SUMMING-UP

what we come round to
in the end
is that all our thinking
has brought us nowhere

that the trail-blazing journey
has ended where it began
that thought is at best
a protection against further thought

that the heathens we sought to save
the masses to educate
need neither our salvation
nor our education.... (Richard Allen 1-12)

British colonisation of the past is now regarded as one of the grave injustices meted out to the indigenous tribes. The western intelligentsia which is informed by the *postmodern spirit* is fully alive to the ills of discrimination on the basis of race and colour. It also explains the reason behind the boom in the emergence of postcolonial studies which was/is nurtured within the citadels of western academia. As postcolonial studies is increasingly becoming an academic activity with its far-reaching theories, postcolonial writing nevertheless achieves its significance in the postcolonial experiences that are written and published by the hitherto suppressed voices.

Though writing is not a western invention, writing in English as an exercise certainly began in the colonies, only in the wake of colonisation. The gift of English language boomeranged on the colonisers when the colonised finally found their suppressed voice through their writings. Since writers are the products of their society and are conditioned by their social milieu, postcolonial writers operate as a mouthpiece for their people to express the
counter-discursive perspectives of colonisation, their pre-colonial traditional and cultural life and the present post-colonial scenario of their societies. As they investigate the dominant discourses they posit a new relationship between narrative and experience. Since the colonised were interpellated through powerful colonial representations, postcolonial writers reverse the gaze upon the colonisers even as their writings pass off as a ubiquitous symbol for valorising the local culture. This practice of re-inscribing the coloniser in a perspective that subverts the colonial stance is one of the powerful strategies used by postcolonial writers for their recuperation and empowerment.

One of the aims of postcolonial writing is its endeavour to decolonise the colonial ramifications that have made an indelible mark on the life of the ex-colonised. Though the active period of colonisation has come to a grinding halt, its repercussions are felt in almost all walks of life which the postcolonial writer has to come to grips with. It is under these circumstances English inserts itself into the political discourse. As it is the language of the colonisers in the historical sense and is complicit in the project of colonisation, the use of English by postcolonial writers is seen as a deliberate political act. As the writers prefer English to their mother tongue, it can be argued that these writers do not consider English as a hunch in their back but rather they get reconciled with their postcolonial scenario by the creative handling of the language. The difficulties in using a foreign language to express the cultural experiences of the colonised are resolved to an extent when the writer appropriates the language and alters it to suit his native experience through various strategies. In postcolonial writing, there is nothing sacrosanct about the conventional form of English as the writers experiment with the language by wilfully distorting it. No thought is given or any effort taken to retain the standard form of English as it is fused with native cultural terms which bring it
closer to the lives of the colonised. Therefore in postcolonial writing, even though English is used as the medium of communication, every effort is taken to decolonise the language in its form and content. The myth of the superiority of English is taken to task as the native cultural terms invade the language to mark the cultural hybridity of the colonised societies. The writers do not hesitate to give vent to their anger as they use the language and distort it to look and sound ridiculous. As they write decolonising fictions, they also see to it that English is decolonised in the first place. The images and metaphors are creatively used alongside the insertion of local varieties and cultural terms as the language is distanced from its colonial associations and is brought closer to the postcolonial life of the colonised. As the form of the language is nativised, postcolonial writers commandeer the language to bear the burden of their cultural experience as they interrogate the colonial discourses and offer a rebuttal to the colonial constructions. Postcolonial writers express their increased involvement with the use of English as they employ different strategies to appropriate the language and use it for their ideological purposes.

Taking these factors into consideration, an attempt has been made in the course of this study to analyse the use of English in the postcolonial fiction chosen for scrutiny. English becomes more than a medium as the writers incorporate it into the thematic pattern of their fiction. Though the novels chosen for study, Gabriel Okara’s *The Voice*, James Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat*, Sam Selvon’s *Moses Ascending*, Wilson Harris’s *Palace of the Peacock*, Narogin Mudrooroo’s *Doin Wildcat: A Novel Koori Script* and Kim Scott’s *True Country* have been written from different social milieu, all the writers reveal their marked interest in the deployment of the English language. As postcolonial writers they are aware of the problems that come along with the choice and use of English. Therefore English is decolonised even as it is
used in the making of a postcolonial novel. The writers use decolonised 'englishes' to address their postcolonial concerns which ultimately serve the purpose of decolonisation. As the language is appropriated they use it to assert their native life and culture and also offer counter-discourse to herald the political implications of their writing. The process of decolonisation is furthered as postcolonial writers address it not only at the content level of their writing but also at the formal level where English is decolonised and appropriated.

Therefore after problematising the position of English in post-colonial societies and in postcolonial writing, an attempt has been made to study how each writer uses different strategies to nativise the English language and inserts it into the grid of decolonisation. Okara in *The Voice* fuses his native Igbo patterns into the English language and uses relexification effectively; Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat* incorporates his Kenyan cultural terms and Africanises the language; Selvon in *Moses Ascending* uses a wide variety of 'englishes' and fuses it with the standard variety of English to highlight the cultural hybridity of the Caribbean society and the creativity that marks the speech of West Indian society; Harris in *Palace of the Peacock* experiments with the Caribbean Creole and brings a touch of reality to his novel; in *Doin Wildcat* Mudrooroo experiments with the dialects of his Aboriginal community and captures the language of his marginalised society; Kim Scott in *True Country* incorporates the Aboriginal variety of English with its tribal idiom to authenticate his writing.

Although these writers use different strategies to nativise the language to make it relevant to the context of their writing, the point of convergence that marks their postcolonial resistance lies in their will to violate the conventional form of English. While writers like Okara and Selvon indulge in
explicit experimentations by breaking the grammatical rules of English, other writers do it in a subtle manner. By incorporating the language varieties of the marginalised people, these writers attempt to erase the boundaries of standard and variant and thereby subvert the hierarchies that pertain to the language of the colonised. Therefore though the medium of writing is English, it is not the standard variety of English that these writers strive to retain. As native varieties are fused with the standard variety, new words are coined and new meanings are assigned to the new usages of English. The language is decolonised even as it is appropriated by these writers who use it creatively for their ideological interests.

While the language is decolonised at the formal level, these writers deploy the language to address their postcolonial concerns when it is used for their cultural assertion and to counter the colonial discourses. The colonial representations produced a negative image of the colonised culture which helped the cause of cultural imperialism of the west. Everything pertaining to the colonised was simply dismissed as primitive, wild and barbaric. The natives were taught to give up their cultural practices and instead were forced to learn the ways of the imperial masters which was a necessary first step in the civilising project of the colonisers.

Therefore postcolonial writers take it upon themselves to assert their native culture and subvert the hierarchies. The native life of the colonised is given its due significance and the negative images that were constructed upon the lives of the natives are effaced. The land, life, tradition and culture of the colonised societies are celebrated using the same language that was used in colonial writings that were detrimental to the colonised.

In The Voice, Okara creatively uses the figures of speech to evoke the rural life of Nigeria. He also borrows elements from his oral tradition to
Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat* is a situational novel where he affirms the life of a remote village in Kenya. He captures the songs, dances and other cultural artefacts and validates their significance to the Africans. Harris in *Palace of the Peacock*, creatively uses the landscape to enable a reconciliation with the fractured past of the West Indian individuals. The characters of the novel, through their language of consciousness communicate with their physical environment and strike an affinity with it. In *Moses Ascending*, Selvon while pointing out the problems of acculturation which concern a black West Indian immigrant takes a dig at the western culture and the hypocritical nature of their ideologies. He also calls for the assertion of native culture and the need to be true to one’s identity. Mudrooroo in *Doin Wildcat*, incorporates Aboriginal stories and songs and points out their significance to the life of an Aborigine. Kim Scott in *True Country* celebrates the topography of the land in Karnama and revives the lost relationship with Aboriginal culture. He also transcribes Aboriginal stories and highlights their importance to the younger generation of the Aboriginal community.

As language and culture are inextricably intertwined, these writers fuse their native cultural components as part of their project of decolonisation. The language is used creatively so as to accommodate the oral literary forms which assert the native life and culture. While cultural imperialism created negative images and distanced the natives from their traditional culture, postcolonial writers aim to valorise and celebrate their native culture in order to help the colonised to get reconciled with their past, reaffirm their identity and to revive their relationship with the traditional culture.

Since English provides the scope to write back to the centre, these postcolonial novelists confront the various colonial discourses that were constructed and circulated during the process of colonisation. Now that the
colonised have taken to writing and speak for themselves, they offer counter-discourses as part of their postcolonial response. Colonial myths are punctured as truths from the colonised point of view are affirmed. Histories are reconstructed from an alter perspective and texts that promoted colonial ideologies are rewritten. The construction of counter-discourses by postcolonial novelists is one of the recuperative strategies used in the restoration of facts and retrieval of suppressed truths that enhance their project of decolonisation.

In the novels studied, Okara in *The Voice*, deflates the myth of the superiority of colonial education and instead valorises the traditional wisdom; Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat*, rewrites the Kenyan political history as he validates the Mau Mau party and points out its significant part in the Kenyan freedom struggle. He also highlights the negative impact of colonial education on the African individuals who become estranged from their community and African values; Selvon’s *Moses Ascending* is a rewriting of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. He subverts various western conventional binaries and politically stereotyped discourses and addresses the politics of representation; Harris in *Palace of the Peacock*, points out the futility of the whole process of colonisation as the principal character who represents the coloniser realises his folly of trying to gain control over the land and people. Harris brings in the native Aboriginal presence of the Caribbean islands and captures the motif of resistance that pervades the whole scenario; Mudrooroo in *Doin Wildcat* returns to his earlier novel *Wild Cat Falling* and rewrites it to expose the politics that was involved in the making of the novel. He also counters various discourses that were constructed around the life of the Aborigines; and in *True Country*, Kim Scott rewrites the colonial history of Karnama and unearths the violence that was suppressed in the western
narratives. He also offers a counter-perspective to the colonial educational methods and highlights its irrelevancy to the cultural context of an Aboriginal society.

In postcolonial writing, English is seen as the language of power and hence becomes a site for contestation as postcolonial writers defy the conventional rules and standards that govern the form of the language. They wilfully break the set standards and appropriate it by fusing their native varieties and experimental forms to make it culturally relevant to their society. Decolonisation takes place not only at the formal level but also at the content level as these writers valorise their native culture to assert their cultural identity and rewrite histories as well as offer counter-discourses to expose the politics of representation which was responsible for the construction of the debased identity of the colonised.

All the six novelists chosen for study express their unflinching involvement with the politics of using English as their vehicle of communication. They decolonise the English language from its colonial associations by using different strategies and manoeuvre the language to serve their desired ideological ends. As the content of their writing is essentially political, it is paramount to the understanding of the role of English to notice how English is reworked and refashioned to serve as an effective tool to counter the ideologies of colonisation. Therefore, as English is decolonised it becomes a potent force in postcolonial writing that is skilfully commandeered to address the various postcolonial concerns of the colonised societies and further the cause of decolonisation.

Since this study restricts itself to the examination of male writers, it could be a worthwhile project if a scholar were to scrutinise the postcolonial response of women writers and their treatment of the English language as their
experiences are loaded with colonial oppression as well as the patriarchal suppression. It also would be an enterprising project if one were to compare male and female postcolonial novelists and study the similarities and differences in their usage of the English language.

As English is increasingly becoming a topic of interest especially in the present global context, the present study is an initial step towards understanding the varied reception of English in erstwhile colonial societies and their creative use of it in their fictions.