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**AUTHORS AS SOCIAL LEADERS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE
ANALYSIS OF COUNTER NARRATIVES IN POSTCOLONIAL
AND MARGINAL LITERATURE**



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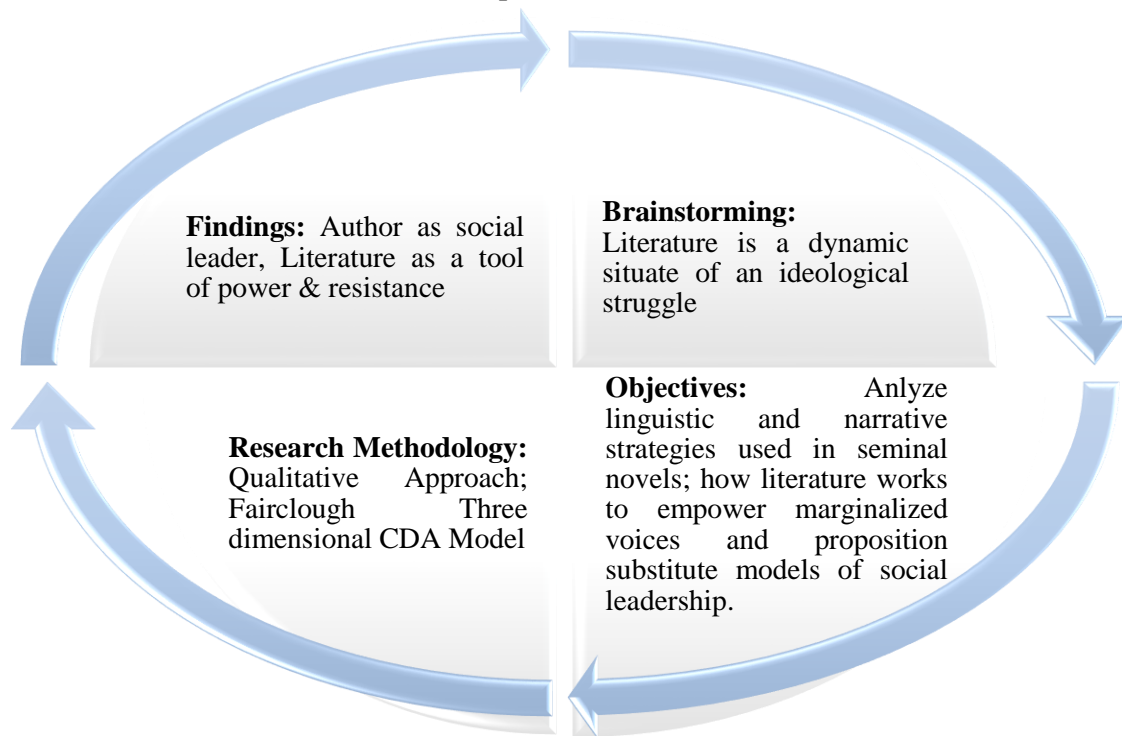


Abstract

Literature acts as a dynamic situation of an ideological struggle where leading power organizations, especially those of historical conquest and colonialism, are both propagated and challenged. The current study aims to investigate how postcolonial and marginal authors played their role in social leadership by creating potent counter-narratives that counterfeit new identities, restore the lost histories, and model alternative futures. The objectives of the study is to analyze the linguistic and narrative strategies used in seminal novels; “Things Fall Apart” by Chinua Achebe, “The God of Small Things” by Arundhati Roy, “Beloved” by Toni Morrison, and “Season of Migration to the North” by Tayab Salih was examined to notice that how these colonial literature works to empower marginalized voices and proposition substitute models of social leadership. This study adopt qualitative approach, as methodology used Norman Fairclough’s three dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework. This consist of describing key literary elements such as metaphor and narrative structure elucidating their discursive process, and read between the lines their role within wide social practices of power and resistance. Findings of the study showed that authors played their role as an agent of “linguistic treason” by integrating local linguistic configurations into English, using language as a direct tool of resistance against power. Moreover, the use of disjointed, non-linear narratives successfully challenges official histories of a colonial state. It is concluded that colonial and marginal novels deconstruct dominant discourses and demonstrate the evolution of social leadership from solitary hero’s to collaborative forms, thereby colonial and marginal authors themselves played the transformative role of social leaders or social agent.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis; Counter Narratives; Social Leadership; Post-Colonial Literature; Marginal Voices*

Graphical Abstract



1. Introduction

In an era where global discourse remains profoundly shaped by historical asymmetries of power, the literary text emerges not merely as an artifact of culture but as a vital site of ideological contestation (Moramollu, 2016). Traditional discourse analysis has long examined how dominant narratives those propagated by colonial, imperial, and hegemonic structures manufacture consent and perpetuate social hierarchies (Aboul-Ela, 2010). Yet, a transformative strand of resistance operates within the narratives themselves, where the act of writing becomes a deliberate project of world-making (Paulson, 2001; Keunen, 2008). It posits that authors operating from postcolonial and marginal positions transcend the conventional role of storyteller to function as social leaders, who, through the strategic construction of counter-narratives, actively dismantle oppressive discourses and envision alternative epistemologies (Eyoh, 2021). The theoretical underpinning lies at the intersection of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and postcolonial literary theory. CDA provides the methodological lens to dissect how language in literature is weaponized not only to reflect power but to challenge and reconfigure it (Maryam et al., 2025). When applied to literature from the margins, CDA reveals the intricate techniques through which authors subvert the linguistic, symbolic, and narrative frameworks of the center. These crafted counter-narratives serve to deconstruct stereotypes, reclaim historical agency, and give voice to silenced subjectivities, thereby performing a crucial socio-political function. This research focuses specifically on the literary production emanating from postcolonial societies and other marginalized communities (including those defined by race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality). It argues that authors such as Chinua Achebe, Toni Morrison, Arundhati Roy, and Ocean Vuong, among others, exercise leadership not through political office but through the symbolic power of their texts. Their leadership is enacted by: (1) Reframing History, challenging monolithic colonial histories with plural, subjective, and often traumatic memories; (2) Linguistic Reclamation, transforming the colonizer's language into a medium of resistance

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and cultural hybridity; and (3) Constructing Relational Identity, forging narratives of identity that resist essentialism and celebrate fragmented, collective, and resilient selves. It seeks to demonstrate that literature, in these contexts, is a form of social action. The current study reflected to broader conversations in discourse studies, postcolonial theory, and the sociology of literature by rigorously theorizing the author as a pivotal agent of discursive change a social leader whose pen catalyzes critical consciousness and fosters the imaginative groundwork for a more equitable social order.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

This study is rationalized by a critical conceptual lacuna in postcolonial and literary studies: while the thematic substance of counter-narratives is well-documented, their discursive mechanics and the precise nature of authorial agency as a form of social leadership remain under examined. It moves beyond thematic interpretation to interrogate how literary craft encompassing narrative structure, metaphor, and linguistic hybridity functions as a direct instrument of ideological contestation and communal guidance. Through the application of Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to seminal works by authors such as Achebe, Roy, Morrison, and Salih, this research provides a systematic model for connecting micro-textual strategies to macro-social practices of resistance. By arguing that these authors perform as social leaders through acts of "linguistic treason" and the reconstruction of historiography, the study redefines leadership itself as a discursive and imaginative practice born from marginality. Consequently, it constitutes an essential interdisciplinary intervention, synthesizing literary criticism, discourse analysis, and social theory to illuminate narrative as a fundamental engine of cultural resilience and imaginative decolonization.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyze, through Critical Discourse Analysis, the specific linguistic and narrative strategies that constitute counter narratives in selected postcolonial and marginal novels.
2. To evaluate how these counter narratives function to empower marginalized voices and, in doing so, position the authors as social leaders who propose alternative models of authority and community.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research offers a tripartite contribution of theoretical, methodological, and socio-political significance. Theoretically, it effects a crucial interdisciplinary synthesis, bridging literary criticism and leadership theory by positing the author as a social leader. This reconceptualization advances postcolonial and marginal studies beyond thematic analysis, refocusing scholarly attention on literature's performative discursive agency its capacity to engineer counter-narratives that actively dismantle hegemonies and blueprint alternative communal imaginaries. Consequently, it proposes a refined paradigm of leadership, one derived from cultural production and symbolic action rather than conventional institutional authority. Methodologically, the study demonstrates and validates the rigorous application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the domain of complex literary fiction. It provides a structured, replicable analytical framework that systematically connects micro-linguistic and narrative techniques such as strategic metaphor, syntactic innovation, and narrative fragmentation to the macro-sociopolitical processes of resistance and identity reclamation. This establishes a valuable model for future scholarship seeking to trace the precise mechanics by which cultural texts enact and mediate power. Socio-politically, the work underscores narrative as a vital instrument of epistemic justice and historical correction. By elucidating the systematic methods through which marginalized voices appropriate and subvert dominant discourse to reclaim agency, the study illuminates literature's indispensable role in global neocolonial and emancipatory praxis. It thereby engages urgent broader conversations in education, cultural policy, and social movements, affirming the transformative necessity of inclusive counter-storytelling in the ongoing

pursuit of equitable representation.

2. Literature Review

This literature review situates the current study within three intersecting scholarly domains: the theoretical foundations of postcolonial and marginal literatures, the methodological applications of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to literary texts, and the evolving conceptualizations of social leadership. It identifies a critical gap where the discursive mechanics of literary counter-narratives are seldom systematically linked to a formal theory of authorial social leadership.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations: Counter-Narratives in Seminal Literature

The role of literature from marginalized spaces as a site of resistance is well-established. Foundational postcolonial theorists, such as Edward Said (1978) in *Orientalism*, demonstrated how Western discourse constructed the colonized “Other,” while Homi K Bhabha (1994) theorized the “third space” of hybridity and ambivalence where colonial authority is mimicked and subverted (Williams, 2013). Following this, the project of “writing back” to the empire, as articulated by Eagleton (2006) in *The Empire Writes Back*, frames the literary text as a primary tool for challenging colonial narratives. Similarly, scholars of African American and diaspora literature, like Henry Louis Gates (1988) with his concept of “Signifying,” and Toni Morrison (1992) in “Playing in the Dark,” have meticulously documented how Black writers reconfigure the language and tropes of a dominant culture to assert subjective sovereignty. Collectively, this body of work establishes that authors like Chinua Achebe, Arundhati Roy, Toni Morrison, and Tayeb Salih are engaged in producing counter-narratives, systematic literary efforts to dismantle master narratives, restore occluded histories (as explored in Rushdie’s, 1981, notion of “imaginary homelands”), and forge new identities. However, this scholarship has predominantly focused on thematic and ideological outcomes rather than a granular analysis of the linguistic and narrative machinery that executes this resistance.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis as a Methodological Intervention

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the three-dimensional model developed by Fairclough (1992, 1995), provides the toolkit to bridge this gap. Fairclough insists on analyzing any discursive event at three levels: the text (linguistic features), the discursive practice (processes of text production and interpretation), and the broader socio-cultural practice (Fairclough, 2023). While CDA has been extensively applied to media, political speech, and policy documents, its application to extended literary fiction, though growing, remains less common (Wodak, 2024). Scholars like Angenot and Barsky (2004) in *Literature as Social Discourse* pioneered a linguistic approach to literature, and more recently, Statham (2022) argued for the value of CDA in narrative analysis. This study builds on this trajectory, arguing that Fairclough’s framework is uniquely suited to dissect how a novel’s micro-linguistic choices (e.g., lexical selection, transitivity, modality, metaphor) are inextricably linked to macro-sociological processes of power, resistance, and identity formation. It positions the selected novels as complex discursive practices where hegemony is both reflected and contested.

2.3 Linguistic and Narrative Strategies of Resistance

Existing criticism on the primary texts offers insights into their counter-discursive strategies. Achebe’s (1958) strategic use of Igbo proverbs, folktales, and a deliberately calibrated English in “Things Fall Apart” has been analyzed as an act of linguistic reclamation (Juma, 2025), challenging the “Heart of Darkness” narrative. Roy’s (1997), “The God of Small Things” is renowned for its lexical innovation, syntactic rupture, and non-linear narrative, which scholars like Baral (2011) read as a formal analogue for challenging rigid social laws (the “Love Laws”) and official history. Morrison’s (1987) “Beloved” employed a fragmented, haunting narrative voice and a cyclical sense of time to perform the unspeakable

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trauma of slavery, a technique interpreted by Mati (2025), as a form of “rememory” that wrests historical control from the archive. Salih’s (1966) “Season of Migration to the North” uses complex narrative framing, irony, and intertextuality with both Arabic and Western canons to enact a postcolonial condition of duality and critique (Hassan, 2003). This review synthesizes these scattered insights, proposing that these diverse techniques here unified under the concept of “linguistic treason” and subversive narratology constitute the core discursive arsenal of the counter-narrative.

2.4 Conceptualizing the Author as Social Leader

The final conceptual pillar addresses leadership. Traditional leadership studies have focused on political, organizational, or charismatic figures (Martin, 2018). The notion of intellectual or moral leadership has been explored, and cultural studies has examined the public intellectual (Jacobsen, 2009). However, the specific idea of the creative writer particularly the marginalized novelist as a systematic social leader who exercises authority through narrative form remains under-theorized. This study draws on Gramsci’s (1971) concept of the “organic intellectual” who arises from within a class to articulate its aspirations, and extends it into the literary realm (Guru, 2013). It argued that by constructing counter-narratives that empower communities, restore historical agency, and model alternative social formations (shifting from Achebe’s tragic solitary hero to Roy and Morrison’s collaborative, often feminine, resilience), these authors perform a transformative social function. They do not merely comment on society; they discursively lead it towards new modes of consciousness and community (Maryam et al., 2025).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, anchored in the interpretive paradigm, to investigate the complex relationship between discursive form and social function in literary texts. The primary methodological framework guiding this inquiry is Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach is selected for its robust capacity to systematically connect the micro-details of literary language to the macro-contexts of ideological struggle and social leadership.

3.1 Methodological Framework: Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional CDA

Fairclough’s model posits that any discursive event should be analyzed simultaneously across three interconnected dimensions:

Text Analysis (Dimension 1: Description): This involves the close linguistic and narrative examination of the text itself.

Discursive Practice Analysis (Dimension 2: Interpretation): This focuses on how the text is produced, disseminated, and interpreted within specific contexts.

Social Practice Analysis (Dimension 3: Explanation): This situates the discursive practice within broader structures of power, ideology, and social change.

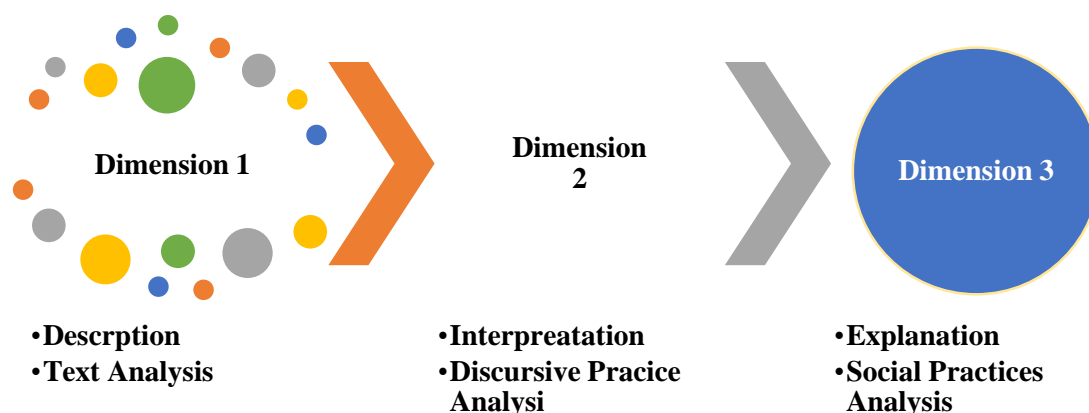


Figure 1 Fairclough's Three Dimensional CDA Model

This framework is operationalized for literary analysis as follows:

3.2 Data Collection: Text Selection and Delimitation

The primary data for this study consists of four seminal novels, purposively selected for their canonical status as exemplars of postcolonial and marginal counter-narratives:

1. Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe
2. The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy
3. Beloved by Toni Morrison
4. Season of Migration to the North by Tayeb Salih

These texts constitute the corpus. Data collection involves intensive, repeated close reading of each novel to identify and extract relevant passages that exemplify key discursive strategies.

3.3 Data Analysis: The Three-Dimensional Procedure

Analysis proceed iteratively through Fairclough's three dimensions for each identified discursive strategy.

3.3.1 Dimension 1: Textual Analysis (The "What" of Discourse)

This stage involves a formalist-inspired close reading to describe the specific linguistic and narrative features. The analysis focused on:

Lexical and Metaphorical Choices: Examining word choice, semantic fields, and the construction of sustained metaphors (e.g., fragmentation, haunting, hybridity).

Narrative Structure and Point of View: Analyzing the use of non-linear chronology, fragmented narratives, multiple focalizers, and narrative gaps.

Transitivity and Agency: Investigating how linguistic patterns represent social actors who acts, who is acted upon to uncover ideological encoding of agency for marginalized characters.

Intertextuality and Hybrid Language: Noting the incorporation of local proverbs, myths, vernacular syntax, and code-switching, termed in this study as acts of "linguistic treason."

3.3.2 Dimension 2: Discursive Practice Analysis (The "How" of Discourse Production/Interpretation)

The focus shifts to the interaction between the text and its context. Analysis interpreted as:

Production: How the authors' situatedness (as postcolonial/marginal subjects) informs the choice of discursive strategies identified in Dimension 1.

Interpretation: How these strategies potentially guide or challenge the reader's interpretation. This involves analyzing the text's implied reader and the discursive work required to "read between the lines" of dominant history.

Interdiscursivity: Tracing how the novels blend and recontextualize discourses from different domains (e.g., colonial archives, oral traditions, legal discourse, domestic speech) to create new, resistant meanings.

3.3.3 Dimension 3: Social Practice Analysis (The "Why" of Discourse)

This final stage explains the ideological and social significance of the discursive practices. It asks:

- How do these textual strategies function within wider social practices of power and resistance? This involves linking specific narrative techniques (e.g., non-linearity) to the counter-hegemonic work of challenging official, colonial historiography.
- How do these practices constitute social action? The analysis will evaluate how empowering marginalized voices and modeling alternative communities through narrative positions the author as a social leader. It will explicate the transition from individual to collaborative agency within the narratives as a proposed model for social organization.
- What social identities and relations are being (re)constructed, affirmed, or challenged? This examines the role of discourse in the formation of postcolonial and marginalized subjectivity.

3.4 Analytical Process

The analysis was conducted thematically across the corpus. Key episodes and discursive patterns from each novel examined through the three-dimensional lens. The findings was synthesized to build a coherent argument about the common and divergent strategies used to enact counter-narratives and perform social leadership.

4. Findings of the Study

The Critical Discourse Analysis reveals a sophisticated, coherent deployment of discursive strategies across the selected novels, demonstrating that their counter-narratives are engineered through a dual praxis of formal subversion and communal re-imagination. Fundamentally, the authors emerge as agents of "linguistic treason," systematically appropriating the dominant language to render it a vessel for marginalized epistemologies. This insurgent philology manifests in Achebe's infusion of Igbo lexicon and proverbs to assert a pre-colonial worldview; in Roy's creation of a molten, Malayalam-inflected idiolect that fractures syntactic norms alongside social laws; in Morrison's deployment of Black vernacular and haunted syntax to articulate the unspeakable trauma of slavery; and in Salih's intertextual weaving of Arabic poetic traditions into a Western narrative frame, performatively enacting postcolonial duality. Concurrently, a poetics of disruption operates through non-linear narrative architectures that dismantle the linear, progressive temporality of colonial historiography. Morrison's cyclical "rememory," Roy's anachronic revelation of trauma, Salih's framed unreliability, and Achebe's structural bifurcation collectively reject monolithic accounts, presenting history instead as a contested, multi-vocal terrain of fragments. Crucially, these techniques transcend mere critique to actively model alternative social orders, thereby positioning the authors as social leaders. The corpus traces an evolution from the tragic, solitary heroism of Okonkwo implicitly deconstructed as inadequate toward collaborative, often feminized forms of agency. Leadership is reimagined as diffuse and collective: in the communal exorcism in "Beloved", in the subversive intimacy of "small things" that defy caste in Roy's novel, and in the discursive holding of irreducible tension in Salih's narrative. Thus, through this dual strategy of linguistic insurrection and

narrative re-framing, the authors perform transformative social agency, using the novel not only to deconstruct dominant discourses but to discursively blueprint resilient, alternative communities.

5. Conclusion

This study, guided by its dual research objectives, concludes that postcolonial and marginal authors exercise a potent form of social leadership through the deliberate discursive architecture of their counter-narratives. In direct response to the first objective, the Critical Discourse Analysis has identified and analyzed two core, interrelated strategies that constitute these narratives: strategic linguistic appropriation and subversive narrative temporality. The authors commit acts of "linguistic treason," transfiguring the colonial language through the infusion of indigenous lexicons, vernacular syntax, and hybrid intertextuality, thereby dismantling its claims to universal authority and turning it into a medium for suppressed epistemologies. Simultaneously, they deploy disjointed, non-linear, and cyclical narrative structures to dismantle the linear, progressive historiography of the colonizer, replacing it with a fragmented, multi-vocal, and contested account of time and memory. Pursuing the second objective, the evaluation demonstrates that these are not merely aesthetic choices but functional discursive acts that empower marginalized voices and explicitly position the authors as social leaders. The novels move beyond deconstruction to active re-imagination. They trace an evolution in the modeled form of authority from the solitary, tragic hero who is ultimately inadequate, toward collaborative, diffuse, and often feminized models of community. By narrativizing resilience through collective action, intimate rebellion, and the sustained holding of complex cultural tensions, the authors perform a transformative social agency. They do not merely document oppression but use the novel as a discursive blueprint for alternative communities. Therefore, this study affirms that through this sophisticated praxis of formal subversion and communal vision, postcolonial and marginal authors enact the essential work of social leaders: they challenge hegemonic discourse, restore historical and epistemic agency to the marginalized, and propose resilient new paradigms for collective identity and authority.

6. Implications of the Study

This research, which positions authors from postcolonial and marginalized contexts as deliberate social leaders through their creation of counter narratives, carries significant implications across multiple domains:

A. Theoretical & Disciplinary Implications

1. Reconceptualizing Authorial Agency: The study challenges traditional, often Eurocentric, literary theories that separate the "artistic" from the "political" or view authors merely as products of their milieu. It argues for a theoretical framework that recognizes authors as active agents of social discourse and intellectual leadership, consciously deploying narrative as a tool for ideological intervention.

2. Advancing Counter-Narrative Theory: It moves beyond identifying counter narratives to systematically analyzing their discursive architecture how they are linguistically and structurally built to decenter master narratives. This provides a replicable model for analyzing resistance in text.

3. Interdisciplinary Bridging: It strengthens the bridge between Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Postcolonial Studies, and Social Movement Theory. The study demonstrates how literary texts function as social practices, contributing directly to discourses on identity, power, and collective memory.

B. Sociopolitical & Cultural Implications

1. Validating Subjugated Knowledge: By centering marginalized voices, the research performs an act of epistemic justice. It legitimizes non-dominant perspectives as crucial sources of historical, social, and psychological insight, challenging the monopoly of colonial or mainstream historiography.

2. Illuminating Mechanisms of Resistance: The analysis reveals the specific rhetorical and narrative

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strategies used to resist oppression. This offers a toolkit for understanding how symbolic resistance operates, which can inform and inspire contemporary social justice movements and activists in their own narrative-building.

3. Promoting Critical Literacy in the Public Sphere: The findings can foster a more discerning public readership. By revealing how narratives construct reality, the study encourages readers to critically interrogate all dominant stories (historical, media, political) and seek out suppressed perspectives.

C. Pedagogical Implications

1. Curriculum Transformation: The study provides a robust rationale for decolonizing and diversifying literature curricula. It argues for including these texts not as tokenistic "add-ons" but as central case studies in understanding power, narrative, and social change.

2. Critical Pedagogy in Action: It offers a concrete methodology (CDA of literature) for educators to teach critical thinking. Students can learn to dissect texts not just for theme and style, but for their ideological underpinnings and social agency, moving from passive reception to active critique.

3. Empowering Student Voice: By analyzing how marginalized authors claim authority, the study can empower students from similar backgrounds to see their own stories and analytical perspectives as valid and powerful. It models how personal experience can be translated into authoritative critique.

D. Methodological Implications

1. Model for Literary-CDA Synthesis: The project serves as a methodological blueprint for combining close textual analysis from literary studies with the systematic linguistic and discursive frameworks of CDA. It shows how to rigorously trace macro-social power dynamics in micro-linguistic choices.

2. Framework for Comparative Analysis: The approach allows for a structured comparison of counter narratives across different geographies (e.g., Caribbean, African, and Indigenous) and marginalized groups (e.g., based on race, gender, and caste), revealing commonalities and specificities in the discourse of resistance.

7. Recommendations of the Study

On the basis of findings of the study, research methodology adopted by researcher and gap found in current research, it is recommended that;

- Expand research to include more diverse marginalized voices and modern digital narratives.
- Combine literary analysis with social sciences to study literature's real-world impact.
- Teach the techniques of counter-narratives in classrooms to build critical thinking skills.
- Pair colonial texts with postcolonial responses to show how literature challenges power.
- Support and promote authors from marginalized backgrounds through cultural institutions.
- Public programs should highlight the role of authors as agents of social change.

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