CHAPTER - 4

INTERROGATING COLONIAL DISCOURSES

In postcolonial writing, the text becomes a site where the writers unmask, reject and rewrite colonial ideologies. Colonial discourses are confronted with conflicting perspectives and world-views of the colonised. Tropes are questioned and the binaries are subverted. The counter-discourses of the postcolonial writing are a rebuttal of the colonised and the vengeful response to the cruelty and sufferings that were the outcome of colonial discourses. Since texts operated as one of the tools of colonisation, postcolonial writers use the same tool to counter the violence of the colonisers. The various colonial discourses that were perpetrated by the writings of the western creative writers played a prominent role in shaping up their ideologies. These writings not only defined the subject position of the self, but also constructed the identity of the other. Though these writings apparently appear to be a mere aesthetic exercise, it had far-reaching consequences, which had its manifestations in the whole process of colonisation. Therefore the textual violence which was generated by the western writings shares equal responsibility with the physical violence that was exercised on the indigenous people.

Therefore postcolonial writers who represent their community address the issues that relate to colonial discourses. They not only give the counter-perspective to the western narratives but also expose the lies that had masqueraded as truths in the colonial writings. The politics of representation is questioned and the coloniser and his prejudiced assumptions are exposed to showcase the role of textual violence in the process of colonisation. As
stereotypes are altered and colonial myths punctured, histories are rewritten from the alter perspective of the colonised. It is also significant to note that the same language that was used by the colonisers in the creation of colonial discourses becomes an effective tool as postcolonial writers dismantle the discourses and create narratives that are in conflict with the coloniser's versions of truth. It should not be forgotten that decolonisation is one of the primary concerns of postcolonial writers and as they appropriate the English language, it is used to counter the discourses of the west and to narrate their own versions of truth. This chapter purports to analyse the use of English for counter-discursive purposes in the writers' project of decolonisation.

**Deflating the Myth of Colonial Education**

Okara in *The Voice* uses English to counter the discourse that was built around colonial education. English education was greatly responsible for the spread of English language in the former colonies. Colonial education was introduced so as to civilise the indigenous tribes that were deeply immersed in their native traditional wisdom and values that were passed as a legacy from one generation to the other. However the colonisers interrupted the traditional systems of thought and values and forced the western knowledge that was imprinted in their books and literature. Okara deflates the myth of the ennobling nature of colonial education and highlights the superiority of their native communal wisdom.

In the novel *The Voice*, Okolo, the central character goes about the village asking for 'it'. He spares no one and questions everybody whether they have got 'it'. Though the novelist does not explicitly spell out the meaning of 'it', it is quite evident that it is something to do with the spiritual aspect of the human life. As Amatu is ruled by the dictatorial powers of Chief Izongo,
people are mere puppets without any moral courage or strength. No one dares to raise his voice against the evils of Chief Izongo for the sheer fear of his iron rule. It is against this social climate that Okolo raises his voice questioning the standards and principles of not only the rulers, but also the common people who have lost their will to resist evil. According to Eustace Palmer:

*The Voice* is a cry of protest against the spiritual sterility, inhumanity, and materialism that Okara sees everywhere about him, and it is a message of an obviously universal relevance. The ‘voice’ is Okolo’s, crying in the spiritual wilderness, and calling for a restoration of traditional integrity and moral purity. (158)

African societies are plagued with spiritual sterility and materialism that came along with the colonisers and their culture. As their traditional set up is disturbed, it is inevitable that people tend to lose grip with their cultural strength and African way of life. The pre-colonial African states that thrived on divided labour and shared profit is given to the evils of materialism, due to the western influence. Okara points out to this particular shift in value and the novel becomes a lament for the loss of traditional values and systems and at the same time sketches a biting satire of the willing degradation of the erstwhile colonies. Colonisation as an exercise was justified by the colonisers in their attempt to civilise and improve the standards of living of the colonised. But the post-colonial scenario witnesses degradation and abject misery that pervades the former colonies as a result of colonisation.

Though Okara’s *The Voice* deals with the post-colonial scenario of a Nigerian village, it is underscored with the theme of resistance. Okara punctures the myth of the ennobling nature of colonial education. The novelist
in a very subtle manner handles his characterization of Abadi, who is in many ways the lone exception to other characters of the novel. In the novel, Abadi happens to be the "next man to Izongo" (TV: 42). He is Izongo's advisor and sits next to Izongo on all important social gatherings. He is also the most learned man in the entire town of Amatu. He has travelled far and wide and has acquired coveted degrees for himself. As Abadi himself claims: "I have been to England, America and Germany and attended the best universities in these places and have my M.A., Ph.D" (TV: 43-44). Abadi has gained reputation and respect as he has been to England, America and Germany, the high places of learning and has mastered the master's language. Izongo remarks: "This house will not contain the books he has read" (TV: 45).

As a man of such wide scholarship, Abadi begins to address the crowd in flawless English though it is obvious that the common folks of Amatu will not understand his language. Chief Izongo has convened a meeting and the whole town of Amatu has gathered to decide upon the fate of Okolo who has been a cause of concern for quite sometime. Amatu is peopled with fishermen, palm cutters and in Abadi's phrase, "some of you were nothing in the days of the imperialists" (TV: 43). Okolo is the only other educated person who has attended a secondary school.

A language has multiple functions in a given social context apart from just transferring the message from a speaker to the listener. As Altmann puts it, "Language, quite simply, is a window through which we can reach out and touch each other's minds" (233). Abadi's use of English is quite contrary to this view of language. The purpose of using a particular language here is not just to communicate one's ideas and so Abadi does not choose to address the gathering in the vernacular as Izongo does (TV: 45). But since there is power
and prestige associated with the use of the coloniser's language, Abadi chooses to speak in English, a language that commands respect and demands admiration in the colonies. As English came with the colonisers it always enjoyed a privileged status in the colonies. To be able to use the language characterised the speaker's position in the new hierarchy of social order. As Godfrey C. Aniche observes,

English has always enjoyed a 'high' prestige in comparison with the indigenous languages with which it is co-territorial in Nigeria. As the language of the all-powerful official of the colonial administration, and of the early Christian missionaries, English was held in awe and reverence. (72)

With the introduction of English, the value systems associated with the knowledge of languages in traditional African societies were redefined. While English was preferred and promoted, the indigenous languages were considered to be inferior. English was promoted at the expense of the African languages and was signified with power and prestige. So when Abadi begins his speech in English, at Izongo's cue, the Elders, "clapped their hands and stamped their feet in applause" (TV: 43), and when he ends his speech, "there arose a great shout of applause, feet stamping and hand-clapping" (TV: 45), acknowledging his achievement in garnering the prestige variety and affirming his stamp of class. The great applaud and adulation is not so much for Abadi's speech as it is for his ability to handle the English language. The people only hear his speech but do not understand it. As Izongo himself honestly confesses, "He spoke in English and many words missed our ears while many entered our ears" (TV: 45).
Abadi has garnered the position of next-to-chief simply by the virtue of his vast learning, particularly the "whiteman's book" \((TV: 119)\), and Chief Izongo calls him "our highest son" \((TV: 45)\). Interestingly, Okara endows Abadi with a flawless variety of standard English without any contortions and aberrations. He even uses archaic words like 'nay' \((TV: 43)\) in his effort to impress and sound like an English man. As the situation demands Abadi is impeccable in his formal use of language, starting from acknowledging the august presence of Chief Izongo. As he is the only exceptional individual in Amatu, who has travelled widely and has got various degrees, his speech is also the only exceptional passage in the whole of the novel where the language is not subverted and nativised. Though he has read and mastered the white man's book, his learning has not effected anything good as he is no different from the deprave Izongo and others. Therefore Okolo retorts, "You have your M.A., Ph.D., but you have not got it" \((TV: 44)\).

As Okolo observes, Abadi does not show any trace of virtue as he only acts as Izongo's mouth-piece. His vast learning has not implanted anything good and remarkable which contributes to the good of the society. The only difference is that he can speak in English and has learnt to abstain from drinking palmwine. Instead he prefers the other sophisticated liquor brands:

'\text{Don't you know? Don't force him,} ' the second palmwine bearer said lowering his voice. 'He does not drink palmwine. We looked for beer, whisky, schnapps and brandy but couldn't get that. Palmwine does not fit him so leave him alone.' \((TV: 119)\)

As an individual who has received the western education, he acts no different from the western colonisers. Though he talks about democracy and
acknowledges one's right to raise one's voice, Abadi does not like anybody to interrupt and contradict him. Even at the beginning of his speech he browbeats the Elders and reminds them of their loyalty that is due to Chief Izongo:

What could you have been without our leader? Some of you were mere fishermen, palm cutters and some of you were nothing in the days of the imperialists. But now all of you are Elders and we are managing our own affairs and destinies. So you and I know what is expected of us, and that is, we must toe the party line. (TV: 43)

As Abadi likes no dissenting voice to counter the decisions of Izongo, it is evident that he is a party to the evil designs of the Chief. Okara depicts the plight of the post-Independent setting of Nigeria that is torn asunder by the morally deprave and profligate leaders who seek only to further their selfish interests. They are united in their evil design to do away with the contradicting views of Okolo and Tuere who attempt to bring in a social revolution. The new elite who boast of the English education have not evolved into morally superior persons. In the novel Okolo points out this flaw in the character of Abadi:

'Whom are you fighting against?' Okolo again interrupted.
'Are you not simply making a lot of noise because it is the fashion in order to share in the spoils. You are merely making a show of straining to open a door that is already open. You go and sleep over this,' Okolo said. (TV: 44)

In fact Abadi's great learning of the whiteman's book has only made him a better and clever devil as he is responsible for some of the tactical moves in the killing of Okolo and Tuere. As Chief Izongo himself confesses, it is Abadi who is responsible for ostracizing Okolo from Amatu (TV: 47). Later in
the novel, when Okolo resurfaces in Amatu after being exiled in Sologa, it is Abadi who twice silences Izongo so that they can put an end to Okolo and Tuere. Even when Izongo shows signs of panic, it is Abadi who exhibits absolute control over the situation:

'If the people see and they turn against us what will we do?' Izongo said with fear creeping into his inside.

'Leave everything to me. Let her speak and allow her to take Okolo with her. Then we continue the celebration.' (TV: 121)

By attributing such a role-play to Abadi, Okara deflates the myth of white man's civilising and ennobling nature of his much-celebrated education. Instead he validates the superiority of the native knowledge that has been handed from their ancestors. Okara addresses the binary divide of the western bookish knowledge that is pitted against the traditional wisdom of African societies that instil moral values in their societies. In the novel one of the messengers of Izongo is averse to corruption and says that anybody who indulges in corrupt practices will die.

'You say water has my inside entered. I know not whiteman's book. Their book learning is different from earth's knowledge which has come down from our ancestors. Book teaches not that. You say water has my inside entered. But you know not the power of water?' (TV: 93)

The common folks of Amatu who still value their traditional values are free from corruption and spiritual sterility. The messengers of Izongo, Tuere, and Ukule who are untouched by the evils of modernity maintain their integrity
and moral stability. Okara deliberately pits the native wisdom up against the bookish knowledge of the west and reverses the hierarchy. He affirms that the white man's knowledge and teaching is not absolute and there are things that the natives can learn from the spoken words of their ancestors rather than by the learning of the western education. Hence it is not surprising that Abadi who gets distanced from his native culture by the virtue of his vast learning turns out to be more hideous and villainous than the rest of the natives. All his learning from various foreign universities has not inculcated any remarkable social value that would be beneficial to his society. According to Ernest N. Emenyonu:

Education in the colonies was designed to produce individuals enlightened enough to understand the values of the world outside their home environment, but not equipped to think inwards for the betterment and salvation of their own immediate environment.

(116)

Abadi, therefore, becomes an outsider to his society and does not prove useful to his community. He perpetrates more violence by instigating Izongo and furthers his selfish motives. Through the character of Abadi, Okara points out the negative influence of the English education on the African native who turns a traitor to his own community and society at large. He deflates the civilising myth of the English education by pointing out the impact it has on Abadi. It is also a call to revive the traditional value systems that are sidelined due to the intervention of colonisation and modernity. Okara highlights the failure of the English education in the colonies and validates the traditional wisdom and spiritual values of African culture that would contribute to the welfare of post-colonial African societies.
Validation of Mau Mau and the Effects of Colonial Education

It was in English, the colonial history of Africa was constructed, and their pre-colonial past was effaced and denounced as barbaric and uncivilised. English turns out to be a racist language as it expresses the cumulative negativity of the idea of blackness in its imagery and vocabulary. Therefore as a postcolonial response an African writer posits, in English, a counter-narrative and rewrites the history of his past, race and injustices from the African perspective. While doing so, the writer dons the mantle of a historian who interrogates the European versions of truth and presents a conflicting narrative that springs from the felt experiences of the native Africans.

Therefore an African writer is sensitive to the historicity of his themes. Though it can be argued that the novels are not a faithful reflection of the social reality, they deal with the ideological challenge of that reality. The significance of these writings lie in their realisation of the importance of excavating suppressed histories while trying to critically engage with the problem of historical representation in the postcolonial condition. With regards to Ngugi’s encounter with Kenyan political history, Dianne Schwerdt is of the view that his achievement lies in the “articulation of what has been called elsewhere ‘a proper sense of history’, in particular the production of a Kenyan history that ‘shines with grandeur . . . of heroic resistance’” (184-185).

In Ngugi’s A Grain of Wheat, the action opens four days before the Uhuru celebrations as people are gearing up for the event. The narrative also shifts back and forth to include the years of Emergency, Mau Mau rebellion, detention camps and the brave resistance that was put up against the British imperialism. The immediate post-Independence setting and the inclusion of
historical events mark Ngugi as a documentary historian who is charting a different version of Kenyan history opposed to the European/Official version. As Barry Andrews observes:

The History to which Ngugi Wa Thiong'o refers is the recent history of his native Kenya: specifically, the dramatic and bloody decade of Mau Mau, the Emergency, and Uhuru; a decade—roughly, the early fifties to the early sixties—which continues to ‘obsess’ Kenyan writers. (36)

Unlike his earlier novel, *The River Between*, which deals with the ancient history of Kameno and Makuyu, two villages of Kenya, and the prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro, the great Gikuyu seer, who predicted the coming of the white man, *A Grain of Wheat*, is concerned with the recent history of Kenya which Ngugi is well aware of and which he belongs to. Ngugi was a schoolboy when Mau Mau began its freedom struggle against the colonial government which made life difficult for the Kenyans. As Ngugi is aware of the Manichean struggle between the natives and the colonial regime, he vindicates the Mau Mau rebellion and highlights its political ideologies which are in stark contrast to the manner in which the west perceived it.

The novel reveals that almost everybody in the village is a member of the party who wishes to retrieve the stolen land and governing authority from the whites. It grows from strength to strength though its leaders change from time to time. Nobody knows exactly when the party was started but “its origin can, so the people say, be traced to the day the whiteman came to the country, clutching the book of God in both hands, a magic witness that the white man was a messenger from the Lord” (GW: 11). In other words, the people of
Kenya look up to the party as freedom fighters who would break free the chains of colonialism and liberate their land from the shackles of white domination. But the colonial administration sees it as a threat to its very existence and brands them as terrorists and outlaws who have to be dealt with an iron hand. In the novel, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who has worked in Nyeri, Githima, Kisumu, and Ngong, is of the view that:

One must use a stick. No government can tolerate anarchy, no civilization can be built on this violence and savagery. Mau Mau is evil: a movement which if not checked will mean complete destruction of all the values on which our civilization has thriven. (GW: 49)

The overwhelming zeal to curb the Mau Mau activities on the part of the white administrators culminates in the arrest and torture of many innocent civilians. Ngugi highlights this in the character of Gitogo, the only son and breadwinner of an old widow. He is a deaf mute who ekes out a livelihood by doing menial jobs in eating houses and meat shops. He is shot dead by the police and his death is justified in a matter-of-fact statement: “Another Mau Mau terrorist had been shot dead” (GW: 6).

The atrocities and cruelties that are inflicted on the Africans reach its pinnacle when Thomas Robson holds office as the District Officer of Rung’ei, during Emergency. He is known as “Tom, the Terror” (GW: 162), who, with his all-pervading presence persecutes a number of people for nothing. As the novel reveals,

Driving in a jeep, one Askari or two at the back, a Bren gun at the knees, and a revolver in his khaki trousers partially concealed by
his bush jacket, he would suddenly appear at the most unexpected
times and places to catch unsuspecting victims. He called them
Mau Mau. He put them in his jeep, drove them into the edge of the
forest, asked them to dig their graves. (GW: 162)

The brutalities of Robson’s actions are legitimised under the cloak of his
undisputed white administrative power that is mandatory to bring order and
peace in the otherwise unruly African state. However, in the end, when Kihika
shoots him dead at point blank, the only word that escapes from his lips is
“brutes” (GW: 163). The irony is that, the killing of a black by a white is
called discipline whereas the reverse is brutal.

The western perception is so prejudiced that they are unable to
understand the ideology of a party like Mau Mau, which strives to liberate the
land from its colonisers. Since black liberation means the eviction of whites
from Africa, anything that is aimed towards this end is viewed as terrorist
activity, which has to be subjugated, suppressed and ultimately decimated. But
for the natives, it is more than a mere organisation. They consider it an honour
to work and suffer for the party’s cause. It is a religious exercise when they
pray and sacrifice with pigs before their expeditions. Lieutenant Koinandu, a
member of the party, explains that they prayed twice a day facing Mount
Kenya:

Mwenanyaga we pray that you may protect our hideouts.
Mwenanyaga we pray that you may hold a soft cloud over us.
Mwenanyaga we pray that you may defend us behind and in front
from our enemies.
Mwenanyaga we pray that you may give us courage in our hearts.
Thai thathaiya Ngai, Thai.

We also sang:
'We shall never rest
without land,
without Freedom true
Kenya is a country of black people.' (GW: 20)

The party has tried with words of persuasion and is tired of waiting for the colonisers to give heed to their rightful claims. There was a time when peaceful rallies and demonstrations were staged as a mark of protest against the white administration. Warui, an old member of the party recollects the peasant revolt without anybody having even a spear. But now, the party believes in the power of their hands than the efficacy of their mouths. The party's ideology is best expressed in the words of Kihika:

'We don't kill just anybody,' he started speaking as if there had been no interruption. 'We are not murderers. We are not hangmen--like Robson--killing men and women without cause or purpose.'
.... We only hit back. You are struck on the left cheek. You turn the right cheek. One, two, three--sixty years. Then suddenly, it is always sudden, you say: I am not turning the other cheek anymore.
Your back to the wall, you strike back." (GW: 166)

The few exploits of Mau Mau that are mentioned in the novel strictly adhere to their ideology and never stray beyond it. The greatest achievement of the time is the capture of Mahee, a police garrison in the Rift valley. Kihika, who leads the attack, sets the prisoners free and sets fire to the prison. It should be noted that even in a great expedient such as this, the damage that is inflicted is
restricted to the property and not to persons. As the policemen are allowed to make their escape, some jump over the prison walls and flee (GW: 16).

Even a gruesome incident such as the rape of Dr. Lynd by her African cook, has a motive that contains the Mau Mau ideology within:

He and two men laid her on the ground. He vibrated with fear and intense hatred. He hated the whiteman-everyone. He was being avenged on them now; he felt their frightened cry in the woman’s wild breathing. Whiteman nothing. Whiteman nothing. Doing to you what you did to us—to black people—he told himself as he thrust into her in fear and cruel desperation. (GW: 185-186)

The motive behind the act explains the deed. It is not the burning desire to feel the white body of the lady, but one that of hatred and revenge for the shame and ignominy the African women were subjected to by their colonial masters that prompted Koinandu to do this. This is in stark contrast to the flirtations of Margery, wife of Mr. John Thompson, who tries to seduce Karanja, a black, and in turn blames “the African heat does these things to women” (GW: 44). It is also a case in point for the stereotyping of the black as sexually deviant whereas the white woman’s promiscuous behaviour is explained in terms of heat. Ngugi satirizes the colonial assumptions that are responsible for stereotyping the Africans.

The colonisers often associated Mau Mau with violence and bloodshed. General R. rationalises the aggression of the party when he says,

The White man went in cars. He lived in a big house. His children went to school. But who tilled the soil on which grew coffee, tea,
pyrethrum, and sisal? Who dug the roads and paid the taxes? The White man lived on our land. He ate what we grew and cooked. And even the crumbs from the table, he threw to his dogs. That is why we went into the forest. (GW: 192)

It is the retributive justice that is at work in Africa as seen in the novel. The land was confiscated and the people's rights were stolen. The country became a colony and the native became a slave who was fed with the bread of affliction and drink of oppression. It is under these circumstances of incessant colonial brutality that the Mau Mau movement has its inevitable beginnings and forms a powerful limb of the Kenyan nationalist struggle. This view stands diametrically opposed to the representations of Mau Mau as evil and violent by the colonialists and the writings of apologists of colonial rule in Kenya and elsewhere.

The colonial administration expected absolute subservience from the natives. The traditional, socially structured system of local law and order was pronounced inadequate and every black individual was brought under the protective cover of the western system of laws which were favourable only for the whites. Contrary to the claim that the western interference into the traditional African society has liberated the natives from their monstrous superstitions, the western legal system did more harm than good to the natives. It provided the colonial administrators the official means to silence the freedom struggle with violence. In the novel, the killing of Thomas Robson, the District Officer, has its repercussion in the lives of so many people, who are taken to detention camps and never come back. The Government confiscates their lands. Mugo, who is taken to the detention camp, is stripped of his property. Even when he returns he does not retain his land but works on
Warui's land. Some run away to the forest. Even women are not spared from the vengeful violence of the whites. Wambuku, Kihika's woman, who is pregnant, is beaten to death. The life of one white man, who is called a "man-eater" (GW: 162), takes its toll on the entire village of Thabai.

The capture of Mahee Police Post results in things falling apart in old Thabai village. Huts are burned and villages are destroyed. Even those who are caught listening to the news of Mahee over the radio are arrested and sent to "Manyani, the most famous and the largest concentration camp in the country" (GW: 123). The villagers, both men and women, are forced to dig a trench around the village to stop them help the Mau Mau fighters. Mumbi recollects the scene and narrates it poignantly:

We were prisoners in the village, and the soldiers had built camps all round to prevent any escape. We went without food. The cry of children was terrible to hear. The new D.O. did not mind the cries. He even permitted soldiers to pick women and carry them to their tents. (GW: 126)

The laws that were enforced by the Colonial Government in Kenya sanctioned all of this unspeakable violence and considered it as indispensable to maintain law and order in Africa.

The west considered itself to be the champion of humanitarian issues. Unlike the presumed brutal barbarians of the Dark Continent, they considered themselves humane, civil and noble. But Ngugi exposes the brutality that lies buried beneath the white policies when he writes about the
detention camps. The prisoners are beaten with truncheons. The sanitation is extremely bad because of the over populated cells:

Manyan was divided into three big camps: A, B and C. Compound C into which Mugo was hustled, was for the hard core. Every compound was then subdivided into smaller compounds, each enclosing ten cells. One big cell housed about six hundred men. (GW: 115)

As a result of poor sanitation, the detainees are prone to typhoid and are not taken to hospital but are just left to die. The shocking treatment to force the prisoners to confess their oaths is described as a “common game in Rira had been to bury a man, naked, in the hot sand, sometimes leaving him there overnight (GW: 116). Even their just claim to treat them as “political prisoners” and not “criminals” (GW: 117) and to increase their food ration ends in severe beating in which eleven men die. Mugo, who is sent to the detention camp for daring to stop the whipping of a pregnant woman, Wambuku, recollects the details of the painful experiences:

Nothing, except that I saw men crawl on the ground, you know, like cripples because their hands and feet were chained with iron.’ 
‘. . . Once bottlenecks were hammered into people’s backsides, and the men whimpered like caged animals. ‘. . . I saw a man whose manhood was broken with pincers. He came out of the screening office and fell down and he cried: to know I will never touch my wife again, oh God, can I ever look at her in the eyes after this? (GW: 160)
Ngugi's novel is documentary, political, expository, and subversive and balances all these complexities with a simple and spontaneous style of narration. After witnessing and experiencing the cruelties and inhuman treatment of the white colonisers, Mugo refuses to give them the status of human beings. He says, "When I was young, I saw the White man, I did not know who he was or where he came from. Now I know that a Mzungu is not a man--always remember that--he is a devil--devil" (GW: 160).

Contrary to all the boastful claims about himself, the white man is drubbed by a black as the devil. The western texts might have dismissed the blacks as an extension of evil. But now that the black has learnt the art of writing, he describes the whites as devils not merely discursively to construct himself by contrast, but supports his statements with evidence from the colonial history.

The double standards of the western humanitarianism is thoroughly exposed in the incident when Dr. Lynd is furious over Karanja for attempting to throw a stone at her bull-mastiff, even after knowing that he did it only for his self-defence. She confesses, "I hate them, How can I help it" (GW: 40)? and wishes to let her dog get at Karanja. The hypocritical stand of Thompson, who tries to solve the problem and speaks in favour of Karanja, is exposed in the passage: "Thompson’s breath came back first in a long-drawn wave, then in low quick waves, relieved and vaguely disappointed that nothing had happened" (GW: 38).

The reason for Thompson’s disappointment is manifold. Firstly, a black has not been punished after he dares to harm a dog that belongs to a white. Secondly, he has been deprived of the exercise of his administrative power.
The following passage reveals this: "The other Africans looked at Thompson and stopped murmuring and mumbling. The sudden silence and the many eyes unsettled Thompson. He remembered the detainees at Rira, the day they went on a strike" (GW: 39). Had the dog harmed Karanja, there would have been a protest from the black workers which he would have had to control. In the process, he could have had a repeat of Rira, where he ordered for the whipping and beating of the blacks in which eleven men died. As this incident takes place just a few days before the Uhuru celebrations, this would have given Thompson the last opportunity to have his sweet revenge on the blacks before his departure to England. The association of Uhuru with this incident is significant as it gives a new twist to the perception of the behaviour of the blacks which is evident from Dr. Lynd's comments: "They are rude because Uhuru is coming- even the best of them is changing" (GW: 39). To cap it all, the mixed feelings of hatred, antagonism, betrayal and revenge towards the blacks are evident in the suppressed confession of Thompson: "He wanted to tell her the truth- but he would have to tell her about his own paralysis- how he had stood fascinated by an anticipation of blood" (GW: 40). The spilling of black blood fascinates a white. Ngugi rips open the apparent mask of civility and humanism and exposes the barbaric thirst for blood that has manifested itself at various levels in the whole enterprise of colonisation.

The notion that the Europeans are the torch bearers of knowledge and civility who have brought enlightenment to Africa and the prejudice that Africa is incapable of maintaining its own affairs is expressed when Thompson reflects:

Would these things remain after Thursday? Perhaps for two months: and then - test tubes and beakers would be broken or lie
un-washed on the cement, the hot-houses and seed-beds strewn with wild plants and the outer bush which had been carefully hemmed, would gradually creep into a litter-filled compound. (GW: 38)

Thompson feels that without his presence the whole compound will rot and perish. The notion that Europe is indispensable for the existence of Africa is best expressed in the words of Thompson: “We are not yet beaten, he asserted hoarsely. ‘Africa cannot, cannot do without Europe’” (GW: 144). He is so jealous of his office that he cannot even imagine a successor to his place in the office. When Margery suggests that probably a black would replace him after he quits, Thompson feels the pain “as if a pin had pricked his buttocks” (GW: 43). Thompson comes to Africa with a great vision to help build the British Empire cutting across colour, class, creed and boundaries. He recollects:

In a flash I was convinced that the growth of the British Empire was the development of a great moral idea: it means, it must surely lead to the creation of one British nation, embracing peoples of all colours and creeds, based on the just proposition that all men were created equal. (GW: 48)

Thompson’s vision cannot be considered as a desire for a Utopian world of equality, peace and prosperity. The point that has to be noted is his desire to change the world into Britain and all denizens into citizens of the British Empire. The apparent equality that is assumed by Thompson, is thwarted when he considers himself as “Prospero in Africa” (GW: 48). But the irony is that the west is always the Prospero, destined to teach its principles, values and customs and the Caliban is expected to be subservient, obedient,
and ever-willing to learn and to be grateful to the master. When a Prospero/Caliban binary is created, there arises a hierarchy in which the west always wants to be on top. Thompson’s view that “all men were created equal” (GW: 48) proves to be a farce and fad and remains at an idealistic level. The reason he gives for his resignation from office reveals that he can never accept an African as his equal: “For why should people wait and go through the indignity of being ejected from their seats by their houseboys” (GW: 50)? Thompson calls the Africans who will replace him in the office after Uhuru, houseboys. The European mind is conditioned to imagine itself superior and divinely commissioned to educate, eradicate and enlighten the minds and lives of the other. Ngugi reveals that all the gibberish talk about equality and justice is yet another instance of the western gimmick.

The delineation of the character of Karanja assumes significance in the fact that he is the only person in the novel who is competent in English. Though nothing much is said about Karanja’s education, he is shown to be reasonably proficient in reading, writing and communicating in English. He works at Githima Library and is happy to be in the service of the English men. As a representative of the new elite, Ngugi portrays Karanja and highlights the ill-effects of the colonial education on the African youth.

The English educational system which was forced on the African natives had adverse consequences on the African individual. Josef J. Schmied is of the view that,

Because English is the language of a European nation and a Western culture it cannot carry the associations and connotations of an African identity. Education in English may therefore deracinate
the African child and alienate it from its own cultural background.

(104)

As language and culture are inextricably interwoven, the imposition of English education results in the cultural alienation of the African child. It also stifles the imaginative faculty of a child. The basic education they get in the schools enabled them only to write a composition or a letter in basic English. Thus in the novel, it can be observed that Karanja is well content in “dusting books, keeping them straight in their shelves and writing labels” (GW: 31), when there are a lot of research activities going around him. It also affects the mindset of an individual. He learns to revere the whites with awe and wonder and at the same time believes in his inability to manage his own affairs and his intellectual inferiority. Mala Pandurang observes that,

In *A Grain of Wheat*, the figure of Karanja in front of his White colonial boss John Thompson “standing as he always did before a White person, feet slightly parted hands linked at the back, all in obsequious attention” (33), is a good example of a well constructed subject totally ingrained with a ‘colonial mentality’. (101)

Therefore, Karanja is happy to run errands for Thompson and Mrs. Dickinson. He feels proud and privileged when Margery invites him into her house and offers him a cup of sugarless coffee. His mentality has been so conditioned that he refuses to believe that the Thompsons are leaving for England before the Uhuru celebrations. He has been brain washed to believe in the infallibility of the whites and therefore cannot imagine the end of their rule in Africa:
As long as he did not know the truth, he could interpret the story in the only way that gave him hope: the coming of black rule would not mean, could never mean the end of white power. Thompson as a D.O. and now as Administrative Secretary, had always seemed to Karanja the invincible expression of that power. How, then, could Thompson go? (GW: 35)

He has been taught and trained to look upon the whites as a symbol of power and authority and to remain secure under the overwhelming presence of the colonial regime. He seems to have lost the verve to fight against the evils of colonialism. Therefore, when his playmates like Kihika, Gikonyo and Mugo are bravely putting up a resistance against the white administrators, Karanja is found to be totally compliant and content in serving his colonial masters. He is seen to be isolated from the mainstream of his traditional society. Even his traditional village, Thabai, hardly holds any attraction for him. He makes a guest appearance during the Uhuru celebrations and leaves for Nairobi immediately. He cannot even wait for the rain to stop. The colonial educational system has isolated the individual from being an integral part of his society, which used to be the hallmark of a traditional African society. Mala Pandurang points out that not only the content but also the mode of learning has contributed to this isolation:

Colonial education which compelled the learning of reading and writing in English, not only marginalized the mode of transmission of tribal ideology through induction, initiation and group activity, but was also responsible for breaking the harmony between the individual and the social environment. (107)
Thus Karanja, though takes the oath along with his village youth, turns a traitor to his own people. The western ideology of individualism and materialism has crept into him and Karanja's first job in the colonial government is to betray his own people, which he does with a degree of bravado.

His first job was in a hood. The hood—a white sack—covered all his body except the eyes. During the screening operations, people would pass in queues in front of the hooded man. By nod of the head, the hooded man picked out those involved in Mau Mau. (GW: 199)

The man who is expected to live in brotherhood becomes a hood to his own people. He enjoys the act of killing "human life by merely pulling a trigger" (GW: 199). He joins with his white officers and is ruthless in dealing with his people:

When he shot them, they seemed less like human beings and more like animals. At first this had merely thrilled Karanja and made him feel a new man, a part of an invisible might whose symbol was the whiteman. (GW: 199)

Estranged from his society, Karanja becomes a new man who is selfish, greedy and cruel. As he turns an apologist for the colonial government, he finds himself climbing up the social ladder, further removed from his society. Therefore when he assumes office as the Village Chief during the Emergency, he is ruthless in managing the affairs.
He led other homeguards into the forest to hunt down the Freedom Fighters. It was also during his rule that even the few remaining fit men were taken from the village to detention camps. He became very strict with curfew laws and forced communal work. *(GW: 129)*

The man who has taken the oath to fight against the colonial government hunts down his own party workers without any guilt or remorse. When Gikonyo returns from detention, Karanja makes his stand clear:

‘Listen carefully. You have now come back into a normal life in the village. People here obey the law, hear? No meetings at night, no stories about Gandhi and Unity and all that. The White man is here to stay.’ *(GW: 103)*

It is his strong belief in the permanency of the white rule that makes him conscious of his power in the new Government. The white man’s presence is essential for his own self-aggrandisement and therefore speaks for the white man’s power, which prompts Mumbi to castigate him: “Why don’t you wear your mother’s skirt and Mwengu? When others went to fight, you remained behind to lick the feet of your white husbands” *(GW: 130).*

Ngugi published *A Grain of Wheat* four years after the Kenyan Independence. As the colonial government has come to end, it is now up to the natives to reform and re-form the country and to chalk out a path for success. But the new elite who have been inevitably caught in the western influence of neo-colonialism prove to be a stumbling block for the progress of Kenya. In his earlier novel *The River Between*, Ngugi expresses his expectations of the white man’s education and the role of new elite:
How could he organize people into a political organization when they were so torn with strife and disunity? Now he knew what he would preach if he ever got another chance: education for unity. Unity for political freedom. For a time this vision made his heart glow with expectation and new hope. He quickened his descent, wishing to come to the people and communicate this new vision.

Education, Unity, Political Freedom. (143)

Ngugi wished that the new elite would gather the forces and work towards the political freedom of Kenya. Having learned the white man's education, it would give the African elite, the edge of using the white man's tools against them. Ngugi in The River Between envisioned a prosperous future for Kenya where everyone realised the African culture:

And Waiyaki saw a tribe great with many educated sons and daughters all living together, tilling the land of their ancestors in perpetual serenity, pursuing their rituals and beautiful customs and all of them acknowledging their debt to him. (87)

But the post-independent Kenya witnesses the new elite as a sect of comprador intelligentsia given to the demands of neo-colonialism. Though the country is independent, the people are not yet liberated, because of the profligacy of the new elite like Karanja.

Though Ngugi wants the African youth to equip themselves with the white man's learning, he does not fail to warn the adverse effects that go along with it. In his novel The River Between, he puts it across quite forcefully:

The white man's education was an instrument of enlightenment and advance if only it could be used well. He still remembered his
father's words, that long time time ago, when they stood on a hill, the whole country before them:

'Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices.' (94)

Ngugi, punctures the myth of western education and reveals how it affects an African individual by isolating him from the main stream of his community. As Karanja isolates himself from the rest of the youth of his community, he betrays his own folks in order to befriend the white officers. Ngugi, in his article, "As I see it: Mboya is Right- Education is an Investment" points out:

In the past [the educational] system was designed to fit people into a colonial regime. It produced a whole group of people with a colonial mentality whose two facets were an inferiority complex that was ready to be apologetic of a people's past when not outright ashamed of it, and an extreme dependency- a feeling that only the whiteman can do things for us. (10)

Ngugi targets the influence of colonial education through the character of Karanja who is totally estranged from his immediate society and is unable to relate to the sentiments of his own people. As the colonial education has influenced his world-view, Karanja, though lives with his community, is not part of it.

Ngugi, uses the English language to serve his ideological purposes. By choosing English as his medium and presenting a different perspective on Kenyan history and its resistance towards colonisation, Ngugi activates the hitherto suppressed space of alterity in the colonial discourse. Even as he
validates the Mau Mau movement, he exposes the double standards of the western ideologies which were responsible for the suppression of the Africans.

Both Okara and Ngugi use English as an effective tool to counter the discourses that were circulated during the colonial enterprise. As Okara addresses the myth concerning the ennobling nature of the colonial education, Ngugi re-positions the Mau Mau movement and validates its role in the Kenyan freedom struggle. He also points out that the new elite, who are the product of colonial education, find themselves estranged from their society and alienated from their traditional values. The writers offer a counter perspective to the colonial claims and give expression to the suppressed voices of their societies.

Subverting Binaries and Rewriting of Canonical Texts

Sam Selvon employs his experimental use of English to counter various discourses and to interrogate the constructions of binary oppositions. As he focuses on the racial discrimination that prevails in the white society, he also writes back to the English canonical texts and its discursive field in which they operated. He offers a biting satire on the colonial assumptions and reverses the hierarchy in which the blacks scale above the whites. In Sam Selvon's *Moses Ascending*, the principal character Moses, attempts to compose his memoirs by jotting down the experiences of his life. The content of the writing and the language in which he expresses himself are the problems which Selvon tries to highlight in the novel. In spite of all the problems that Moses has to face, the desire to write and his wanting to prove a point to the whites that even the blacks are capable of writing seem to be the propelling force behind his efforts to write. To quote Moses: "I longed to get back to my philosophizing and my analyzing and my rhapsodizing, decorating

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my thoughts with grace-notes and showing the white people that we, too, could write a book” (*MA*: 100-101).

As a writer from the Caribbean, Selvon’s is a quest to show his stamp of class as a writer, giving voice to all the pent up feelings and emotions of his tribe, people and nation that have been suppressed for ages. It was the white-skinned writer, who, all this while, has written about the blacks, naming, interpreting and trying to understand their peculiar ways. This exercise of interpellation has only resulted in the formation of colonial discourses, which have been responsible to keep the voice of an entire race buried and unheard. Therefore when Moses takes to writing, he knows well that the intellectual community would raise meaningless questions like, “In any case, who tell you you could write” (*MA*: 42)? Since writing needs an amount of scholarship, people deride him saying, “You think writing book is like kissing hand? You should leave that to people like Lamming and Salkey” (*MA*: 42). Without expecting any encouragement from any quarters Moses knows that his work will break a new ground in the tradition of fiction writing though there are established writers like Lamming and Salkey who are associated with Black Literature with some powerful books to their credit. Selvon’s predicament as a writer is similar to that of Moses. But Moses knows that his work, with its radical techniques and strategies will stand out when he says, “So? Well, my memoirs will create a new dimension” (*MA*: 43).

In the novel Moses tries to enjoy his post-retirement life. As a black immigrant he has started off from the scratch, stomached unmentionable suffering that belongs to his race but through all his hardships and toil, he is now propertied and wants to eat the fruit of his years of labour. Though he desires to be left alone in peace, there is an inherent desire to compose his
memoirs for which he jots down his experiences and hunts for materials. The writing of memoirs is not an activity to while away the time but a declaration to the whites that blacks are capable to tell the stories of their painful experiences and linguistically competent to produce narratives. He does not care about the various provocative criticisms his friends offer. All that he cares for is the selection of materials. Will the insignificant details of the problems that bother the blacks have an appeal with the reader in the wider context? It is significant to note that Moses' concern is not to create a piece of English literature, but it is rather the need to make his voice with all its seeming errors heard in the land of the English language. He wishes to break the spell of silence by expressing the felt experiences of his people and desires to expose the racist ideologies of his white community.

Ever since the onset of the emergence of literature from the Third World countries, postcolonial writers have subverted western literary texts as they counter the textual violence that was unleashed on their societies. As Bill Ashcroft remarks in his Post-Colonial Transformation, “Canonical literary texts are ‘consumed’ in such a way that they become the basis for resistant, appropriated versions which subtly subvert the values and political assumptions of the originals” (33).

The west has tried to justify their ways of colonisation and to understand the ways of the other by writing and reading about them in literary texts that have been written by the western writers whose perception had been tainted by prejudice, presumption and misconception. These writings resulted in such colonial discourses that had very serious consequences on the lives of the colonised. Therefore when the oppressed took to writing, they took it upon
themselves to dismantle these discourses by rewriting these western literary
texts highlighting the politics of representation. As Ismail S. Talib points out,

It has been noted in this regard that ‘a prominent endeavour among
colonial writers/artists had been to rework the European “classics”
in order to invest them with more local relevance and to divest
them of their assumed authority/authenticity’. . . (87)

One of the classic examples of such texts is Shakespeare’s The Tempest. The
Prospero – Caliban relationship and its implications have been remodelled and
subverted repeatedly. Selvon alters a number of binary divides and highlights
the politics of representation. As Helen Tiffin observes in “‘Under the Kiff-
Kiff Laughter’: Stereotype and Subversion in Moses Ascending and Moses
Migrating”:

Inversions of the roles of master and servant; white and black;
coloniser and the colonised here serve to denaturalise the
stereotypes and their hierarchisation; to expose their
constructedness, their interested representational foundations.
(132)

Even while dealing with the binary opposition of master and slave, black and
white. Selvon focuses on the problem of language as found in the Calibanic
response to Prospero’s language. Selvon brings it alive when one of the Asians
uses the abusive four-lettered word when Moses asks if he could speak
English.

“I was in a quandary, ‘Speakee English?’ I try.
‘Fuck off’, he say, giving me a nasty look”. (MA: 69)
Though it is only a short span of time for the Asian who is an illegal immigrant in London, he manages to pick up the alien language and as Moses says, though not “the most auspicious phrase in the Queen’s language” \((MA: 69)\), it serves his purposes well. It is not the language that was learnt by choice with a liking and fascination. Rather it was the Hobson’s choice, a language that was enforced upon and compelled to learn if not to master it. It is the language that was learnt in order to stay afloat and to survive in the “London Jungle” \((MA: 89)\), and hence it is understandable why the Asian retorts back with a verbal punch. Moses gets the same response even when he wishes him good luck:

I dashed downstairs and caught him just as he was entering the van. 

‘Let’s be friends,’ I say proffering my hand. ‘I wish you the best of British luck during your stay in our country.’

He shook my hand warmly and say, ‘Fuck-off.’ \((MA: 89)\)

Moses, who is also an immigrant, really appreciates it when he realises that it is, “Only one day in Brit’n, and he was already picking up the language” \((MA: 89)\). But what needs to be noticed is the resistance of the immigrants to the systems of the white coloniser that is instigated by the recognition of the pain of the wound that was inflicted during the colonial struggle.

Sam Selvon subverts the stereotypical characters of Defoe’s \textit{Robinson Crusoe} succinctly and quite efficiently in his creation of the character of Bob. The stereotyped white/black, master/servant roles are swapped by Selvon and he portrays Bob as a white vagrant who comes to London to seek his fortunes, and a “willing worker, eager to learn the ways of the Black man” \((MA: 4)\). Moses calls Bob his “Friday” \((MA: 4)\), a subversion of Crusoe’s character, only
with a difference that, in Selvon's, a white man is ever willing to serve his master who is a black and wants to learn his ways. To quote Moses:

Witness how I take in poor Bob, and make him my footman, when he was destitute and had no place to go to when he land in London. I create a home for him, giving him the joys and comfort of a warm hearth in winter, and a fridge with ice and orange squash in the summer. (MA: 25)

Therefore as a grateful servant Bob sweeps, scrubs, cooks and run errands for Moses who reclines in his chair, busy jotting down his memoirs. Though Bob is ever willing to learn, he is quixotic and blockheaded. Selvon constructs the character of Bob to destabilise the colonial binary oppositions, which were instrumental in deciding the subjectivity of the coloniser and the colonised.

Bob is never seen to be sharing the same vicious racial prejudice of the generation which he belongs to. Rather Selvon turns the table on Bob when he feels discriminated because of his white skin. After all that he had done for the Black party starting from getting the bail to donating funds for the party, Bob feels offended when he finds out that his efforts are not recognised in the article written by Brenda for her magazine. He feels sidelined and left out and says, "I suspect a spot of discrimination" and reasons, "it is because of my colour" (MA: 101) that his name and his sacrificial contribution for the party is not mentioned in the article.

It has been the blacks, who, for centuries have been the victims of racial discrimination and quite justifiably have risen in protest against its manifestations. But Selvon, for once, has made Bob, a white, to complain of
his colour. Moses attempts to console Bob, who is in his fit of tantrums by saying,

‘Balderdash’, I snort, ‘since when does a white man complain of his colour? You should be proud of it, as becomes any staunch English man. You want to create a precedence’? (MA: 101)

Bob is shown to be the precursor of his race who realises the nobility of the blacks and when he feels that he has been sidelined on account of his colour, he does not protest but is seen to be crying for recognition and acceptance.

It is not an outright rejection and subversion where a white man and his ways are dubbed as uncivilised and uncouth. But Selvon does it covertly in his creation of Bob. He does not call him a cannibal, but attributes such qualities to him that would showcase that he is no less than a cannibal. Even his physical demeanour is not desirable as he is dirty and smelly for bathing is one of his aversions. As Moses puts it,

I must say that I have had to encourage, goad, and even order Bob to have a bath. What he used to do was to have a dry-clean – as he humorously tried to call his uncleanliness using a dirty washing rag rub up in soap under the neck, behind the ears, under the arms, and finish off with a dash of Woolworth’s talcum powder. I found it disgusting, and told him so, but that was the way he was brought up. (MA: 79)

If Shakespeare portrays Caliban as a monster who smells like fish, Selvon’s Bob is not far behind with his strong body odour. He is too lazy even to have a bath and Selvon goes a step further and traces it to be the problem of his race when he points out that, it is the way Bob has been brought up. Moses points
out how even the fair and modest looking white girls are not very different from Bob:

You get a whiff of them frowsy English girls what look sharp on the outside but ain't changed their panties and bras for weeks, and only cover up the day-before perspiration with another layer of talcum and a quick splash of water on their face. (*MA*: 79)

Moses goes on to describe his nauseating sexual experience with one of the white girls who worked in the "Houses of Parliament" (*MA*: 79). Even a girl who belongs to such elite class is shown as dirty:

Well, to cut a long story short, while I was sucking her nipples, I find something crunchy in my mouth. 'What's this?' I ask her with disgust, spitting it out. She giggled, 'I didn't wash today,' she say, as if that make her more desirable. When I investigated the flakes I spat out, I found it was vintage talcum which had calcified that she was hoarding as if a shortage was threatened. That was the upper regions; I will not disgust you further by my encounter with the lower regions. (*MA*: 79)

Moses takes the white race to task when he depicts them as dirty and uncLean. Moses takes extra effort to highlight that Bob is not just an exception in an otherwise civilised white world. Bob is only a representative of the white race and culture through whom Selvon counters and reverses the discourses.

Bob is devious and is not trustworthy. Selvon depicts Bob as a puppy who bites the hand that feeds him. Moses, the noble and benevolent black, unlike Prospero and Crusoe, treats Bob as his friend rather than a servant. He
also takes a dig at the colonising attitude of the west, which exploits the less powerful and overpowers to control them. Though Bob knows that Moses does not like anybody to read his memoirs, Bob betrays his master when he breaks the lock and shows Moses' memoirs to Brenda so that he can have sex with her. Moses does not hide his feelings when he snaps him saying: "'You'd do anything for a bit of pussy, won't you'? I say bitterly, 'even deceive your friends'?" (MA: 107)? He also reveals to what extent Bob is willing to stoop when he says, "You would sneak and beg and crawl and creep. Nothing is below you to get a bird beneath you" (MA: 107).

If Shakespeare's Caliban is after the white-skinned Miranda, Selvon's Bob lusts after the black Brenda. He is lewd and shown to be like a sex-maniac. Ever since he meets Brenda he is always on the look out for an opportunity to have sex with her. Prospero punishes Shakespeare's Caliban for trying to violate Miranda. But when Bob makes a forceful advance and pushes her on the sofa, he learns, in the hard way, what a black woman is capable of, as Brenda beats him black and blue and gives him a demonstration of Kung-fu: "Bob emerge from under the maxi with his nose bleeding, his eyes bound-up, his lips bust-up, and he stagger back like a drunk and fall down on the floor" (MA: 24).

Bob is also a drunkard and is addicted to drinking. As Moses puts it, "he went out most evenings and come back pissed, drunk like a lord" (MA: 5). Bob is so much addicted that he does not spare even the cheap stuff which forces Moses to teach him a telling lesson. To quote Moses:

Only thing Bob drink so much that I had to teach him a lesson, and that particular bottle of whisky, I did wait until it was halfway
empty, and piss and fill it up again, telling him he could have that but leave the other bottles alone. \( (MA: 18) \)

Therefore Moses takes the burden to indoctrinate Bob and tries to convert him from the evils of alcohol. Moses tries to enlighten his darkened mind by teaching him the Bible \( (MA: 5) \). Nevertheless, Bob continues to be a kind of a savage on whose nature no amount of teaching will have an effect.

To cap it all Bob is an illiterate. Though he shares the same skin of those who brag of civilisation and enlightening this world with their language, Bob is seen staring at the pictures in his comic books without deciphering what it is all about. While Moses composes his memoirs, browses all popular magazines, and Brenda does the editing of a magazine, Bob cuts a sorry figure in the company of the blacks, squatting on the floor surrounded by his crate of comic books and looking at it “like a juvenile” \( (MA: 128) \). Selvon has created such a typical character as Moses says, “It is the first time that I have come across a full-fledged white man in this day and age who does not know that A is for apple and B is for bat” \( (MA: 129) \). Now is the time when a black man has to teach a white and Moses has great fun in teaching Bob with his little telephone book, how to make the letter A.

The misconceptions of the west which jumped into conclusions that the use and style of language and literature as a hegemony belongs only to the white race suffer a set back when Bob, the white savage, makes a serious and audacious claim, though not without its comic sense, that he “can write better memoirs” \( (MA: 139) \) than the black Moses, just because he happens to be of the same race that prides itself of its intellectual superiority and highly civilised status than the rest. Bob, who does not even know to sign his name, and
practices it so that he can marry his ladylove, claims that he can write better memoirs. It is also significant to observe that no sooner had Bob tried learning to write the alphabets than he claims that he can write better memoirs than Moses. Selvon points out the psychological mode of colonising the mind of the natives, a ploy used by the west in its colonial exercise. The repeated reprimanding and denouncing of the colonised, results in stifling and conditioning their minds that they are an inferior race and backward in thinking and hence should emulate the west which passed for an ultimate role model. Since Bob belongs to the white race, he naturally assumes the superiority of his literary skills and no matter how he writes, his writing will always be of a higher standard than that of Moses. Therefore when Bob tells Moses that he can write better memoirs it only stresses the latent manifestations of the common ground that links him with his imperial race.

Selvon’s attempt is not to write back to any specific British master narrative. Instead what he achieves is that he counters the whole discursive field in which such texts wielded its power. Selvon erases the binary constructions while he ridicules the entire process of representation and subverts the colonial discourses. He also laughs at the whole exercise of interpellation and exposes the political ramifications that lie beneath it. As Roberto Retamer observes in his “Caliban Speaks Five Hundred Years Later”:

After disdainfully calling us “barbarians” and “coloured peoples”, and not wanting to use the proper denomination of colonies, semi- or neo colonies (the epoch encouraged at least verbal equalities), more neutral and even hopeful denominations were proposed. . . . These are, like in previous examples, terms of relation (civilization/barbarism, white people/coloured people, colonizing
countries/colonized countries), which make it necessary to know their opposite pole. . . . And the inference is that if the latter behaved well-learned their lessons, etc, they could become like the former, the big ones, the adults. (4)

Selvon addresses the discourse of the colonial constructs and the categorisation of the blacks as barbarians. As he alters the binary divide and subverts its hierarchy he points out that it is not the black Moses who wants to learn the white ways of Bob, but it is the white Bob who is eager to learn the black ways of Moses. Sam Selvon, by his use of Creole and by subverting the structures of the coloniser's language and their politically stereotyped discourses has demonstrated what it is to be a postcolonial writer of fiction who is goaded by the necessity of resisting and toppling the imperial ideologies while recreating an identity for the suppressed voice. As Helen Tiffin observes in "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse":

What Selvon has achieved (in spite of Moses' descent) is a complete destabilisation of centrist systems and an exposure of their pretensions to the axiomatic. By re-entering the text of Robinson Crusoe (and to a lesser extent The Tempest), the assumptions on which they rest and the paradigms they reflect and construct, Selvon destabilises the dominant discourse through exposure of its strategies and offers a Trinidadian/Caribbean post-colonial counter-discourse which is perpetually conscious of its own ideologically constructed subject position and speaks ironically from within it. (27)
Selvon addresses the politics of representation and its influence in the construction of colonial subjectivity and also subverts the colonial discourses by writing back to the centre. Through his creation of Bob who is deviant, lewd, dirty and illiterate, Selvon alters the binary divide and exposes the evils of racial discrimination. Selvon destabilises the colonial assumptions and subverts the position of British centrality through his fictional characters. He takes a revolutionary stand when he bulldozes the colonial discourses that have wronged his race.

**Futility of Colonisation and the Vanquished Coloniser**

Wilson Harris in his novel *Palace of the Peacock* interrogates the colonial assumption of the assumed superiority of the colonisers and points out the inherent resistance that exists between the coloniser and the colonised. The novel discusses the coloniser's futile attempt to wield absolute control over the natives and their defiance that thwarts the colonial authority. The novelist also alters the hierarchy in the binary of the coloniser and the colonised and portrays the absurdity of the whole project of colonisation.

Wilson Harris portrays a motley group on a mission to capture the indigenous people of Mariella. As Donne captures Mariella, an Arawak woman, he takes her as a hostage with him to track down the other natives of Mariella who have fled. Therefore Mariella, who stands for the name of a settlement and of a person, becomes a living presence as Harris counters the discourses of colonisation. Harris questions some of the assumptions of the colonisers and exposes the absurdity of such thought and feeling.

In the novel, there is a resistance to the use of the English language. As discussed in the earlier chapter "The Nativisation of English", Cameron calls it
“brutal sounds” (PP: 43), and old Schomburgh manages only “scarred broken
words” (PP: 28). The colonisers were not bothered by these linguistic hazards,
which the English language has inflicted upon its non-native speakers. Neither
did they try to understand the nuances and ingenuity of the indigenous
languages. In the novel, Mariella, an Arawak woman speaks in her native
tongue. Old Schomburgh manages to understand her language and dons the
role of an interpreter who translates it into English. But Donne, the captain of
the crew and the symbolic representation of the white coloniser, despises her
language when he says, “What does she say?” he demanded. “You know the
blasted Buck talk” (PP: 60).

Though Donne needs her words of wisdom, as she is the only person
who knows the trails and can guide them, he discards her language as the
‘blasted Buck talk’. He does not know her language, neither does he take any
effort to learn it. But since her indigenous language is different from his
much-glorified English, his linguistic chauvinism enables him to drub it as an
inferior tongue. The ingenuity of the languages of the colonised was never
understood by the colonisers who dismissed it in haste as inferior varieties.
But Jean Aitchison is of different view when he says,

It is a mistake to think that societies which lack Western technology
have primitive languages. A Stone-age culture may well possess
less sophisticated vocabulary items, but the language’s essential
structure is likely to be as complex as that of any other language.

(221)

Since English was the language of the officials of the colonial administration
who ruled over the indigenous land and its people, it has always enjoyed a
status of power and prestige when compared to the native languages.
Donne's reaction to the Arawak woman's language is not very different from the coloniser's attitude towards the native languages. However, Donne, no matter what his opinions are, has to listen to Mariella's voice for his own survival. The Aboriginal presence is brought alive through the character of Mariella, and Donne who symbolises the coloniser, has to recognise her presence and obey her directions.

When the invaders landed in the Caribbean islands they considered themselves to be destined to own and rule the land. They asserted their power by colonising the land and any form of resistance from the indigenous people was considered to be a rebellion against their monopoly and a challenge to their military prowess. The native tribes were seen as a blot on the face of the land and a block to the establishment of their empire. Moreover the discursive practices in creating an otherness with regards to the Caribs who are reported to have one eye in the forehead and cannibals, which started from the writings of Columbus' *Journal*, gave the colonisers the added advantage in evicting these natives from their land and were not given even the status of a human being. The colonial representations of the indigenous people are quite essential in the negation of the humanitarian rights that were denied in the whole process of colonisation. The native tribes were cruelly decimated on the pretext of their forced identity as cannibals. In the novel, *Palace of the Peacock*, Donne who identifies himself with the colonisers speaks in the same vein when he says,

"Isn't it a fantastic joke that I have to bargain with them and think of them at all?" he spoke bitterly and incredulously. "Who would believe that these devils have title to the Savannahs and to the
region? A stupid legacy--aboriginal business and all that nonsense:
but there it is." (PP: 58)

Donne is not able to digest the fact that the native Aborigines can own lands
and he feels it terribly humiliating to negotiate with them for their lands. He
calls it a "stupid legacy" and drubs it as "aboriginal business" and asserts that
they do not deserve their titles to the lands. Dubbing them as devils makes
things easy for Donne in furthering his obsession with the native land. When
Donne captures Mariella, the Arawak woman, she is subjected to severe
cruelties and is "ruled like a fowl" (PP: 15). Unable to bear Donne's cruelty
she blurts out: "She shuddered and sobbed. 'He beat me', she burst out at last.
She lifted her dress to show me her legs. I stroked the firm beauty of her flesh
and touched the ugly marks where she had been whipped" (PP: 16). As Donne
beats and whips her, she complains that Donne is "cruel and mad" (PP: 16).
Harris brings in the native voice and feelings that have been suppressed for
ages, through the character of Mariella. The colonisers might have had a high
self-esteem about themselves and their moral responsibility in bringing
civilisation to the islands against all odds. More often than not the native voice
was suppressed which was never given a hearing. But Harris, through the
character of Mariella breaks the suppressed silence and manoeuvres a space
for the suppressed voice which has a completely different view regarding the
presence of the colonisers. She belongs to a race that nurtures grievance and
hatred towards the colonisers as the wounds of colonisation remains unhealed
in their hearts. As the narrator points out, "She belonged to race that neither
forgave nor forgot" (PP: 71).

Even in the delineation of the characters, Harris points out that they are
not easily compliable and their apparent meekness should not be confused
with the acceptance of their lot. When Mariella is taken into custody by Donne, she sails along with the crew who follow the trails of other Arawak men, who, when caught will be forced to work in Donne's plantations. As she travels with the crew, her posture is described as follows:

She sat still as a bowing statue, the stillness and surrender of the American Indian of Guiana in reflective pose. Her small eyes winked and blinked a little. It was an emotionless face. The stiff brooding materiality and expression of youth had vanished, and now--in old age--there remained no sign of former feeling. There was almost an air of crumpled pointlessness in her expression, the air of wisdom that a millennium was past, a long timeless journey was finished without appearing to have begun, and no show of malice, enmity and overt desire to overcome oppression and evil mattered any longer. (PP: 71)

It is an expressionless face that tries to negate every threat and persecution. She knows well that she is betraying men who belong to her race. But she also knows that if she refuses, her own life will be at stake. Therefore she sits with an "unearthly pointlessness" (PP: 72), oblivious of the crew that is around her and their threat of persecution. The injustices that were meted out to them are severe and linger fresh in their minds that they find it difficult to forgive and forget. Therefore even though there is an apparent submission and subservience to their colonial masters there can be no denial of the fact that there is an inherent resistance lurking beneath the facade of meekness. This is evident when Donne tells of their behaviour: "They call me Sir and curse me when I'm not looking" (PP: 58). Wilson Harris captures this resistance, which masquerades in various forms. Even in the casual
conversation of the characters there is a resistance which questions, though subtly, the centre/periphery power relations and a desire to alter it. The characters are shown to be totally unhappy with their present situation in which they are forced to live and we see them abusing and cursing the colonisers and their English language.

Though Harris believes in the power of spiritual love to unite the polyphonic setting of the Caribbean islands, when it comes to the indigenous races, he is circumspect of his conviction. The motley group of Donne and his crew though gnawed by contradicting opinions and cultural differences, towards the end strike a chord of unity in the palace of the universe:

This was the palace of the universe and the windows of the soul looked out and in. The living eyes in the crested head were free to observe the twinkling stars and eyes and windows on the rest of the body and the wings. Every cruel mark and stripe and ladder had vanished. (PP: 146-147)

The settlers have a different post-colonial experience than that of the indigenous tribes of the islands whose land was forcibly confiscated and their people brutally wiped out. Though there is no gain saying of the experiences of slavery and deracination which the settlers suffered at the hands of the colonisers, Harris sees a possibility for a future West Indian society that can live, in spite of the differences, in harmony through the power of love. But Harris, significantly, leaves out Mariella in the final union. Throughout the novel there is a constant friction and resistance between Donne and Mariella. While Donne is unable to accept her as an important member of his crew, he is also aware of the fact that without her native skills there is no return for his
crew. Even as he is willing to heed to her directions he is unwilling to recognise her rights as a native of the land. On the other hand although Mariella acts as a part of the crew, she remains always as an outsider and never integrates with the others. She is unwilling to yield to Donne’s authority and she is defiant in her attitude towards him. Even while she recognises that Donne is the captain of the crew, she refuses to budge to his dictatorial powers and in turn calls him mad:

“Donne cruel and mad,” Mariella cried. She was staring hard at me. I turned away from her black hypnotic eyes as if I had been blinded by the sun, and saw inwardly in the haze of my blind eye a watching muse and phantom whose breath was on my lips.

She remained close to me and the fury of her voice was in the wind. (PP: 16)

If at all there was a truce needed in the novel, it should be between Donne and Mariella as there is always a tension and resistance in their relationship. But significantly Harris does not bring in Mariella in the final chapter where the I-narrator realises the scope of spiritual love that can transcend “cruelty and confusion in the blindness and frustration of desire” (PP: 152).

Before her disappearance, the final description of Mariella is that of her native navigational skills on the rocky terrains of the cliffs: “The Arawak woman rolled like a ball on the cliff, clinging to tree and stone and Vigilance was able to follow” (PP: 117). Mariella, makes her escape from the colonising Donne and simply disappears from the novel. She retains her grievance and anger against the colonisers and remains a part of her race that “neither forgave nor forgot” (PP: 71).
Harris, through the character of Donne, ridicules the whole act of colonisation. Donne sets out with a mission to capture the folks of Mariella and bring them for work on his estate. He identifies himself with the coloniser when he says:

"Now I'm a man. I've learnt," he waved his hands at the savannahs, "to rule this. This is the ultimate. This is everlasting. One doesn't have to see deeper than that, does one?" he stared at me hard as death. "Rule the land," he said, "while you still have a ghost of a chance. And you rule the world. Look at the sun." (PP: 19)

For Donne, the ultimate thing in life is to rule the land. He loves to have everything under his control. He acts as the captain of the crew who give their "divine attention" (PP: 21) to him. He does not brook any rebellion or resistance from the natives and behaves rudely to gain control. His behaviour towards Mariella speaks volumes of his cruelty. His lust for power and land is ably masked by the recognition of his responsibility akin to the 'white man's burden':

"I have treated the folk badly," he admitted. "But you do know what this nightmare burden of responsibility adds up to, don't you? How gruesome it can be? I do wish," he spoke musingly, "someone would lift it from my shoulders..." (PP: 56)

The colonisers' lust for land resulted in the power struggle that placed them in direct conflict with the natives. The colonisers, simply by the virtue of gun powder managed to eliminate the resistance as they annexed estates to their property. Native land was demarcated and new boundaries were fixed.
establishing their power. In the novel the I-narrator highlights the futility of these practices:

The map of the savannahs was a dream. The names Brazil and Guiana were colonial conventions I had known from childhood. I clung to them now as to a curious necessary stone and footing, even in my dream, the ground I knew I must not relinquish . . . I could not help cherishing my symbolic map, and my bodily prejudice like a well-known room and house of superstition within which I dwelt. \(PP: 20\)

These symbolic maps and imaginary boundaries never become real as Donne in his quest for conquest becomes the victim: "They were the pursuers and now they had become the pursued" \(PP: 106\). Though Donne tries hard to maintain his control, he is never in control of anything. Mariella emerges as a symbol of resistance who continually defies his power. His crew, though apparently travels in one boat with a single vision, they are actually plagued with in-fighting and most of the crewmembers die on the way. As they get carried away by the currents their boat is wrecked \(PP: 117\). Donne, finally realises that all his colonising endeavours are futile:

An abstraction grew around him--nothing else--the ruling abstraction of himself which he saw reflected nowhere. He was a ruler of men and a ruler of nothing. The sun rose into the blinding wall and river before him filling the stream and water with melting gold. He dipped his hand in but nothing was there. \(PP: 127-128\)
Harris exposes the futility of the colonisers’ materialistic cravings for power and wealth through the character of Donne. He makes him realise that it is only in the spiritual love that human beings can find fulfilment:

In the rooms of the palace where we firmly stood—free from the chains of illusion we had made without—the sound that filled us was unlike the link of memory itself. It was the inseparable moment within ourselves of all fulfilment and understanding. Idle now to dwell upon and recall anything one had ever responded to with the sense and sensibility that were our outward manner and vanity and conceit. *(PP: 151)*

Harris through the character of Donne hits at the colonisers who are bound by their “chains of illusion” and ridicules their desire to control. He also points out that absolute colonisation is never possible as it is grounded on shadowy footing of imaginary boundaries and the coloniser is made to realise that he is a “ruler of nothing” *(PP: 127).* Even the native tribes, who can be easily subdued by the point of gun, never fail to express their resistance and strong resentment towards the colonisers. Through the characters of Mariella and Donne, Harris captures the antagonistic feeling that is survived even centuries after colonisation and remains problematical in the relationship of the coloniser and the colonised. Harris decolonises the colonial assumptions that supported the act of colonisation by producing a counter-perspective of it when he shows the disillusionment of Donne.

Harris as a postcolonial writer is concerned about the post-colonial scenario of the Caribbean islands. While he brings people of various races together and highlights their need to be united and forge a distinct identity, he
captures the resistance that prevails among the native tribes whose land has been confiscated as their lives face the threat of extinction. Harris points out the futility of the whole enterprise of colonisation when the coloniser ends up as the vanquished as the colonised show their bitter resentment and defies his attempt to exercise absolute control. The colonial assumptions of the superiority of the coloniser is ridiculed as Donne, in spite of all his boastful claims depends on the wisdom of Mariella for his survival and towards the end realises his folly and yields himself to the saving grace of spiritual love where boundaries and differences are transcended. Harris while interrogating the colonial assumptions reverses the hierarchy of the coloniser and the colonised and portrays the learning experiences of the coloniser and counters the colonial discourse of the assumed superiority of the colonisers.

While addressing the postcolonial experiences of the Caribbean islands, both Selvon and Harris take it upon themselves to counter the colonial discourses that were constructed to further the interest of the colonisers. Though they are varied in their thematic concerns the underlying motive to decolonise the colonial assumptions that negate the truth about the West Indian individuals mark their commitment to the societies they belong. As they are sensitive to the important role of English that supported the colonising enterprise, Selvon and Harris appropriate the language to offer counter-discourses as part of their decolonising efforts.

Revising/Rewriting to Expose the Politics of Aboriginal Writing

Mudrooroo in his novel *Doin Wildcat* offers a postcolonial critique to the various discourses that were built around the life of Australian Aborigines. He addresses the struggle that exists between Aborigines and the whites and
portrays the plight of Aborigines who are always at the receiving end. He exposes the hypocritical nature of the western policies of the colonisers and the problems concerning the assimilation of Aborigines into the white mainstream. He also brings out the politics that was involved in Aboriginal writings that were controlled by the whites that stifled the true voice of Aboriginal writers.

Mudrooroo's *Doin Wildcat* is a rewriting of his earlier novel, *Wild Cat Falling*, published in 1965. Mudrooroo looks at the former through the fictional window of the latter and exposes the politics that was involved in the earlier writing. He also addresses various discourses of the west that concern Australian Aborigines and offers his counter-perspective. *Wild Cat Falling* is the first novel written in English by an Aboriginal writer. The novel deals with an Aboriginal youth who becomes a victim of the assimilation policies of the white administrators. As he is forcibly removed from the loving arms of his mother he is sent to a Welfare home and later to the prison. After his failed attempt of burglary, he meekly surrenders to the police and courts arrest.

Mudrooroo comments on his novel in his book *Writing From the Fringe*:

My novel, *Wild Cat Falling*, heavily edited and launched with a foreword which in effect said that assimilation was working in that now 'they' can write novels just as 'they' can paint watercolours, was well received. But followed to a great extent the metropolitan tradition with the hall marks of character development, supposedly a feature of the then modern novels. The unnamed character advanced into the arms of the police and the ending provided the hope that he might eventually settle down, or be assimilated into the wider Australian society if given the necessary help. (34)
The novel *Wild Cat Falling* is an achievement in that it is not only the first Aboriginal novel to be published, but from the western perspective, it is also a success to the assimilation policies that were aimed to nurture the Aboriginal youth to get on to the mainstream of white Australia. Mudrooroo’s novel falls well within the western standards and conventions of how a novel should be written. Mudrooroo conforms to the literary traditions of the west to a great extent in form, content and language and does not hurt the western sentiment in the treatment of his subject.

But when the same novel is reworked in *Doin Wildcat*, the western conventions are broken, and the story is rewritten from an Aboriginal perspective, in an Aboriginal dialect, incorporating Aboriginal oratures. Commenting on *Doin Wildcat*, Mudrooroo remarks in *Writing From the Fringe*:

In 1988, I returned to the story again in *Doin Wildcat*. The character had gone to gaol, written *Wildcat Falling* in gaol as a project of rehabilitation, been released and much later was hired to script his novel. *Doin Wildcat* is on one level the story of the making of the film. On another level, it shows what happens to the Aboriginality of a script when it is made into a film by a White director. A third level is to try and escape the conventions of the novel. Conventions such as an ending. Also it was an attempt to write an entire fictional work in dialect and to include some examples of contemporary Aboriginal oral literature. All in all, I consider it my best work to date; others consider it my worst. (174)
Doin Wildcat deals with the making of a film of his earlier novel Wild Cat Falling. Though both the texts are physically different and can exist on their own, the thematic strand that runs through these novels overlap each other at various levels. The latter novel attempts a critique on the earlier one and explores the tension that existed between Aboriginal writing and the colonial master's response to it. Mudrooroo looks at his Wild Cat Falling, written under white dominance, through the fictional window of Doin Wildcat to explain the politics that was involved in the writing and publishing of the novel. It also offers a critique on the politics of representation when the white director changes the script to suit the western audience. As Mudrooroo offers his counter-perspective of the white interference into the Aboriginal life, he also experiments with the form of the novel and experiments with the language. Therefore, the three levels, as mentioned above by Mudrooroo, are punctuated with politics that crop up between the western Intelligentsia and the native Aboriginal writers.

Mudrooroo's experimentation does not confine itself to language but also spills over to the form. The early Aboriginal novels were modelled on the western classics and to a large extent conformed to the great literary traditions of Europe. But Mudrooroo in Doin Wildcat extends the frontiers of 'novel' to inculcate the indigenous forms into it. To a great extent it is a play within a novel which is interspersed with stories and anecdotes. There is no sequence of stages of character development and it does not offer a definite ending.

Aboriginal literature does not arise out of a vacuum. It springs from the well of emotions and hope for a better future free from the shackles of white dominance. It is an integral part of the struggle that goes on between the Aborigines and the colonisers. It is written with a purpose to contribute to the
redressing of people’s perceptions of their cultural identity and historicity. It also seeks to contribute to the form and content of the growing modern tradition of Aboriginal literature. Therefore, it is not sufficient to join the bandwagon of the western literary tradition, which is guilty of exploitation and stifling the voice of the marginalised. Aboriginal novelists forge their own novels capturing the indigenous literary forms of orality and story telling and chart a course for Aboriginal writing. Therefore Mudrooroo extends the conventional structure of the novel to accommodate his cultural patterns.

Mudrooroo is aware of the response his novel would receive from critics and publishers who might castigate him for breaking the conventional structures. But the desire to carve out an Aboriginal literary tradition gets the better of Mudrooroo, and his only response for all the reactions and objections that might be raised against his language, form and content seems to lie in the words of the narrator of *Doin Wildcat*: “Come on, yuh can’t take on a black in an argument. Yuh can’t argue like we do: yuh know ow we do it? We say: ‘Well, fuck yuh’- then stalk off. That’s our answer to everythin: ‘Fuck yuh’” (*DWC*: 69)

In *Doin Wildcat*, Al Wrothberg, “the biggest an whitest director/producer we’ve ever seen, an come all the way from America to spend big bucks and mix with us Abo’s to make a filim based on me book” (*DWC*: 3) also stands for the surrogate white coloniser of the neo-colonial era who misrepresents and falsifies facts regarding Aboriginal life. His shooting of the film can be viewed as an exercise in fictionalizing things, both literally and metaphorically, by documenting the Aboriginal life into the most popular medium. The ‘I’ narrator of the novel is also the scriptwriter of the movie that is being shot by Al Wrothberg. It is a part autobiographical story of the
narrator’s miserable early teens and gruesome prison experience. Al Wrothberg shoots the movie, for a touch of reality, in the very places that are mentioned in the novel *Wild Cat Falling*. He shoots the film for solely commercial reasons coupled with the desire to please his white audience. In the process, he does not hesitate to change the script to suit the western tastes. He wants to be realistic in the portrayal of the locale of the action but in the depiction of the character he prefers to tamper with the original script so as to please his white audience. Ernie, who plays the role of the script writer in the movie, informs about the changes Al Wrothberg makes:

> Yuh know this character of yours, well, don’t yuh think ee’s a bit too quiet? Al’s decided to make some changes to it. Nothing big, yuh understand. Jest letting yuh know, so that yuh won’t be too surprised when yuh see some parts are different from the way yuh wrote em. (*DWC*: 11-12)

It is true Al’s venture is not to make a documentary film of the Aborigines and their traumatic experiences with the white colonisers. But even in a commercial movie, the misrepresentation of the Aborigines can produce negative images in the minds of the viewers.

As Al shoots the prison scene, the narrator feels “the scars of those other days ache in me memory” (*DWC*: 5). The prison gardens remind him of his hard labour for a pittance of fifty cents a week and a ration of tobacco. His disgust for prison is made manifest when he says: “Still there’s that smell bout that place. Smell of prison; smell of prison soap; smell of fear; smell of commands issued and obeyed. Smell of kids bein fucked into stupid lives by so-called men” (*DWC*: 70).
The story and the incidents are a painful reminder for the scriptwriter who has been through all of it. But Al is more interested in capturing the local colour than to address the poignancy of the tragic incidents of prison. He says,

Say, listen, I've been playing this game for twenty years. I know what'll click what won't. The one thing that the folks back home'll want to see is local colour. What I mean is this is where the America's Cup race was held. It was on T.V. you just gotta jog their memory. So I'll put in a shot or two of a few yachts tacking, and then, well, there's that beach scene I shoot tomorrow... you know cut from character to carnival, back to character, to carnival and so on. Man, I can see that. It will work and it'll bring the whole thing into focus. (DWC: 29-30)

While the story of the film is about an Aborigine, the intended audience is western. So Al wants to shoot a couple of shots that would remind them of America's cup race. He dilutes the tragic incident of prison experience with America's sporting event held in one of the beaches of Australia. He has also forgotten (or has he ignored?) that the Aborigines have bitter memories regarding the yacht race. The script writer tells Ernie: "Yuh know, when they ad the yacht race ere, they tried to keep the Aborigines outa town. We aven't forgotten that" (DWC: 51)!

The native was driven out of his land because a foreigner wanted to play games on the shores. Therefore what is tragic for the Aborigines is carnival for the West. But since Al, the white, is the director of the film, the narrator/script writer has no power to retain his text. He simply says, "What
can I do, but say 'fuck it', an let the cameras roll. Life is only dreams an feelins. Cut" (DWC: 36)!

Though the script writer is an Aborigine, his writing is only closer to reality, and not reality itself. Therefore arguments may be raised regarding the credibility of the incidents and the writer’s reaction to Al’s changing of the script, given the fact that the novel itself cannot be a true story in its ultimate sense of ‘reality’. The narrator seems to be aware of this and tries to answer:

I don’t trust what Al is doin to me script. Got to keep an eye on im, but then I wait for a cup of tea, an forget about it. So much as bin changed that it ain’t a true story anymore, but then it never ad bin. It’s just a book, just a filim like any other one, if it’s like that, ow come I feel so bad about the changes made? Dunno, maybe I want to put people in it I like an know? May be I want to ave a record of ow it was when I was a kid? It means something to me. I know that now! (DWC: 107)

More than the emotional bonding between the writer and his writing, the narrator feels a moral commitment to the portrayal of his society and events. No adventures and no unravelling of plot are done for the sake of doing it. Rather, the Aboriginal writer reports the events that have wronged his race and were systematically suppressed and twisted. Therefore the Aboriginal novel is not entirely fictitious but contains the records of Aboriginal life and their encounter with the white colonisers. This is in sharp contrast to Al’s making of the film who considers it as a “game” (DWC: 29). Kevin Gilbert, in his “Black Policies”, opines about the responsibility of an Aboriginal writer:
An onus is on Aboriginal writers to present the evidence of our true situation. In attempting to present the evidence we are furiously attacked by white Australians and white converts, whatever their colour, as, 'Going back two hundred years... the past is finished. Yet, cut off a man's leg, kill his mother, rape his land, psychologically attack and keep him in a powerless position each day--does it not live on in the mind of the victim? Does it not continue to scar and affect the thinking? Deny it, but it still exists.

(41)

It is this memory of history and the sense of responsibility as an Aboriginal writer that is responsible for the hurt that is felt by the narrator/script writer, when his text is altered by Al who wants to look at events from the western perspective.

Mudrooroo’s *Doin Wildcat* examines the politics that is involved in Aboriginal writing. It is not that when the Aborigines took to writing and started to publish novels in English, the wall that divided the ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ collapsed and the voice of the marginalised got its due attention. On the other hand, the content of the Aboriginal literature was modified to suit the western audience. The work had to go through the grind of editors and had to satisfy the publishers. More often than not, the Aboriginal writings were prefaced by the whites, recommending readership and as an apology for the Aboriginality of the text. Since writers of Aboriginality are ideological writers and socially committed, their content is predominantly protest in nature against the white interference and denial of rights. As Mudrooroo observes in *Writing From the Fringe*.
Being born in a white world is no joke for a black man or woman. A primary school education in which we suffer and react to racist taunts, the psychical and physical blows of assimilation, the coming to terms with one's Blackness the discovery of one's Aboriginality and the rebellion against a life of oppression—all these result in the formation of a writer with a message to get across. (136)

The content that counters the white dominance is altered and modified so as not to hurt the white sentiments. This interference by the whites deprives the text of its aboriginality and restricts the freedom of the writer. The exercise of editing is a calculated measure by the white publishers to read only what they want to which stifles the counter-discursive practices of the Aboriginal writers. Bruce McGuinness and Dennis Walker address this issue in “The Politics of Aboriginal Literature”:

This brings a very important fact to the surface and that is that Aboriginal people, writers who even write their own material, have no control over that material in terms of having it published. They have no control over the finances that make it possible for them to exist, make it possible for them to pursue writing as a career, and, most importantly, to act as historians in control of the way in which they write and what they write about in terms of what is happening within the Aboriginal population of Australia, within the various Aboriginal communities throughout Australia . . . that it ceases to be Aboriginal when it is interfered with, when it is tampered with by non-Aboriginal people who exist outside the spectrum of Aboriginal life, of Aboriginal culture within Australia. (44)
In *Doin Wildcat*, the narrator points out to the politics that was involved in the writing of his novel *Wild Cat Falling*. He tells that he “wrote it ere in jail” (*DWC*: 10) when he served a term in prison. In the novel *Wild Cat Falling* the protagonist is arrested for burglary and attempted murder. Though armed with a rifle, he has no guts to open fire on the cop, nor on his dogs that pounce on him and rip his flesh as he meekly “stands against a tree like a cornered Kangaroo” (131). An Aboriginal youth, who is a hunter and gatherer, is shown to succumb to the barking of dogs without offering any resistance.

Ernie, in *Doin Wildcat*, plays the role of this chicken-hearted Aboriginal youth, and is enraged with the narrator/script writer for having depicted the Aboriginal to be weak and yielding without putting up a fight.

Begin to cast me mind back, but Ernie who as slumped into the seat beside me (guess this actin business is ard work), turns an angry face at me. I try a grin, but the face still scowls. Dunno what’s wrong with im. The filim is alright, isn’t it?

Ernie: That fuckin end, bro?

‘That fuckin end? Al done it more or less as I wrote it. Not like some of the other parts. Never a word from you bout em -cept that nude scene.’

Ernie: Well, yuh ended it wrong, yuh did. All yuh got is another black fella endin up in jail. Nuthin good about that. Should ad im shoot it out with those blokes on orses. Sorry for what they done to im, that’s a joke that is? (*DWC*: 112)

Ernie is furious over the fact that an Aborigine has been made to say sorry after having suffered so much of brutality and humiliation at the hands of the
white colonisers. Earlier in the novel *Doin Wildcat*, when Ernie gives a punch on the face of a white bloke, and is asked by June to apologise to him, he replies, "Never apologized in me life, for nuthin!" (*DWC*: 79). Therefore it is understandable that Ernie is upset with the narrator for his depiction of an Aborigine.

But Al Wrothberg, the white director is elated and is all praise for the way the novel ends.

Director: This'll make the movie, man. Beautiful, real beautiful. They'll love these bush scenes in the States. I've got a sixth sense about these things, you know. Poetry and sympathy for the underdog are where it's at, and that means the Australian bush for sure: the real Australia just like our Old West. (112)

An Aborigine youth running for life into the bushes is poetry for the western audience. The white sentiment expresses sympathy over the Aboriginal youth who is cornered by the dogs and handcuffed by the cop. But it cannot stomach the display of bravery of a black Aborigine who shoots the cop and overpowers white authority. It always has to be that of the invincibility of the white power decimating the meek resistance of the black natives which would move the white audience to the ends of their sympathetic feelings towards the underdogs.

But the narrator of *Doin Wildcat* is quite candid about his intentions in giving such an ending even if it would hurt the Aboriginal sentiment. He says, "Then suddenly, I remember it's just ow I wrote me book. Ow I ad written it to comfort em" (*DWC*: 118).
Under adverse circumstances, in the prison, the narrator writes the novel *Wild Cat Falling*. Though as an Aboriginal, he would have loved to have the cop killed, his present predicament leaves little scope as he has been given 'The Governor's Pleasure' (a form of punishment where the prisoner had to please the Governor to be let out). He says, "That book was me ticket to the outside, bradda. It ad to please em, so the ending was an appy one for em (*DWC*: 113).

As a prisoner, the narrator has to please the white authorities and hence the ending of the novel is one that would please them. An Aborigine rebel has been shown to feel sorry for what he has done--a positive sign in the process of assimilation--and willingly obeys the cop by offering to be handcuffed without putting up any resistance.

Al Wrothberg, who is elated about the whole thing, shoots his film based on the ending of the novel *Wild Cat Falling*. But the narrator/script writer of *Doin Wildcat* offers a critique on the ending of his earlier novel, *Wild Cat Falling*. Therefore the narrator offers two other alternate endings to his earlier novel. Now that the narrator has no obligation to please the white authorities, he exercises the freedom of a creative writer, and extends the conventions of a novel, by offering more than one ending to his earlier novel. The other two alternate endings are:

He doesn't shoot anyone, just gets away. Ee doubles back to the city, an uses the money to make it to freedom in the east. What do yuh think of that?

Ernie: Better than the one I just did.
'Old on a sec, aven't finished yet. Ad another endin too. I liked this one a lot. Bit like the movie, so I'll put yuh in the role, so yuh can easily follow it. Yuh an jinda do the job. Yuh both take rifles. The cop get it an yuh off into the bush. Yuh both meet old Wally, I mean Winjee an, after yuh leave im, you ear those dogs an then orses gallopin towards yuh. Yuh get be'ind a fallen log. Wait for those dogs, wait for those orses an men to reach yuh. Yuh both get yer rifles, an they is waitin too, waitin for those policemen. . .

(DWC: 112-113)

While the first ending depicts a submissive aborigine youth who lacks the guts to fight against the white oppressors, the second ending depicts an escapist Aborigine. He steals money and gives a slip to the cops and goes to East. He is shown as a fugitive who deserts his homeland. But the third ending depicts the Aborigine to be in a revengeful mood. He braves to face the music, as he gets ready, armed with rifle, to take the cop and his dogs head on. The narrator expresses his preference to this ending than the other two.

But the narrator goes on to say that since his novel Wild Cat Falling has an ending that pleases the whites he had little difficulty in getting his novel published.

So ee wrote that book, nice white social workers elped im, an the reports went in, an the book got written, then published. I was an, what do yuh call it, an exemplary prisoner, an so after a dozen years or so I was let out. Bin out ever since. So now yuh know why the endins like that. It ad to appen, it was as it appened- at least to em!"  

(DWC:113)
The politics of writing is brought to the fore as the socio-political conditions of the writer impinge upon his literary aesthetics, which has a considerable impact on his creative output. The narrator highlights the conflict in writing and publishing that is maimed with the interference of politics which has a detrimental effect on Aboriginal writing. Because of these constraints, Mudrooroo feels that Aboriginal writing is deprived of its originality. In *Writing From the Fringe*, he says:

I feel that it is away from the printing houses of the established publishers that an originality of Aboriginal writing is to be found. There is an increasing number of Aborigines writing who do not go through the processes of being published. (29-30)

Mudrooroo points out to the circumstantial factors that restrict Aboriginal writers from exercising their freedom and remain true to their creative expression.

Al Wrothberg shoots the film in the exact places as mentioned in the novel. Therefore the prison scenes are shot in the same prison where the narrator/script writer had been a prisoner in his early teens. Though many years have passed by and much water has flown under the bridge, the narrator cannot help but remember the dreaded times he had in the prison. It should also be noted that not all imprisoned Aborigines are thieves, thugs and hardcore criminals. The discourses that were built around the Aborigines gave the administrators the moral justification for bringing the Aborigines within the boundaries of their law. In the novel, the narrator gives the reason why he was put in prison:

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To1 her straight just before I was picked up for something I didn't do. Yuh know it, yuh goin along swell an then they grab yuh one night for bein on the street an before you know it, yer back inside again. (DWC: 21)

The Aborigine's 'original sin' seems to lie in the fact of being born an Aborigine. He is deprived of the basic rights of a human being--to enjoy the warmth of family and kinship. In the novel, the narrator, even as a child of nine is snatched from the loving arms of his mother to be sent to welfare homes, to be bred and groomed in the civilised way of the west, and is thus sandwiched between two differing cultures. This hideous act is made possible and legalised by the Aborigines Act of 1910. As Darrel Lewis observes:

It was this act which allowed 'half caste' children to be taken away from their parents and raised in institutions, a law now recognized by Aborigines and Whites alike as one of the most inhumane ever applied to Aboriginal people. (5)

The western intrusion into Aboriginal affairs has had detrimental effects on the native culture and life. Arguably, the worst affected part of their culture is their family kinship. Families were broken as children were forcibly removed from their parents with the assumption that the Aboriginal parents do not know how to bring up their children. Since the Aboriginal way of life was considered uncivilised and uncouth, the missionaries instituted this practice to instil Christian virtues in young lives. As Colin Bourke and Bill Edwards, point out in "Family and Kinship":

The separation of Aboriginal children from their families began in earnest in 1883 when the NSW Aborigines Protection Board was
established to control what non-Aborigines perceived to be a growing problem of Aboriginal populations congregating around towns (Edwards and Read, 1989: xii). It was argued that the children of these people could be turned into useful citizens if they were taken from their parents and socialized as Europeans. A policy of child removal began based on the “idleness” of the parents from which the child should be “protected” . . . and placed in Aboriginal Children’s Homes. (101)

The colonisers did not understand the complexity of Aboriginal kinship and social systems. Little did they realise that it was considered as a legacy of their Ancestral Spirit Beings and was a part of their tradition of The Dreaming. Since Aboriginal societies are closely knit, every individual is expected to play his/her role in the society. Even children are not exempted from contributing to the good of the extended family which give them their social identity. Therefore, even at an early age, an Aboriginal child is educated concerning his/her responsibility to the society and family. According to Aboriginal Women’s Taskforce Report in Women’s Business, Children are the responsibility of the entire family rather than to the biological parents alone. Many Aboriginal people have been ‘grown up’ by members of the family other than the biological mother and father and this practice of growing up children is still very wide spread today. Often it is the children’s grandparents who carry out the growing up. They also are very important members of the family unit and are heavily relied upon to play a large part in child rearing. As a result of the children being encouraged to think
and have responsibility at a very early age, they have a large degree of personal autonomy. (qtd. in Colin Bourke and Bill Edwards 115)

The extended family system enables the children to garner the realisation that they belong to a larger community rather than living within the close confines of a family. The growing up of children by their grandparents, the elders of the community, gives children the opportunity to learn various aspects of their traditional life.

But when the children are snatched from their families and herded in Welfare Homes, they badly suffer from identity crisis, not to mention the agony of their mothers. Having removed from their traditional life, they are taught to think and act white. An Aboriginal child is, thus, caught between two cultures and struggles in not being able to relate to either of them. In the novel Doin Wildcat, the narrator recollects the plight of his childhood days in Swanview, which any Aboriginal youth can identify himself with:

I ad to play games there. Ad to do everything in teams too. Yuh know, march in teams, play sports in teams, eat in teams, shit in teams, shower in teams, sleep in teams. Yuh name it, we done it in teams. I ate teams. (DWC: 67)

He resents the collective identity with which he is known that is radically different from the communal identity he has with his community and regrets that he is never let to decide anything for himself. In a Welfare Home he is deprived of his individuality as he congregates with the rest of the Aboriginal kids who also share the same plight. He has always been taught to obey orders and never to talk back.
Yuh know, I'm what's called institutionalized, bin in one place or another most of me life, an it appened from the age of nine when I found myself in Swanview. There I done me basic trainin on ow to exist in a institution. \textit{(DWC: 85)}

The most significant aspect of the Welfare Homes is that while the white society receives a young Aboriginal boy into its fold, it rejects him when he becomes an adult. He is forced to fend for himself in a world, which he does not belong to. As he is left high and dry, his instinct to survive gets the better off him and he indulges in petty thieving from shops and stores. As the doors of Welfare Homes are shut on him, he seeks shelter within the walls of prison, as the codified white legal system is unfavourable to him. Because the white world grimaces at him, he resents his day of freedom as the prison remains a haven for him. In the novel, \textit{Doin Wildcat}, the narrator points out to the fact that some of his prison inmates are total misfits in the white society and hence take prison as their refuge.

‘Yuh know, there are blokes who can’t stand the outside. Can’t take it all. They come in for five years say, then one day they are eaved out. They out one day, then in the next. An ol mate of mine was like that. The screws even useta keep is cell for im. . . . Yuh know, I couldn’t andle anything. Cars and buses, shops an streets. I remember goin into a supermarket. Seein all those goods on the shelves, same kinda things with different brand names put me into a fright. Man I was shiverin. Couldn’t make a choice, didn’t know ow to. All those things just pressin in on me. I couldn’t take it, just couldn’t ack it.’ \textit{(DWC: 83- 84)}
The voluntary imprisonment of the Aborigines is misconstrued by the non-Aborigines and discourses are built denouncing them as devious, lazy and morally depraved. However, it should be noted that their ancestral land has been stolen, along with basic human rights and their freedom. It is not without a tinge of irony that a race that has suffered so much of a loss at the hands of white colonisers is in turn called devious and dishonest.

In the novel, the narrator shares his prison experiences. The cell is tiny and badly lit. His only company in the cell is a shit bucket and a Bible. The hair which he fondly grew is cut and he is given a rough clothing of grey and brown. The prisoners are subjected to hard labour and inhuman treatment at the hands of white officers. At the time of release, each prisoner is given "our lousy pay: just enough to buy a few drinks" (DWC: 83). Though the narrator has to undergo all these hardships in the prison, he says that he did not feel happy at the thought of his release.

'Achin with the pain I felt standin at the window of me cell starin out at the dark sea an earin from be'ind bars the ebb and flow of the freedom sea. I ear the lap of the waters an begin telling er bout the time I was gettin out of prison an instead of feelin appy just felt sad. Yuh know, I ad no one to go to.' (DWC: 83)

The prison experience not only affects them physically but also leaves a lasting impact on the psyche of the Aborigines. The men who once go into the prison are never the same again. In the novel, Kevin, an Aboriginal trainee director, shares an anecdote in which one of his relatives who is new to the city is awestruck on seeing the elevator. He is unable to understand how people who go into a tiny room, which has no windows or any other doors,
disappear and a new group of people come out. The narrator compares this to the prison cell and draws a parallel to the transformation that takes place in the minds of individuals who are kept in it.

They all laugh at this. All except me. Yeah, people go into little rooms just like this one. They put yuh in these little rooms an then after a time, too long a time, they take yuh out, and yuh 've changed, all different inside. That’s what they did to me. They locked me away in this tiny cell, left me for a month an then came an took a new me out. A quieter an more passive me; a meaner an nastier me too. Well, fuck em I say! (DWC: 18)

The cruelties of prison and the inhuman punishment at the hands of white officers drain the Aborigines of any will to express their resentment and resistance. They learn it in the hard way how not to give vent to their ill feelings that they nurture towards the colonisers. They are taught to obey orders and be subservient to the white authorities. As a result the prison eats away the guts and leaves the Aborigines passive and without the will to resist.

Mudrooroo deflates the myth that the Aborigines are morally depraved and cannot do without the civilising practices of the west. He also highlights the fact that Welfare Homes contrary to their purpose, did more harm than good by disrupting the familial system of native life. Mudrooroo also takes a dig at the white laws which legitimise the brutalities that are inflicted on the Aborigines. The trustworthiness of welfare officers are questioned in the novel when the narrator points out to the incident when his probation officer, Mr. Robinson, promises to help him out in his trial, but eventually turns a traitor in front of the magistrate.
The bastard as dobbed me in good and proper. What statement? Ee wanted me to talk about meself, an I obliged im. Now I get it flung back in me face. Can't trust any of these so-called welfare officers. They'll do yuh in as soon as spit at yuh! (DWC: 89)

The double standards of the white welfare officers is in direct contrast when pitted against the seventeen-year-old Aborigine who refuses to take an oath on Bible in front of the magistrate but speaks the truth upon his honour:

Magistrate: Oh ... now remember that you have given me your word of, of honour to tell the truth. This is very important. Do you feel any remorse for the offences you have committed?
‘Dunno. what that is. I was angry, the rent was due, an I needed dough.’ (DWC: 90)

A simple monosyllabic word ‘yes’ would have seen him “escape on a bond” (DWC: 87). From the non-Aborigine’s perspective, feeling remorse for a petty theft is a sign of progress towards the bigger project of assimilation. It is also a sign that, if given time, he will mend his ways and integrate with the civilised white community. But the same reply, from an Aborigine’s point of view, would mean weakness and being submissive. As he belongs to a race that suffers from the scars of colonisation, he is defiant and unrelenting. “What do they expect, that I’ll break down an beg forgiveness . . . don’t give em the satisfaction of seein ow scared yuh are” (DWC: 89).

Because he is brutally frank, unlike Mr. Robinson, and speaks the truth without camouflaging his resentment he ends up in prison for eighteen months.
I watched that cunt Robinson an that magistrate whisperin together
an knew me rabbit was trapped. Still, I didn’t believe that I would
get eighteen months, but I got it. A bloody stupid kid getting
eighteen fuckin months in Freo. That was what they were like!
(DWC: 90)

The Aborigines are not expected to talk back to the white colonisers.
They are supposed to stay in their assigned places and assumed roles. As
wards of the State they are expected to be content, if not grateful to the white
government and white policies. Even a rightful claim to their rights is seen as
a mark of rebellion which has to be addressed with punitive measures before it
becomes a threat to the white society in Australia. In the novel, Mr. Robinson,
tries to teach a couple of things as to how to behave in a white society:

Me probation officer. Mr. Robinson was there with is shit advice. I
keep noddin as ee whispers: ‘Now listen carefully. Don’t give the
magistrate any lip, understand! No answering back, just speak when
you’re spoken to.’ (DWC: 87).

The narrator in Doin Wildcat talks back to the colonisers and rewrites
history from the Aboriginal perspective. In the process, he counters the
discourses that were created about the native indigenous people and their
culture. It also exposes the double standards and the hypocritical nature of
white policies and white officers.

One of the cultural symbols of Aborigines is the ‘boomerang’. The
narrator calls it “the most returning one in istory” (DWC: 116). The
coloniser’s gift of English language boomerangs on them as the colonised
write to uncover the masks of conquest in the white policies and their legal system that legitimises it. The instituted stereotypes with which Aborigines were interpellated, are restructured with the creation of counter-discourses that are in direct confrontation with colonial discourses of the west. As a result we have the subversion of the binary opposition as black/good pitted against the white/evil.

In the novel *Doin Wildcat*, Ernie converses with the white university students regarding the integration of Aborigines into the white Australian society. They discuss the ways in which the transition should be eased and need for remedial measures to improve the quality of life of Aborigines. But Mudrooroo feels that all the big talk that goes with the assimilation policies, remain at the ideal level and never gets realised. Therefore, even as the university students discuss these issues, when the question is raised regarding the problems that tag along with these policies, the conversation abruptly comes to an end and the topic is changed. The question is left in the limbo. The narrator feels that,

> It sounds phoney. Only problem is they do talk like that, an do ask such questions, an do wait with bated breath to get the info directly from the orse’s mouth. We all know ow it is an ow to play this game. Most of us go along with it, though may be some’ll ave better answers than the one’s I’ve written. (*DWC*: 63)

All along, the white Australia has failed to understand the black ways. Aborigines have remained inscrutable and hence they have been interpellated in terms of the white man’s understanding. This gave rise to the destructive discourses that were constructed around them. The desire to assert the
superiority of the white race saw the Aborigines denounced as inferiors who had to be educated in the white ways that would, in turn, make them better citizens who will comply with the authority of the colonisers. Various measures were schemed to educate the natives in the civilised way of the west.

Mudrooroo’s novel is a rebuttal to these redemptive measures of the colonisers. Now that the centrality of the centre is questioned, he turns the table on the west and feels that it is time the whites began learning the black ways.

Girl: Yes, it’s white people who need the education, not the native. . . . I consider it stupid and arrogant to want to drag the Aborigines into our so-called civilisation. Why, why, it is like giving a jazz musician a classical music education. It’ll only spoil their natural ability. We ourselves must regain that naturalness before it is too late. We should be learning from the Aborigines, not the other way round. *(DWC: 65)*

Mudrooroo brings out the politics that is involved in stifling the growth of Aboriginal writing and publishing. As a postcolonial writer he revises/rewrites his earlier novel, which was written under the aegis of colonial authorities and exposes the extra-literary influences that stifled the Aboriginal voice. He not only defies the conventional standards of fiction writing but also manoeuvres with forms of Aboriginal dialects to offer the counter-perspective of colonisation and to give voice to the plight of Aborigines in the process of assimilation. He also deflates the myth of the white superiority by exposing the double standards of the colonisers and their laws. Mudrooroo, in his novel *Doin Wildcat*, addresses various issues concerning the Aborigines and their
culture while countering the colonial discourses as a part of his decolonising practice in the postcolonial space.

**Exposing Colonial Myths and Rewriting History**

In *True Country* Kim Scott appropriates the English language and uses it to rewrite the history of Karnama which runs counter to the western narrative. He exposes the politics that was involved in the creation of such narratives that showcased Aborigines as wild, blockheads and lazy. He attempts to rewrite history from the viewpoint of the Aborigines who were eyewitnesses to the colonial encounter. Kim Scott also experiments with Aboriginal stories as he transcribes and includes them as part of the curriculum. He addresses the problem of colonial education which is irrelevant and insufficient to the cultural needs of the Aboriginal children and exposes the colonial myth that undermined the intellectual prowess of Aboriginal children.

In the novel *True Country*, Billy comes back to Karnama in search of his roots. Having removed from his community for almost two generations, Billy's return to Karnama is in a sense a return of the native. Since colonisation, the close-knit family and kinship of Aborigines have been mutilated and members of their community got displaced and dispersed. But the knowledge of the history of their genealogy gives them their sense of identity, bonding, joy and pride. Whether they live in urban areas or in bush or they are fringe-dwellers and no matter whether they are full-blooded Aborigines or part Aborigines, they share the same kinship as they share the cultural bonding with each other. In "Australia's First Peoples: Identity and Population", Eleanor Bourke is of the view:
Europeans have based Aboriginal identity mainly on race whereas Aboriginal people speak of “my people”, representing the notion of peoplehood. This is derived from the knowledge of genealogies, and belonging to specific extended family groups. Aboriginal identity and culture is based on a distinctive cultural heritage which incorporates special meanings given to the land and people and is centered on core values. (51)

Therefore, Billy, though removed from Aboriginal community for two generations, is accepted within his community and his genealogy is traced. Walanguh, the oldest man of the community stuns Billy with his query: “Your pudda--grandmother--my sister, she die, eh” (TC: 147)? Being associated with the community, Billy looks forward to the future. He is concerned not only with his past but also about his future and his role in the community. He expresses his concern to Gerrard: “About me, the past, what I'm doing, where I belong, the future, um . . .” (TC: 129).

Billy understands that he has a role to play in his Aboriginal society. He might have been displaced for two generations but once he identifies himself with the community he is aware of his commitment towards his society and people. He has the white man’s learning at his command and hence uses it to the good of his Aboriginal community. Billy rewrites the history of Karnama. Billy’s knowledge about Karnama is entirely textual. Though Billy shares the Aboriginal blood, his knowledge about the history of his community is limited. For two generations he has lived as an outsider to the culture and experiences of his people and therefore Billy knows very little about the colonial history and the traumatic experiences of his community. Acknowledging his limitations, Billy confesses, “My first impressions of
Karnama were from Above, over a map. I looked at several maps. Karnama was labeled either ‘Aboriginal community’, or ‘Mission’, depending on the age of the map” (TC: 19).

Once he arrives in Karnama, Billy is curious to know about the history of the place and hence orders for books and journals written by the white settlers. It is also significant to note that Billy garners his initial knowledge of Karnama from books written by white colonisers about the settlement. As Billy collects information about Karnama and the Mission, he meets Fatima, an Aboriginal woman, who according to Brother Tom is “among the last of them with any understanding of their culture” (TC: 24).

Fatima, who likes to tell stories, has a series of sessions with Billy and he records them in his tape recorder. Since Billy is keen on the history of Karnama he asks Fatima: “Fatima, why not tell me the history of Karnama? Sort of like what these books do, but more what you remember, or what you know” (TC: 36-37).

As Fatima begins to tell, Billy follows it up as it is recorded in the books and the two histories come into direct conflict with each other. Though they agree on issues such as landing, meeting the first girl, Nangimara and giving gifts, the textual version suppresses facts regarding the killing and shooting of the girl.

Fatima grunted, ‘No?’ and yawned. She said, ‘it’s not in this book but, the shooting, not in this mission book’.

I found the passage I’d been searching for and never followed up the story of that particular shooting. (TC: 38)
Kim Scott, even as he problematizes the history, brings the two narratives so close, both literally and metaphorically, to highlight how far it deviates from each other. At times Billy reads from the book as Fatima complements or corrects it.

I qualified what I was about to read. I was oddly defensive, apologetic. 'And then, this is what they say here. This might not be true, because it's just the way they remember it:

*Then we noticed that some of the boys with the Father's were becoming restless and looking a bit frightened. Four of the Aborigines went back to where they'd left their spears.'*

Fatima was enthralled.

'Peter one of the boys, came up to the Abbot saying, "Father, they want war." Then the Abbot realized that he was right. They had circled us.' *(TC: 40-41)*

Settler writings have promulgated discourses that run counter to the Aboriginal voice. Exclusion of facts and inclusion of comments marked the style of their writing. Therefore when Billy reads out that the Father did not know the reason why the Aborigines want to fight them, Fatima provides the backdrop of how the killing of a dog has incited the Aborigines to attack the Mission.

'Yeah, see that's why I want to talk to you, and the others may be, because the book doesn't... it just tells you what one eye saw. they don't tell you the background like about the dog...' Fatima said, curtly, 'Yeah because they don't want to.' *(TC: 42)*
By refusing to state reasons for the fight, the European texts create a negative image of the Aborigines. It is not just ignoring the minor details of an incident, but a conscious suppression of facts which lead to distorted and biased construction of narratives. In “The Politics of Aboriginal Literature”, Bruce McGuinness and Denis Walker write about an incident where the white readership ignores the truth:

Another thing that is important is the relevance of writings. Gerry gave a good example of yesterday of something that has actually happened, talking about the taking of heads, pickling of heads and sending them to England. The white authorities, the white academia, continually suppress this information and they write about something which pleases them. . . . People just don’t want to know the truth. (52)

Kim Scot in his novel retrieves the wilful omissions and the suppressed facts that will change the contour of the western narrative regarding their relationship with the Aborigines. In the novel, Fatima is quite candid in her comments regarding the happenings and their recording in the narratives of the western text:

‘Well, it should be like I say it in that book.’ She continued. ‘that book might tell you different, this one or this one might tell you ’nother way.’ She pointed to the books on the table. ‘If you find it, it might tell you that way. So I tell people, like I do now, to you, the right way it happened. The true way, and what we people think. You can do that too, maybe.’ (TC: 43)
The epistemic violence that is generated in the construction of the narratives by the white settlers is brought to the fore. When Fatima refers to "we people", it is the collective voice of the community that asserts the "true way" and the "right way it happened" which is pitted against an individual author's perspective. It is also a confrontation between the veracity of spoken words and the duplicity of written texts. In the postcolonial writing, histories are not only problematised but also rewritten from the colonised point of view. Kim Scott rewrites the Aboriginal history from the Aborigines' point of view which marks him as a postcolonial writer who is committed to his society. In "Changing History: New Images of Aboriginal History", Steve Hemming opines:

Aboriginal people have started an invasion of their own over the last few decades--challenging the dominant "white" view of Australia's past. They have begun presenting their own versions of what has happened in Australia in the last two hundred years and before and introduced a new perspective, based on The Dreaming, of Australia's much longer history (18).

Therefore Billy who belongs to the Aboriginal community is entrusted with the responsibility of writing the recorded voice of Fatima. The socio-political climate has changed in Aboriginal Australia and hence the change in mode of transmitting knowledge is inevitable. So Fatima teams up with Billy in the production of the new narrative from the Aborigines' point of view. "... And this tape machine, I take that eh? I can listen on it, maybe do some talking on it. You can write what I say, what we say, all together. Some of us? So people will read it, and know" (TC: 43- 44).
The readership will be both Aborigines and the non-Aborigines as well. The knowledge created in the new narratives is also about both, Aborigines and non-Aborigines. As Kevin Gilbert points out in his "Black Policies":

Rewrite our Aboriginal history and remove the distortions and the lies. (Remember, the general public of white Australia know little of our real situation. They certainly do not realise the truth of how much all of Australia will benefit from Aboriginal land rights. They know little, if anything, of how we speak in our vernacular, little of how we live or feel. They are a people kept in ignorance by the media and governments, except in cases where public notice is unavoidable or the matter makes good television). (40)

The western narrative and the Aboriginal narrative differ in purpose as they differ in perspective. As the former validates the white ways and justifies colonisation, the latter contradicts and offers a counter-perspective of the whole project. When the colonised take to writing, the result is not an erasure of colonial writings, but it is an erasure of the claim to the absolutist nature of the grand narratives of the west.

On another level, True Country is a rebuttal to the colonial educational methods. The white benevolent settlers tried to impose western education on the Aboriginal children ignoring the fact of irrelevancy of the content in the context of Aboriginal Australia. Invariably the curriculum consisted of English Kings, Queens, Heroes, Culture and History, which made little sense to the indigenous children. Mudrooroo points this out in his Writing From The Fringe:
Even the education system belongs to the coloniser and reflects the things of Europe more than the things of Australia – with perhaps a few tokens of Aboriginality thrown in as a goodwill gesture. Fringe dwellers lurk on the outskirts of this system, and if they enter, they are taken in and escorted to their place. A foreign culture is thrust upon them and they recite words in a foreign tongue. (145)

Not only the syllabi were designed by the whites, those who taught them were also whites or those who were sympathetic towards the western mode of teaching. Since these teachers and what they taught were far removed from their culture, the Aboriginal children showed little interest in learning the white man's education. Hence tropes were built that the Aboriginal children are lazy, dull, rebellious, mischievous and uncontrollable.

In the novel, True Country, the white teachers of the Mission school in Karnama share the same opinion as they simply denounce the Aboriginal children:

Oh, it's so frustrating. Kids that don't know how to sit still and not getting to school until recess time. What are their parents doing? Do they feed them? No, they are playing cards. Alex goes out to see them, like to get them to help with the dancing, and they are all yes sir no sir but as soon as he is gone they forget. (TC: 23)

The teachers share a sense of racial and cultural superiority that prevents them from seeing things as they are. While they notice the indifference of the children, they fail to trace the reason for it. In "Education: The Search for Relevance", Howard Groome is of the view:
In addition to the reality of verbalised racism there is a hidden or institutionalised racism in schools. One aspect of this is the failure by schools and teachers to recognise the distinctive cultural needs of Indigenous children in their organisation, teaching and management policies. . . . (179)

In the novel, when all the other white teachers of the Mission school spend their time in complaining about the attitude of the children, Billy goes out of the way to help the Aboriginal children to cope with the white presence. Every morning he goes out to the Aboriginal settlement to wake up the children and gets them to school. His concern for the children makes the parents remark:

You see them. Teacher out front and them boys sleepy walking behind him sort of in a line waking up. He turn his head head back and talking soft to them. He get 'em there. He's all right that fella, good teacher. He Nyungar, or what. Is he? (TC: 75)

As Billy shares the Aboriginal descent, he mixes freely with the Aborigines and the children seem to enjoy his company. He goes along with Deslie for hunting and fishing expeditions. Not only does he show love and affection, but is also concerned with their education and hence experiments with the teaching materials. Billy is not content with the white curriculum as it does not meet the needs of the students. Not wanting to know the needs of the students has been one of the pitfalls of colonial educational system. As Howard Groome points out in his “Education: The Search for Relevance”:

Many teachers are ignorant about contemporary Indigenous people, their cultures, values and life styles. The House of Representatives
Select Committee (1985) found that many teachers did not understand the attitudes and motives of Indigenous students and were unresponsive to their needs. Until, very recently teachers have not received guidance in their training on how to work with Indigenous students. (182)

As Billy reads out the transcribed Aboriginal stories in the class, he finds out that the students show keen interest in listening to them. Earlier, Deslie, who is a “proper well-trained blackfella” (TC: 172) is portrayed as a trouble-maker and a dunce at school:

People worried about him, he was sniffing petrol, going too wild all round. He went to school all the time here, because they made him. But he was clever at school. Couldn’t read or write, not even his own name, but he was clever enough to trick the other kids, and teachers, too, most of the time. (TC: 173)

But when Billy introduces the Aboriginal stories into the curriculum, there is a world of difference in Deslie’s attitude towards learning. Even Billy is surprised to see the sea change in his behaviour.

It surprises him in class, how Deslie, especially, took to listening to him reading. Even before school. Billy sat in a bean bag, and Deslie beside him, and they read. It was as if it was a parent and very young child.

It was funny, really, how they got on so well. He who couldn’t read or write, and he who wanted to read and write everything too much and may be too hard. (TC: 171)
Kim Scott points out to the fact that the Aborigines do not lack in intellectual powers to learn the sophisticated learning of the west. Rather, it is just that their interest lie elsewhere and they have the acumen to learn anything that is relevant and closer to their culture. Kim Scott offers a counter-discourse in that it is the flaw in colonial educational curriculum and teaching strategies that proves to be a block for the Aborigines, and there is nothing wrong in the cerebral capabilities of the Aborigines. He also experiments with the English language as he transcribes Aboriginal stories and cultural forms and uses it as part of the school curriculum. His novel suggests that designing proper syllabi by the Aborigines, which will incorporate their traditional oral heritage, is the need of the hour, whereby the future generation will be educated in both ways—efficient in the western academic skills while retaining their strong sense of Aboriginal identity.

Kim Scott also interrogates the history of colonisation of Karnama and offers an Aboriginal perspective on the whole issue. He points out to the wilful deletions and suppression of facts by the colonisers who constructed narratives only to further their selfish ends. He also records the Aboriginal version of the incidents that took place during the colonial encounter which runs counter to the western narratives and addresses the epistemic violence that was generated by such misrepresentations.

In the Australian literary scenario, both Mudrooroo and Kim Scott employ the genre, ‘novel’, to redress the wounds that the Aborigines sustain from colonisation. While they decolonise the English language by incorporating Aboriginal dialects and cultural forms into the standard variety, they use the language to offer counter-discourses to the already existing colonial discourses that were circulated during the act of colonisation.
Histories are rewritten from the Aboriginal perspective. The coloniser’s language is appropriated to voice the suppressed feelings and the unheard cries of the Aboriginal communities are given expression, which further the project of decolonisation.

The role of English in the project of decolonisation is significant as it is reworked to dismantle the colonial discourses of the colonisers. The colonial myths are deflated as postcolonial writers offer a counter-perspective from the colonised point of view. All six novelists discussed in this chapter express their commitment to the society they belong, as they use English for counter-discursive purposes. Rewriting of texts and rewriting histories are essential components of postcolonial writings where the colonial myths and constructions are investigated and subverted, and the counter-perspectives from the colonised point of view are validated. Though the writers deal with different issues that pertain to their respective societies they display their unflinching involvement towards decolonising efforts as English is appropriated and used in the anti-colonial polemics of their writing. They are not only unhesitant to demean the coloniser’s values and the western narratives but also give voice to the suppressed voices of their community which are in direct conflict with the coloniser’s writings.