Chapter I
Postcolonial African Novel As Counter-discourse

1. Colonial Discourse

Discourse basically means dialogue in its various forms. It comprises of all forms of written and verbal communication. It also means symbolic communication through dress pageantry, spectacle, rite, rituals, arts, edifice etc. In short, whatever signifies is a part of discourse. Discourse, therefore, is a network of meanings. Michel Foucault says in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that all societies have certain procedures to control discourses. He says:

[In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality. (216)]

So a discourse is not free. It is regulated. It is only a system of possibility for knowledge. Meaning, therefore, changes from time to time, place to place and person to person. Discourses are subjected to institutional control and are identified by the institutions they come from. They gain their power in relation to the listener. To extend the argument, a discourse gets its power through its
relations to another discourse which could be an opposing one. Therefore, the possibilities of meanings are determined not by language, but by the institutions they are attached to. "A crucial argument concerning discourse is that meanings are to be found only in the concrete forms of differing social and institutional practices: there can be no meaning in 'language'" (Macdonell 12). Thus Foucault’s Theory of Discourse subverts the arguments of Saussurean linguists and structuralists that a common system of meaning underlies all forms of language.

Foucault’s theory has been extended and qualified by Michel Pecheux and Louis Althusser. Pecheux argues in *Language Semantics and Ideology: Stating the Obvious* that it is not language that determines the meanings of words. Meanings are not neutral. It is the position of the speaker that determines the meanings of words. He says that "...words, expressions, propositions, etc., change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use them" (111). So words change their meanings from one discourse to another. Pecheux regards discourse as a specific form of ideology. This theory of Pecheux has its roots in Louis Althusser’s essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," which puts forward that ideologies come from social conflicts and these ideologies are reinforced, in turn, by these social conflicts. Althusser offers a distinction between two types of state apparatuses which
pass down the ideology of the ruling class—the Ideological State Apparatuses and the Repressive State Apparatuses. The Repressive State Apparatuses consist of the police, military etc., which are externally enforced forms of social cohesion. Ideoclogical State Apparatuses consist of education, religion, family, culture etc., which are more effective and lasting because they arise from consent and do not depend on force and it is through them that a society conveys its knowledge and ensures its survival. Althusser's essay supports Foucault's theory by showing how discourses come into being and how they gain their power.

The term discourse used by Foucault is, therefore, related to the term ideology as used by Pecheux and Althusser. So discourses as speech or writing shape our worldview. They embody beliefs and values and have the force to impose these beliefs and values. Discourses, in fact, condition us to think in certain ways. Discourses supplement force through ideological persuasion. Bruce Lincoln in Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification says:

[D]iscourses . . . may be strategically employed to mystify the inevitable inequities of any social order and to win the consent of those over whom power is exercised, thereby obviating the need for the direct coercive use of force.... (4)
So discourses can be used for legitimatizing power. Discourses are controlled, therefore, by the ruling classes who have control over the State Apparatuses. The dominant group in order to establish its hegemony appropriates the discourses and uses various discursive strategies in justifying its policies.

Modern European colonization of black Africa was made possible using force in the form of technological superiority. But force functioned only as a temporary means of control. Colonialism functioned as a discourse. Colonialism was not a mere act of domination motivated by economic profit and monitored through force. According to Edward Said, imperialism and colonialism are not mere acts of accumulation and acquisition.

Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people 'require' and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination...

(Culture and Imperialism 8)

Colonialism functioned under the assumption that Africa had an inferior culture and Europe represented the only course of progress, whether in Africa or Asia.

This conception of Africa as Europe's cultural Other was a historical necessity. Kofi Awoonor says in The Breast of the Earth that the early European contacts for
trade were "based on mutual respect and profit until the Portuguese decided to pervert the course of this trade and introduce the slave trade" (10). It was the trans-Atlantic slave-trade that dehumanized the Africans because by equating them with savages and animals, they could be captured, shackled and sold in the European markets. But the Emancipation Act of 1833 abolished slavery in all British territories and since then it was the 'civilizing mission' which justified the colonial presence in Africa.

... Africa grew 'dark' as Victorian explorers, missionaries, and scientists flooded it with light, because the light was refracted through an imperialist ideology that urged the abolition of 'savage customs' in the name of civilization. (Brantlinger 185)

Thus if it was the slave-trade that dehumanized Africa, its abolition 'darkened' the continent. The 'primitiveness' of Africa was endorsed also by anthropological Darwinism "which in the evolutionary scheme of cultural hierarchy placed African culture at the bottom and Western culture at the top of the scale" (Obiechina 15). Thus it was necessary for the colonialist to present the Other as opposite, negative, inferior and ugly so that exploitation could continue in the guise of bringing light to the continent.

Colonialism brought in its trail significant sociological and psychological changes. It transformed the
collective identity of the colonized. The discursive apparatuses of religion, education and other means of social control worked hand in hand to establish the myth of white superiority and to justify conquest and legitimize the continuation of the colonial presence. The colonialists' desire to exploit the resources of Africa destroyed the native mode of production and the native social and political systems. This amounted to a negation of all native values. The colonialists could only think of the strange and unfamiliar as evil and inferior. They could never think of it as cultural difference. Thus colonization led to an irrecoverable damage to the African psyche.

Lewis Nkosi says in Home and Exile and Other Selections that defeat by other African powers was not so detrimental to the African mind. But European colonization was something different because "...its transforming power was enormous; its challenge to African values total and inexorable..." (31). For the colonialists power was self-validating. For them there was only one way of progress, that was technological; only one civilization, that was Europe's; only one religion, that was Christianity. Kofi Awoonor says that most of the colonial administrators, who were lured by the romance of Africa, belonged to the upper or upper middle class and were imbued with their own class attitudes and snobberies. "For this group, the bulk of the Africans represented a despicable
lower level of creatures, with obnoxious religious and social habits who must not be tolerated around the precincts of decent homes" (Awoonor 27).

In order to assert his individuality and his worth as a superior human being, the colonizer objectified and de-individualized the colonized. The colonized was never regarded as an individual human being but a member of a group. Albert Memmi in The Colonizer and the Colonized says: "The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity" (qtd. in Gates, "Critical Fanonism" 459). O. Mannoni in Prospero and Caliban regards the basic problem in a colonial situation as mutual incomprehension. The colonizer’s strength springs from his belief that he represents civilization and possesses superior power. This persuades the native to imitate and obey. It is not merely profit-making that motivates the colonizer. He is greedy of certain psychological satisfaction, an affirmation to his individuality. Mannoni says that a colonial situation is created

\[ T \]he very instant a white man . . . appears in the midst of a tribe . . . so long as he is thought to be rich or powerful or merely immune to the local forces of magic, and so long as he derives from his position . . . a feeling of his own superiority. (18)
So it is the 'thought' that matters. The colonizer thinks that he is powerful and superior, and he remains so. The colonized thinks that he is powerless and inferior and he remains so. But the 'thinking' does not spring from a vacuum. It is framed by the various discourses: functioning as the carriers of the ruling class's ideology. The colonial discourse contrives to stuff the native's mind with self-hatred which leads to an internalized oppression so much so that the native loses his cultural confidence and surrenders his cultural identity to the dominant culture and tries to win economic profits.

Frantz Fanon, in his books *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Black Skin White Mask* (1967), has given a seminal and thorough-going analysis of the consequences of colonialism. Fanon's findings have been based on his own experience as a psychiatrist. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon defines the colonial situation as a "Manichaean world" (31) where the colonial situation is represented in terms of a Manichaean division along the binary axes of colonizer/colonized, good/evil, white/black, civil/savage etc. The colonialist does not view the new world as one of difference, but as the opposite of all that is human and civil and "paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil" (*Wretched* 32).
The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. (Wretched 32)

Fanon goes on to say that this Manichaeism "dehumanizes the native" and even "turns him into an animal" (Wretched 32). This radical division into paired oppositions leads to a sort of psychological marginalization and alienation. The colonial discourse which privileges the primary sign ipso facto disarms opposition. So Fanon sees the colonial situation as a site of resistance, of unbridgeable gaps and unnegotiable antagonisms.

In Black Skin White Mask Fanon says that in black/white relationship colour is a cultural marker, a key signifier. Just as the whiteness of the European signifies power, money, superiority, and civility, the blackness of the Negro signifies the opposites. This fact of blackness alienates the Negro not only from his society but also from himself so much so that he longs to peel off "the burden of that corporeal malediction" (111). It is colour that makes the native, Europe’s abominable Other at first sight itself. Fanon continues:

The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it’s cold, the nigger/is shivering, the nigger is
shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger.... (113/14)

Lewis Nkosi also expresses a similar view. He says: "In the small prefix put before the word 'white' I saw the entire burden and consequence of European colonialism; its assault on the African personality; the very arrogance of its assumptions" (32).

Thus the colonial discourse which depends on notions of race and colour creates conflicts in the colonized. It represents the colonized as primitive, chaotic and barbaric. It functions as a system of knowledge and beliefs about the site of colonization. It is also a system of statements that can be made about the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized. Although it is produced "within the society and cultures of the colonizers, it becomes that discourse within which the colonized may also come to see themselves" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Key Concepts 42). The discursive apparatuses of the colonizer included a variety of writings such as trade documents, religious pamphlets, government papers, letters, scientific literature, records and fiction. Out of these, fiction did the most powerful discursive function in transforming the African societies.

In Culture and Imperialism Edward Said says that the power to narrate or to block other narratives from forming
and emerging is very important to culture and imperialism and forms one of the main connections between them. Said says that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world. It was through narratives that the colonialists—writers, administrators, historians and travellers—told Europe of its cultural Other (xiii). Even though the main issue in the colonial world was battle over land, “when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it” and similar issues were “reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative” (xiii). And the power to narrate lay with the colonizers as the instruments of discourse were under their control.

The mission schools and universities in Africa had in their curriculum creative writing, mostly prose fiction, on Africa by Europeans. This colonial fiction functioned as colonial discourse by projecting the image of Africa as a land of darkness, savagery, charm, cannibalism, exotic beings, fabulous wealth and a total absence of culture. This image had its roots in the early writings of Arab explorers and Portuguese historians and it was attested by the writings of European merchants, slave-traders, colonial administrators and missionaries who had visited or lived in Africa from fifteenth to nineteenth century. English literature down from the Elizabethan age contains references to Africa. Later when novel grew up as a
popular genre in Europe, writers like Daniel Defoe recognized the immense potential of Africa as a background for their sensational narratives. It was during the hey-day of colonialism which spans between the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that English writers like Rider Haggard, Joseph Conrad, Edgar Wallace, Evelyn Waugh and Joyce Cary with their exotic romances did great disservice to Africa by functioning as aides in the 'civilizing' mission. Their tales were told for the amusement of the emerging urban industrial population in England. These writers were handicapped by their inability to appreciate African culture and comprehend the African mind. Their perception was undoubtedly steeped in ignorance, prejudice bigotry and misunderstanding. They were probably using "Africa as a primitive scene where impulses which in the European have been bottled up . . . can burst open like a sewer . . ." (Obiechina 22).

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) is taken up as a specimen text to examine how the colonial discourse projects Africa as Europe's abominable Other. Conrad pictures Africa as the heart of darkness. For his Marlow, going up the River Congo is "like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world . . ." (39) and the 'savage' who was trained to be the fireman of the ship looked like "a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs" (43). Marlow says:
We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there--there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were--No, they were not inhuman. . . . They howled and leaped and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity--like yours--the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. (42)

As Chinua Achebe says in “An Image of Africa,” Conrad’s book projects the image of Africa as “the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant beastiality” (3). Conrad and other liberal creative writers were projecting the colonial image of Africa in the Western mind. Even Hegel in The Philosophy of History has described Africa as “the land of childhood, which lying beyond the days of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night . . .” (qtd. in Lamming 15). Thus the colonial fiction was an imaginative rendering of the colonial situation--an exploration into the colonizer/colonized relations.

Abdul R. JanMohamed says in “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature” that by collapsing the African natives into African animals or by mystifying them as some metaphysical
essence of Africa, there can never be a meeting ground between “the social, historical creatures of Europe and the metaphorical alterity of the Calibans and Ariels of Africa” (87). If the difference between the two races is so vast, Europe can continue its process of ‘civilizing’ indefinitely. The colonial fiction was unconcerned about its truth value because the native did not have access to the fiction and the European reader had no direct contact with the native. So the writer could afford to have free-play of his imagination and disfigure the African to any degree. He could offer him as a stereotype for the gratification of the European reader (JanMohamed 82).

"Just as imperialists ‘administer’ the resources of the conquered country, so colonialist discourse ‘commodifies’ the native subject into a stereotyped object and uses him as a ‘resource’ for colonialist fiction" (JanMohamed 83). Thus the colonial fiction in tune with the popular imperial ideology, created a negative, exaggerated and distorted picture of Africa for the glory of the Empire. Even liberal creative writers like Joseph Conrad failed to present an impartial picture of African cultures left behind by history. Thus the colonial fiction with an insistence on the savagery of the native performed the discursive function of ideological persuasion and cultural colonization. It succeeded in sending out the first generation of African writers from the mission
schools and universities of Africa, after having learned that Africa did not have a culture to boast of, a history to speak of and a humanity to think of, let alone a soul.

2. **Postcolonial Discourse**

The term 'postcolonial' is elusive and multidimensional. Arif Dirlik in "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" observes three uses for the term—"as a "literal description of conditions in the formerly colonial societies," "as a description of a global condition after the period of colonialism" and "as a discourse on the above named conditions that is informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products of those conditions" (332). So postcolonialism means a culture study of the inevitable impact of colonialism on the literature and arts of the ex-colonies. But the term 'postcolonial' is mainly used to refer to the literatures produced from the former colonies of Europe and has recently replaced terms like 'Third World Literature,' 'Commonwealth Literature' and 'New Literature in English'. As Deepika Bahri says, the term which had a humble beginning as a descriptor for literature has now grown "into the status of theoretical apparatus and a disciplinary entity" (67). In *The Empire Writes Back* Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin use the term "to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the
present day” (2). So postcolonial literatures would refer to those literatures produced from the various ex-colonies of Europe, both before and after political independence. These literatures bear the burden of a long night of suffering, denigration and marginality, despite their spacial and temporal differences. They foreground their tension with the imperial centre. Stephen Slemon says in “Post-colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History” that “the colonial encounter and its aftermath, whatever its form throughout the post-colonial world, provides a shared matrix of reference and a shared set of problems for post-colonial cultures” (165). Thus postcolonialism has recently been used in connection with discourses on colonialism, both critical and creative.

Foucault’s theory of discourse as strategies of power and subjugation has been employed by postcolonial critics like Edward W. Said, Abdul R. JanMohamed, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in studying colonialism as a discourse, a signifying system, or as a text without an author. These critics offer various projects for re-reading and subverting the colonial discourse which has silenced, oppressed and marginalized the colonial subject. As Stephen Slemon says in “The Scramble for Post-colonialism,” colonialism is studied by the postcolonial critics as "an ideological or discursive formation: that is, with the ways in which colonialism is
viewed as an apparatus for constituting subject positions through the field of representation” (17).

Fanon’s works also have been seminal in the development of postcolonial discourse theory. Postcolonial critics are employing Fanon’s theories in analysing the colonial discourse and re-reading it to dismantle its discursive strategies and thereby writing back to the centre. Though Fanon has emphasized the power of colonial discourse in disarming opposition, he has recognized its power as a “demystifying force and as the launching-pad for a new oppositional stance which would aim at the freeing of the colonized from this disabling position though [sic] the construction of new liberating narratives” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Empire 125). As Edward Said says in “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” Fanon’s aim has been to persuade Europe to review the relevance of the imperial mission and its historically ordained opinion of the colonized. He says:

Despite its bitterness and violence, the whole point of Fanon’s work is to force the European metropolis to think its history ‘together’ with the history of colonies awakening from the cruel stupor and abused immobility of imperial dominion... (qtd. in Gates, “Critical Fanonism” 458)
Edward Said in his *Orientalism* describes how the Orient was created as the cultural Other of Europe. "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1). The Orient has been a foil to Europe. "...European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (3). Said regards Orientalism as a discursive strategy of Europe to dominate the East. As a discourse, it is owned entirely by Europe and offers no space or voice to the Orient. Said shows how the West's imperialist images of its colonies govern its hegemonic policies. For Said, orientalism is a discovery, a myth and a projection. "The representations of Orientalism in European culture amount to what we can call a discursive consistency ..." (273). Said's analysis of Orientalism as a discourse is rooted in Fanon's notion of binarism which negates the Other and privileges self. The Other is antagonistic to self and hence there is perpetual tension. Through various discursive strategies the West has constructed an image of the Orient as Other both in the Western mind and in the Eastern mind. Said's analysis is taken up by other postcolonial critics in studying European colonialism and its signifying systems. The image of Africa in the Western mind, likewise, is a construct, an artefact and an invention. Hence postcolonial critics are
engaged in re-reading the colonial discourse to expose its
discursive strategies and to subvert its centrism and
hegemonic privileging of the primary sign.

Abdul R. JanMohamed’s arguments are also grounded on
Fanon’s theory. JanMohamed says that the dominant model of
relations in all colonial societies is the Manichean
opposition between the putative superiority of the European
and the supposed inferiority of the native. This binarism
provides “the central feature of the colonialist cognitive
framework and colonialist literary representation: the
manichean allegory—a field of diverse yet interchangeable
oppositions between white and black . . .” (82). Such a
division makes the colonial societies sites for everlasting
antagonisms. To be colonized means to be removed from all
the privileges of the colonizer. There is no room for
individual worth because the negative signs cloud the
positive aspects of the binary opposite. Similarly, the
evils in the colonizer are covered up by his superior
status and supposed civility. The colonial relations are
founded on this theoretical framework. Since the colonial
discourse contains strategies for imposing this state of
mind, it contains fissures which can be identified in order
to subvert the colonizer’s assumptions about his moral
superiority which has dissuaded him from understanding and
treating the Other as difference.
Some postcolonial critics like Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have rejected this theory of Manichean opposition. Their analyses of the colonial discourse varies from that of Said or JanMohamed. In "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," Bhabha argues that colonial authority is best understood and resisted through its ambivalence. To make that ambivalence clear, Bhabha describes a scene from the register of the Church Missionary Society. In the first week of May 1817, Anund Messeh, an Indian catechist found a group of people under a tree outside Delhi. They were reading the gospel translated into "Hindoostanee Tongue" (164). To the natives, the book is a wonder. It contains the word of God. But they wonder how the Shahibs could produce it. The Shahibs are not miraculous. In the conversation that follows, the catechist re-establishes his authority and reaffirms that the Shahib’s words are God’s words.

Based on the above document, Bhabha argues that the colonial discourse fails to create fixed identities and the binarism that places the two groups as water-tight compartments is doomed to fail because there are enormous cultural and racial differences within the two groups and crossovers between them. The colonial discourse is split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. The
relationship is, therefore, more ambivalent than binary. This ambivalence makes the boundaries of self/other and differentiation of colonizer/colonized different from the Hegelian master/slave dialectic or the phenomenological projection of otherness (169). So Bhabha assigns a space for the native subject to stand and resist and question the imperial mode of constructing the Other. He is liberating the Other into a sort of difference. By allowing the natives to question the authority of the colonial text, Bhabha assigns a speaking position and a voice to the native.

But JanMohamed says that the ambivalence that Bhabha speaks of itself is a product of imperial duplicity and there lies beneath it the colonial dichotomy between the colonizer and colonized. He says:

\[\text{[A]ny evident 'ambivalence' is in fact a product of deliberate, if at times subconscious, imperialist duplicity, operating very efficiently through the economy of its central trope, the manichean allegory. This economy, in turn, is based on a transformation of racial difference into moral and even metaphysical difference. (80)}\]

Gayatri Spivak argues differently. In her writings, the historically silenced native subject is the subaltern woman. She sees imperialism as a form of epistemic violence
which silences the native male and female. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" she says: "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow . . ." (28). So subaltern is muted beyond redemption.

Both Spivak and Bhabha reject the colonial dichotomy of Fanon and other theorists. Spivak's position of 'silence' and Bhabha's position of 'ambivalence' jeopardize the postcolonial project of writing back to the centre. Fanon has argued that in decolonizing there is a "need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation" (Wretched 28). His theory suggests that a native challenge to the colonial discourse which begins in the colonizer's language transforms itself into a downright rejection of imperialism's signifying systems making all the "Mediterranean values...lifeless, colourless knick-knacks" (Wretched 36). Bhabha's politics of ambivalence and Spivak's project of silence weaken the postcolonial attempt of subverting the colonial discourse. An assertion of cultural identity and a rewriting of history will be at stake by the indeterminacy of the politics of ambivalence and the incapacity of the project of silence. In "Writing on Boundaries: Homi Bhabha's Recent Essays" Shaobo Xie says:
If postcolonialism signifies an attempt by the formerly colonized to re-evaluate, re-discover, and reconstruct their own cultures, critiquing and dismantling the manichean allegory of racial oppositions and the imperial structures of feeling and knowledge underpinning colonial cultural productions, then the postcolonial critic has to break out of the postmodern limits of indeterminacy which confines the critical subject to political ambivalence. (164)

Postcolonialism, in fact, gains its relevance only as a counter-discourse—a voice audible enough and a space large enough to be no more than a margin. Benita Parry also says that the position taken by Bhabha and Spivak undermines “the counter discourses which every liberation movement records” (43).

3. **African Novel As Counter-discourse**

Foucault has argued in *Power/Knowledge* that power is a set of potentials, which social agents or institutions appropriate, exercise, resist, shift, and struggle over. Power is not the monopoly of one agent and entirely absent in another. It functions in a network which includes those who exercise it and those who accept/resist it. We cannot exercise power without truth and wherever there is power, there is resistance. So the paths of discourses are not smooth. They are challenged and resisted on the very
ground where they function. So wherever discourses function there are counter-discourses that run parallel to the dominant with counter-hegemonic projects.

Richard Terdiman in his book, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse*, deals with the potential as well as the limits of counter-discursive literary revolution. He argues in the line of Foucault that culture is a field of struggle and "no discourse is ever a monologue" (36). It presupposes a world of "competing contrary utterances against which it asserts its own energies" (36). Since a dominant discourse is an imposition from outside, individuals who are subjected to it will try to gain control over its power and turn it to their own use. Terdiman identifies this process as "counter-discursive" (87). In the third chapter of the book "Counter-Images: Daumier and Le Charivari," Terdiman offers a study of the caricatural images of the satirical dailies of early nineteenth century France as counter-discourses to bourgeoisie ideology and complacency. He shows how the caricatural images could degrade bourgeoisie culture in its own eyes. Terdiman says: "A counter-discourse is counter-discourse because it presupposes the hegemony of its Other. It projects a division of the social space, and seeks to segregate itself in order to prosecute its critique" (185). A counter-discourse is not merely engaged in contradicting the dominant. It tries to represent reality differently
and to counter the strategies of the dominant which regulate the understanding of social reality.

How counter-discourses challenge the dominant discourse and dismantle its codes are illustrated by Xiaome Chen in the article "Occidentalism as Counter-discourse: 'He Shang' in Post-Mao China." Chen describes Occidentalism as a discursive practice in post-Mao China for constructing the Western Other. This official Occidentalism aimed at picturing the West as Other in order to support nationalism and thereby cause internal suppression of people. Simultaneously there existed an anti-official Occidentalism supported by the opponents of the government from among the intelligentsia who believed that the Western Other is superior to the Chinese Self. The author tells that the controversial television serial "He Shang" of 1988 functioned as anti-official Occidentalism by giving a positive picture of the scientific and modern West. This serial functioned as a counter-discourse that sought "to subvert the dominant and official Orientalism and Occidentalism prevalent throughout Chinese culture" (693).

The postcolonial creative and critical discourses are overtly counter-discursive. Their concern is not merely questioning or problematizing but resisting and subverting. The postcolonial is supposed to designate a counter-discourse of the colonized Others against the cultural colonization of Europe. It challenges the very
concept of identity which has occupied the colonial discourse during the days of imperialism. So if the postcolonial project is "to represent the world 'differently'" (Terdiman, 149), the colonized has to be seen not as an Other, but as a difference—a difference in language, colour or culture. Pamela Banting says that the postcolonial encompasses a large repertoire of responses which include various forms of protest and cultural construction (7). The postcolonial does not aim at occupying the centre in the centre/periphery struggle, but to project itself as an acceptable difference. It constitutes a project of re-reading the colonial discourse in order to subvert its hegemonic assumptions and thus initiate a decolonizing process, because decolonization, as Helen Tiffin says in "Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse," "invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them..." (95). The postcolonial also aims at re-reading the post-colonial literatures as counter-discourses because they "are... constituted in counter-discursive rather than homologous practices, and they offer 'fields’... of counter-discursive strategies to the dominant discourse" (96). So the postcolonial discourse—both creative and critical—constitutes counter-hegemonic discourses challenging Europe's claim to be the custodians of world culture. As Sangeetha Ray and Henry Schwarz say, postcoloniality is an attempt "to question the hegemonic
position of European modernity as the culture of reference for the rest of the world . . .” (150).

Africans have been writing in English since the eighteenth century. But it was in the early fifties of the twentieth century that postcolonial African novel came up as a considerable force in world literature. Since then it has grown remarkably and is now a flourishing phenomenon. The publication of Amos Tutola’s *Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) is considered the starting point. But if the factors of public welcome and literary impact are considered, Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) marks the real beginning of postcolonial African novel. The growth of the novel in Africa is inseparably bound with the experience of colonialism and coincided with the years of intense cultural nationalism. The novel has been a weapon in the movement for freedom in Africa. Novelists have used this weapon to arouse the political consciousness of the people to help them get out of the self-hatred and low self-esteem. In “The Novelist As Teacher,” Achebe says that his purpose in writing was to help his society “regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement” (44).

Postcolonial African novel can be regarded as a historical record of the changing consciousness of black Africa and it represents three major phases in Africa’s history, recording the socio-political transition of the
continent. Novels in the first phase revolve round a rebuilding of lost dignity, denied identity and distorted history. Their project is a cultural rehabilitation of the past. They are nationalist and hence anti-colonial. They revolve round the cultural purity of African societies before they were disrupted by white contact. The writers tell their readers that their past “was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them” (Achebe, “Novelist” 45).

The focus of postcolonial African novel shifted during the years following independence. The leaders of the nationalist movements became the rulers of Africa. But the unity of the nationalist crusade began to crumble. The paradise which independence offered seemed now unattainable. People soon recognized a continuation of exploitation, the only difference was that the exploiters were Africans. The colonial powers continued their economic domination by controlling the economic policies of the African democracies and exerting technological influence over them. A feeling of betrayal set in and a period of intense disillusion followed. Writers began to redirect their angst against neo-colonialism and African leadership.

The novels during this phase present Europeans or Americans as the agents of international capitalism and cold war politics who seek to destabilize African
democracies which are under the grip of tribalism, nepotism and corruption. The white men are pictured as roaming their ex-colonies with seductive offers to lure the African leaders to corruption and venality. So the novels are marked by pessimism, disillusion, anger and helplessness. They are highly critical of the manipulations of the Western capitalist economy, the potential dangers of neo-colonialism and of the corrupt African leadership. Alienation, search for identity, corruption, vandalism, cultural colonization and value crunch have become the themes of these novels.

The third phase of the African novel can be called the 'liberation phase'. The resistance to cultural imperialism, neo-colonialism and corrupt leadership continue. But the novel transforms itself into a narrative of liberation as Fanon envisaged in The Wretched of the Earth. Cultural decolonization is aimed through a more confident assertion of black identity and an overt challenge to Europe's myth of black Africa. During this phase, the novel has become therapeutic in nature and the novelists are engaged in a mission of healing the African psyche of its traumatic experiences of colonialism. The novels are open ended and offer solutions--a way out--to the stranglehold of cultural imperialism. So they are more optimistic, constructive, visionary and more functional than their predecessors. The novelists of this period betray a remarkable influence of
Fanon. This is the period when the writer turns himself into an awakener of the people. This is the period of "a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature" (Wretched 179).

Thus the postcolonial African novel has had its beginning as an anti-colonial weapon and throughout its successive periods it has continued to foreground resistance to imperialism of all forms. It has been a response to and a reaction against the colonial discourse. It challenges the Western construct of African reality and continues to offer cultural resistance to European hegemony. It aims at transforming the state of consciousness of the African which has been shaped by the colonial discourse. Hence it is counter-discursive. It is a discursive formation aimed at decolonizing the mind through projects of re-Africanization.

Nguwi wa Thiong’o of Kenya and Ayi Kwei Armah of Ghana are two postcolonial writers whose novels are counter-discursive in content and form. Ngugi is the earliest writer from East Africa who has been widely read abroad. He started to write under the influence of Chinua Achebe and soon rose as the pioneer of the decolonization movement. His first two novels, The River Between (1964) and Weep Not Child (1965) are celebrations of the past and fall under the cultural nationalist phase of the African novel. The third novel, A Grain of Wheat (1967), is set in
neo-colonial Kenya and reflects Ngugi’s socialist ideas. The fourth novel, Petals of Blood (1977) shows that Ngugi’s thinking has grown more radical. The novel criticizes contemporary Kenya, the corruption and inefficiency of bureaucracy and the failure of the government of Jomo Kenyatta. Ngugi’s commitment to his people has led him to part ways with the metropolitan English and to write in his mother tongue. He wrote two novels in Gikuyu—Devil on the Cross (1981) and Matigari (1987). These two novels have been translated into English. While Ngugi himself translated the former, he refused even to translate the latter. These two novels are satires of neo-colonial Kenya.

Ayi Kwei Armah has written five novels. The first three can be clubbed together as they belong to the neo-colonial phase of African novel. The first novel, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born (1968) and the second one Fragments (1970) are set in neo-colonial Ghana immediately before the coup d’etat of 1966. In the third novel, Why Are We So Blest? (1972) Armah breaks out of his Ghanaian concern and embraces a wider worldview. The novel is set in America, Muslim Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. Armah’s stay in the United States during the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Movement has conditioned him to think of Africa’s destiny independent of European influence. This, in turn, has made him project the black/white dichotomy in
Why Are We So Blest? which has its full blossom in the fourth novel, Two Thousand Seasons (1973). The vision of this novel is more positive than its predecessors. The last novel, The Healers (1978) is a historical novel with a therapeutic value and a forward looking vision. The last two of Armah’s novels fall into the liberation phase.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o from East Africa and Ayi Kwei Armah from West Africa are brought together in this study to show how postcolonial literatures, despite their differences in space and time, are counter-discursive and how they are predicated on the experience of colonialism. The novelists use various counter-discursive strategies to subvert the colonial discourse and to diffuse its potential for cultural colonization. Offering alternative social systems, reversing the binarisms of the colonial discourse, instilling revolutionary consciousness, reclamation of history and the powerful use of satire are some of the strategies common to both Ngugi and Armah that are discussed in the subsequent chapters.