Conclusion

The major project of the counter-discourses is to subvert the dominant discourse. The power of the dominant discourse lies in the codes by which it regulates understanding of the social world. "Counter-discourses seek to detect and map such naturalized protocols and to project their subversion" (Terdiman 149). According to Terdiman, subversion is the characteristic project of nineteenth-century counter-discourses. "They tried to disrupt the circuit in which the dominant construction of the world asserted its self-evidence, its naturalized currency. For the most part counter-discourses sought to imagine alternatives to such a mechanism" (Terdiman 87). But Terdiman agrees that counter-discourses are unable to effect a revolution since they are destined to remain marginal to the dominant. He says: "No counter-discursive strategy ever carries guarantees. Notwithstanding the efforts which our humorists [Marx and Flaubert] put into this one, the bourgeoisie carried on" (Terdiman 219).

But the postcolonial situation is different from that of nineteenth-century France, which Terdiman refers to in his book, because of geo-political situations. The postcolonial novels, especially during the 'liberation phase' are projects of decolonization. A psychic liberation for the African will be possible only through a subversion of the colonial discourse and its Eurocentric assumptions.
In "Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse" Helen Tiffin says: "Processes of artistic and literary decolonisation have involved a radical dis/mantling of European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses" (95). For the former colonized peoples the centre even now exercises economic and cultural domination because political independence could not bring in a total liberation for the colonized. For the postcolonial writer, writing itself is a search for re-generation. So the postcolonial asserts that "the marginalized Other has her or his voice, which works towards subverting essentialist and unifying classifications" (Michel 93).

The counter-discursive nature of the African novel is grounded on its commitment. The African novel is "explicitly and implicitly didactic, even propagandist" (Obiechina 32). The commitment is both historical and cultural. Historically, the writers took their pen to set the score right. Theirs was an attempt to redefine Africa's past by rewriting Africa's history. The postcolonial novel is a natural outgrowth of the socio-political situation of contemporary Africa. The post-colonial novelist is engaged in challenging predestined notions of identity and interrogating the Western construct of Africa's past. His concern is to formulate "a corrective to the imperial versions of history and function as an educator . . ."
Ngugi also believes in the functional nature of literature in Africa. He says:

Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations. Slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. (Homecoming xv)

Commitment in postcolonial African novel is also culture bound. The cultural ontology that determines the relations between art and society in Africa justifies the commitment. It does not have a parallel in Europe where the "artist lives on the fringe of society" (Achebe, "The Novelist" 42). In Africa the artist is a true man of the people and "art is not the exclusive concern of a particular caste or secret society" (Achebe, "Africa" 22). So in African societies art was functional. It was not separated from the social or spiritual needs of the society. Music, dance and carving were an integral part of a community's very existence. So the postcolonial novelists write with a definite purpose. They are engaged in helping their people get back their lost identity.
The postcolonial African novel thus functions as a counter-discourse to challenge, question and problematize the colonial discourse. Lewis Nkosi says: “After a long grey nightmare of colonial rule, during which the question of their humanity was gravely asked and negatively answered, Africans are once again rediscovering themselves, their dignity and their humanity” (111). Edward Said also says in *Culture and Imperialism* that new alignments across borders, types, nations and essences are rapidly coming up and these new alignments now “provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notion of ‘identity’ that has been the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism” (xxviii). The postcolonial writers are engaged in a process of decolonizing the minds of their people who have been the victims of historical manipulation.

This deep-seated commitment of the African novelist leads to his condemnation of certain groups occasionally. A committed writer uses his pen to further the cause he believes in. When his society struggles against forces of oppression, a writer cannot remain a watcher, viewing the spectacle from his attic. Instead, he has to join the forces of liberation with whatever weapon is handy. In his case it is the pen which he has every right to use. Elechi Amadi defends the committed artist:

The committed writer is not out to make a general statement; he is out to change a particular situation, or to initiate, reverse, or modify a
mode of thinking. His preoccupation is intense and his subject looms so large in his field of view that he sees little else. So he comes up with distorted, if powerfully drawn images. (38)

Ngugi and Armah are healers who offer therapy to the massive communal inferiority complex of their peoples. Their novels are counter-discourses to the colonialist distortions of Africa’s history. They believe in the functional nature of art. From their novels there results “an access of health and hope for those languishing under such a corrosive misunderstanding and mistrust of their own past” (Fraser 73). As committed artists, Ngugi and Armah on certain occasions tend to negate Europe and all its values with a zeal bordering on to xenophobia.

Armah’s outright rejection of whiteness and earnestness to deck both the predators and the destroyers in equally bad/white feathers in Two Thousand Seasons have been severely criticized as xenophobia by critics like Bernth Lindfors. In his article “Xenophobia and Class Consciousness in Recent African Literature,” Lindfors says: “Here xenophobia is carried to its ultimate extreme. Armah goes beyond ‘anti racist racism’ to a racially selective misanthropy” (59). In Myth Literature and the African World, Wole Soyinka also agrees that there appears to be a vengeance motif in some passages and in picturing the perversities of the predators, Armah’s “humane sensibility
tends to recoil a little" (111). But Soyinka defends Armah by saying that despite all its excess, the novel is not a racist book. He says that the central theme of the novel is too positive and dedicated that "its ferocious onslaught on alien contamination soon falls into place as a preparatory exercise for the liberation of the mind" (112). Armah’s images are powerful; they are drawn with a purpose --"the visionary reconstruction of the past for the purposes of social direction" (Soyinka 106). Armah is engaged in showing "the living force of a violated people’s anger . . ." (Seasons 175) and he wants to convey the message that "whatever goes against the white destroyers’ empire, that thing only is beautiful . . ." (Seasons 205).

Similarly, Ngugi’s Devil on the Cross is an angry book which betrays its author’s resentment against the Kenyatta government for arresting and detaining him in the Maximum Security Prison in Kamiti. Ngugi’s protest is mainly for cutting him off from his community and preventing him from communicating with his people. This belligerence of Ngugi weakens the counter-discursive potential of his novel to a certain extent on certain occasions. The satiric excess which he employs to challenge monopoly capitalism has been criticized as the anger of an aggrieved individual which weakens the novel’s potential for counter-discourse. As counter-discourses are trying to induce a new frame of mind, blatant and direct attacks fall out of place as the
reader will see into the personal motive of the writer. But Ngugi is a committed writer. His novel is a launching pad for decolonization.

The counter-discursive strategies employed by the postcolonial novelists change from phase to phase, depending on the prevailing political situation, conditions of production and readership targeted. So the novels written in the cultural nationalist phase had to depend on the European publisher and mostly on the white reader. As these novels were produced under imperial supervision, the writers could not afford to be openly defiant and overtly counter-discursive. "It is characteristic of these early post-colonial texts that the potential for subversion in their themes cannot be fully realized" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Empire 6). As the centre would allow to be published only those texts acceptable to it, the novelists skilfully wove into their texture the counter-hegemonic message using a variety of ingenious counter-discursive strategies.

In the neo-colonial phase, political independence and the rise of democracy bestowed a larger amount of freedom on the novelists. So their ambivalence and reservation gave way to defiant antagonism and they showed great courage to criticize neo-colonialism and African leadership. Themes of corruption and identity crisis replaced themes of pre-colonial cultural purity. Writers
showed a greater confidence in appropriating the metropolitan tongue and creating its native variants.

In the liberation phase, the novel becomes aggressively counter-discursive both in theme and in form. The zeal for decolonization paves the way for an enthusiastic assertion of black identity, thereby posing a challenge to the centre and all it represents. The counter-discursive potential of the novel is realized to the maximum. Language has been subjected to unprecedented appropriation. Appropriation is the process by which the received language is brought under the influence of the vernacular tongue. It is replacing the centre’s language in a specific cultural context. It is as Raja Rao says, conveying “in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own” (296). The post-colonial writers use various strategies to create a new English from the metropolitan English imported to the colonies. Some of the strategies commonly found in all linguistic groups are glossing, code-switching, syntactic fusion and neologisms, using untranslated words and translated proverbs and creating an inter language. Novel as a genre has been abrogated, hybridized and domesticated by weaving profusely into its fabric the elements of the oral tale. As language appropriation and genre abrogation are exhaustive areas with ample scope for a dissertation, they are not discussed in detail in the present project. Thus in the third phase,
the novels have acquired a new militancy and have transformed themselves into liberation narratives. And the novelists carry on with a clearer vision.

There are many similarities as well as significant differences in the counter-discursive strategies used by Ngugi and Armah. Both of them offer alternative social systems, project revolutionary consciousness, reverse the binarisms of the colonial discourse, re-evaluate history and use satire. The similarities can be traced back to the background of both the writers. Ngugi and Armah are contemporaries, though Ngugi started to write a bit early. Both of them are considerable forces in the postcolonial creative and critical fields. Both of them have similar educational backgrounds and have been exposed to the same literary traditions. Both of them have fallen under the influence of Fanon. They have grown from critics to visionaries and healers. They are adepts at myth-making and draw abundantly from their oral traditions.

Ngugi and Armah are alienated intellectuals--alienated through education. Their early novels echo this alienation. But in the later novels which are liberation narratives, they offer positive suggestions for empowering the people. They go beyond merely picturing the neo-colonial democracies in which their heroes find themselves misfits. Both the writers are on the side of the people against their exploiters. They speak of collective actions and
group endeavours that succeed or suggest success. Their visions have matured to offer alternative social systems to Western imperialism. Both of them believe that Africa needs a social system other than the Western model.

There are significant differences in the counter-discursive strategies of Ngugi and Armah. These differences can be traced back to the differences in the social vision of the writers. Ngugi speaks of revolutionary socialism as the potent alternative to monopoly capitalism. He believes in workers and peasants leading the struggle for liberation against their exploiters. His earlier concerns of colour and race give way to class. His liberation army consists of workers and peasants of the whole world. He visualizes an all-world army of workers fighting global capitalism or African workers and peasants holding hands with their counterparts in other continents. Ngugi sums up his alternative social system in Decolonising the Mind:

[W]riters in African languages should reconnect themselves to the revolutionary traditions of an organized peasantry and working class in Africa in their struggle to defeat imperialism and/create a higher system of democracy and socialism in alliance with all the other peoples of the world. (29-30)

Armah's social vision differs from that of Ngugi in certain aspects. His vision is guided by a deep-seated
humanism and aims at communal welfare. He recognizes the major cause of Africa’s illness in the fragmentation of the black races. His healing therapy is an all-black union. His vision is pan-African or even pan-black. Armah’s alternative social system—‘the way’—is a search for strengths in the community’s past suffering. So going back to the past is a preparatory exercise for future. ‘The way,’ Armah, believes is a viable alternative to Western imposed economic system. ‘The way’ is also fundamentally socialist, but it differs from the reactionary socialism of Ngugi. ‘The way’ is a yearning for the communalistic, egalitarian traditional society of mutual help and collective participation in all forms of production. Moreover Armah does not visualize the masses leading a struggle. He draws a line between the masses and a select group of artists and intellectuals whose duty is to lead the masses towards ‘the way’ and to equip them to resist forces antagonistic to ‘the way’. Richard Peck says:

He [Armah] has found a community (or hopes that he may do so) not in the community of the common people where Ngugi has found his, but in the community of the uncommon—the committed artists and intellectuals of Africa. (40)

Thus Ngugi joins the community of Gikuyu peasants and workers and finds hope in their strength. In contrast Armah finds community in like-minded intellectuals and
committed artists. As Armah is conscious of the suffering of the common man and of the living presence of their oppressors, he believes that the exceptional individuals can make their work easier if the oppressed people also join them. So though Armah does not give the leadership to the masses, he recognizes their potential.

The differences in the social vision of Ngugi and Armah create differences in their counter-discursive strategies. While Ngugi has grown to be more class conscious, Armah remains race conscious. Though Armah recognizes class divisions, he does not speak of class unity or class struggle. While Ngugi speaks of the unity of the workers of the world, Armah pins his hopes on the unity of all black races. So while offering alternative social systems as counter-discursive strategies, Ngugi puts forward revolutionary socialism as his alternative and Armah speaks of a return to 'the way' of pre-colonial egalitarianism. Similarly while Ngugi’s concern is instilling revolutionary consciousness in the workers and peasants of Africa and the rest of the world and marching an army against the capitalist forces, Armah is more conscious of mobilizing the black races against their white exploiters and of the role of the artists and intellectuals in this liberation struggle. Again, while reversing the binarisms of colonial discourse, Armah is more race conscious and privileges the black body and the
black values by juxtaposing them with the white body and the white values. While employing satire as a counter-discursive strategy, the major targets of Ngugi and Armah differ. Ngugi's satire is mainly against monopoly capitalism and its champions and against Christianity represented by both white and black church leaders and church-goers. Armah's major targets are neo-colonial apemanship and Christianity. He satirizes the blacks who mimic the white race. And Christianity for Armah is the religion of the white race and so blacks are not his targets. So the fundamental differences in the counter-discursive strategies of Ngugi and Armah may be traced back to the differences in their social vision.