Chapter III

Decolonizing the Mind

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said defines culture as “all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation . . . that often exist in aesthetic forms” (xii) and also as “a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought . . .” (xiii). Ngugi also says: “Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they [people] come to view themselves and their place in the/universe” (*Decolonising* 14-15). So culture manifests itself in a people’s way of life, in their songs, dances, rituals and beliefs. It is a body of material and spiritual values transmitted from the past to the present. It is a living organism that undergoes constant change. And as it is inseparably linked to the socio-political systems in a society, any change in them will result in a cultural transformation.

Imperialism which began as an exploitative system motivated by economic gains led to the transformation of black Africa from one cultural mode to another. Contact with the Western systems of administration, education and social, economic and religious control disrupted the pre-colonial agrarian communities and their system of
values resulting in the "elevation of the technological at the expense of the teleological" (Armah, "Masks" 36). The colonialists could only view the indigenous systems as the antithesis of culture--the European middle class culture. As the discursive instruments were at their disposal, the European settlers, missionaries and administrators could colonize the mind and the thinking of the colonized. This is called cultural imperialism or cultural colonization.

Ngugi says in Decolonising the Mind that the most important area of colonial domination was the "mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world" (16). Economic and political control of a people cannot be possible without cultural control. Ngugi calls this "the cultural bomb" (3) the effect of which is "to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" (3). So if imperialism is a metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory, cultural imperialism will be the culture of a metropolitan centre 'ruling' the culture of a distant territory. In Devil on the Cross Gatuiria who does research in the field of culture tells his fellow passengers in the 'matatu:' "Our culture...has been dominated by the Western imperialist cultures. That is what we call in English cultural
imperialism. Cultural imperialism is mother to the slavery of the mind and the body” (58). So the colonialists came to Africa “holding death of the body in their right, the mind’s annihilation in their left . . .” (Seasons 2) because they knew that “the capture of the mind and the body both is a slavery far more lasting, far more secure than the conquest of bodies alone” (Seasons 33). And colonialism functioned as a programmed attempt to destroy the songs, dances, religion and rituals of a people.

Aijaz Ahmad says that cultural domination is an important aspect of imperial domination and “‘culture’ is always, therefore, a major site for resistance . . .” (8). Literary texts are sites where the dominant narrative and the culture filtered through it are challenged through counter-cultural narratives. Postcolonial novelists are engaged in creating counter-narratives to challenge cultural imperialism and “to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (Said, Culture xiii). The postcolonial novelists take upon themselves the task of generating “modes of expression that could build up a counter-cultural discourse” (Pandurang 135). They attempt to liberate the minds of the people by giving them cultural confidence because, as Ngugi says, “no country can consider itself free as long as its economy and culture are dominated by foreigners” (“National Identity” 175). So the postcolonial novels are projects of decolonization.
The term decolonization has become popular ever since Chinweizu, Jemi and Madubuike used it in the title of their book, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980) and Ngugi used it in his collection of essays *Decolonising the Mind* (1987). Ngugi defines decolonization as a negation of the whole colonial process and the dismantling of the psychological structures created in the minds of the people through colonial propaganda. Armah says that decolonization in cultural and intellectual terms means “the search and research for positive African ideas, perspectives, techniques, values” (“Masks” 64). Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin say:

> Decolonization is the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms. This includes dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power and that remain even after political independence is achieved. (Key Concepts 63)

So decolonizing the mind means unloading the falsified reality of one’s own existence and rejecting untruths about one’s past in order to reclaim the lost African identity. It means re-Africanization of the self for gaining cultural confidence or an attempt for psychic liberation as Kimathi in *The Trial of Dedan Kinathi* sings: “Unchain my hands /
Unchain my legs / Unchain my soul!” (27). So postcolonial novelists do away with their earlier projects of returning to the past for marginal comforts as they have done during the cultural nationalist phase and take upon themselves the nobler and more positive task of decolonizing the minds of their people through counter-narratives of liberation.

The novels of Ngugi and Armah are counter-discourses within the framework of narratives and are projects for decolonizing the minds of their people. They have proved themselves champions of decolonization in the east and the west of Africa through their novels and their extra-fictional assertions. They are engaged in redeeming the African from “slavery disguised as freedom” (Seasons 104) and to create out of him a new man “without chains on his legs, without chains on his mind, without chains in his soul” (Petals 236). They try to redefine and recreate their people’s perception of themselves in a more positive way by resisting cultural imperialism. Both Ngugi and Armah use counter-discursive strategies for decolonizing the minds. Three of the prominent strategies common to both these writers are discussed below.

1. **Reversing the Binarisms of Colonial Discourse**

The binary logic in Western thinking made imperialism see the colonial world in terms of paired opposites. So for the colonialists Africa was the binary opposite of Europe. Fanon defines the colonial situation as a Manichaen
world inhabited by the 'good' colonizer and the 'evil' colonized. In the colonial narratives there was an underlying binary--the colonizer/colonized--which was manifested on different occasions as white/black, beautiful/ugly, human/bestial, civil/savage etc. As Edward Said says in *Culture and Imperialism*, "... the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as 'inferior' or 'subject races,' 'subordinate peoples,' 'dependency,' 'expansion,' and 'authority'" (8). So all colonialists who were white, beautiful and civil were collectively opposed to all the natives who were black, ugly and savage.

John Thompson, the white administrator, in *A Grain of Wheat* represents the colonialist's attitude towards the blacks. For him the topic of changing African minds into European minds is worthy enough for research. His treatise *Prospero in Africa* is a paradigm of Europe's attempt to impose "the principle of Reason, of Order and of Measure" on the irrationality, inconsistency, and superstition so characteristic of the African and Oriental races (*Grain* 47). His diary notes contain the binary logic of colonialism. "These primordial trees have always awed primitive minds" (*Grain* 49). "Dr. Albert Schweitzer says, 'the Negro is a child, and with children, nothing can be done without the use of authority'" (*Grain* 49). "Every whiteman is continually in danger of gradual moral ruin in
this daily and hourly contest with the African” (Grain 49). Thus Thompson projects the cultural and the moral superiority of the whiteman and the cultural and moral infancy of the binary opposite. This dichotomy permeates through all colonial contacts and colonialist representations of reality.

This binarism is crucial in the cultural construction of reality in the colonial world. Imperialism, by constructing a binarism of white/non-white, has been successful not only in establishing a relation of dominance but also in controlling the native’s perception of himself. It can be argued that the colonial discourse is the matrix in which the personality of the colonized has been moulded. Frantz Fanon says in Black Skin White Mask: “The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. It is the racist who creates his inferior” (93). Jean-Paul Sartre says in Anti-Semite and Jew that the Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew. “It is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew” (69). Thus the attitude of the colonizer determines the colonized’s attitude to himself. For the Negro all his maledictions and all the negative images about himself were there before his birth. He came to this world with many sins—blackness, cannibalism, savagery, aggressiveness etc. All these negative images have been pre-existing and waiting for him.
So decolonizing the mind will only be possible if the colonized gains confidence in himself, only when he begins to think of himself as not inferior or his culture as not backward. In “The Necessary Background: Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism,” Sylvia Wynters says that “for the African to become a man, the European has to cease being the superman” (qtd. in Pandurang 138). So if the colonial discourse has created a superior/inferior binarism in the white/black relationship, the most powerful counter-discursive strategy for decolonization will be to reverse the process by inverting the binarism. Fanon has rightly observed that the settler tries to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the native and the native therefore tries to imagine all possible ways to destroy the settler. “On the logical plane, the Manichaeism of the settler produces a Manichaeism of the native. To the theory of the ‘absolute evil of the native’ the theory of the ‘absolute evil of the settler’ replies” (Wretched 73). So the radical division into paired opposition of white/black in the colonial discourse is reversed in the postcolonial counter-discourse by privileging black over white. An inversion of the cultural markers and symbols would assist any project of decolonization because colonialism thrived on the myth of white superiority which was established through a set of symbols and images. So Armah and Ngugi are engaged in creating opposing images in order to debunk this myth of white superiority.
Colour of the skin has been established as the most striking means of distinguishing one race from another and of identifying the behaviour that can be expected from them. This leads to colour prejudice which amounts to the hatred of one race for another. Colour prejudice leads to out-group hostility and in-group solidarity. Colour is the most conspicuous outward manifestation of a race and so it has been used as a means for judging people and their behaviour irrespective of their social standing and educational attainments. Colour prejudice is related to power and money and hence leads to bitter resentment of the subjugated people and unreasoning contempt for them. And skin colour has been a signifier of oppositionality, denigration and de-humanization in the colonial world.

For Europeans the most repulsive thing in a Negro was his colour. It is the colour of hell and devil in European imagination and hence the opposite of all their values. So skin colour is the most conspicuous cultural marker from which the Negro cannot escape. He is doomed to lie at the bottom of the colour-ladder and consequently of the culture-ladder. He is “locked into the infernal circle” of his skin colour (Fanon, Black Skin 116). Unlike the Jew who is white and thus goes unnoticed sometimes, the Negro is given no chance to save himself from the prejudice of the white man. Fanon says: “I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the ‘idea’ that others have of me but of my own appearance” (Black Skin 116). So colour becomes the immediate cause for marginalizing the
Negro. It establishes his inferiority and powerlessness. Lewis Nkosi says that he discovered his Africanness the day he learned that he was “not only black but non-white” (31) and the prefix ‘non’ made him realize that in the eyes of the world his life represented “something negative, something non!” (32). So Armah and Ngugi reverse the colour symbolism and associate positive values with blackness and evil with whiteness.

In *Two Thousand Seasons* black stands for Africa and white for all forces that destroyed it. White is presented as an epithet for the arid, the destructive and the hideous. Whiteness is the symbol of alien values and blackness symbolizes triumph over these. Desert is white while water is black. White is associated with death. “All around us the world is drugged white in a deathly happiness . . . .” (*Seas ons* xi). “We wander now along steep roads declining into the whitest deaths” (*Seas ons* 52). White is associated with the desert and black with springwater. Desert is the symbol of aridity, death and destruction while spring water is the symbol of energy, life and fertility. In *Why Are We So Blest?* also Armah associates white with death and destruction. Solo wonders why Modin chose as his companion “the American child of the tribe of death” and why blacks like Modin have a fatal attraction to “these daughters of our white death?” (*Blest* 230).
Armah and Ngugi invert the norms of physical beauty. For them black is beautiful and white is pale and deathly. In *Two Thousand Seasons* Anoa is described as a black beauty full of grace.

She was slender as a fale stalk, and suppler. From her forehead to her feet her body was of a deep, even blackness that could cause the chance looker to wonder how it was that even the surface of a person's skin could speak of depths. Her grace was easy in the dance. (*Seasons* 15)

In contrast Bentum's wife is white, pale and ugly. Armah pictures her as

[An apparition exactly like a ghost: a pale white woman in white clothes moving with a disjointed, severe, jerky walk. . . . Her face was squeezed in a severe frown. . . . She had no eyebrows. Eyelashes she had, but they were hard to discern, being white and therefore merging into the pallor of her face. (*Seasons* 119)]

In *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah contrasts the beauty of Naita, the black Secretary of Mr. Scott, with Aimee and Mrs. Jefferson. "Naked, Naita is perfect. Nothing about her is fat" (122). In contrast Aimee is "big in a tall, bony way" (62) and Mrs. Jefferson is a "horny white bitch" (134). In *The Healers* when the young participants of the ritual games are introduced, the black skin of the handsome
young men is contrasted with the giant Buntui’s light-skin and physical awkwardness. The body of a tall and handsome youth is economically built. “His skin was smooth and black” (Healers 8). Another youth is slender and not as tall as the giant. “His skin was black, with a suggestion of depth and coolness in its blackness” (Healers 10). In contrast Buntui “was light-skinned. His skin had a reddish colour. . . . Two things stood out about this one: his ugliness and his size” (Healers 9).

Similarly in *Petals of Blood* there are beautiful women like “Nyangendo of the famous gap in her upper teeth and Nyaguthii of the black gums and breasts . . .” (121). In *Devil on the Cross* Wariinga is the black beauty who has “dark eyes radiating the light of an inner courage . . .” (218). In contrast Wariinga notes that the delegates from foreign countries, who attend the Devil’s Feast, have red skin “like the skin of a black person who has been scalded with boiling water or who has burned himself with acid creams” (Devil 91). The devil who appears in Wariinga’s vision is not black, but red. “His skin was red, like that of a pig” (Devil 13).

In *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah inverts the binarism of good/evil in the colonial relations. He pictures everything indigenous as virtue and everything alien as vice. The predators as well as the destroyers have low morals and their value systems are antagonistic to ‘the way’ of the
people. The predators engage in “decayed pleasures” (Seasons 19). They are hypocrites who pretend to be pious. Ramadan is their season of hypocritical self-denial. “After a month of public piety and abstinence the predators again threw themselves into their accustomed orgies of food, of drugs and of sex” (Seasons 20). “Fraud they call intelligence” (Seasons 40) and robbery with force is their way of life. They are lazy. They reap where others sow. They use violence to get their things done. “They plant nothing. They know but one harvest: rape” (Seasons 40). Their god is a “servant using god” and they are “sharp-clawed desert beasts” (Seasons 40).

The white destroyers are also equally bad. Their name itself is their vocation. “They are pretenders. They are liars” (Seasons 98). Their theology is mad and their god is a slave-owner god. They know nothing of the way of reciprocity of the people. Instead they follow their way of taking without giving. They want land to be cut off from the rest and on this cut off land they want to plant seeds. But as they are not accustomed to doing any work, they want men to work for them. Thus Armah presents the Arab predators and the European destroyers as the embodiment of all that is evil.

In Why Are We So Blest? Armah inverts the binarism of the immaculate white woman/the libidinous black woman and uses it as a powerful counter-discursive strategy. The
colonial discourse right from the period of Renaissance has tried to present the non-white woman as a symbol of deviant femininity and insatiable sexuality. The cultural Other is charged with deviant sexuality in Renaissance travel writings, thereby placing them at the bottom of the cultural ladder. Black women have fascinated white males because of their aggressive sexuality and libidinous nature. The European travellers had returned home with myths of deviant femininity and placed them in circulation to differentiate European sexual behaviour from its cultural Other. The dark races were pictured as immoral, promiscuous, libidinous and always yearning for white contact. "By the nineteenth century the sexuality of the black, both male and female, becomes an icon for deviant sexuality in general (Gilman 228).

Calvin Hernton, a black American poet and sociologist in his book _Sex and Racism in America_ dwells on how sex plays a key role in the racial relations between whites and blacks in America. The sexual relations are perverted because it is linked to race and power. Hernton traces its origin to the American South and its slave-owning system. This inhuman and exploitative system needed a justification and the easiest way was to dehumanize the slave by attributing aggressive sexuality to him and thereby picturing him as a threat to the pure white woman. Consequently sacred white womanhood emerged in the American
South "as an immaculate mythology to glorify an otherwise indecent society" (Hernton 24). Black male became a synonym for sexual aggression of white female. So the concern of the white male was to protect his immaculate white female from the aggressive black male. At the same time the white female had a fascination for the black male who was a stereotype of excessive sex potential and she was agitated over the white male's fascination for the black female. So there came up a situation in which the white woman "did not actually lynch and castrate Negroes herself, but she permitted her men to do so in her name" (Hernton 26).

Armah subverts this myth of the immaculate white woman in *Why Are We So Blest?* He presents the white woman as a symbol of frigidity, perversion and sexual fantasy. The novel has been the result of Armah's American experience which he has treated small-scale in his story "Contact" (1965). The experiences of the hero of the novel, Modin, are analogous to that of Armah. Modin Dofu is a Ghanaian scholar who arrives on a scholarship for his higher studies at Harvard. On his arrival Naita, the black American Secretary of Mr. Scott, warns him of the whites' assumptions of the blacks and advises him to be careful in his relations with the whites.

The white scholars regard Modin as an unusually intelligent student, an exception. They suggest that he is
an exceptionally intelligent student though he belongs to a race of inferior creatures. Their opinion is in keeping with the attitude of the whites towards the exceptionally intelligent natives in colonial fiction. The native’s exceptional potentialities are considered “momentary aberrations that will inevitably subside and return him to his innate, inhuman barbarity” (JanMohamed 88).

Immediately after his arrival, Modin faces the racial insults from the members of the African Committee, especially from Professor Jefferson under whom he agrees to study. Soon Modin finds it difficult to identify himself with the alien culture. His separation from his tribal community through education and his inability to cope with the new situation leads to Modin’s alienation. He becomes an almost invisible nonentity in the midst of the whites. Modin says:

I should have stopped going to lectures long ago. They all form a part of a ritual celebrating a tradition called great because it is European, Western, white. The triumphant assumption of a superior community underlies them all, an assumption designed to reduce us to invisibility while magnifying whiteness. (Blest 31)

Modin’s alienation leads him to the sex-traps of white women. Naita has earlier warned him that friendship between the blacks and whites is not possible.
Mrs. Jefferson, the wife of Modin's professor, shows unusual interest in him. This leads to their sexual contacts which leads to Mr. Jefferson stabbing him and Modin landing in a hospital with multiple injuries. Later he meets Aimee, a white woman, in a psychological lab. Aimee shows great concern for Modin and draws him gradually to her trap.

Aimee's love for Modin has been a manifestation of her love for the exotic and strange. She loves Africa and Africans. In Africa, the continent, she finds a space for her adventures and in the African she finds a race for her sex-adventures. As Derek Wright says in "Requiem for Revolution: Race-Sex Archetypes in Two African Novels," Aimee loves Africa for its "special animal vitality and extraordinary sexual prowess" (63). In her first contact Aimee finds Modin as just another male. But soon she uses her fantasy to convert Modin into a black servant boy. In the sexual fantasy she imagines herself as the wife of Kapitan Reitsch and Modin as her servant boy Mwangi. In the sex-fantasy Aimee seduces the handsome Mwangi when her husband is in the forest. She needs such fantasies to free herself from frigidity and to regain her womanliness and her normal self. Thus Armah pictures Aimee as the specimen of a white woman longing for the inordinate sex-potential of a black male. For Aimee, Modin's sex-prowess is at her disposal.
Aimee represents the West’s search for the exotic in black Africa. Aimee is in love with the bizarre and strange. She is led by an intoxicating desire to find new sensations through new experiences. This encourages her to undergo the test in the psycho-lab where she meets Modin. Her search for excitement and stimulation results in her decision to take part in the revolutionary struggle. For her revolution is an adventure sport and she uses it as a façade for her perverted sexual urge. In the company of Modin she leaves America and we meet the two in the office of the People’s Union of Congheria based in Laccryville. But even after a long stay, they are not allowed to join the forces of revolution. Aimee decides to return to America. She leads Modin across a desert where they are picked by the French army men who are on patrol in a jeep. They tie Modin to the back of the jeep, undress him and arouse him in order to moisten Aimee. They rape Aimee and cut Modin’s male organ. Aimee kisses Modin and drinks the blood spurting out from Modin’s wound. The men untie Modin and leave him to die in the desert and drive Aimee back to within sight of the town.

Armah uses the career of Aimee in the novel to subvert the myth of whites’ superiority in morals. Aimee’s moral depravity reaches its climax in the desert scene. When Modin is carried in the jeep to be murdered, Aimee expresses her freedom and happiness for being in the open
air. "The desert was open. A lot of space. I forgot the situation I was in. There was freedom out there. It made me happy to be here" (Blest 284). Derek Wright regards the death scene in the desert as an allegory of the white world's perverse siphoning of Africa's energies. He says: ". . . Aimee, as malevolent American priestess, erotically prepares the sacrificial victim and then catches his blood" ("Requiem" 62). In this ritual castration, the life blood of Africa flows to satisfy the lust of the white female world. Aimee is the young misfit white woman who needs not a Negro, but a nigger--a monster. In the novel the last word of racial prejudice coming out from Aimee is "nigger" which she uses against Solo when he refuses to give her Modin's notebook. Thus Aimee fits into the class of misfit white women who "are expert users of their sexuality as an instrument of power . . ." (Frederiksen 46). O. S. Ogede comments:

Aimee Reitsch's career illustrates the motif of whites' undimining view of the Black man as a sex machine, a variation of the older myths of Africans as savages whose actualization constitutes a violence that deprives the African of dignity and self-assertion. ("Ayi Kwei Armah" 60)

So both the white women, Aimee and Mrs. Jefferson, are stereotypes of sexual perversity. Both are equally
destructive. They lure Modin to their sex/death traps. If one is frigid, the other is a nymphomaniac. They both seduce Modin and collaborate to punish him. Mrs. Jefferson tells her husband of their affair and consequently he stabs Modin. Aimee co-operates in the castration of the black male after her use. Arnah pictures Mrs. Jefferson as a white woman going after a black man because her husband is not potent enough to meet her sexual needs. She has no qualms in seeking extra-marital relations with a student under the supervision of her husband. Aimee who is frigid needs a black male to become a true woman. The black body is a commodity which she wants to use indiscriminately. By presenting the white women as libidinous, frigid and perverse, Arnah subverts the myth of the immaculate white woman. Arnah thus attacks the myth-making process of the West by offering a brilliant counter-myth.

The treatment of Modin’s relations with women reverses the usual white stereotype which opposes a purely physical black virility to the greater spirituality of whites. Here it is the whites who, having crushed their own spirit under a crude physicality, are turning their sexual rapacity on the souls of blacks. (Booth 57)

Thus by inverting the binarism of the immaculate white woman/libidinous black woman, Arnah is trying to save his people from some of their sins at birth. He is appealing
for the “eradication of the prejudice, social scorn, xenophobia, and ignorance which have stood for long in the way of attaining inter-racial harmony” (Ogede, “Ayi Kwei Armah” 64).

Thus Armah and Ngugi reverse the binarisms of colonial discourse as a counter-discursive strategy. They are trying to create fissures in the seamless expanse of the colonial discourse and to check the unchallenged and devastating flow of racial prejudice. Richard Terdiman says that the counter-discursive is protodialectical. “It asserts alternative structures for conceiving the real in the expectation--however naively hopeful--that their intervention will induce some fissure or slippage in the apparent seamlessness and solidity of the dominant” (199). As postcolonial counter-discourse, the novels of Armah and Ngugi intervene to subvert the binary logic of imperial discourse and thereby attempt to decolonize the minds of their people.

2. Reclamation of History

The history of Africa has been a subject of scholarly debate over the years since the modern European colonization of the continent. It has been asked whether Africa can claim a past, a history. Kofi Awoonor says that such a question only betrays bigotry and “racist scholarship” (3). Obviously, it is the modern view of history as written document that leads to such questions.
History is not seen only in written texts and documents. It exists in various other non-documentary sources such as oral traditions, archaeology, musicology, ethnology and anthropology. Above all it is seen in a people’s way of life, their tools, institutions, religions and values. Obviously, a people who have fashioned tools and developed means of social control cannot be said to be lacking in history. Pre-colonial Africa has had fully grown institutions of social and spiritual control. City states have risen and fallen. “Religion, worship, ritual, art, and a whole way of life had been established which was distinctively African in the pure cultural and geographical sense” (Awoonor 7). So to say that Africa has no history will be tantamount to negating the founding principles of any society. It only betrays one’s ignorance or misunderstanding. Moreover, the history of Africa can be seen documented in the works of Arab and African scholars centuries before the coming of modern Europeans.

But the arrival of modern Europeans marked a significant change in Africa’s history. Colonialism which functioned as a discourse projected the image of a powerful empire and denied a history to Africa. For them Europe represented world culture against which other cultures had to be measured up. Knowledge and the transmission of truth had been under their control and they manipulated it for specific advantages. So after appropriating the control
and dissemination of knowledge through discursive apparatuses, the colonialists created a past for the natives because dehistoricizing Africa was a means for dehumanizing the natives which justified the colonial presence under the guise of the 'civilizing mission.' The process was easy in the absence of a proper written history. Consequently there was a downright denial of Africa's past and the history of Africa came to the modern African refracted through the colonial discourse. There was, of course, a cunning selection of negative information and stereotyping. As Armah says in "The Caliban Complex," what the African came to know of his continent came from "a judicious selection of negative misinformation, savagery, wars, famine, drought, the jungle and the tribe" (521). Thus the history which the colonialist wrote was not the history of the country which he plundered "but the history of his own nation in regard to all that she skims off, all that she violates and starves" (Wretched 40).

It is this falsified history, this distorted reality which the postcolonial writers are trying to reclaim, to re-evaluate. The writers are addressing their works to victims of historical manipulation in order to help them regain belief in themselves. They challenge the "deliberate propagation of untruths by others, both for racist motives and to disguise their incapacity to penetrate the complex verities of black existence" (Soyinka 107). They are
engaged in an imaginative return to the past for the restoration of truth. This will help their people sort out their strengths and bank on them for creating a better future. Lewis Nkosi says that the African has discovered that his history has been tactfully veiled in a shroud of mystery because if it came out that the Africans also had a culture and poetry, it would establish their humanity and their right for a fair deal. "It is against this background of appalling ignorance about himself, his history and his particular mould of personality, that the African is reacting so violently" (Nkosi 111). So postcolonial African writers regard colonization as a planned attack on Africa’s long history. They challenge received history and attempt a reshaping of the historical experience in the search for positive alternatives to existing reality. Edward Said comments in *Culture and Imperialism*:

> [O]nly recently have Westerners become aware that what they have to say about the history and the cultures of ‘subordinate’ peoples is challengeable by the people themselves, people who a few years back were simply incorporated, culture, land, history, and all, into the great Western empires, and their disciplinary discourses. (235)

Reclamation of history is used by Armah and Ngugi as a counter-discursive strategy. Armah wants to rewrite “the truncated tales” (*Seasons* 1) of his peoples’ origins
because he knows that they "are not a people of yesterday" (Seasons 1). Ngugi seeks answers to the various unanswered questions about Africa's past. He is unhappy that the present day African historians, "following on similar theories yarned out by defenders of imperialism" (Petals 67) insist that their history begins with modern European colonization of Africa. He asks what happened to "all the Kenyan people who used to trade with China, India, Arabia long before Vasco da Gama came to the scene . . .?" (Petals 67). He wants to prove that the history of Kenya before colonialism was not "one of the wanderlust and pointless warfare between peoples" (Petals 199). Armah and Ngugi do not believe in a "blind groping backwards along any nostalgic road" (Seasons 149) as the writers and intellectuals did during the cultural nationalist phase. Instead they are working out better directions for the future. They use the past in decolonizing the minds of their people from the present discursive bondage. They use the past "with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope" (Wretched 187).

Ngugi and Armah's challenge of Western construction of Africa's past has particular valency when we consider that there is no specific history as an objective, impartial representation of truth. History is a record or a remembrance of a past through a process of selection and exclusion. There may be many versions of the historical
truth. It is the West’s notion of claiming the history they got written as the only source material to know of the intricate social dynamics of an African past, that the writers are challenging. As Munira asks, “... how can one truly vouch for the truth of a past sequence of events?” (Petals 191). After all, Africa “did not have one but several pasts which were in perpetual struggle” (Petals 214). So the writers attempt to reclaim a real and living history as opposed to the official history which Europe made for them. They make a clear demarcation between the two modes of historical representation--the Western master narratives and the oral expression of historical facts. And by placing a higher premium on oral expressions, the passing down of truths through legends and stories, the writers challenge the specificity and infallibility of history. Moreover, they challenge the Western tendency to consider the history of the colonial period alone as the history of Africa. Derek Wright says about Two Thousand Seasons:

The prologue’s rhetoric of fragmentation and dismemberment issues a reminder that it is the fragmented part of Africa’s history--the colonial period which cut the continent off from its past--that, until recently, has alone constituted ‘African history’ in Western study. (“Orality” 96).
Racial Memory as History

As written history is not of much importance to Africa, Ngugi and Armah use racial memory as a narrative device to revoke the past. In their novels the collective memory of the people becomes a repertory of facts that provide a glimpse into the history of their peoples. They use the legends passed from generation to generation by the poets and story-tellers of their tribes. Their use of creation myths and prophetic legends in their novels leaves no doubt regarding the timeless memory of the existence of their peoples and their struggles across the continent.

In *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah depends on the "unending stream" of a people's remembrance (1). The collective voice in the novel revokes the past using legends and folk tales. The history of the whole black race is compressed in the novel as in an oral tale. Armah uses two legendary sources. The first is that the Akans of Ghana migrated to their present coastal settlements from the medieval African Kingdom of Ghana on the border of the Sahara. The second legend is that of Anoa, the young Akan priestess, who had the power of seeing visions of future. She prophesied two thousand seasons of suffering to her people. "Two thousand seasons: a thousand you will spend descending into abysses that would stop your heart and break your mind merely to contemplate.... Two thousand seasons: a thousand dry, a thousand moist'" (*Seasons* 16). She prophesied suffering to
her people as they refused to listen to her warning. The people were moving away from their 'way' of reciprocity and following the path of generosity in their attitude to the predators who came from the desert.

The Arab predators came to the beautiful land of Anoa as beggars seeking hospitality. The people pitied them and gave them sustenance as it was their 'way.' They gave generously forgetting their 'way' of reciprocity. Soon the predators grew stronger and "in the fullness of their strength turned sudden predators against an easy host" (Seasons 19). The predators grew powerful. They made the native women their playthings and made a few men into willing slaves known as 'askari zombis.' These slaves helped the predators to put down native resistance. One night the native women joined hands and killed the predators during their sexual orgies.

When the predators came the second time, they came with force and guile. They got "a brood of men ready to be tools of their purpose" (Seasons 33). This time they brought "a religion to smash the feeblest minds" (Seasons 33) among the natives and to turn them into tools against the people of Anoa. After much consideration the people decided to leave their original home. They started their epic journey in search of a new home. They moved through the savannahs and through the rain forests. Finally they reached a fertile land, full of vegetation, water and
animals. But by this time the people had changed due to the influence of the predators. Their traditional outlook changed. The old ‘way’ of reciprocity was forgotten except by a few rememberers. There grew in the people a hunger for privilege and social recognition. Thus selfishness and divisiveness befell the people.

The degeneration of the old ‘way’ made the people vulnerable to the attack of the white destroyers who came from the sea with guns and fire arms. The destroyers were very cunning. They came with gifts for the King Koranche who soon became their stooge. The destroyers also brought a new religion to subjugate the people. The people lost their liberty. Their suffering multiplied. Any form of resistance was subdued with force. The King collaborated in shipping his people to the destroyers’ land. ‘The way’ of the people was totally lost except to a few ‘fundis’ and their disciples. The corruption and degeneration reached its climax when a group of Anoa’s youth in the course of their initiation rites were tricked into the white destroyers slave-ships with the connivance of the King.

In Fragments Armah uses Naana as a rememberer to invoke a past with all its glories. ‘Naana’ is the singular for ‘Nananom’ which means ancestors in the Akan language. So Naana is the voice of the elders and the ancestors and she functions as a link between the past and the present. Through her Armah tries to recapture the ethos of the past
and to contrast it with the materialism of the present. Through the monologues and conversations of Naana, Armah asserts the superiority of a lost order. Naana represents the spirituality of the old as opposed to the materialism of the present represented by Baako’s mother and his sister, Araba. Naana’s is “the seeing blind eye as opposed to the blind seeing eyes that surround her” (Peterson 57).

Naana is the living elder who has witnessed the ideal past. She laments the erosion of old values due to the onslaught of an alien system. When the young around her make a mockery of ancient customs, Naana warns them of the displeasure of the ancestors. Foli, Baako’s uncle, makes a mockery of the old custom of pouring libation for ancestors, seeking their protection. He drinks the wine meant for ancestral libation on the occasion of Baako’s journey to America. In a similar fashion Korankye cheats the ancestors during the out-dooring ceremony of Araba’s child. Naana accuses Baako for allowing his mother and his sister to conduct the out-dooring ceremony before the seventh day. The out-dooring ceremony symbolizes a child breaking its ties with the spirit world. The Akans believe that only after seven days a child severs its tie with the ancestors under whose protection it is till the seventh day. But Baako’s mother and sister do the ceremony on the fifth day to match the pay day. According to them an out-dooring ceremony far away from the pay day is not its
money's worth because during the ceremony, the near and
dear of the child compete with one another offering fat
cash-gifts. According to Naana, "... the child is only a
traveler [sic] between the world of spirits and this one of
heavy flesh'" (Fragments 139). So she warns Baako of dire
consequences. And the child dies during the out-dooring
ceremony. Thus by bringing the past through Naana, Armah
presents the integrity of the old customs and questions the
ways in which they are abused in the present. He recaptures
the history of his people's past which lies maltreated in
historical documents.

In Petals of Blood Ngugi incorporates the legend of
Ndemi as remembered by the old woman Nyakinyua. During the
epic march of the peasants to Nairobi, Nyakinyua narrates
the legend in which the glories of Old Illmorog have been
revoked. Illmorog has not always been a small cluster of
mud huts. "It had had its days of glory: thriving villages
with a huge population of sturdy peasants . . . ." (Petals
120). During those days "there were no vultures in the sky
waiting for the carcasses of dead workers . . . ." (Petals
120). All had to work. Only the feeble and the young were
exempt from the common labour. The founding father of
Illmorog was Ndemi who was a herdsman. He fashioned a tool
to cut the trees and to clear the bush. He turned himself
into a peasant and experimented with different types of
plants. He became famous and people sang of him as the one
who tamed the forest and wrestled with God. Illmorog continued to prosper even after the death of Ndemi. It became a great trade centre and people came from far and near to barter goods. “Soon a settlement of skilled workers in metal, pottery and stonework grew side by side with the community of tillers” (Petals 121). Their skill attracted the Arabs and the Portuguese. This narration of the past of Illmorog by the old woman arouses a communal response from the peasants. It dawns on Karega that history can be used to evoke self-pride and solidarity in a people.

The three women in Petals of Blood who are connected to Karega at various stages of the story represent the past (Nyakinyua), the present (Wanja) and the future (Akinyi). Ngugi hints that there is a need for interaction among the three—the first helping the second to shape the third. Karega says:

'I mean we must not preserve our past as a museum: rather, we must study it critically, without illusions, and see what lessons we can draw from it in today’s battlefield of the future and the present. But to worship it—no.’ (Petals 323)

So the old rememberers like Naana and Nyakinyua are vital links that connect the present to the past. They are the agents of cultural transmission and sources of history.
They are the makers of tomorrow because a people who are ignorant of their past cannot claim a future.

Re-presentation of Historical Episodes

A very important concern of Ngugi and Armah is the re-presentation of historical episodes in their proper perspective. Many historical incidents have been misrepresented in the colonial history to the advantage of the empire. So the novelists attempt a re-evaluation of the colonial versions of these events. The major historical event that permeates the novels and essays of Ngugi is the Mau Mau War of Independence. This historic liberation struggle has been misrepresented by the colonial government and the British historians as a Gikuyu peasant revolt which lacked an all-Kenya base. It has been propagated as an act of violence by a group of blood thirsty terrorists. The Kenyans during and after the struggle have tried to put the movement in the right perspective and Ngugi tries to do it through his novels.

Kenya, unlike other colonies in Africa, had to face the problem of settlers from Europe, Asia and South Africa. So land was a key factor in Kenya's struggle for independence. Colonization of Kenya began towards the end of the nineteenth century when a Royal Charter for Trade within the East African Protectorate was granted to the East African Trading Company. Later when the company withdrew, the British government took over the control. A
Commissioner was appointed for the protectorate. With the coming of the British ex-soldiers after the world war and the white settler-farmers, the land of the Kenyans was taken away from them and many of them became squatters on their own lands. Though resistance against the colonial government began, it was only sporadic and was not planned properly.

The Kenyans who returned from Europe after the Second World War, after meeting the white man in his home, infused fresh blood into the resistance campaigns. They knew that the whites were not insurmountable. Bildad Kaggia, an ex-service man and one of the leaders of the Kenyan National Liberation Movement, says in *Roots of Freedom* that they could no longer accept that a white man was better than an African. “This generally pervasive feeling brought about the formation of organisations like the ’40 group’ which was mainly made up of ex-servicemen” (66). The independence of India also inspired the Kenyans. There came up a number of strikes and the radicals among the Kenyans decided to wage a battle for the freedom of Kenya and it reached a violent phase between 1952-57. As the movement gathered momentum, the government used harsh measures to suppress it and let loose false propaganda that the Mau Mau was a movement led by a fraction of Kenyans who were blood-thirsty. The government let loose its repressive machinery also, killing about ten thousand Africans during
the emergency alone and detaining over eight thousand people in various camps. J. M. Kariuki, a detainee at the Manyani camp, says in *Mau Mau Detainee* that 'Manyani' is a word deeply entrenched in the Kenyan languages "and no one hopes to understand the present temper of Kenya African politics without some awareness of the life led by our 8,000 detainees during those emergency years (27). But despite the use of the military and the weapons, the government could not defeat the struggle.

In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi tries to recapture the Mau Mau in its true perspective as the liberation movement unparalleled in the history of Africa. He does this through a series of flashbacks in the lives of his principal characters—Mugo, Kihika, Gikonyo and Mumbi. Ngugi tries to answer his own questions in the preface to *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*:

Had this heroic peasant armed struggle against the British Forces of occupation been adequately treated in our literature? Why was Kenyan Literature on the whole so submissive and hardly depicted the people, the masses, as capable of making and changing history? (n. pag.)

Ngugi tries to prove that the Mau Mau was not a terrorist movement, it was a war for land, the fighters were forced to take up arms out of frustration and untold suffering was inflicted on the innocent civilians.
Ngugi disproves the colonial propaganda that Mau Mau was a terrorist movement, through the raid on Thabai by the government troops in which deaf and dumb Gitogo was killed. One morning the people of Thabai woke up and found themselves ringed round by black and white soldiers carrying guns. Frightened people hid themselves behind sacks and locked themselves in latrines. Gitogo ran to a shop. The soldiers were leading the people into the market place for screening. Gitogo remembered his aged mother sitting alone in the hut. He rushed out through the back door of the shop. A white soldier asked him to stop. But he ran. “Something hit him at the back. He raised his arms in the air. He fell on his stomach. Apparently the bullet had touched his heart. The soldier left his place. Another Mau Mau terrorist had been shot dead” (Grain 6). Ngugi hints that innocent civilians like Gitogo were killed and written off as Mau Mau terrorists.

The scene where Kihika meets Mugo after killing Robson—the District Officer—shows that the freedom fighters are not murderers. Kihika comes to Mugo’s hut. Mugo is frightened that he will be caught for hiding a terrorist. “‘Do you want to kill me? I have done nothing,’ Mugo appealed . . .” (Grains 165). Kihika replies: “‘We don’t kill just anybody.’ . . . ‘We are not murderers. We are not hangmen—like Robson—killing men and women without cause or purpose’” (Grain 166). Ngugi’s message is clear. Mau Mau fighters took to arms as a last resort.
Ngugi pictures how the acquisition of land by the white settlers and missionaries was the starting point of all the troubles. Mugo remembers how the white man came with sugar-coated words and touching humility, how he converted a few to a new faith and how he acquired more land to meet the growing needs of his position. The elders of the land protested. "They looked beyond the laughing face of the whiteman and suddenly saw a long line of other red strangers who carried, not the Bible, but the sword" (Grain 12).

How the suppression of the struggle led to untold miseries to the civilian population is illustrated through the story of Gikonyo and Mumbi. Mumbi remembers how her mother’s hut and her own hut have been burned down. How the villagers mostly women, children and the old have been forced to dig trenches. Mumbi remembers: "We were prisoners in the village, and the soldiers had built their camps all round to prevent any escape. We went without food. The cry of children was terrible to hear’’ (Grain 126). Thus Ngugi tries to rewrite the history of the Mau Mau with the skilful use of flashbacks.

The Healers is the only novel of Armah subtitled, “An Historical Novel.” In it Armah offers a fictional treatment to a historical episode which has been misrepresented by European historians. For them the Second Asante War (1873-74) was only a minor military operation of the
British to annex the territory of a headstrong and war-like people. It was only an insignificant aftermath of the rapid colonial expansion in which the mighty British Empire faced only little resistance from the natives. The defeat, therefore, was inevitable. It was the "irresistible impact of a technically superior force on a bewildered but headstrong people stuck in a cultural backwater" (Fraser 85). In *The Healers* Armah asserts that the Asante resisted the British powers and that the Asante are not a war-like people. The causes of their defeat lie elsewhere.

Armah challenges the prevailing notion that the Asante were helpless when faced with the British army. Asamoa Nkwanta, the military general, formulated a plan to resist the army. His plan was that his army would retreat to the deep forest as a trap for the white army. Then the warriors of Juaben led by Asafo Adjei would circle round behind the whites. But the general’s well-planned strategy failed because the Juaben continent did not co-operate. The general waited for the sound of gun shots. "But from behind the white lines no sound came to reassure his still grieving soul, and he saw no sign" (*Healers* 284). Now the only way for the Asante warriors was to retreat. All these happened because the royals, in the absence of the general, had changed the war strategy. The Queen Mother had persuaded the King to yield to the British because she made the King believe that if Asamoa Nkwanta’s plan to resist the whites succeeded, there would be nothing to stop him from claiming the throne.
The British could conquer the Asante mainly due to the support of the Fantse chiefs who gave black soldiers to fight in the forests and the labourers to build the roads for the army to march. The Asante and the Fantse were constantly at war and the Fantse chiefs were desperately in need of white support to defend themselves against the mighty Asante. But for the support of the chiefs, the British should not have marched an army to the forest to meet the Asante. During the discussion among the kings of Fantse who meet in King Ata’s palace after the durbar for the chiefs of Fanteland, organized by the newly appointed British Commander Sir Garnet Wolseley, King Ata says: “‘The whites fear the rains more than they fear the Asante army’” (Healers 213). The King reminds the others what happened ten years ago when the British sent an army to Praso to frighten the Asante King: “‘The army came back half dead. It hadn’t fought any battles, except against the rains and the diseases that came with them’” (Healers 213). So the fall of the Asante was possible only because of the Fantse Kings sent their men to fight in the forests.

In order to disprove that the Asante are a war-like people, Armah develops the character of Asamoa Nkwanta with great artistic skill. Asamoa Nkwanta is a military general of vast experience who has turned out to be a pacifist. In order to safeguard their territory, the Asante put on a fighting posture. But there exists a deep division between
the lovers of peace and lovers of war and the general becomes the spokesmen of the peace-lovers. So Armah counters all the simplistic notions of the Asante as a proud, obstinate and war-like people by his skillful portrayal of a people "sorely divided on the crucial issue as to whether or not to fight the British" (Fraser 88).

In The Healers Armah portrays the real causes of the disintegration of the Asante empire and disproves the colonial version. "Despite a superficial solidarity it is gradually revealed as a culture barely at ease with itself" (Fraser 86). As the society puts on a fighting posture to defend itself, it places a high premium on martial arts and individual excellence. The novel opens with a series of ritual games which are mainly meant for testing physical strength and endurance. The spiritual and deeper qualities of the mind are left out. In the past, the games were rituals to bring together the people of Esuano and were celebrations of the people's struggles. But in recent times they have degenerated into trials of individual strength and skill, to isolate and glorify a single person. So Densu decides to opt out to be the winner and offers the chance to Appia, the heir to the Esuano throne and decides to become a healer.

Another cause of disintegration is the excessive self-pursuit of certain members of the community who go in for material advancement for the self at the expense of the
wider community. The British at Cape Coast are busy creating divisiveness among the people using collaborators like Ababio. Noticing Densu’s skill and strength, Ababio approaches him with an offer of the kingship of Esuano, if he agrees to function at the dictates of the whites. Ababio tries to lure Densu by saying that great changes are coming. The whites will soon take the control of the land. He persuades him: “‘Those who take care to place themselves on the right side of big changes, when the big changes have taken place, become big men’” (Healers 29). But Densu rejects these offers and decides to join the process of healing his community of the diseases of death and destruction.

The character and the crimes of Ababio illustrate the moral crisis that the community is facing. Ababio decides to do away with Densu. The next day after Appia’s victory in the games, the prince is found butchered on a path leading from Esuano to the eastern forest. The body is brutally mutilated. The missing eyes and the missing muscles of the arms and legs are signs that the murder is out of jealousy. The prince’s mother Araba Jesiwa is also missing. Ababio has used Buntui, the giant, to kill Appia. Soon the rumour spreads that Densu has killed the prince out of jealousy.

Densu goes to the healers’ village to receive his early lessons on the healing profession. On his return he
is ambushed by Ababio and his men and imprisoned in a house. At the trial where all the suspects have to drink the poison bark, Anan, a friend of Densu, rescues him. Densu returns to the healers’ village where he meets Araba Jesiwa who is fully paralysed and unable to speak. The shock of the murder of Appia which she has witnessed has paralysed her. Damfo, the master healer, cures her slowly. Towards the end of the novel, after the defeat of the Asante army, Densu returns to Esuano to expose the crimes of Ababio who is the king now. Ababio arranges a trial for Densu with a white judge. But the trial leads to an unexpected end when Araba Jesiwa appears to give evidence. The white judge sends Ababio to Cape Coast for a trial. Armah uses the machinations of Ababio to show that the community’s hold on the individual is losing and selfishness and materialism are gradually disintegrating the community. So the defeat of the Asante is more of their own making than by the technological power of the British. Armah hints that the misrepresentation of the Asante War by colonial historians can be seen as a paradigm of the historical process taking place in Africa.

The Fact of Native Resistance

A preoccupation with Ngugi and Armah is challenging the imperial lie that Europe had to face only little resistance from the natives during the days of colonial expansion and that superiority of technology and
technological power made it easy for the empire to annex native territories. Ngugi and Armah try to disprove that the Africans were docile victims of the imperial assault. In the preface to The Trial of Dedan Kimathi Ngugi says:

Our historians, our political scientists, and even some of our literary figures, were too busy spewing out, elaborating and trying to document the same colonial myths which had it that Kenyan people... readily accommodated themselves to the British forces of occupation! (n. pag.)

So Ngugi and Armah portray not only how their people were exploited but also how they resisted exploitation. This project has a therapeutic value as it suggests that the Africans can learn from their past and work out strategies for resisting neo-colonial cultural colonization.

The novels of Ngugi rest on the framework of history. They are explorations into the history of Kenya’s resistance to imperialism through the medium of fiction. There is a chronological scheme in Ngugi’s novels, starting with The River Between (1965) which portrays the Gikuyu land during the twenties and thirties. Weep Not Child (1964) begins fifteen years after by 1945 and spans over for a period of ten years. A Grain of Wheat (1967) concerns the independence days and recaptures the Mau Mau through flashbacks. These three novels picture Kenya’s resistance to colonialism till the day of independence.
The events in *The River Between* happen after the formation in nineteen twenty-one of Harry Thuku’s Young Gikuyu Association and the Gikuyu Central Association. The clash between the traditionalists and the Christians following the Presbyterian Mission’s order banning Christians from practising female circumcision finds a fictional treatment in the novel. Consequent upon this clash of values, independent churches were founded in Kenya. The Gikuyu Independent Schools Association started running schools. In *The River Between* Ngugi portrays the Gikuyu resistance to colonialism and Christianity and their struggle for cultural independence at a time of political slavery. The ‘kiama’ is committed to maintaining the cultural purity of the tribe and at the same time bent on fighting for the land. The novel also deals with the problem of leadership and the consequent failure to unite the people against the powers of colonialism.

*Weep Not Child* continues the history of resistance where *The River Between* stops. The events start after the return of the Kenyans who fought in the Second World War and Kenyatta’s return from England. The novel has the Mau Mau in its background. The relationship between Ngotho and Howlands pictures a typical situation in colonial Kenya. Ngotho works on his own land as a squatter because his ‘shamba’ has been unlawfully taken away by settler Howlands. Ngotho represents the Gikuyu protest against the
forceful taking of land which is a key factor in tribal unity. It is land that links the living and the dead. Ngotho’s passivity may have provoked his son Boro, but he is more concerned with the loss than his son. “And yet he [Ngotho] felt the loss of the land even more keenly than Boro, for to him it was a spiritual loss” (Weep 84). It was the issue of land that led to the Mau Mau liberation war. So Ngugi is grafting into his fiction the resistance of the Kenyans to the unlawful taking of their land. “Ngugi is not simply recording and fictionalizing but recreating and re-interpreting history...” (Ikiddeh 213).

In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngugi uses the exploits of Young Kihika to bring out the spirit of Gikuyu resistance to the forceful and unlawful grabbing of land from its real owners to rehabilitate white ex-soldiers and settler-farmers. Kihika is a fighting leader and pursuing his exploits Ngugi re-writes the history of the Mau Mau. The untold miseries of the civilians in the detention camps, the courageous deeds of children and women working as carriers to the forest fighters and the dare-devil exploits of the young men are all attempts of Ngugi to portray the history of Kenya’s resistance to colonialism.

In *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah shows how the black races resisted and survived the onslaught of the predators and the destroyers. The novel is a document of the migrations and struggles of the black races and their
ultimate victory over all forms of oppression. It tells of a people being exploited and the exploited heroically resisting the exploitation. It also tells of a few making sacrifices for the community. As Peter Nazareth says in *The Third World Writer, His Social Responsibility* the novel shows the spirit of resistance of the people, the determination to survive as a people (26). *The Healers* also deals with the heroic resistance put up by the Asante against the British powers.

Ngugi and Armah admit that the heroic resistance put up by their people at different stages against colonialism could not succeed as expected because of the disunity among the blacks and the machinations of the native collaborators. In *Petals of Blood* the visionary seers who had witnessed the ravages of crime and greed in the name of civilization and witnessed the resistance carried out by the people said that the blacks must unite to resist oppression.

They [the seers] had seen that the weakness of the resistance lay not in the lack of will or determination or weapons but in the African people's toleration of being divided into regions and tongues and dialects according to the wishes of former masters, and they cried: Africa must unite. (*Petals* 262)
The major opposition to all anti-colonial campaigns came from the natives themselves.

The women in Two Thousand Seasons who kill the predators in the course of their sexual orgies are brutally attacked and killed by the 'askaris.' "Of our women fifteen died that night, murdered by stupefied askaris" (Seasons 25). The cry of the women brings everybody running from the town, even the old. The oldest woman Nundi who is the grandmother of the leader of the 'askaris' asks:

'But for whom are you fighting still?... Son of my daughter, whose work are you doing? Look. Those who turned you killer, where are they? Look at them. That should have been your work: killing your people's killers, destroying your people's destroyers. You did not do it, the work of your life.' (Seasons 25)

The destroyers make the people of Anoa slaves because the chiefs and kings help the whites. "'No one sold us but our chiefs and their hangers-on'" (Seasons 146).

Armah presents the rivalry between the Asante and the Fantse in The Healers as a metaphor of the disunity and rivalry that exist in the African societies. By setting one tribe against the other the British keep under restraint all blacks. The whites discover that it is easy to entice the blacks to fight against the blacks. Glover says: "'Give a blackman gifts... and his soul belongs to
you. He and his people will fight for you'" (Healers 259). The whites exploit this disunity and rivalry between Asante and the Fantse in subduing and disintegrating the Asante Empire. Damfo says that "...the royals of Asante do not wish the unity of black people..." (Healers 267). The Fantse are happy to hear that the whites will help them to "drive away the Asante armies and defeat them thoroughly, so they will never rise again’’ (Healers 201). Ababio, the traitor, tells Densu that the whites are powerful. "But they cannot control the whole land without help from people they trust. Black people they trust’’ (Healers 30).

So Armah stresses the need for black unity to resist colonialism. Damfo knows that for bringing together all the black people a long process of healing is necessary. It may take centuries because the people have lost remembrance that they belong to the same community. "If you talk to them now of the unity of all the earth’s black people they stare at you like idiots’’ (Healers 84). It is difficult to make people believe that they are "a single small fragment of one community that misfortune blew apart’’ (Healers 84). The gap has widened to such an extent that people cannot imagine such a wholeness. So a healer’s work is not limited to a small period. "A healer needs to see beyond the present and tomorrow. He needs to see years and decades ahead...’’ (Healers 84).
**Weep Not Child** shows how during the Mau Mau struggle the freedom fighters suffered due to the disunity in the village and how the home-guards did blood-work for the British. Jacobo is the black collaborator of the whiteman. Even Mr. Howlands, the whiteman for whom Jacobo works, hates him.

Mr. Howlands despised Jacobo because he was a savage. But he would use him. The very ability to set these people fighting amongst themselves instead of fighting with the white men gave him an amused satisfaction. (Weep 88)

Ngugi stresses disunity among the blacks as the cause of their present condition. Boro says: "All white people stick together. But we black people are very divided" (Weep 85). The Barber also echoes the same feeling. According to him the black people will never be united. "There must always be a traitor in our midst" (Weep 68).

So the novel along with emphasizing the need for corporate action by the community, pictures the unhappy effects of disunity in the tribe.

Ngugi shows in *A Grain of Wheat* the threat the forest fighters had to face from their own men and how their attempts could not bear fruits due to the native collaborators. In fact the novel deals with friends betraying friends. Ngugi juxtaposes the martyrdom of Kihika with the treachery of Mugo to show how the blood of
sacrifice was neutralized by the selfishness of the traitors. The whites could have done only little without the support of the blacks.

So Ngugi and Armah through their fictional treatment of history establish that Africa’s resistance to colonialism is a fact and that the cause of defeat at various stages was a hardiwork of the traitors from the fighters’ race itself. Karega sums up the truth:

‘That our people resisted European intrusion is a fact: we fought inch by inch, ridge by ridge, and it was only through the superiority of their arms and the traitorous actions of some of us that we were/defeated. That Kenya people have had a history of fighting and resistance is therefore a fact.’ (Petals 246-47)

In *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe also hints at the disunity among the members of the tribe which led to the whiteman establishing his religion, law and administration in Umuofia. When the first missionaries came, the people treated them with “light-hearted buffoonery” (Obiechina 221) and even when they started winning converts, people did not take them seriously. Soon the number of converts increased and it led to the disunity in the tribe. It was too late when people realized their mistake. A man like Okonkwo who wanted to answer the whiteman with his matchet could only mourn for the “war-like men of Umuofia, who had
so unaccountably become soft like women” (129). Obierika, Achebe’s rustic philosopher, sums up the situation: “How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us?” (124). So writers across the continent of Africa have shared the view that native disunity was the strength of the conquering alien.

Thus by retelling the ‘truncated tales’ of their people’s origin, by re-presenting historical episodes in their true perspectives and by digging deep into the causes of disintegration of the African empires, Ngugi and Armah reclaim Africa’s history and use it as a powerful counter-discursive strategy in accelerating the decolonizing process. They suggest that a dependence on Western written history alone will lead to the denigration of their people and so it is the duty of every African artist, intellectual, creative writer and historian to revalidate the historical process with a therapeutic purpose and a constructive vision.

3. Instilling Revolutionary Consciousness

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon says that independence will not come to the colonized as charity. Instead, it has to be earned through revolutionary violence. The years of colonization has drained off the self-esteem of the native and he has developed a massive inferiority feeling which can be won over by revolutionary endeavours. Violence invests the colonized with positive
and creative qualities. It binds them together as a great chain and as parts of the organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the violence they experienced earlier from the settlers. So for the native, life would spring from the rotting corpse of the settler (73). Thus violence becomes an act of emancipation, an answer to the years of subjugation. It functions as a force that would dismantle the colonial system on the one hand and offer psychic liberation to the colonized on the other. So violence is a cleansing force. "It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (Wretched 74). If during the colonial period violence can be used to fight oppression, after independence it can be used to fight poverty and underdevelopment. So genuine liberation from colonization of all kinds has to be based on the collective will of the people using violence as a redeeming principle.

Influence of Fanon is clearly seen in the novels of Ngugi and Armah who use revolutionary consciousness as a counter-discursive strategy. Both of them advocate a revolutionary restructuring of existing socio-political arrangements through collective participation. Ngugi and Armah picture revolution as a positive strategy. Ngugi says that cultural domination is a result and extension of economic and political domination and as long as a country
is culturally dominated political independence would remain meaningless. He believes that independence can only be achieved by group actions using reactionary violence. “Democracy and justice can only be achieved when the various interest groups voice their positions and fight for them” (Detained xv). Ngugi favours the use of violence if it cannot be helped. He says: “I do not condemn violence indiscriminately for the oppressed have no option but to use violence” (Homecoming 47). Armah also asserts that for a radical change revolutionary participation of not one, but all is needed.

Not one spring, not thirty, not a thousand springs will change the desert. For that change floods, the waters of the universe in unison, flowing not to coax the desert but to overwhelm it, ending its regime of death, that, not a single perishable spring, is the necessity. (Seasons xii)

Armah’s Two Thousand Seasons ends with the picture of a pioneering liberation army of twenty initiates—eleven girls and nine boys—staging a successful revolt against the white slave-traders. They rebel against King Koranche who wants the best of them, Abena, as his son, Bentum’s, wife. They come to know of the secret plans of the King and escape to the fifth grove where they receive lessons and training from the ‘fundis’, Insanusi, who lives in exile.
in the jungle. Insanusi is the most articulate of the 'fundis' and even King Koranche fears him. Insanusi is the meeting point of the wisdom of the past and the revolutionary spirit of the present. But King Koranche outwits this group of initiates who foolishly accept the King's invitation to a feast. They are tricked to get on board a white slave-ship. They are captured and are to be shipped to the land of the slave-owners. But they use their creative powers to overpower the white destroyers and the 'askaris' and escape from the ship.

Later the young revolutionaries organize an armed resistance against the white men and set free other slaves and steer the ship back to the coast. This is the beginning of the battle for the liberation of the land of Anoa. Insanusi gives further training and the young men and women make the land free of the destroyers and their puppet King, Koranche. They attack Koranche's palace, kill the 'askaris' and capture Koranche and shoot him to death.

Thus a motivated group of the young men and women inspired by high ideals succeed in their attempt to overthrow powerful enemies. Their commitment and revolutionary fervour rid their community of the destroyers. But their success was solely dependent upon their use of violence. Armah shows that the use of "rightful" violence is necessary for "a return to the straight path ahead" (Webb 36). Armah conveys the message
that revolutionary ideology alone will not bear fruits. It has to be carried out into action. The association of the "fundis" and the young militants symbolize the meeting point of ideology with action. Armah justifies violence in the struggle for liberation. He hints that if colonialism can be fought against by inculcating revolutionary consciousness and by using violence, these are imperative in any project of decolorization. "The activities of the initiates are therefore both missionary and revolutionary; in fact, they provide a blueprint for the continuing African revolution" (Palmer, Growth 236).

Earlier in the novel, during the predators' sexual orgies, the native women reward them with blood-curdling death. Hassan, Hussein, Faisal, Mohammed and many others are killed during their perverted sexual enjoyment. About fifteen native women also are killed by the 'askaris.' Thus the first attempt at a small-scale revolution is initiated by the women who have been made the sex-dolls of the predators. Armah hints that the spirit of revolution is there in the community. It needs to be tapped and channelled.

Towards the end of Why Are We So Blest? Solo reveals his awareness that revolution is the best art. He believes that Europe has destroyed Africa to create itself and America which is a growth out of Europe deepens that destruction. Solo says:
In this wreckage there is no creative art outside the destruction of the destroyers. In my people’s world, revolution would be the only art, revolutionaries the only creators. All else is part of Africa’s destruction. (Blest 231)

But for Solo his Western education disqualifies him from participating in genuine liberation struggles. Here Solo expresses his frustration and anxiety at being an outsider. He has realized that as a member of the elite “he is part of the problem he wishes to address and not its solution” (Ogede, “Ayi Kwei Arma” 63).

Revolutionary consciousness and the need for collective action find a place in all the novels of Ngugi. In Weep Not Child Ngugi recaptures the revolutionary spirit, sacrifice, selflessness and constructive use of violence of the Mau Mau heroes. He suggests that everything has to be fought and won. Ngugi believes that the Mau Mau is the cause of Kenya’s independence. Boro is Ngugi’s Mau Mau hero who fights for land. He is the son of Ngotho and the half-brother of Njoroge, the protagonist. Ngugi contrasts the spirit of revolution of Boro with Njoroge’s passivity and Ngotho’s servile attitude. Boro does not believe in the prophecy of the Gikuyu seer, Mugo, that a son of the tribe will one day lead them to deliverance from the white man. His experiences in the Second World War change his attitude to the whites and
reinforce his faith in revolution as the only means of getting back the land. He wonders: “How could these people have let the white man occupy the land without acting?” (Weep 30). He asks his father: “How can you continue working for a man who has taken your land? How can you go on serving him?’” (Weep 30).

Boro represents that section of the Kenyans who have lost faith in education as a means for liberation. Boro joins the Mau Mau militants. He becomes a hero to his fellow fighters. Boro murders Howlands—the white settler. Though the immediate provocation is a desire to avenge the death of his half-brother, the primary motive is the reclamation of land. It is an act of violence by the young generation as a reaction to the passivity of the older generation. Definitely, Ngugi’s sympathies are with the freedom fighters.

_A Grain of Wheat_ also deals with the growth of revolutionary consciousness in the Kenyans and the heroic exploits of a group of freedom fighters who use violence in their efforts to bring about a juster society. Here Kihika is Ngugi’s Mau Mau hero. Kihika was fed on the “stories of how the land was taken from black people” (Grain 73). His heart “hardened towards ‘these people,’ long before he had even encountered a white face” (Grain 73). He is a charismatic leader who is motivated by his love of truth and justice. He is a man of action who is ready to use
violence if there is no other alternative. He believes that "'a people united in faith are stronger than the bomb'" (Grain 166). He sacrifices even the woman he loves and offers himself for crucifixion because "'a few shall die that the many shall live'" (Grain 167). Once again Ngugi shows that the only option for Kenyans was resorting to guerilla war and violence.

In *Petals of Blood* the revolutionary consciousness of the oppressed leads to joint action in many instances. The students organize strikes in Siriana. The first strike has not been a success. Chui the leader and many others have been dismissed. The second strike against the Principal, Cambridge Fraudsham, demanding Africanization of the curriculum, ends in victory. Fraudsham resigns and Chui becomes the principal. Towards the end of the novel Joseph speaks of another strike being planned against Chui. At the national level the Mau Mau rebellion succeeds. Karega comes to know from Akinyi, the young girl sent by the workers to the jail to meet Karega, that a very important person in authority is shot dead in Nairobi. The killers have left a note. "'They called themselves Wakombozi—or the society of one world liberation . . . and they say it's Stanley Mathenge returned from Ethiopia to complete the war he and Kimathi started . . .'" (*Petals* 344).

Wariinga is Ngugi's young woman revolutionary in *Devil on the Cross*. She is the victim of sex-attack by elderly
upper class men. The Rich Old Man seduces her while she is in the secondary school and rejects her after pregnancy. She is miraculously rescued by Muturi from her attempt to kill herself. Then after qualifying herself from a commercial college, she gets into the job of a typist. Soon she loses it consequent upon the elderly male assault from her boss Kihara. Again she becomes the victim of a ruthless landlord. Ngugi pictures Wariinga as a silent victim of male chauvinism. But her contacts with Wangari, Muturi and Gatuiria during the Devil’s Feast make a new woman out of her. The revolutionary fervour of the workers who rally in front of the cave and the speeches made by the leaders like Muturi inspire her to join the workers in their revolt.

In the end of the novel Wariinga becomes a totally changed woman. She is no more the sex-toy of elderly men, no more a fickle-minded girl to attempt suicide. She is a confident, self-reliant automobile mechanic. And she is in love with Gatuiria. The climax of her heroism comes in Gatuiria’s house when they arrive to attend the tea party arranged by Gatuiria’s father to welcome his son and his fiancée. Gatuiria’s father turns out to be the Rich Old Man who now requests Wariinga to end her love to his son. When Wariinga asks him whether he is ready to marry her, the Rich Old Man replies: “I am a man of the Church. I just want you to be mine. I’ll find my own ways of coming
to visit you’” (Devil 253). The Rich Old Man’s words are an affront to her womanhood and Wariinga shoots him down. Once again Ngugi spills blood on the last pages of his narrative.

Ngugi reverses the role of Wariinga. In the earlier fight with the enemy she was a timid victim and she lost. But now she is a bold revolutionary conscious of her right and her might. She avenges her oppressor and declares a new social order of equality for women and also for all the oppressed classes for all days to come. Ngugi has no reservations in picturing the use of the gun in class conflicts. The Rich Old Man epitomizes capitalist greed and Wariinga’s gun symbolizes the retribution in store. Ngugi hints that a day will come when the wretched of the earth will act in concert and fight with the weapons in hand. In the novel revolution itself “becomes an alternative religion . . .” (Cook and Okenimpke 132).

Matigari is the truly revolutionary novel written by Ngugi. The protagonist, Matigari, roams the country in search of truth and justice. He drifts into a meeting organized by the Minister of Truth and Justice. Matigari confronts the Minister demanding justice for the poor. The Minister is provoked by Matigari’s defiant gesture and orders to take him to the mental hospital. While he is in the hospital it strikes Matigari that revolution alone will defeat the enemy. “It dawned on him
that one could not defeat the enemy with arms alone, but one could also not defeat the enemy with words alone. One had to have the right words; but these words had to be strengthened by the force of arms" (Matigari 131).

Matigari escapes from the hospital and rearms himself. Muriuki, the boy and Guthera, the barmaid, join him. Guthera has by now undergone a transformation in her outlook. She is now endowed with clear social orientation. She wants to contribute her share in the revolutionary social change attempted by this new found alliance of patriots who survived the war (Matigari), their children (Muriuki) and wives (Guthera). Guthera wants to change the conditions of people living like animals. She wants to be among the vanguard and not to be left behind. She says: "Matigari, stamp your feet to the rhythm and let the bullets tinkle! May our fears disappear with the staccato sound of our guns!" (Matigari 140).

Matigari decides to enter his house. The three of them pick up a Mercedes Benz and ride at great speed along the city. The entire police force in the country tries to stop Matigari from entering his house. But he gets into his house and sets fire to it. The trio drive along with the police at their heels. They reach the bank of the river. Pointing to the forests Matigari tells Muriuki and Guthera: "There in those forests and mountains we shall light the fire of our liberation. Our first independence
has been sold back to imperialism by the servants they put in power!" (Matigari 172). Thus the revolutionary spirit of the patriots, peasants, workers, youth and women burn down neo-colonialism and the comprador bourgeoisie. It is only through using violence that Matigari registers a victory for the group he represents.

The revolution and violence which the novelists picture are not limited in space. They are not concerned with a revolution that is merely communal. Their vision is pan-African and trans-national. The core-group of revolutionaries in Two Thousand Seasons include Gikuyu, Zulu, Yoruba, Igbo and Akan names. Armah hints at a pan-African army of liberation incorporating as many ethnic groups as possible. The novel "incorporates a specific, collective pan-African vision of the essential oneness of the black peoples . . ." (Webb 33). The children of Illmorog sing in their shrill voice of the trans-African highway which will take them to "all the cities of Africa, their Africa, to link hands with children of other lands . . ." (Petals 263). Ngugi recognizes that pan-Africanism is essential for the survival of black Africa. In an article entitled "As I See It: What Do We Really Mean by Neutralism," Ngugi says:

The African countries have no choice. They must either unite, or singly, sink into obscurity or insignificance in the world scene. Pan-African
unity as a strategic position for the battle for world peace should transcend personality and national sovereignty. (qtd. in Cook and Okenimpke 18)

This pan-African unity of all the ethnic groups and nations of Africa, gives way to a revolutionary union of all the workers and peasants of the Third World. So the unity he dreams of cuts across tribes, nations and continents and rests on a vision of the unity of the wretched of the world as one class. Ngugi says: "We want to create a revolutionary culture, which is not narrowly confined by the limitations of tribal traditions or national boundaries but looks outward to pan-Africa and the Third World, and the needs of man" (Homecoming 19). Ngugi, therefore, believes in the power of a people united--their power to change the world. He believes:

[A] single finger cannot kill a louse; a single log cannot make a fire last through the night; a single man, however strong, cannot build a bridge across a river; and many hands can lift a weight, however heavy. The unity of our sweat is what makes us able to change the laws of nature, able to harness them to the needs of our lives, instead of our lives remaining slaves of the laws of nature. (Devil 52)
Chapter IV

Satire As a Counter-discursive Strategy

Webster’s Third New International Dictionary defines satire as

A usually topical literary composition holding up human or individual vices, folly, abuses, or shortcomings to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other method sometimes with an intent to bring about improvement.

So satire is an instrument of social correction used by writers of all genres and all times. Satire attempts to expose individuals, groups, institutions, societies, ideas or beliefs to ridicule or contempt. It creates humour by exposing folly. Irony and wit are the most powerful weapons of satire. Another precious weapon of the satirist is comic exaggeration in which the writer attempts to interrupt and upset the original and the reader recognizes traits of the original.

Terdiman says: “Humor [sic] is intensely counter-discursive” (198). He analyses how Marx and Flaubert, “the canonical humorists of the nineteenth century” (198) have employed satire as a counter-discursive strategy to resist bourgeoisie ascendancy in nineteenth-century France. Ngugi and Armah also use satire as a counter-discursive strategy