CHAPTER - 1
INTRODUCTION

For nearly six centuries now western Europe and its diaspora have been disturbing the peace of the world. Enlightened, through their Renaissance by the learning of the ancient Mediterranean; armed with the gun, the making of whose powder they had learned from Chinese firecrackers; equipping their ships with lateen sails, astrolabes and nautical compasses, all invented by the Chinese and transmitted to them by Arabs; fortified in aggressive spirit by an arrogant, messianic Christianity of both the popish and protestant varieties; and motivated by the lure of enriching plunder, white hordes have sallied forth from their western European homelands to explore, assault, loot, occupy, rule and exploit the rest of the world. And even now, the fury of their expansionist assault upon the rest of us has not abated. (Chinweizu 3)

The casualties of colonisation are far too great to be assessed in its entirety. The explorers who assumed to have discovered the colonies not only charted new sea routes but also changed the course of history for these colonies. The desire to know and to report details of their discoveries of land and people often proved to be an exercise in imaginative discourse that was grounded on their fears, prejudices and selfish motives. Hence savages, barbarians and cannibals were constructed which made a fascinating reading to the then reading elite of the west. Also these narratives gave colonisers the moral edge to justify their acts of violence that were unleashed on the natives of the colonies. While it is difficult to come to consensus as to who suffered
the most during the colonial excesses, the singular experience that binds Africans, West Indians and Australian Aborigines is the victimisation made possible by guns and texts. Any sign of resistance on the part of the indigenous people was met with brute force of bullets. Equally destructive were the denigrating discourses of textual violence that denied recognition of these colonised as human beings and thereby enhanced the process of colonisation.

It is also worthwhile to note that postcolonial literature does not consist of writings about the indigenous people by sympathetic western writers but by the natives themselves who speak for their cause. It is the voices of the suppressed people which break the shackles of stifling forces and express the felt experiences as an act of self-assertion. Therefore the contestation of postcolonial writing is the contestation of the politics of representation while exposing the scribal power of Europe in the construction of colonial discourses. Because the postcolonial writer writes from an alternate viewpoint as he addresses the colonial discourses and the discriminating binary constructions, postcolonial writing stands in direct conflict with colonial writings and stereotypical representations by the west. As the writer is socially committed, he acts as the spokesperson for his tribe and community and hence his conflicting view is the voice of the community which he represents. A postcolonial writer is therefore more than a creative writer as he is drawn voluntarily into the political ramifications of his concerns. Ken Saro Wiva’s trial and execution in Nigeria and Ngugi’s detention in Kenya are cases in point which would supplement this line of thought.

The present study is an attempt to examine the nature of English usage in postcolonial fiction. Even as the novelists indulge in creative writing, their
involvement with language is crucial to the analysis of postcolonial fiction since they use various strategies to appropriate the language so as to suit their ideological intentions. Given the fact that English came to the colonies along with the colonisers, it has the dubious distinction of being the coloniser’s language. It was used as a powerful tool in the process of colonisation and thrived in the colonies at the expense of indigenous languages. As language and culture are inextricably intertwined, the induction of English brought cultural alienation in the colonies. English was effectively used in the construction of colonial discourses which furthered the cause of colonisation. Therefore a postcolonial writer’s engagement with the English language is also simultaneously an exercise that reassesses, through the grid of fiction, the cultural and linguistic positioning of the ex-colonised, which are inextricably embedded in the political history of the colony and its own recurrent consequences. In the present study, an attempt is made to place in critical perspective the role of English in postcolonial fiction with specific reference to African, Caribbean and Australian Aboriginal writings. The postcolonial novelists express their unflinching involvement not just with the experiential content of their writing but also with the medium through which it is conveyed. As English, in the historical context, happens to be the coloniser’s language, it becomes paramount in the postcolonial response of these writers. Therefore this study examines the ideological purpose of new English usages in postcolonial fiction as the most powerful postcolonial usage of English. As English language is the field of contention of the cultural politics of these writers, fiction becomes a means in which history is the content.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to place English in its historical context and its role in the colonial enterprise, which would explain the need to
review the English language in a post-colonial setting of Africa, Caribbean and Australian Aboriginal societies.

**English and the Construction of Colonial Discourses**

As the coloniser's language, English was used in the construction of colonial discourses. Everything that pertained to the colonised was dismissed as barbaric and wild. Damaging discourses and negative images were created which had far reaching consequences on the natives. Racism was manifested through the power of language, as the colour 'black' was associated with negative connotations. Being the oppressor's language, English became the language of oppression. Since the colonisers considered themselves as a superior race, English naturally became the elitist language and was placed above all other indigenous languages. It was an accomplice in the civilising mission of the colonisers. The colonisers realised the power of language to transform the lives of the natives. To teach the language of Shakespeare, Milton and Pope was also to teach their values, morals and systems of belief. Therefore English was used in a very calculated and systematic way to civilise the presumed barbaric societies. The linguistic colonisation of English paid dividends in consolidating the colonial rule.

The early colonialist writings such as the diaries and reports from the colonies provided the spark for English literary writers to romanticise the theme of colonisation in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, texts that have been widely discussed as synoptic of colonisation through the textual space. Though these texts are imaginary voyages written for reasons other than political, the images, metaphors and tropes created by them have had a major share in the perpetration of textual violence. In this context, Paul Longley Arthur opines:
This new form of fiction simulated contemporary accounts of discovery voyages by incorporating the latest knowledge of the world in painstaking detail, and adopting the same matter-of-fact rhetoric used in genuine voyage accounts. Despite their high levels of realism . . . writers of imaginary voyages in the setting of the antipodes helped to create a social acceptance of colonial expansion by imagining environments in which a European presence was constructed as natural, beneficial and welcomed. (208)

Texts, therefore, played a crucial role in the construction of colonial tropes which supported colonisation by stirring up the imagination to conquer and control. As Edward Said observes in his *Culture and Imperialism*, "imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible . . . to read one without in some way dealing with the other" (84). Since representations and constructions of tropes and images masqueraded as truths, colonisers assumed a moral responsibility and considered themselves as apostles of truth on a civilising mission who have placed their lives at great risk to redeem the indigenous tribes. Therefore even the economic exploitation of looting and plundering of the natural resources was swept under the carpet of these writings, which provided a falsified facade to the colonial motives. Also the desire to know and to interpellate culminated in the desire to control and to rule. The colonial discourses that supported colonisation and the veracity of these representations were never threatened as they were readily accepted by the west and returned with the sanction of power. The text became a site of power constructed by the coloniser's selfish motives, a site whose empowerment came from outside the realms of literary creativity. As Edward Said observes in his *Orientalism*:
What they shared, however, was not only land or profit or rule; it was the kind of intellectual power I have been calling Orientalism. In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. (41-42)

The atrocities of colonisation were committed in an age when Europe had given itself to learning and enlightenment. It is ironical to find that their pursuit of knowledge ultimately led them to the experiences of the darker side of humanity such as greed, materialism, violence and cruelty. The advancements in the field of science and technology widened the gulf and enabled the Europeans to assume a superior position and understand themselves in relation to the inferior other. Social theories such as Darwin’s theory of evolution fuelled the fire of imperialism and instigated the west to believe that they were indeed a superior race. According to Michael Adas:

Those who held to the social evolutionist dogmas interpolated from rather dubious readings of Darwin’s writings were convinced that the most benighted of the savage races were doomed to extinction. Some observers, such as the Reverend Frederick Farrar, thought the demise of these lowly peoples who had “not added one iota to the knowledge, the arts, the sciences, the manufacturers, the morals of the world,” quite consistent with the workings of nature and God. (33)

Christianity was used as one of the effective weapons of colonisation. Although the Christian missionaries were not always supported by the colonial officials, the Bible certainly was used as one of the tools of colonisation.
Though Bibles were translated into indigenous languages, the missionaries used English as the administrative language. English hymns and choruses were taught to the new converts. The Great Commission given in Mark 16:15 of the Bible to preach the Gospel was misinterpreted for selfish gains and there was an organised suppression of the native religious systems. As religious schism ravaged closely-knit societies, the colonisers capitalised on the situation with their divide and rule policies. Achebe in his novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, Ngugi wa Thiong’o in his novel *The River Between*, highlight this issue where the traditional society breaks up because of the difference in religious beliefs.

However, there is another school of thought, which believes that Christianity helped the Africans in their struggle for freedom. The Bible was inspirational to young African individuals in shaping their revolutionary ideals. As Wauthier points out in *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa*:

> When the Europeans took our country, we fought them with our spear, but they defeated us because they had ‘better’ weapons. And so colonial power was set up much against our wish, but lo, the missionary came in time and laid explosives under colonialism. The bible is now doing what we could not do with our spears. (218-219)

While there is an ambivalent response on the part of the colonised to the introduction of Christianity, it is ironic to observe that a religion that is grounded on love and unity was used to perpetuate violence and division among the natives.

Colonisation, therefore, is an enterprise that was supported by various factors and ideologies of that time, resulting in the construction of colonial
discourses that salved the consciousness of the colonialists. The induction of western scientific achievements in the colonies was yet another instance that enhanced the west in self-aggrandisement of its utilitarian service to the colonised. But the loss of cultural and traditional systems was ignored under the onslaught of western modernisation. Aime Cesaire in “Between Colonizer and Colonized” highlights this poetically thus:

I hear the storm. They talk to me about progress, about “achievements”, diseases cured, improved standards of living. I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled under foot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out. They throw facts at my head, statistics, mileages of roads, canals, and railroad tracks.
I am talking about thousands of men sacrificed to the Congo-Ocean.
I am talking about those who, as I write this, are digging the harbour of Abidjan by hand. I am talking about millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life-from life, from the dance, from wisdom.
I am talking about millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and believe like flunkeys.

(340-341)

Colonisation was backed up by various ideologies and colonial discourses. It was not just a straightforward political and military aggression to
invade the land and take control by force, though this was the physical mode
of operation. Physical violence was ably assisted by crafty ideologies and
textual violence which furthered colonisation that operated at different levels
in fields such as culture, religion, language, education, economy and
administration, affecting every nerve of life. Arguing against the metaphor that
colonisation was a simple journey towards the centre of power, Bill Ashcroft
in Post-Colonial Transformation brings in the concept of rhizome where there
is a strong network of power relations intertwined to smother any resistance.
He says:

The rhizome describes a root system which spreads out laterally
rather than vertically, as in bamboo, which has no central root but
which propagates itself in a fragmented, discontinuous,
multidirectional way. . . . There is no ‘master-plan’ of imperialism:
the greatest advancement of cultural hegemony occurs when it
operates through an invisible network of filiative connections,
psychological internalisations and unconsciously complicit
associations. (50)

Since the colonial enterprise is a complex process, postcolonial writing
engages itself with a host of issues that needs to be addressed. Though the
painful process of colonisation is not central to all post-colonial novels, it is
nevertheless a watershed in the history of the colonies which had far-reaching
consequences and hence needs to be addressed. As the effects of colonisation
are felt in the psychological internalisations of the colonised, a postcolonial
writer does not write just back to the centre but in a more intense sense to
himself, sometimes addressing the comprador in himself, sometimes the
insurgent, sometimes the hybrid product of the colonial aftermath, but in any
case addresses himself as constructed by the episteme of colonisation. As English was involved in the creation and proliferation of such discourses, it becomes imperative to examine the postcolonial writer's use of the same language in his project of decolonisation.

History: Erasure, Retrieval and Rewritings

Pre-colonial life is a compelling issue, which is recurrently addressed in post-colonial writings. Since there can be no present without the past, these writers often hark back to their cultural past to interrogate their present social structures. As colonisation has effected a fracture in their history, the desire to go back to their roots for recuperative purposes is one of the projects of postcoloniality although at all times there is an awareness that the pre-colonial past can never be recovered unaffected by the experience of colonisation. Though the past is not always present as a pristine commodity, there are elements that withstood the onslaught of colonisation which can be retraced.

Thus Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, one of the earliest writings of African literature, stresses the significance of various cultural components of traditional life, which form the backbone of an African individual and community as a whole. Since modernisation/westernisation, which came along with colonisation, threatens the very fabric of indigenous patterns, postcolonial writers incorporate their cultural artefacts as a vital part of their narratives. Since colonisation has rendered a fracture in the traditional way of life, the desire for the pre-colonial past is quite understandable. But given the historical experiences of the colonised, such a retrieval of the absolute pre-colonial past cannot be achieved. This simultaneous retrieval of past culture indelibly overwritten by the colonial experience and of enduring traces of past culture, such as the oratures for example, as meaningful for the present can be
found in postcolonial writings. In *The Empire Writes Back* Ashcroft et al. are of the view:

Post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybridised phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the 'grafted' European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity. Such construction or reconstruction only occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic systems and 'peripheral' subversions of them. It is not possible to return to or to rediscover an absolute pre-colonial cultural purity, nor is it possible to create national or regional formations entirely independent of their historical implication in the European colonial enterprise. (195-196)

In the African scenario, the closely-knit traditional life was disrupted. Their traditional values that were largely based on oral heritage were demonised and denounced barbaric and wild. Their songs, dances music and ceremonies were considered acts of savagery. African languages were misconstrued and were considered as brutal sounds close to that of the animals. Colonisation had its impact on all these issues as their culture was over-written by the western influence of the colonisers. The effects of colonisation linger even after the period of active colonisation seen in the overwhelming surge of modernisation/westernisation. Traditional societies are never the same as their culture gets transformed by the influence of the metropolitan culture. Churches are built to implant new religious beliefs and the sacred symbols of the past lose their earlier significance. Societies stand divided over their conflicting views on festivals and religious observances which bound the earlier societies together. Native gods and clan deities
become demons and evil spirits for the new converts whose implanted religious beliefs lay the foundation for later religious divisions. Western English education in local schools completes the cultural invasion as English manners, customs, values and culture imposed on the native child, effects a systematic erasure of native cultural values.

An African writer is aware of the impossibility of the negation of his past and is also wary of the problems in retrieving his past. Neither is it possible to create a pre-colonial past in the post-colonial scenario. On the other hand he also realises the importance of his past cultural values for an African individual. Therefore he draws inspiration from his oral heritage even as he alters it to suit the present cultural need. Wisdom in riddles, proverbs and stories are reworked and incorporated in their writings. The end of colonisation in Africa saw the transfer of power to rulers who exercised their dictatorial powers over the new independent countries. Postcolonial African writers take it upon themselves to challenge the corrupt political leaders and work towards their project of decolonisation and hence the recourse to indigenous native traditions through various strategies.

If the past, in Africa, was threatened and forcefully subjected to change, in Caribbean islands it was entirely obliterated. The indigenous tribes such as the Arawaks, Tainos and Caribs, sparing a few survivors, were wiped off from the face of the earth. Along with them, their language and culture were also destroyed. Instead the slaves brought from the shores of Africa to work in the plantations of the European colonisers peopled the islands. It was not just a transplantation of Africans alone. There were also the East Indians who were brought from India as indentured labourers. As a result Creole languages and cultures evolved in the islands giving a distinct identity to the islanders. Since they are completely removed from ‘home’ they remain outsiders to their
traditional culture even as they struggle to identify with the present. Hence the desire to migrate to London instead of Africa or India is a common trait found in the West Indian society. As Claudia Jones points out the statistical details in "The Caribbean Community in Britain":

This new situation in Britain, has been inimitably described in the discerning verse of Louise Bennett, noted Jamaican folklorist, as 'Colonization in Reverse'.

Immigration statistics, which are approximate estimates compiled by the one-time functional West Indian Federation office (Migrant Services Division) in Britain, placed the total number of West Indians entering the United Kingdom as 238,000 persons by the year 1961. . . . Distribution of the West Indian population in the United Kingdom indicates that, by mid-1962, over three hundred thousand West Indians were settled in Britain. (49)

The mishap of Columbus’s discovery resulted in the decimation of native Amerindian tribes who were the indigenous people of the islands. The term ‘West Indies’ itself is a misnomer as Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados and British Guyana form part of the South American continent. However, the term serves as a useful nomenclature of classification since all of these islands share the common heritage of colonisation, slavery and indentureship. With regards to the ironies that go with the term ‘West Indian’, Michael Gilkes is of the view:

Even the term “West Indian” contains certain ironies. A misnomer to begin with--Columbus in 1492 thought he had discovered the fabled Indies of Marcopolo--it was first used to identify the white
Creole plantation owners who had investments in the British colonies within and around the Caribbean sea. In an eighteenth century English play, the servants in a well-to-do London home are making preparations for the arrival of the hero, the “West Indian”. (9)

The indigenous tribes were almost wiped out and African slaves were shipped in to work in the plantations. The civilised white indulged in one of the most inhuman and cruel practices of all time when African men, women and children were chained and dragged to the markets to be sold and bought like cattle. Rendered rootless and homeless, the African slaves in Caribbean islands had to start their life afresh. Their past became a distant memory as it had very little to do with the present Creole society. As Edouard Glissant observes in *Caribbean Discourse*:

> Slavery was accompanied by reification: all history seemed to come to a halt in the Caribbean, and the peoples transplanted there had no alternative but to subject themselves to History with a capital H, all equally subjected to the hegemony of Europe. Reification was systematized in racism: “All blacks look alike; the only good Indian is a dead Indian”. (248)

However, the West Indians who were mostly blacks and coloured folks formed along with the East Indians, a hybrid society in the Caribbean islands. The polyphonic setting of the islands saw the emergence of Creole. The African culture and the Indian culture mostly influenced the new hybrid Creole society. Therefore the Caribbean identity did not arise out of a vacuum but out of a heavy cultural baggage of each group. Ken Parmasad is of the same view:
The colonial and post-colonial experience represents an important phase of cultural sedimentation, but only one phase. Caribbean peoples were not constituted by this experience out of nothing. We bring with us thousands of years of other layers of sedimentation which we access even when we do not recognise it. (22)

Therefore a West Indian writer is concerned with the experiences and forces that are at work in the islands. Slavery, migration, racism, search for roots, identity crisis, nostalgic memories of home are some of the major themes that are found in West Indian literature. Postcolonial Caribbean writers are concerned with their past history and various colonial discourses that made colonisation possible. One of the damaging discourses about the Caribbeans is the dubbing of the Caribs as cannibals. During the early period, the colonisers had to meet the stiff resistance of the indigenous tribes who fought hard to preserve their land from foreign invasion. In the process, textual violence proved to be very useful in physical invasion as certain tribes were obliterated by simply denouncing them as cannibals. Hilary McD. Beckles points this out in "Klinago(Carib) Resistance to European Colonisation of the Caribbean":

Primarily because of their irrepressible war of resistance, which intimated all Europeans in the region, Kalinago were targeted first for an ideological campaign in which they were established within the European mind, not as 'noble savages', as was the case with less effective Tainos, but as 'vicious cannibals' worthy of extermination within the context of genocidal military expeditions. (4)
As the past continues to haunt, postcolonial writers interrogate the European versions of Caribbean history of land and people. The politics of representation come to the fore as the writers investigate various colonial discourses that operated as a powerful tool in the process of colonisation. The myth of cannibal is punctured when the postcolonial writers confront the European versions of truth. The writers take it upon themselves as a responsibility to counter these falsifying images of their past and expose the colonial designs that lurk beneath such constructions. Basil Reid in “Arawak Archaeology in Jamaica: New Approaches, New Perspectives” points out:

... it is common knowledge that the pre-historic Caribs who settled in the Lesser Antilles are still being dubbed as cannibals by modern day Historians. To date, no archaeological proof has been found to substantiate this claim and it is quite possible that the Caribs got this infamous title because of Spanish and English propaganda peddling. This issue is indicative of the need to explore aspects of our Caribbean pre-history rather than accepting ideas at face-value. (18)

Since texts were instrumental in the circulation of these discourses, writers like George Lamming, Derek Walcott, Sam Selvon and Jean Rhys resort to the re-reading and re-writing of western master narratives like The Tempest, Robinson Crusoe and Jane Eyre. This is a recuperative strategy used effectively by West Indian writers as they assert themselves through their writings. Though the Caribbean islands are scattered and each have a specific identity of their own, the colonial experience is common to all of them and so are their postcolonial concerns. As P.S Chauhan points out in “Caribbean Writing in English: Intimations of a Historical Nightmare”:
Individual differences between works, marks of a mature community of artists, would under normal circumstances subvert any categorical or general remarks about the entire body of the West Indian fiction. But neither the West Indian communities nor their fictions developed under normal human political circumstances. Though separated by distances and distinguished by differing demographics, they were presided over by similar histories of cruelty and exploitation. Whatever the size of their economies, they were like wards of absentee landlords whose affairs were managed by self-serving overseers accountable to no local authorities in particular. (46)

As the Caribbeans were thus textually constructed by the representations and discourses of colonisation, postcolonial writers seek to efface the perverted narratives by rewriting their past and present social conditions.

In Australia, Aboriginal writers are preoccupied with the history of the land, people and experiences of colonisation. Though the native Australians are people belonging to different tribes, the term 'Aborigines' is used as a categorical classification for convenience to represent all Aboriginal tribes and Torres Strait islanders. Also the present Australian Aboriginal society is categorised as postcolonial as an ideological term rather than in the historical sense of post-colonial. Almost all Black Australian literature, irrespective of the genre of expression concerns itself with the past as the Aborigines try to come to grips with the present. As the past is not readily available for the Aborigines, there is a constant negotiation between the present modernity and the remnants of their past culture. Since Aboriginal history runs counter to the European versions of truth with regards to land and people, Aboriginal writers
attempt to rewrite history from the Aboriginal viewpoint. As Jack Davis and Bob Hodge put it in the introduction of *Aboriginal Writing Today*:

For all the Aboriginal writers, history is more important, more inseparable from literature, than would be the case for white writers as a whole. After all, for white writers, history is in safe hands, white hands, and they can take it or leave it alone. Aboriginal people have been excluded from the pages of white history, and denied access to the records of their own people. Aboriginal writers cannot rely on anyone else to do the work for them. (5)

The colonial experience of native black Australians is different from that of the African and Caribbean islands in that, the white colonisers came not just for exploitative reasons but to stay as permanent settlers and monopolise the rights of the land. Though the founding population of white civilisation in Australia were criminals and outlawed citizens commandeered by colonial officials, once they landed in Australia, they assumed a moral superiority to that of the natives and by the power of guns gained control over the indigenous tribes. Ever since James Cook landed in 1788, the native Aborigines were subjected to cruelty and oppression, and became slaves in their own land. The land that was sacred for the Aborigines was confiscated for the construction of white mission settlements. The natives were captured and forcibly brought to live in the mission settlements where systematic measures were taken for cultural indoctrination. The Aborigines had an experience similar to that of the African slaves when their family life was disrupted as children were taken away from their mothers and sent to mission schools. Having removed from their families and alienated from their
traditional life, the natives were confined to the missions. As Kevin Gilbert points out in his “Black Policies”:

The ‘reserves’ and ‘missions’ became a refuge, as well as a prison. The ‘kamp Commandant’, the white manager, and the police kept the worst of the barbarians away. Then these concentration areas became ‘home’, offering the security of institutionalisation, dependency on food supply, a little medical attention and, above all, peace from the madness and predictable hatred and unhappiness of white society.

Night time curfews, separate compounds for boys and girls, forced removal of family heads and husbands and mothers from the family for work ‘in service’ or expulsion for being ‘troublemakers’ were an acceptable alternative to imprisonment, death or burning on the ‘cheeky blackfella boong fires’ that profaned the landscape.

(36)

The white settlers completely ignored the fact that the land belonged to the Aborigines before their arrival and that the natives had a tradition of life that was as old as life itself. The native Aborigines are very much conscious of their history and they have it recorded on their various cultural artefacts which are passed on from one generation to the next. Jack Davis points this out in “Aboriginal Writing: a personal view”:

We, the Aboriginal people, have been recording our history for thousands of years. Our medium has been stone, hair, wood, the walls of caves; and the flat surface of rock has been the canvas of
our ancestors. Hair string manipulated by fingers can tell a myriad of stories and the land was our drawing board. (11)

But the whites were ignorant of Aboriginal life and culture and they called the land ‘Terra Nullius’, forgetting the Aboriginal presence and literature. As Eleanor Bourke points out in “Images and Realities”:

The land was declared *desert and uninhabited* later represented as *terra nullius* and the various Aboriginal nations declared uncivilised, . . . This seemed to justify the ‘extinction’ of a ‘Stone Age race’ inevitably ‘doomed’ to extinction. Subsequently the half-caste problem’ would be solved by ‘breeding out the colour’, a policy congruent with the idea of a White Australia” . . . (1)

The settlers consciously ignored the presence of the Aborigines even as they grappled to assert their control over the newly inherited land. They considered the Aborigines also as immigrants and therefore felt justified of their control over the land and people. But they could never come to grips with the fact that the land belongs to the Aborigines.

The Aborigines had a spiritual relationship to the land and environment as their consciousness was greatly influenced by The Dreaming. W.H Edwards in *An Introduction to Aboriginal Societies* explains the term as follows:

This is thought of by Aboriginal people as the beginning of their existence, of their heritage and of their cultural life. The Dreaming was the period in which dramatic events took place which shaped the environment, its inhabitants and their life. Aboriginal people trace their ancestry to the beings which participated in these events. (12)
Contrary to the European belief that the Aborigines are migrants and settlers of Australia, the native tradition asserts that they belong to the land which they have inherited from their ancestors. They consider themselves as people who live in Australia not for a few thousands of years but from time immemorial. Since the Aborigines have a strong traditional background and rich cultural forms, assimilation into the white stream of life is not easy. Though many tribes have become extinct and languages disappeared, colonialism could not erase Aboriginal culture completely. The Aboriginal writers who write in the modern world still look back to their past oral heritage and cultural forms and try to incorporate it in their writings.

Therefore the Aboriginal writers feel that it is their responsibility to explain the past Aboriginal culture to the non-aborigines. The early white anthropologists, missionaries and others who recorded the Aboriginal myths misunderstood and misinterpreted the cultural nuances and significance of these stories. Hence Aboriginal novelists seek to explain their cultural forms in order to emphasise the richness of their oral heritage. Moreover when the Aboriginal writers tap the huge wellspring of their oral tradition, Aboriginal writing becomes more culturally authentic and independent of white Australian literature.

The coming of the whites saw the extinction of most Aboriginal tribes. The Aborigines who were traditionally hunters and gatherers were forced to live in Mission settlements and thus were forcibly estranged from their cultural practices. Modern Australia witnesses Aborigines as fringe-dwellers living on the fringes of white cities unable either to integrate into the white mainstream or to go back to their traditional past. Though efforts are made to record and preserve the few surviving cultural practices of the Aborigines, what is lost is lost forever. Therefore postcolonial writers are wary of the term
"history", that was affected by the experiences of colonisation, as they constantly negotiate with their past to retrieve the existing structures. The history of the society and race signifies more than the historical records of the colonisers. It is a series of events and experiences, with gaps, fissures, suppressed silence, and resistance. Hence they interrogate with the official version of history, the grand narrative of the western panoply of knowledge and attempt to rewrite it from a perspective that offers an alternative point of view. But it would be grossly unfair to brand these writings as mere ‘protest’ literature, for it seeks to scale above the realms of resistance. Though there is distinct uncompromising resentment towards the experience of colonisation, these novels move forward in trying to explain the historical and cultural nuances that are unique to their society and to the world at large. Therefore the novel, more than the mere unfolding of plot, with its multifarious role takes an important place in postcolonial writing. The Aboriginal writers are also concerned with the history of the colonial contact with the white settlers. They desire to write the Aboriginal version of it, which invariably stands polemical to the European versions. The early contact with the whites was marked with violence and brutality as the resistant natives were hunted down mercilessly. Kevin Gilbert records of this colonial violence in "Black Policies":

When colonisation of this, our land, began with Cook, Aboriginal policies were based upon tradition: the immutable, the unchanging social and spiritual laws of behaviour that had continued from the time before time began, the creation. When the whites attempted to land, to invade this tribal country, the appropriate signs were made, 'Go away!' You are entering our tribal grounds. To enter means
war'. And the annals of the whites tell us that this was indeed the case.

The first spears were thrown. Then the first floggings ever witnessed in this land occurred, then the first tortures, the first hangings, the first shootings, the first invasion and occupation of the land by aliens. A cruel, inhumane, barbaric alien. (35)

Since there are a lot of suppression of facts and distortion of details regarding the early contact period, Aboriginal writers offer a counter perspective of the Aboriginal history in their novels. They confront the various colonial discourses that operated in the justification of colonisation and expose the exploitative nature of the colonisers. As Shane Howard, a song writer, puts it in his song ‘Solid Rock (Sacred Ground)’:

They were standin’ on the shore one day
Saw the white sails in the sun.
Wasn’t long before they felt the sting
White man- White laws-White gun
Don’t tell me that it’s justified
‘Cause somewhere-
Someone lied.’

Aboriginal writers act as a spokesperson for their community recording their cry of protest and desire for recognition of their rights. Postcolonial writers confront the discursive violence that was perpetrated by the colonisers as they expose the racial and political underpinnings, which operate as the fulcrum of colonial discourses. Grand narratives of the west are taken to task as new narratives of the colonies stand in direct conflict with the old. Histories
are re-constructed from the native’s point of view. Western canonical texts that deal with colonies and the theme of imperialism are reread and rewritten from the counter-discursive position. As Helen Tiffin observes in "Recuperative Strategies In The Post-Colonial Novel":

The rereading and rewriting of the European historical and fictional record thus characterises the post-colonial enterprise. Such rereading and rewritings involve questions about ways of knowing, how cultures are constructed and how signs mean. An examination of European tropes, forms, themes, myths and the ways in which these operate, not as cultural expression but as cultural control in other environments, precedes their potential dismantling or deconstruction. These subversive manoeuvres, rather than the construction of the essentially national or regional, are characteristic of the post-European text. (28)

Using English as a Political Exercise

As English was used as a powerful force in the textual violence that was unleashed on the former British colonies it is significant to observe that in postcolonial space, texts have always operated with great success along with the physical resistance against the colonisers. When the swords and matchets were met with the coloniser’s gun, the native’s power of pen became a potent force to reckon with. Just as texts were used in the interpellative exercise of colonisation, postcolonial writers use texts in their anti-colonial rants. As Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson observe:

Just as fire can be fought by fire, textual control can be fought by textuality. . . . The post-colonial is especially and pressingly
concerned with the power that resides in discourse and textuality; its resistance, then, quite appropriately takes place in- and from- the domain of textuality, in (among other thing) motivated acts of reading. (10)

Considering the fact that the pre-colonial societies in Africa and Australia had its literary forms predominantly in oratures and the writing of literary texts had its beginning in colonisation, the very act of writing by postcolonial writers is conditioned by many factors. Colonisation suppressed the voices of the colonised for many centuries and a whole tradition of native culture was dismissed as barbaric. But when the natives mastered the master’s tools it gave them the leverage to express the raging voice of their community. Therefore writing becomes an exercise in self-empowerment. As Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia point out in Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity:

Clearly, in societies with no tradition of literary writing, the desire to write can become a highly charged and highly mediated political act, sometimes issuing out of a very conscious affiliative tension. Why one form of writing and not another? Why at that moment and not another? The fulfilment of the post-colonial desire often occurs as a function of that ambivalence instituted by the dis-articulation of colonialism itself. (36-37)

Therefore when spears and matchets had failed before the power of guns and bullets, the new elite seem to have recognised the power of pen which they wield not only to question colonial presumptions but also in furthering the self-assertive voices of their community. As Jack Davis puts it in “Aboriginal Writing: a personal view”:
The pen can girdle
The world and hurdle
The sword that kills
And the grave it fills
So black sisters and brothers
Remind the white others
That the pen
Lives forever. (11)

If writing itself is a political exercise, then the language they employ is an issue that needs a thorough scrutiny. When a writer uses English in a post-colonial society, he is forced to negotiate a lot of issues that pertain to his choice and use of the language. First and foremost is the historicity of the English language. English came to the colonies along with the colonisers, and being the coloniser’s language it was the language of the people of power and thus became the official language in the colonies. If a native had to interact with the white man he had to learn the white man’s language first. Therefore English, along with many other factors, extended the rift between colonisers and the colonised. It also created a schism within the colonised as it divided the natives over their ability to communicate in the master’s tongue. To speak the language of power was a step towards self-empowerment and hence the natives had a fascination for the white man’s language.

Since English enjoyed the privileged position in the colonies, the native languages were deprived of the space that is needed for existence. In Australia and West Indies, many languages became extinct when its speakers were killed in the colonial encounter. At school the native children were forced to speak in English and were forbidden from using their mother tongue. Ngugi
wa Thiong'o records his painful experiences at school in "The Language of African Literature":

Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking in Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment--three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks--or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I Am A Donkey. . . .

The attitude to English was the exact opposite: any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms. (288)

English was used as the touchstone for one's mental prowess. It opened up avenues for a native child's advancement in intellectual and material pursuits. The whole system was tuned in such a way that English became indispensable in the colonies. Through these systematic measures, English thrived often at the expense of other indigenous languages.

Since language is a carrier of culture, those who learned the coloniser's language straddled between two cultures and in most cases the white man's culture which was the dominant, had a strong influence on the colonised world view. The colonial educational system which had a key role in the diffusion of English and cultural imperialism widened this cultural divide among the natives. The curriculum in the schools was designed to inculcate English history, culture and values to the children in the colonies. Edward Kamau Brathwaite points out the poor educational planning in "Nation Language":
Shakespeare, George Eliot, Jane Austen—British literature and literary forms, the models which had very little to do, really, with the environment and the reality of non-Europe—were dominant in the Caribbean educational system. It was a very surprising situation. People were forced to learn things which had no relevance to themselves. Paradoxically, in the Caribbean (as in many other 'cultural disaster' areas), the people educated in this system came to know more, even today, about English kings and queens than they do about our own national heroes, our own slave rebels, the people who helped to build and to destroy our society.

The children who studied these subjects were totally cut off from their traditional values. They no longer could integrate fully into their cultural practices as they strove to become like the colonisers. As a result, traditional society was littered with mimic men who could no longer fully identify themselves with their native tradition nor were able to assimilate into the white main stream. The induction of English brought cultural alienation in the colonies. As Ngugi observes in Decolonising the mind:

African children who encountered literature in colonial schools and universities were thus experiencing the world as defined and reflected in the European experience of history. Their entire way of looking at the world, even the world of the immediate environment, was Eurocentric. Europe was the centre of the universe. The earth moved around the European intellectual scholarly axis. The images children encountered in literature were reinforced by their study of
geography and history, and science and technology where Europe was, once again, the centre. This in turn fitted well with the cultural imperatives of British imperialism. (1142)

The induction of English in the British colonies through various Educational Acts and Policies throw light on the underlying colonial motives of the colonisers. English was never meant to coexist on equal terms with other indigenous languages. It was always scored high above the native languages.

In Africa, English was just a contact language between the coast blacks and the British sailors and traders in the early sixteenth century. But after the Berlin conference in 1884, formal imperial rule was established in Africa which meant a superstructure of colonial administration was imposed with English becoming the official language. English medium education was formally introduced with special government grants. Josef J. Schmied in *English in Africa: An Introduction* records a report of a commission sponsored by Phelps-Stokes Fund as follows:

... It is clear that there is comparatively little, if any advantage, in the continuation of a crude dialect with practically no powers of expression. It is also evident that the need for a common language is not essential to a large group of people speaking the same language and living under conditions that do not require much intercommunication. It may even be true that some one of the Native languages may be so highly developed as to make possible the translation of the great works of civilization into that language. With due consideration for all of these elements and the modifying
circumstances, the following recommendations are offered as suggestions to guide governments and educators in determining the usual procedure in most African colonies:

1. The tribal language should be used in the lower elementary standards or grades.

2. A lingua franca of African origin should be introduced in the middle classes of the school if the area is occupied by large Native groups speaking diverse languages.

3. The language of the European nation in control should be taught in the upper standards. (15)

African dialects were always pushed to the periphery as their functions were greatly restricted by colonial enforcements. Since English was placed in a privileged position, the Africans were made to realise the usefulness of English in their personal self-aggrandisement. There was a systematic suppression of local languages when English was considered synonymous with education. English became mandatory if ever an African wanted to enter into Government service. According to Josef J. Schmied:

There is a school of thought that argues that English was imposed on Africans, for example through a system of 'certification'. English . . . was not really made compulsory, but to obtain government employment Africans had to have a certificate--and in order to obtain a certificate a candidate was expected to be reasonably proficient in English. (14-15)

The Anglican Church Missionary Society, along with other Catholic missions also had its share in the expansion of English. Although they made a
significant contribution in studying and expanding African languages, they used English in church organisation. Though Bibles were translated into local languages they mostly used English in their sermons. The educational programme in the schools that were run by the missionaries was also no different from the colonial educational policies. Therefore, even though overtly there was no forcible teaching of the English language at gunpoint, the colonial strategies operated in a subtle manner that made English indispensable in the colonies. Achebe in "African Literature as Restoration of Celebration" is of the view that,

It is simply not true that the English forced us to learn their language. On the contrary British colonial policy in Africa and elsewhere emphasised again and again its preference for native languages. . . . We chose English not because the British desired it but because having tacitly accepted the new nationalities into which colonialism had grouped us, we needed its language to transact our business, including the business of overthrowing colonialism itself in the fullness of time. (8)

In the Caribbean islands, English was introduced in the schools when the Act of Emancipation (1833) included measure to impart religious and moral education to the Blacks. The Negro Education Grant provided financial assistance to various missionary organisations which were more interested in evangelisation than education. As Kenneth Ramchand in The West Indian Novel and its Background points out:

The different denominations did not have a system of systems, nor was there ever in the nineteenth century a coherent set of objectives for West Indian education. The Colonial Office advocated religious
education, the requirements of small farmers, and a grammatical knowledge of the English language 'as the most important agent of civilisation for the coloured population of the colonies', and felt that 'the lesson books of the colonial schools should also teach the mutual interests of the mother-country and her dependencies; the rational basis of their connection, and the domestic and social duties of the coloured races'. (20)

Given the fact that African slaves who were brought to the Caribbean islands were not even given the status of a human being, education of any kind was denied to the slaves. Even in the nineteenth century, when the movement for the emancipation of the slaves gained momentum, popular education in the islands was only the elementary education which hardly helped the West Indian individuals to read and write. Due to the lack of funds the educational programmes were carried out in adverse conditions. The schools, teachers and the curriculum were of poor quality. In *The West Indian Novel and its Background* Kenneth Ramchand goes on to add that,

But if the school places was low, the quality of education provided was not correspondingly high. 'Existing accommodation is frequently badly planned, and in a chronic state of disrepair and insanitation. Teachers, are inadequate in number and are in most colonies not well paid. Their training is largely defective or non-existent, and far too great reliance is placed on the pupil-teacher system. . . . Curricula are on the whole ill-adapted to the needs of the large mass of the population and adhere far too closely to models which have become out of date in the British practice from which they were blindly copied! These remarks come from the
report of the Moyne Commission on education in the islands, 1938-9. In the dark days of the nineteenth century matters were even worse. (21-22)

The negligence on the part of colonial policy makers had adverse effects on the children who were the victims. Though they learnt English as their first language at school, the European culture that was transported through these language policies made matters worse as their creative acumen was stifled. Because of the poor teaching standards and curriculum, the painful process of learning did more harm than good. Slinger Francisco captures this quite forcefully in his poem "Dan is the Man" which lengthy as it may be is appropriate to quote fully:

I

According to the education you get when you small
You'll grow up with true ambition and respect from one an all
But in days in school they teach me like a fool
The things they teach me I should be block-headed mule.

Pussy has finished his work long ago
And now he resting and thing
Solomon Agundy was born on a Monday
The Ass in the Lion skin
Winkin Blinkin and Nod
Sail off in a wooden shoe
How the Agouti lose he tail and Alligator trying to get
Monkey liver soup.

II
The poems and the lessons they write and send from England
Impress me they were trying to cultivate comedians
Comic books made more sense
You know it was fictitious without pretence
But like Cutteridge wanted to keep us in ignorance.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty did fall
Goosey Goosey Gander
Where shall I wander
Ding dong dell...Pussy in the well
Rikki ... Tikki Tavi.
Rikki Tikki Tavi

III

Well Cutteridge he was plenty times more advanced than
them scientists
I aint believe that no one man could write so much foolishness
Aeroplane and rockets didn't come too soon
Scientists used to make the grade in balloon
This time Cutteridge done make a cow jump over the moon.

Tom Tom the piper son
Stole the pig and away he ran
Once there was a woman who lived in a shoe
She had so many children she didn't know what to do
Dickery Dickery Dock
The mouse run up the Clock
The lion and the mouse
A woman pushing a cow up a ladder to eat grass on top a House.

IV

How I happen to get some education my friends I don’t know
All they teach me is about Brer Rabbit and Rumplestilskin
... O
They wanted to keep me down indeed
They tried their best but didn’t succeed
You see I was dunce and up to now I can’t read.

Peter Peter was a pumpkin eater
And the Lilliput people tie Gulliver
When I was sick and lay abed
I had two pillows at my head
I see the Goose that lay the golden egg
The Spider and the Fly
Morocoy with wings flying in the sky
They beat me like a dog to learn that in school
If me head was bright I woulda be a damn fool. (161-162)

The biting satire in the poem voices the suspicion that colonial education was never meant to bring excellence out of a native child. The natives were given education only to make them better colonial subjects who would cooperate with their colonial masters. No thought was given to improve the curriculum that was taught at school to make it culturally relevant. Since
the administrators borrowed it from England, they were convinced that it must hold good to the West Indian scenario. George Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile* offers his critique on West Indian school education:

The West Indian’s education was imported in much the same way that flour and butter are imported from Canada. Since the cultural negotiation was strictly between England and the natives, and England had acquired, somehow, the divine right to organise the native’s reading, it is to be expected that England’s export of literature would be English. Deliberately and exclusively English. And the further back in time England went for these treasures, the safer was the English commodity. So the examinations, which would determine that Trinidadian’s future in the Civil Service, imposed Shakespeare, and Wordsworth, and Jane Austen and George Eliot and the whole tabernacle of dead names, now come alive at the world’s greatest summit of literary expression. (27)

On the other hand, because there was no formal education for the slaves, they picked up English as a contact language from their masters, though this variety was often faulty according to the European standards. According to Edward Long in *The History of Jamaica*:

The Africans speak their respective dialects with some mixture of broken English. The language of the Creoles is bad English, larded with Guiney dialect owing to their adopting African words in order to make themselves understood by the imported slaves; which they find easier than teaching these strangers to learn English. The better sort are very fond of improving their language by catching at any hard word that the whites happen to let fall in their hearing; and
they alter and misapply it in a strange manner; but a tolerable
collection of them gives an air of knowledge and importance in the
eyes of their brethren, which tickles their vanity and makes them
more assiduous in stocking themselves with this unintelligible
jargon. (qtd. In Ramchand 82)

Since English was the language of their colonial masters, and because it was
the official variety, the West Indians had little choice in deciding which
language to use, as they needed English for survival.

In Australia the colonial policy is not very different from that of Africa
and the Caribbean. English was placed high above the Aboriginal languages.
Though the invaders did not care to acknowledge the richness and complexity
of the indigenous languages, they were convinced of the superiority of the
English language. English was taught in the mission schools as an integral part
of their assimilation policies. It was left to the Christian missionaries to impart
western education to the Aborigines. Mudrooroo Narogin in Writing From the
Fringe traces out the introduction of English in Aboriginal Australia:

Throughout Australia, as the weakened and demoralised tribes went
down or fell back before the guns of the colonists, a more
compassionate invader came to soothe the pillows of a dying race.
These were the Christian missionaries who although they saw
Aboriginal culture as intrinsically pagan and thus evil, did bring
with them a policy of education which in effect helped to foster the
first Aboriginal writings in English. . . . The missionaries laboured
to soften the coarse pioneering spirit of the first settlers, who often
considered the Aborigines vermin to be destroyed. They accepted
the Aborigines as human beings and educated them and eventually christianised them so that today there is a strong current of Christianity running through much of Aboriginal writing. (8-9)

Discourses on the Aborigines were so strong that white Australia religiously believed that Aborigines did not possess the needed intellectual abilities to master the English language and its literature. The mission schools were herded with Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their families. The teachers who taught in these schools were prejudiced because of their racist ideologies. Neither were they competent to teach Aboriginal children. However the mission schools had an important role in the expansion of the English language. Jack Davis in “Aboriginal Writing: a personal view” points this out:

At least on these missions and settlements, some of our people learned to read and write in English. Outside these institutions it was considered improper for Aboriginal children to attend school. They thrust pencils and paper before us and told us to write, and write we did. . . . also, it was believed that we had the intelligence of children and we were members of a dying race. Even when our modern day authors appeared in the sixties, the progress was not accepted by the general white Australian public. (12)

When the white settlers assumed power over all social institutions, English became the administrative language. Since colonisation, the Aborigines were relegated to the position where they were at the mercy of the white settlers. The Aborigines were forced to communicate in English if they wanted to interact with whites. Therefore the Aborigines learnt the English language as a
matter of survival. As English became the official language and a prestige variety, the native indigenous languages were systematically suppressed which led to their near extinction. Mudrooroo in Writing From the Fringe addresses this issue:

This signifier reveals the subordinate position of Aboriginal languages and Kriol. They may be taught in a few schools, heard on a few radio programs, but possession of them is not enough in Australia. If an Aboriginal person wants a job, wants to secure some sort of position, Standard English must be mastered. Everyone knows this, and so it is the aborigines themselves, especially the young, who are discarding their languages. They feel ashamed of them, declare that they know them not, hang their heads as they mumble that they talk like everybody else. (146)

Therefore, the modern Aborigine youth hardly speak their native Aboriginal language. But however, even during the process when Aboriginal languages were on the decline, a new variety called kriol or Aboriginal English evolved which is mostly at vogue in the Aboriginal communities.

Therefore when a postcolonial writer uses English as the medium of his creative and intellectual expression, it is a deliberate choice that foregrounds his political stance. In societies like the Caribbean and Australia, the postcolonial scenario does not offer a choice for the writer as the indigenous languages have only restricted use in the society. Though efforts are taken to preserve these languages the people who use these languages are few. It is also worthwhile to note that these languages are predominantly oral in nature and hence it is debatable how far a book published in a native language will gain currency among them. In Africa, the pre-colonial states consisted of different
tribes that had their distinct languages. The nation formation that was effected through colonisation poses problem when different tribes are brought together to have a common identity. For example, Nigeria, in the early period of colonisation was conceived of as three distinct colonial territories namely Lagos, the North and the South. Even in 1914, when Lugard united these three provinces as Nigeria, it still maintained distinct administration for each province. There are a few hundred tribal languages that are used in Nigeria. As it is the case in India, it is English that serves as the common lingua franca of Nigeria. Therefore if a writer chooses any particular African language, he limits himself to a narrow section of his society. Unlike the storyteller of the past who had restricted audience, the postcolonial novelist, through the scope of English, chooses to address a wide range of audience. It also gives him the leverage to reach out to the international audience to whom he likes to tell his story of his land and people, his version of what happened to his land and people during and after colonisation.

However postcolonial writers are not united in their choice of English as the medium of writing. Some writers subscribe to the school of thought that only indigenous languages can fully serve the purposes of the cultural and social issues of the natives. As early as in the 1960's, Obiajunwa Wali in "The Dead End of African Literature?" feels that "any true African literature must be written in African languages", and those who fail to comply with this are "merely pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity, and frustration" (14). They also believe that writing in English naturally has a detrimental effect on the vernacular languages as they still remain in an impoverished state. Instead efforts should be made to enrich the native languages which also assert the fact that the native languages are rich enough
to be used as a literary language even in modern times such as this. Thiong'o in "The Language of African Literature" passionately puts forward his claim:

How did we arrive at this acceptance of 'the fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our literature', in our culture and in our politics? . . . How did we, as African writers, come to be so feeble towards the claims of our languages on us and so aggressive in our claims on other languages, particularly the languages of our colonisation? (287)

Therefore Ngugi who had written in English for most part of his literary career, switched over to writing in Gikuyu and has written and published three novels: *Devil on the cross*, *Matigari* and *The Wizard of the Crow*. To choose a language is also to choose one's audience and Ngugi seeks to address the peasants of his society. In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in English Literature*, Ngugi addresses this issue:

An African writer should write in a language that will allow him to communicate effectively with the peasants and workers in Africa--in other words, he should write in an African language. As far as publishing is concerned, I have no doubt that writing in an African language is as commercially viable as writing in any language. Market forces might even have the added advantage of forcing those who express themselves in African languages to strive for local relevance in their writing because no peasant or worker is going to buy novels, plays, or books of poetry that are totally irrelevant to his situation. Literature published in African languages
will have to be meaningful to the masses and therefore much closer to the realities of their situation. (153)

On the other hand the writers who use English as their medium do not meekly embrace the language, they use English for clear political ends as they are aware of the colonial moorings of the language. Chinua Achebe in his *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, defiantly puts it: "Let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in English for we intend to do unheard of things with it" (7).

Therefore it is not without resentment that these writers take to English. Given the historicity of English in the colonies and its complicity in the process of colonisation, it is ironic that English serves the postcolonial writer in a way that no other language can. The present global situation compels the use of English language. As Jamaica Kincaid puts it in *A Small Place*:

> What I see is the millions of people of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland, no god . . . and worst and most painful of all, no tongue. . . . For isn’t it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed this crime? (43)

**Decolonisation and English: Its Significance in Postcolonial Fiction:**

One of the primary concerns of postcolonial writers is to contribute towards the project of decolonisation which is at the heart of postcolonial writings. Colonisation has had its indelible impression not only on the structures of traditional societies and on the lives of the indigenes but also on the minds of the natives who have internalised the colonial constructions and have accepted their roles that have been assigned by their colonisers. Therefore
decolonisation involves the arduous task of unlearning the prejudiced western assumptions and the received misinterpretations of the cultural identity of the colonised that would ultimately restore the dignity and individuality of the natives. Decolonising fictions are written to interrogate the various colonial discourses and to present a counter-perspective of the colonised which contests the absolutist nature of colonial constructs and the veracity of such statements. In the process, what has been suppressed is given expression; the exaggerated and distorted facts are straightened out; colonial myths are deflated; colonial texts are rewritten; tropes and stereotypes are subverted and the historical continuity, however fragmented it might be, is re-established. While the suppressed identity of the marginalized is given its due recognition, the native culture of the colonised is asserted as being no way inferior to the coloniser's culture.

It is not simply that a postcolonial writer contests the claims of colonisation by speaking back to the enemy after he has retreated or has ceased to be an enemy. The impacts of colonisation have been so severe that these writers feel that there has not been enough literature written on all the aspects of colonisation. These writings are aimed not only at the western world which is incriminated in the whole process of colonisation but also to their fellow country men to restore their honour and dignity by making their voices heard. In his interview with Maya Jaggi, Caryl Phillips, when asked why he was writing about slavery in 1990's, retorted quite forcefully thus:

If you don’t know where you’ve come from, you don’t know where you’re going to... Look at the work that’s been produced out of the Second World War, which lasted six years- the novels, films, non-fiction. Slavery as an institution lasted from 1572 until 1834.
We’re talking about a huge period of history, and I’ll bet you could fill more shelves with books about the Second World War than over the whole two-and-a-half-centuries span of slavery. British people forget they know very little about history. Why? Because most of their history took place in India and Africa and the Caribbean, where they could pretend it didn’t happen. (116)

Therefore the postcolonial writer addresses the western audience as much as his own community to expose the nefarious designs of colonisation and its detrimental effects on the indigenous society. Even after much has been said and done, the construction of discourses on the colonised still operates in a very subtle manner. In Australia, though the Aborigines have been recognised as people who belong to that land, and efforts are taken to assimilate them to enable life on peaceful terms with the European settlers, discourses are created even in the present situation to denounce them as savages and cannibals. As Alan Lawson points out in his “The Anxious Proximities of Settler (Post)Colonial Relations”:

During and after the 1996 election in Australia, an extraordinarily uninformed populist politician called Pauline Hanson drew apparently substantial popular support for some ugly racist views. In 1997 she established a new political party, called “Pauline Hanson One Nation” and to mark its launch, her support movement published an oddly anonymous book called *The Truth*. The circulation of the book was largely restricted to party supporters but it was designed to be quoted by them. . . . The book then presents a number of ‘sources, some of which include eyewitness accounts of
Aboriginal cannibalism ... it concentrates especially on tales of Aborigines eating their own children. (1120)

The western epistemological attitude that is complicit with oppression and domination is contested in anti-colonial polemics of postcolonial writings. Colonial tropes, metaphors, images, and paradigms are reversed with the construction of counter-discourses. Given the nature and impact of colonisation on the colonised culture and experience it becomes imperative that postcolonial writers seek to decolonise the colonial ramifications that exist in post-colonial societies. Hence decolonisation involves dismantling and subverting the European codes that were used for cultural oppression. It also alters the binary relationship between the coloniser and the colonised as dominant European discourses are appropriated and subverted. Helen Tiffin in "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse" points out the significance of decolonisation in postcolonial writing:

Decolonisation is process, not arrival; it invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them; between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dis/mantling. Since it is not possible to create or recreate national or regional formations independent of their historical implication in the European colonial enterprise, it has been the project of post-colonial writing to interrogate European discourses and discursive strategies from a privileged position within (and between) two worlds; to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in the colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world. (17-18)
Hence post-colonial writing does not merely stop with the interrogation of colonial discourses and cultural oppression. Though there is a modicum of truth that the colonies inherited 'novel' as a genre, English language and classical stereotyped art forms as colonial legacies, postcolonial writers appropriate these forms and re-work it to suit their native experience. Therefore, it is not always the European conventional forms that exist in postcolonial writing, rather the form, structure and language is constantly worked upon to create new art forms giving expression to the creativity of the postcolonial writers. Karen McIntyre, defines the desire to create new forms of writing as creative decolonisation:

One of the aims of creative decolonisation is to establish a new form of creativity that is quite distinct from Western canonical writing, and which is imaginative and exploratory rather than predicated on an atavistic desire for the revival of precolonial creative traditions. (23)

It is significant to observe that English is reused by the postcolonial writers in their project of decolonisation. Not only decolonising fictions are written but they also use decolonised englishes as a medium of their writings. As English is appropriated, it no longer remains as a foreign tongue, and the postcolonial writer experiments by imprinting his native image on it in order to express the resonance of the finer nuances that are naturally and effortlessly achieved in one's own language. The English language itself is decolonised as it is stripped of its colonial residues and simultaneously refashioned to suit the specific needs by incorporating native cultural forms to validate its expression. Since language is the repository of culture and the social fabric of a society, it is imperative that the postcolonial writer incorporates his cultural forms and
authenticates his cultural expression. The problem of speaking for himself and his people through another man's tongue is resolved to some extent by the nativisation of English where the local idioms, images and metaphors are given expression. The incorporation of indigenous cultural forms with the coloniser's language is a political exercise given the fact that it was written off by the colonial discourses. Postcolonial writers deliberately experiment with the cultural forms that were suppressed and incorporate it with the English models and validate the culture of the colonised. The colonial residues in the English language are subjected to erasure as the writers' native culture is valorised.

While the postcolonial writer reworks the English language by incorporating his cultural forms, he is also concerned about the form of the language. Nativisation takes place not only at the content level but even the form is altered to reflect the local conditions. The conventional structures of the English language are replaced with the structures of the native language. As the influence of the native language is allowed to prey upon the standard forms of the English language, the variety that the postcolonial writer uses is closer to his native culture. While addressing the varied uses of English in postcolonial writing, Salman Rushdie goes on to say:

Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between cultures, within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free. (17)
The issue of handling the English language by postcolonial writers becomes a political activity that reflects the ongoing struggle in the dialectics of the colonised. The new Englishes of the postcolonial writers cannot be simply dismissed as faulty/sub-standard English without analysing the historical experiences of the writer. The whole exercise of writing is a continuous process of negotiation between the writer's native language and the coloniser's language. It should also be noted that, in some cases, this is the only variety available for the writer in the given situation and he intends to use it. More often than not, his creative use of it will be fashioned in such a way that it becomes distinct from the conventional standards of English. He writes in a variety that expresses his local conditions and captures the idiom of his people whom he is representing. Therefore he writes in a variety of English that is distinctly his own which is closer to his native culture. Edward Kamau Brathwaite in "Nation Language" records his Caribbean experience:

I think, however, that language does really have a role to play here—certainly in the Caribbean. But it is an English which is not the standard, imported, educated English, but that of the submerged, surrealist experience and sensibility, which has always been there and which is now increasingly coming to the surface and influencing the perception of contemporary Caribbean people. . . . It may be in English: but often it is in an English which is like a howl, or a shout or a machine-gun or the wind or a wave. It is also like the blues. And sometimes it is English and African at the same time. (311)

The use of Caribbean Creole and Aboriginal English in postcolonial writing proves that the native writer uses the variety of language that he is
acquainted with. Also, it should not be forgotten that these varieties have a social stigma of being inferior in societies which they operate. Despite this, when a writer uses this variety, it goes to affirm the political and ideological stand of the writer in postcolonial writing. Though the term ‘Standard English’ itself has many contradictions, the postcolonial writer dismisses the notion of ‘standard’ as he thwarts the centre/periphery binary. As W.D Ashcroft puts it in “ Constitutive Graphonomy: A Post-Colonial Theory of Literary Writing”:

Constitutive Graphonomy raises the question of language to prominence because language that exists in complexity, hybridity and constant change inevitably rejects the assumption of a linguistic structure of code which can be characterised by the colonial distinction of ‘standard’ and ‘variant’; all languages emerge out of the conflict and struggle. The post-colonial text brings language and meaning to a discursive site in which they are mutually constituted, and at this site the importance of usage is inescapable.

(64)

At another level, English becomes a plaything at the hands of the postcolonial writers. Without any qualms, or regret they subvert and alter the structures by way of experimentation. They deliberately distort the language and render it ridiculous to point out the irrelevancy of standard form in that particular social setting. As they are writing with vengeance, writers like Ken Saro-Wiwa wilfully break the conventions of the English language in their writing. Helen Gilbert in “De-Scribing Orality: Performance and the recuperation of voice”, points out the manner in which Kevin Gilbert uses the English language:
Kevin Gilbert's *The Cherry Pickers* (1988), initially performed in 1971 and regarded as the 'first Aboriginal play' in the European sense, makes a point of 'bastardizing' (Gilbert's own term) conventional English beyond the limits of the purely colloquial by using words like 'tremendaciously' and 'rememberising', as well as neologisms such as 'kunstidonus' or 'amphiskkulus', to satirize the pretentiousness of white speech and signal its inappropriateness to an aboriginal context. (100)

These writers even though they use the coloniser's language, write with a vengeance to mark their anti-colonial sentiments through their writings. They belong to a class of people who have not forgotten the colonial atrocities meted out to their people, land and culture. They are also aware of the politics of English under the colonial rule which saw the extinction of many of their native languages. Truths were suppressed, histories were distorted and lies were promulgated through the use of English language. Therefore taking these into consideration, postcolonial writers wreak their vengeance on the much-celebrated English language by breaking the set conventions of the language. In the postcolonial scenario, when all the colonial structures are subverted and bulldozed, the coloniser's language is no exception as its rules and grammar are wilfully violated by the colonised. David Punter in *Postcolonial Imaginings*, points out the rage that marks postcolonial writings:

> There is the mutual rage of incomprehension, the rage that stems from the tearing out of the tongue, the tearing out by the tongue, the 'tonguelessness' that lies behind the most sophisticated of narratives, that renders the gesture of writing in the language of the
conqueror forever an activity of pollution. There is the mutual hatred of that same incomprehension, the sense of a wilful withholding of secrets, the exasperation of the meeting that is denied common ground and instead takes place only under prescribed conditions. There is the sense of ruin at the origin that attends these aftermaths of empire, the awareness that what was destroyed can never be reconstructed. (55)

As Caliban breaks free from the prison house of language that had held him in shackles, he designs a new abode that thwarts the authority of Prospero. The calibanic response of the postcolonial writer, however, does not stop with cursing the master in his own language. It rather makes a compelling hearing when he talks for himself, asserting his native conditions and life. He also sets out to dismantle the various colonial discourses constructed at his expense and puts forward a counter-discourse that is at loggerheads with the colonial version of truth. The postcolonial writer is conscious of the fact that the colonial discourses have affected his traditional life greatly, and have intruded into almost all of his social institutions. The indigenous languages have become extinct; the traditional system of education has been altered and replaced with English schools; the extended family system is lost; the loss of indigenous religious forms where sacred symbols have been desecrated; the loss of one's identity and honour; to name only a few, justifies the resentment that is expressed against the colonisers. As the coloniser is held accountable for the loss that was/is suffered during and after colonisation, postcolonial writings are aimed at expressing this rage that was pent up for centuries. Mudrooroo in Writing from the Fringe points out the way in which Aboriginal writers write against the whites:
Wonder has been expressed at the rancour in Kevin Gilbert's books. They have 'gifted' him their language and here he is using it to attack them, and they turn to the gentler Oodgeroo Noonuccal who accepts a common humanity; but the wonder is that any Aboriginal writer can write without the feelings of a Kevin Gilbert. Can words of peace or thoughts of gratitude be expected from someone who has had their own language stolen from them? They feel this tragedy in each and every word they write, but there is no going back, no return. (148)

English is also used to re-inscribe the white coloniser in his own language. During the process of colonisation, the colonisers misrepresented the natives partly because of their biased perception and also because of the desire to further their selfish interests. Hence they looked at the African as if he were an animal; Caribs as cannibals and Aborigines as inferior creatures. The land of the colonies was considered as a wild, savage place but nevertheless a thing to be possessed and exploited. The whites looked down upon the native's culture and denounced it as barbaric and uncivilised. Therefore in postcolonial writing the colonised reverses the gaze on the coloniser and determines himself as the point of reference. The Eurocentric notion is thwarted when the colonised alters the point of reference. Ngugi calls it 'moving the center'. In his interview, "A Conversation with Ngugi wa Thiong'o", Ngugi wa Thiong'o explains what he means by it:

I use the phrase "moving the center" in the context of moving the center from its assumed centrality in the West to where it should be in a multiplicity of centers all over the world. Because each of our own experiences can be a center from which you look at the world-
our language, our social situations become very important as bases of looking at the world. (164)

The colonised redefines his ‘self’ as he affirms himself by relocating the center and constructs the subjectivity of the otherness of the white coloniser. He tries to come to terms with the understanding of the coloniser from his viewpoint. Hence in Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, the natives tie a bicycle to the tree taking it to be a new, wild kind of an animal: “And so they killed the white man and tied his iron horse to their sacred tree because it looked as if it would run away to call the man’s friends” (125).

As a powerful recuperative strategy, the postcolonial writer re-inscribes the coloniser in the alter/native perspective. As the master-codes of the dominant narrative are subverted, the postcolonial writer also seeks to explain his view of the land and culture with which he shares a spiritual relationship. Hence the African reveres the earth goddess and an Aborigine venerates every rock, tree and waterhole. Therefore for the postcolonial writer, nature is inseparable from his culture. As this view stands opposed to the west’s relationship with nature, the white systems of representation and the native’s subversion of it posit a conflicting relationship between the coloniser and the colonised.

Since English provides the scope to write back to the centre, language becomes paramount in postcolonial writing by way of articulating the suppressed voices of the colonised. While postcolonial writers address the discursive violence of colonisation, they use English for clear political ends. As W.D Ashcroft points out:

The use of English inserts itself into a political discourse in post-colonial writing, and the transcription of English variants of all
kinds captures that moment between the culture affirmed on the one hand as 'indigenous', or 'national', and that on the other as 'imperialist', colonialist, or 'metropolitan'. (71)

Therefore in postcolonial texts English operates as more than a medium of communication when it is used as a tool by the postcolonial writers in their project of decolonisation. Among various issues that concern a postcolonial writer, English becomes a predominant theme at the content and formal level. The political usage of English is the most powerful strategy used in the cultural politics of postcolonial writing. As English is decolonised it is reworked to valorise local culture and to offer counter discourses. Hence this study aims to examine the role of English which is creatively used to further the cause of decolonisation.

Methodology

The texts selected for study include Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*, James Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* (Africa); Sam Selvon's *Moses Ascending*, Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock* (Caribbean); Mudrooroo's *Doin Wildcat: A Novel Koori Script*, and Kim Scott's *True Country* (Australia).

Keeping the intention of the study in mind, six novelists have been chosen from across the globe, whose themes, techniques and contributions, strongly validate the claim of this thesis. Firstly, they are socially committed writers who feel that, as writers, it is their responsibility to address the various issues that concern their society in the post-colonial scenario. They are also sensitive to the impact of colonisation and hence try to experiment with various forms in their writing to make it more appropriate to their respective societies. These writers are also aware of the problems that are concerned with
English language and its role in postcolonial writing and have been quite loquacious in expressing their views.

In the African scenario, Gabriel Okara and James Ngugi have been chosen, as they are prominent literary figures and have contributed much to the growth of the body of their national literature. While Ngugi has become a controversial figure with his radical views on the use of English, Okara is generally known for his creative use of the coloniser's language. If Okara's *The Voice* deals with the post-independent scene, Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat* is primarily concerned with the pre-independent state of African society. As Okara is from Nigeria and Ngugi from Kenya, they lend a fair degree of balance of representation for the body of African literature.

Similarly to represent Caribbean literature, Sam Selvon from Trinidad and Wilson Harris, a Guyanese have been chosen as champions of West Indian Literature because of their prolific writing. Without undermining the achievements and contributions of George Lamming, Claude Mckay, V.S Naipaul and others, Selvon and Harris have been chosen as they lend variety in their themes of concern suited to the scope of this study. While Selvon’s *Moses Ascending* deals with the subjugation of black experience and the problems of assimilation of black immigrants in a white society, Harris in *Palace of the Peacock* is preoccupied with the polyphonic nature of West Indian society and their confrontation with the indigenous presence in the islands. They also experiment with forms of Creole and in their own way and address the issue of language in Postcolonial writing.

In Aboriginal writing, the choice has been narrowed down to Mudrooroo and Kim Scott. Mudrooroo has been championing the cause of
Aboriginal literature for more than three decades and is a much respected figure not only in the Australian literary scene but also elsewhere. Mudrooroo is constantly given to experimentation with forms and content and negotiates to express the Aboriginal experience. Though Kim Scott has only two novels to his credit, his writings explore the delicate nuances of relations between the Aborigines and white Australia. Even as he traces the cultural history of the Aborigines he captures the poetic cadences of tribal idiom and authenticates Aboriginal writing. While Mudrooroo's *Doin Wildcat: A Novel Koori Script* deals with the Aboriginal life in a white society, Kim Scott in *True Country* is more concerned about the disintegration of native culture of traditional life and about the future generation of Aboriginal Australia.

The above six novels have been chosen on the merits of their concern pertaining to the purpose of this study. Though these novels have been written from different social milieu, all of them share the common experiences of colonisation. Each of the six novels concerns itself with the problem of language and addresses it in its own way. Loss of native language and the substitution of English is a matter of reality in the post-colonial scenario, and hence the creative use of English for political purposes is a ploy that these writers adopt in their project of decolonisation. These novels are also deeply rooted in their culture as the novelists experiment with their native literary and cultural forms by fusing it with the borrowed literary traditions of the west. The native culture is venerated to highlight the importance of the inseparable nature of culture and the physical environment in their life. The novels also deal with the interrogation of 'history' as they are seen as an extension of colonial narratives. The novels offer a counter perspective of history exposing the underlying motives of such constructions. The novels are concerned with
native experiences like subjugation, slavery, loss of wealth, land, family culture, issues relating to their past and exploitation. They also undertake the project of speaking/writing back to the colonisers and their colonial discourses. Therefore these novels, while maintaining their distinct socio-political concerns, they share a commonality in their anti-colonial rants against the British colonisation and its ramifications.

The approach of this study is to undertake individual studies of writers and examine the political purpose of English in their chosen works. Since the writers are from different social backgrounds, placing them within their specific literary and cultural traditions offer insights not perceivable in a comparative study. The choice of novels from African, Caribbean and Australian Aboriginal writing is deliberate since they are strongly linked to each other as they share the socio-cultural aftermath of colonisation in some measurably similar ways although the individual experience of each colony is distinct from that of the others. Though the colonisers operated at different times with different strategies, these ex-colonies shared a similar kind of experience under the common yoke of colonisation. Loss of native land and culture, disruption of traditional familial system, slavery, racism, loss of native languages and imposition of English are some of the experiences that are common to them. While the nexus between Africa and the Caribbean is strong as they share the same bio-geographic roots, Aboriginal Australia shares a close affinity with the Caribbean experience. The emergence of Creole, transplantation, dismembered society and rootlessness are experiences that are common to both the colonies. Aboriginal music which is a strong expression of native identity is highly influenced by the West Indian reggae. Mudrooroo points this out in Writing From the Fringe:
CAAMA has begun recording Aboriginal musicians and so has Abmusic in Western Australia. Aboriginality is to the fore in that some Aboriginal languages provide the vehicle of communication and there is little aping of American or British speech patterns in the song texts in English. Many are in the genre termed country and western but a rhythm akin to Jamaican reggae is employed by some bands such as Coloured Stone and Modern Tribe. (26-27)

Since African, Caribbean and Aboriginal Australia are strongly linked to each other with regards to their colonial experiences, the present study includes six novelists, two from each colony to represent the growing body of their respective literature. While this study involves six novels from across the globe, it narrows down on the focus of the singular purpose of the usage of English in these novels. The study examines the use of English as a tool by the postcolonial writers in their project of decolonisation. The choice of male writers is not because of any anti-feminist bias. The purpose of the study is not to make a gender based study of these issues. All these writers do record the indignity heaped on the women of their society, but they do not speak for their women. There are women writers like Bessie Head, Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, Oodgeru Noonuccal, Sally Morgan, Nadine Gordimer, Flora Nwapa, Micere Githae Mugo, Sindiwe Magona and others who spearhead the gender related issues of these nations.

An Introduction to the Writers

Since writers are products of their society and their personal and social experiences go a long way in helping them form their ideologies and world
view, a study of their life history would certainly be helpful for a better comprehension of their works.

Gabriel Immotimi Gbaingbain Okara was born on 24th April 1921 in Bumoundi, in Southeastern Nigeria, to Prince Sampson G. Okara and Martha Olodiama Okara. Gabriel Okara received his secondary schooling in Umuahia and Lagos. He went on to join the Government College in Umuahia. When the Second World War broke out he had to leave the college and was transferred to Yaba Higher College. After the Second World War, Okara worked as a book binder and a journalist. He edited a newspaper called Nigerian Tide and in 1975 was appointed as the writer-in-residence of the Rivers State Council for Arts and Culture.

Okara has won many distinctions as a writer. He is the first significant African poet to write in English, and is also the first Nigerian writer to publish in and join the editorial staff of the influential literary journal, *Black Orpheus* which was started in 1957. Better known as a poet, Okara has published his collection of poems in *The Fisherman's Invocation* (1978) which won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize. Apart from his novel *The Voice* (1964), Okara has also written children's books such as *Little Snake and Little Frog* (1981) and *An Adventure to Juju Island* (1981).

Okara's *The Voice* (1964) is an experimental novel published in 1960's when Nigerian literature as a forerunner, provided the leadership for other black African and Third World literatures. It is a self-conscious linguistic experiment when Okara experiments with his native Ijaw and infuses it with the English language. The novel testifies to his disillusionment with the post-Independent scenario of Nigeria.
The other African writer chosen is James Ngugi. Ngugi was born in Kamiriithu, near Limuru, Kiambu District. He is the fifth child of the third of his father, Thiong'o wa Nducu's four wives and belongs to the Gikuyu tribe. Ngugi began his formal education in the mission run school at Kamaanduru in Limuru, Karinga school in Maanguu, and Alliance High School in Kikuyu. He received his B.A in English at Makerere University college in Kampala (Uganda) and did his graduate studies at the Leeds University in England. He started off as a devout Christian and later on rejected Christianity and changed his original name in 1976 from James Ngugi to Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Ngugi grew up during the turbulent period of 1950's Mau Mau struggle for independence. His elder brother had joined the movement, his stepbrother was killed, his mother was tortured and his village was badly affected during the party's struggle. This made an indelible impression on young Ngugi's mind which later manifested itself in his novel A Grain of Wheat (1967). As a novelist, Ngugi marked his entry with the publication of Weep Not Child (1964), which was the first novel in English to be published by an East African. It was followed by The River Between (1965). In 1977, December, Ngugi was imprisoned for a year without a trial for his involvement with a communal theatre in his village and also partly because of the uncensored political message of his play Ngaahika Ndeenda (1977). In 1980 he published Caitaani mutharaba-In in Gikuyu which was translated as Devil on the Cross, and argued that African writers should use only African languages for writing to help build an authentic African literature. Ngugi's other major works include: Petals of Blood(1978), Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature (1986), Matigari (1987), Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom (1993), Penpoints, Gunpoints and
Sam Selvon and Wilson Harris have been chosen to represent the West Indian literature. Samuel Dickinson Selvon was born in 1923 to East Indian parents in San Fernando, Trinidad. While his father is an Indian, his mother is half-Indian and half-Scottish. He graduated in 1938 with a Senior Cambridge Certificate from Naparima College, Trinidad. Selvon considered himself a creolised West Indian as he grew up in Trinidad's multiracial society. During the World War II, he worked as a wireless operator for the Royal Navy Reserve. After the War, he worked as the fiction editor of the literary magazine of the Trinidad Guardian Newspaper. In 1950, he left for England in search of employment and became a free-lance writer. Apart from his novels, he has written two screenplays, several short stories, radio and television plays. Selvon gained international recognition as a novelist with his first novel A Brighter Sun published in 1952. The novel is set in Trinidad and explores the peasant experience during the socio-economic change in the Caribbean islands. Selvon's The Lonely Londoner (1956) portrays in humorous manner, the plight of the expatriate West Indians in London. As a sequel to it, he published Moses Ascending (1975), in which Selvon's most trenchant social criticism of racism is brought to the fore. In Moses Migrating (1983), Moses, the principal character, returns to Trinidad as an ambassador of British cultural pride.

Theodore Wilson Harris was born on March 24th, 1921 in New Amsterdam, British Guyana. He hails from a mixed descent of European, African and Amerindian. Harris attended Queen’s College in Georgetown, British Guyana. He worked as a Government surveyor from 1942 to 1958. He

Harris got well acquainted with the savannahs and rain forests of the Guyana heartland when he worked as a surveyor. This knowledge provided the setting for many of his novels where landscape becomes a living presence. The Caribbean experience of dismemberment and slavery stimulated him to see the inter-relatedness of all creatures and the power of imagination to transform realities. *Palace of the Peacock* is the first novel of Wilson Harris which contains all his basic themes that are explored in his later novels. It is a recreation of the colonial conquest and conflict with the natives of the land.

To represent Australian Aboriginal writing, Mudrooroo and Kim Scott have been chosen. Mudrooroo (Colin Thomas Johnson) was born on August 21, 1938 in Narrogin, Western Australia. According to the records, his mother Elizabeth Johnson was of Irish/English descent and his father Thomas was from Irish/African-American. In 1988, Mudrooroo changed his name Colin Johnson to Mudrooroo Nyoongah as a political protest. He believed that he shared matrilineal links with the Bibbulmum people of the Nyoongah tribe.
Later he added Narogin to his name that refers to his place of birth. But he is popularly known as Mudrooroo, which means ‘paperbark’ (an Australian tree) in the language of the Bibbulmun people.

In 1947, Mudrooroo was taken into Institutional care when he was just nine years old. At the age of sixteen, he left the Christian Brothers’ orphanage, Clontarf Boys’ Town but soon was imprisoned for twelve months in Fremantle prison for the charges of robbery and assault. In 1957, after the imprisonment, Mudrooroo got acquainted with Mary Durack who was a popular literary writer of the time. It was with her assistance, Mudrooroo published his *Wild Cat Falling* in 1965. He also spent a number of years in India studying Buddhism.

Mudrooroo has won many accolades for his literary achievements. In 1996, he was awarded the prestigious Ruth Adeney Koori Award for his contribution to Aboriginal writing. He was also the Head of Aboriginal Studies at Murdoch University. At present, Mudrooroo resides in Kathmandu where he has given himself to the study and practice of Buddhism.

Kim Scott was born in 1957 in Western Australia and is a descendent of the Nyoongar tribe. He became a secondary school teacher of English in a village in the northwest of Western Australia. He published his first novel, *True Country* in 1993. Kim Scott published his second novel, *Benang: From the Heart* in 1999, which won both the Miles Franklin Literary Award and the Western Australian Premier's Book Award. It also won the Kate Challis Raka Award in 2001. At present he lives in Coolbellup, a suburb of Perth with his wife and two sons.

**Map of the Thesis:**

This dissertation is organised as hereunder. The first chapter traces the historicity of the English language in Africa, Caribbean islands and Australia. It problematises the position of English in these ex-colonies and highlights the need to examine the role of English in postcolonial fiction. It also seeks to explain the role of English in the process of decolonisation and the various ways in which it is used by postcolonial writers for their ideological purposes. The chapter also indicates the organisation of the thesis.

The second chapter scrutinises the various strategies used by these writers to appropriate the language and nativise it. The language is decolonised as it is fused with the local varieties.

The third chapter analyses the strategic use of English for the valorisation of the colonised culture. The fourth chapter examines the use of English for interrogating colonial discourses and to offer counter-discourses as part of the project of decolonisation. The fifth and final chapter sums up the arguments of the earlier chapters and points to areas of further research suggested by the present study.