore, he makes ample use of
traditional forms in his novels.

Like the other novelists of the post-independent period, the South African Es'kia
Mphahlele too is on a search for the self, for a sense of 'wholeness'. His novels *The
Wanderers* (1971) and *Chirundu* (1979) are preoccupied with the politics of neo-
colonial culture in present day Zambia.

In the first decade of independence, African writers had to contend with forces
undermining their dignity and self-esteem. As democratic governments deteriorated into dictatorships, writers who did not follow the party line of the dictator found themselves persecuted, imprisoned and even awarded with mysterious deaths. The novelists' articulated their anger at this 'culture of silence and fear', in the Third World, by resorting to new techniques and style. Achebe, Soyinka and Armah are some of the writers who attempt at constructing post-colonial realities through tropes such as allegory and satire, but it is Ngugi wa Thiong'o who is its most adept and consistent exponent.

The quest for self-determination finds expression in a recreation of authentic African literature. The use of orality in written literature, especially in the novels, becomes part of this quest. Colonial concepts tend to consider oral literature as primarily African and therefore 'primitive', while written literature was considered the exclusive prerogative of the West. In order to debunk this dichotomous view of orality and literacy, the oral mode was reclaimed as one of the glories of Africa’s indigenous heritage. Resorting to oral traditions in their works is one of the means by which post-colonial African writers attempt to decolonize the mind of their people, for orality helps to define their very soul and offer a tool for cultural resistance.

Like all post-colonial writing, African novelists too base their cultural resistance on subversion of the imperial language. Some of the post-colonial African novelists realize that to liberate themselves from their imposed linguistic alienation, they must seize the colonial discourse and replace it with a language adapted to their particular indigenous culture. By writing in a language suited to their specific experiences, African novelists attempt, as Raja Rao says in *Kanthapura*, to "convey in a language that is not..."
one’s own, the spirit that is one’s own” (vii). Resorting to new and diverse syncretisms, African writers embark on a shared quest for their roots.

The quest for identity and roots is a concept shared by the West Indies, which has played a formative role in shaping Africa’s political and literary consciousness. Most of the African writers have been influenced by the revolutionary theories of thinkers like Frantz Fanon, George Padmore, Amie Cesaire, Marcus Garvey and C.L.R. James. West Indian novelists such as George Lamming, V.S. Naipaul, Denis Williams and Roger Mais, attempt to awaken in their people a sense of identity through the fictional recreation of their experience. But the West Indian crisis of identity is different from the African. The Africans were subjected to colonialism and its disruptive and fragmenting influences in their own country, but the West Indians were displaced from their mother country and denied their family, their language, their culture and deprived of political and economic power. They were forced to look at Africa, their past and their colour with a sense of shame and inferiority. Most of the characters in West Indian fiction suffer from a sense of estrangement from their roots. Africa figures prominently in their novels, for the writers understand that it is only by an attempt to connect themselves with their origins can they achieve a sense of homecoming and be able to free their minds from the stigma that everything African had negative overtones.

The theme of exile pervades George Lamming’s novels. Like his protagonists Lamming too perceives that it is only a journey back to the roots, to their motherland that can offer a solution to their acute sense of estrangement. Acknowledged as the most talented of West Indian novelists and the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in the year 2001, Naipaul’s novels depict the existential despair that his society
undergoes. The works of Roger Mais and Denis Williams display estranged individuals in an alienated community. The more recent West Indian novels record the frustration and feelings of displacement that form a part of the middle class West Indian consciousness.

Fiction is the most prevalent genre of literary expression among Indian English writers. As with the African novel, the Indian English novel too seems to have been given an impetus by national awakening. Indian writers in English and regional languages have delineated colonialism as the major influence that shaped their national consciousness. Indian writing depicts the slavish mentality of the hybrid East-West class of Indians, but the writers do not feel the need to articulate their identity in a historical and cultural sense as their African and West Indian counterparts. Though they attribute the degeneration of values in free India and its resultant chaos to the colonial interference, their reference to these factors does not carry the intensity of direct experience, the pain and the trauma that we find in African fiction. Indian writing does not exhibit the irrepressible anger, the intense conviction of oppression, the boldness of ideology and the crises of identity displayed by African novelists. Having been exposed to diverse alien influences for a far longer period, Indians were better equipped to assimilate and adjust to European hegemony. Moreover, their heritage and values are more deeply entrenched in the Indian psyche. Consequently, colonialism did not have the same devastating effect on the Indian mind as it had on the African consciousness.

Prominent Indian writers in English like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan have portrayed the different phases of India’s freedom struggle and the
corruption and failure of hopes in independent India. But the main thrust in these novels is not on the socio-political reality as in African and West Indian fiction. Even in a novel like Raja Rao’s Kanthapura, which primarily depicts the freedom struggle, the writer’s views are projected from a distance with his emphasis on the romantic aspect. The freedom struggle, the agony of the partition, the conflicting values of tradition and modernity and the political events in India are some of the themes of Indian writing in English. Mulk Raj Anand’s novels are concerned with India’s quest for national identity. There has been an increased literary activity since Independence and the later novels have liberated themselves from the conflicting clutches of nationalistic sentiments. Manohar Malgonkar has recreated history and Nayantara Sahgal has dealt with Indian politics but other novelists have been concerned with the psychological states of mind and the social milieu of contemporary India.

India, Africa and the Caribbean have more independent and much older aesthetic, cultural heritage in the form of oral folk traditions, myths, rituals and masks. As in Africa and the Caribbean, in India too, the native culture and the people’s traditions were marginalized and the dominant imperial culture and language were privileged. Many contemporary Indian novels attempt to revive their traditional narrative structures. In Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children (1981), he reproduces the technique of the Indian oral narrative tradition. Indian novelists like Raja Rao regarded the use of English as alienating them from their culture and traditions. Manohar Malgonkar’s A Bend in the Ganges (1964), Raja Rao’s Kanthapura (1938), and Paul Scott’s The Day of the Scorpion (1968), reveal their author’s alienation from their native traditions. Though these novelists deal with the anti-imperial theme, their base still appears to be British
India. It is against this cultural colonialism that African writers like Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, express their protest.

The diversity that African literature manifests is a reflection of the ever-changing patterns of African life. The African writer is possessed with a strong historical sense but he is not a mere historian or a propagandist. The novel from the African continent portrays the social revolution prevalent there in the twentieth century and the resultant conflicts and cleavages in the individual psyche. Through the artistic creation of individual characters in their novels, the writers attempt a quest for their identity, which had been submerged as a result of hundreds of years of enslavement. Their novels attempt to awaken their people to the need to counter the neo-colonial appropriation of their mental and cultural space. By experimenting with various indigenous forms like dance, story telling, song, drama and poetry, African artists seek to build up a counter discourse to rescue their culture and traditions from the clutches of imperialism. Wole Soyinka explains that the African writers use different modes of expression to portray the “crucial struggle for a restatement of self and society” (Myth 109).

The post-colonial African novelists attempt to use their works as a weapon for literacy resistance to neo-colonialism. This literary resistance, according to Chidi Amuta, is aimed against the psychological timidity fostered by centuries of dehumanizing denigration, against the entrenchment of colonial economic structures as road blocks to genuine development, against the tyranny and endless buffoonery of an insensitive ruling class presiding over societies riven
by class inequalities, against the hegemony of irrelevant ideas, and growing sophistication of the ideological tentacles of global imperialism.

(Theory of African Literature 7)

The post-colonial African novelists attempt to challenge the myth of white superiority and invert the dichotomy of the ‘superior white – inferior black’, perpetuated by colonial discourse. Sylvia Wynters has observed: “for the African to become a man, the European has to cease being a superman” (2). Post-colonial writers seek to decolonize the mind and imagination of their people so that they can embark on a quest for their own self, as well as that of the community. Mala Pandurang speaks of decolonization as “a parallel process of re-Africanisation, or a discursive formation wherein the artist, in a conscious act, is building or reconstructing an identity he was hitherto denied or deprived of. The very act of writing becomes a means of self-realisation” (4).

Through their vision of a united and liberated Africa, free from moral, cultural and economic domination, the African writers instil in the people hopes for a positive future. John Chileshe opines that authorial attitudes in creative African writing have ranged from a predilection for the “correction” of previous depictions of African history, the indication of certain “anomalies” in present societies, to the “prescription” of what directions they should follow in the future (133). Their imaginative discourses assume the responsibility of teaching their people to face the challenges of their new nation and also to offer solutions to the existing problems. Gakwandi states that the African society is an unweeded garden and “the very act of writing fiction has been, for each novelist, a contribution towards the weeding of this garden” (130).

Creative works from the various countries of Africa form the most exciting
segment of post-colonial literature and they now occupy the mainstream of literary culture. Berndt Lindfors in an interview, states that the best work from Africa is comparable to the best work anywhere else in the world (17). Like all post-colonial writing, African literature too, seeks to shift the cultural centre from the metropolitan to the regional. Appropriating their cultural space, attempting to capture the oral consciousness of their people and dismantling European norms are the means by which African novelists offer resistance to neo-colonial imperialism. They endeavour to create a new perspective for themselves and for the world. Michael Parker and Roger Starkey observe that post-colonial narratives marginalize the European history of the ‘other’ and create new pluralities for aesthetics and politics. It “is the literature of the dispossessed repossessing fragmented realities” (23). By an inversion of the binarism created by the West and by negating the cultural, moral and economic domination, the African writers transform their works into statements of psychological decolonization.

The movement towards the decolonization of African psyche, literature and culture was initiated by the Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong’o. His novels attempt to transform imaginative literature into weapons of combat, against the mounting inertia of the masses towards the neo-colonial manipulations. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, an era marked by the collapse of the people’s hopes and dreams, Ngugi drew attention to the inadequacy of a literature that merely expressed their sense of betrayal and disillusionment. He was not content with the role of the writer as a teacher. He pointed out the need for radical criticism to shake off the shackles of neo-colonialism. Though his early works are discourses on a sense of loss experienced on being displaced from his ancestral culture, they are also radical critiques of the historical betrayal of the
post-independence era. Ngugi's radicalism evoked the wrath of the neo-colonial authority, which imprisoned him but it did not deter him from searching for new modes of writing to reflect the neo-colonial culture of silence and fear. He uses his writings to contest space for his people in the neo-colonial scheme of things and to build up his people's fragmented identity. Kimani Njogu aptly states that, writing stories for Ngugi is "a way of creating spaces through which alternative voices long suppressed through the colonial experience may find expression" (335). Ngugi repeatedly expresses his desire to return to the roots, to undertake a quest for the realization of the self and to evolve constructive directions for a meaningful future.

Ngugi's novels depict a Gikuyu society evolving painfully through growing political, religious and cultural conflict, then through the violent phase of the Emergency and finally into Uhuru with its accompanying disillusionments. The experiences of the Gikuyu people during the colonial and neo-colonial eras subject them to varied influences that challenge their self-esteem and dignity. Ngugi aptly reconstructs the individual states of feeling and manages to beautifully recapture the emotions of alienation, betrayal and guilt demonstrated by the characters. C.B. Robson, in his study *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, observes that Ngugi's works reveal "a dynamic social situation" where "people are often caught up in a complex pattern of events to which they react in unpredictable, irrational ways; they suffer and cause suffering" (124).

This thesis intends to undertake a thematic study of the experiences of alienation, betrayal and guilt as portrayed in the lives of various characters in the novels of Ngugi. The socio-political and cultural forces that prompt such feelings in the fictional characters and the process by which they attempt to come to terms with their emotions
and experiences and undertake a journey towards self-perception, will be subjected to study. The characters make earnest attempts to gain psychological independence by a return to the roots of their culture and traditions. The experiences of Ngugi’s characters and the situations in which they find themselves are paradigmatic of Kenya’s reality in the past and in the present. By narrating the story of his nation through his fictive constructs, the author attempts to revive his people’s self-esteem so as to enable them to achieve total spiritual and mental well-being and to empower them to take up a search for their identity. An attempt will be made to comprehend the psychological dynamics that prompted Ngugi to undertake the quest for self-realization, along with his protagonists. The ensuing chapter will focus on the shift in Ngugi’s viewpoints and the predominance of Frantz Fanon’s influence on the author. The issues pertaining to Ngugi, as a leading post-colonial writer, will also be touched upon. Simon Gikandi in his article “Moments of Melancholy: Ngugi and the Discourse of Emotions” confesses: “I have always been attracted to Ngugi’s discourse of emotions more than his analysis of the economy of power in the post-colony” (70). It is on this perception that this thesis will be developed.


- - -. “The Novelist as Teacher.” Killam 1-4.


Njogu, Kimani. “Living Secretly and Spinning Tales: Ngugi’s Secret Lives and Other


