CHAPTER IV
FACETS OF ABORIGINALITY
(BENANG)

Benang (1999) as the second novel of Kim Scott promoted Aboriginal representation to the greater polemical heights. Carrying the mixed heritage of Aboriginal (Nyoongar + English) and Colonial, Scott has succeeded in delivering the problem of cultural dislocation and the anguishing problems of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations. At the backdrop of contemporary Aboriginal Australian culture, Kim unfurls a different world in Benang. One can obviously identify the dual purpose in the personal narrative and the family narrative of Kim Scott. The dual narrative is placed in the wider social and historical frame work of Aboriginal oppression. The state sanctioned policy of assimilation aimed to ‘biological absorption’ of Aboriginals, psychologically damaged and culturally dispossessed the Aboriginals born from a mixed parentage. The systematic elimination of Aboriginal culture through state sanctioned policies has created an urgency to retrieve the family histories of Aboriginals. Kim Scott firmly believes that the fictionalized versions of family histories expose the attitudes of non Aboriginals to Aboriginal culture. Scholarly investigation into the lives of Aboriginals will decipher the issues of power and psychosis latent in the lives of Aboriginals from mixed parentage. Scott’s research in this direction becomes personal and historical. Scott’s attempt becomes personal as he
traces the history of his family through Welfare files. It becomes broadly historical as he draws from the diversity of sources like books, letters, parliamentary debates, newspaper articles and royal commission reports. Scott relies more on archival documentation and invention rather than on imaginative blend of facts and fancies. He succeeds in designing the novel with educative purpose and orientation with an equivalence of historical and emotional traits. Informing us about the shameful history of white discrimination of Aboriginal people, the instructive and the educative content of the novel has invited political and aesthetic issues for Scott. First, the acknowledgement of history in writing is primarily for white educated classes. The act of writing history is understood as an attempt to convince and win the consent of white educated classes. The literacy problem that continues to exist in the Aboriginal communities comes naturally in the way of knowing the history of white colonial oppression. So, the negotiation and mediation of Scott is considered as an attempt to pacify the white middle class readership. Scott escapes from this accusation by consciously avoiding didacticism and employing implication, indirection and obliqueness as strategies of narration. The archival material particularly Neville’s letters are evidences of this narration. Through the deliberate use of understatement the fictionalized scenes of brutalization of Aboriginals are emotionally rendered. As a mark of respect for the suffering of Aboriginal people Scott refuses to sensationalise the history of exploitation. He adopts the survival mechanism
of Aboriginal people telling the stories of oppression in a guarded fashion as an enactment of passive resistance through the use of understatement. He creates ‘gaps’ through understatement to provide space for silenced or unknown histories. Scott utilizes these spaces for registering other Nyoongar stories. Through these narrative strategies, he projects *Benang* as part of the process of cultural regeneration and also as a means of essentially educating white people. Besides the educative orientation, the political and spiritual motives of the narrator become paradigmatic. From this perspective, the investigation of personal history is presented as a movement from ignorance to knowledge. It is also projected as a movement from outrage to the compassionate understanding of the oppressors of the past. Also as a movement from psychological disinheritance to a healing of identification with the people and the land. Kim Scott’s desire is to promote diversity of Aboriginal culture. The attempts of colonial discourse in presenting the Aboriginal people as the homogenized ‘other’ can only be contested by the diversity of Aboriginal culture. The very process of recuperating the Aboriginal identity is only to dismantle and disrupt the racist colonial discourse. The rich specificity and variousness of native flora and fauna, landscape and seascape of Aboriginal culture creates a sense of remarkable diversity in varying attempts to resist, accommodate or collude with the dominant white culture.
Sense of identity and place is integral to the Aboriginal self and psyche. The central concern of *Benang* is a sense of place. Scott evokes an Aboriginal sense of place by magically invoking the use of imagery, rhythms and cadences of language. Scott is cautious in attributing spiritual recognition to the place but insists that an effort should be made to convey the spiritual value of place for Aboriginal people. Scott is of the view that the spiritual identity of the land contests the commercialized notion of the land from which the issues of ownership, control and power stem from.

Kim succeeds in providing accessibility in realizing the Aboriginal experience. He sensitizes the readers towards understanding the complexities and diversity in Aboriginal culture. His attempt to strike reconciliation between Aboriginal culture and non Aboriginal culture draws him to be concerned with the ethics of story telling. The issue of who represents whom? And who speaks for whom? The claims of the author in representing Aboriginality with awareness of social and economic positions of Aboriginals are conveyed appropriately. Scott refuses to assume the role of spokesperson for Aboriginal people as it would be exploitative and disrespectful from his perception. So, he makes the Aboriginal characters to demonstrate the extraordinary qualities of resilience, courage and generosity to confront the history of injustice and betrayal. Scott proves his refusal to accept the victim position and makes the narrator to move from self pity to a sense of pride. He makes the readers to think and feel. He creates high level of self
consciousness about history, representation and ethics. Eliciting feelings of outrage, shame, sorrow, compassion, it elevates the reader to understand the inevitability of aboriginal history, identity and intellectuality.

The theme of the novel is set in Gable up Township on the Western Coast of Australia early in the 20th century. Ernest Solomon Scat migrated to this place and brought with him from his native Scotland the White-skin complex. This complex dominates the rest of his life despite his cohabitation with coloured races of the aborigines. A member of the third generation of his family Harley — "the first white born" — struggles to identify his family lineage. He is the protagonist of the novel. He tries to unfurl the intricacies of the history of his family. The history of his family is found to be absent in almost all the sources. He refuses to accept the bestowed white boy status in his community. He is aware of his Nyoongar community and the amount of suffering they have undergone. Nyoongars were always in the victim position. Therefore, he decides to expose the victimisation experienced by the three generations of his family. He begins the story with the few tips available in his grandfathers’ house. He makes sincere attempts to record his family history. In his attempt to retrieve the history of his family, he experiences uncomfortability. To him it is not a story but a rendering of great song. He feels that people can dismiss their cynical position and mind who faces the similar situation of the protagonist. He determines to sing the three generations of his family history. It is not just story of culture that existed
between whites and the Aboriginals. Many people have attempted to reveal the family history but failed due to the lack of historical sense. Led by his consciousness, he affirms:

‘You can always tell
You can’t hide who you are’
‘You feel it, here?’
And, tapping their fists on my chest,
‘Speak it from the heart’.

He sincerely introduces the history of first family. He understands the misery of their lives. His great forefathers Fanny from black community and her white blood husband and their only son Sandy Two have lived miserable lives. He comes to know how Fanny and Sandy Two are discarded in the society. They lived in such adversity that they had no money even to remove the dead body lying close to their living place: “Kylie Bay’s Board of Health had written to Aborigines Department asking for funds for the body of said child which having been deposited within the town area by Blacks, posed a hazard to the town’s health.” This discarded situation compelled him to take up this project: “I WISH TO WRITE NOTHING MORE THAN A SIMPLE FAMILY HISTORY, THE MOST LOCAL OF HISTORIES, AND TO MAKE CERTAIN THINGS CLEAR”.

He simply believed that he may get success after series of failures. He was the first white boy born in his family history. But the feeling of
whiteness is only an epidermalisation of identity with no depth, and very little variation. To write the story of three generations, there is no proper record of his family ancestors. His face was pale, his memory was weak. At the age of seven he was given to his grand father to be nourished. His grand father asked him to fit into the best. His grand father Earnest Solomon Scat belongs to third generation who owned a decent house with white blood outlook. Inspite of the disadvantages and handicappedness in knowing the names of his grand parents, he has decided to write the history of his family.

Fanny Benang, a widow belongs to the third generation of narrator’s family. She marries an English man whose whereabouts are unknown. Fanny Benanag is considered half caste because of her mixed parentage. The other character Topsy was a notorious prostitute. The whereabouts of her father were also unknown. The lives of these characters are in the hands of the protector A.O. Neville. The narrator presents the account of suffering perpetrated by the officer on these Aboriginals. The theme conveys multiple connotations to the word ‘Benang’. ‘Fanny Benang’ one of the names of the ancestors signifies ‘nothing’. It conveys the meaning that the life lived by generations of ancestral community signifies nothing. They belong to no place and land. They are considered as insignificant outsiders. The other connotation of Benang is tomorrow. In Nyoongar community and their local language Benang is understood as tomorrow. The note of optimism at the end of the novel signifies this meaning. In another sense Benang is understood as
from the bottom of the heart. Scott makes a genuine presentation of his community from the bottom of his heart. Admitting that he is not a spokesperson of his community, he makes a genuine effort to analyse the conditions that led to the kinship relations between Aboriginals and whites.

The central figure of *Benang* is A.O. Neville. The novel provides an insight into the anxieties over race and miscegenation seen through the characterization of A.O. Neville. The writer discusses some of the archival representation to the examination of historical archives. The presence of Neville demands the necessity of engagement with history. Linda Hutcheon in *Historiographic Metafiction* emphasizes on the relevance of interaction with historical past and the historically conditioned expectations of the reader. Scott refers to archival material from Neville’s administration which is considered as interaction with the discourses of truth and history. The representation of Neville in the novel unfurls the genuine critique of the past. It opens up the dichotomy in the past history. It retrieves the inglorious past hidden under the mask of glorious past. It prevents the mainstream version of the past from becoming conclusive and teleological. The actions of Neville are subjected for scrutiny rather than seeing them as acts of benevolence.

*Benang* is considered as an act of rewriting and destabilising the character of Auber Neville. It exposes the hidden political and colonial agenda of Neville’s eugenicist project. Scott formulates a blend of fictional and nonfictional correspondence. This is seen as a subversive form of
representation. Scott deconstructs Neville’s self representation presenting them as bureaucratic artifacts. Scott rewrites Neville’s benign ‘civilizing mission’ as cruel. Scott through his rewriting and appropriation disrupts and discloses the ambivalence of Neville’s colonial discourse. Many critics have recognized the significance of Neville’s character and concurred with Lisa Slater’s view that Scott has introduced the readers through this historical Neville’s character to understand the abuse of Nyoongar people. Scott mimics the colonial discursive strategy of catching and containing Aboriginals. Scott strengthens his argument by altering the subtitle of his monograph as *Its Place in the Community to Their Place in Our Community*. This has changed the title from becoming abstract, personal and exclusionary. Though Scott is not the only writer for utilizing the character of Neville, his execution is considered most successful and critically acclaimed.

It is pertinent to observe, throughout the novel Neville is intertwined with Ernest Solomon Scat, another significant character. Scat is the grandfather of the narrator Harley. Harley takes up his own personal breeding project inspired by Neville. Scott presents direct connection between the character of Ernest Solomon Scat and Mr. Auber Neville. Both the characters claim superiority by casting doubts on their so called scientific projects. Scott brings Scat and Neville together early in the novel and presents them in juxtaposition in the Department of bureaucratic centre. Scat and Neville have similar skills and aptitudes. They reinforce their mutual representation.
Neville is projected as a catalyst for Scat’s project. He is associated with and implicated in the moral corruption of his policies and their implementation.

At the narrative level, Harley’s narration conveys that Scott is writing ‘local histories’. Harley making introspective questions about family history, local history, cautiously prevents himself from resuscitating racist discourse. Harley’s narration runs in parallel to Scott’s concern with the problems of style, genre and frame. It is from this dimension; Scott considers writing as a means to contest the knowledge of colonial people about aboriginals and their relations. It is through ‘writing’ the colonial ideology of assimilation is disseminated. Harley undergoes a serious contemplation in using ‘writing’. He feels shy of claiming the estranged world. He tries to recover the world which cannot be expressed by the language. To speak the history of violence and betrayal that Aboriginal people have survived since centuries is only to recreate the experience and deep sense of shame. Scott makes Harley’s uncle Will to provide the testimony to the history of victimization. Scott inundates the characters in the deluge of words that express anger and resistance. While berating white Australians for the horror of colonization, he equally reopens the concealed wounds of Aboriginals and confines them to the positions of victims. Scott considers ‘silence’ as the strategy and practice of survival to speak out the cultural genocide. But Scott chooses his language to proclaim the vitality of Nyoongar’s world view. Harley’s tentativeness in choosing the form of language reflects the concerns of Scott in envisioning
the improved future. Harley’s experiment with writing indicates the ability of Scott in regenerating the complexity of existence. Harley is encouraged by his uncles Jack and Will to return to ‘writing’ as an act of cultural regeneration. It appears that Scott as a complete reflection of Harley is caught at an ethical deadlock and in oscillation. With his writing style, Scott lands in aporia. He prefers Jack’s form of story telling and refuses to subject Nyoongar’s to another colonial discourse. Scott wants Harley to become someone to fulfill his desire of transforming Australia in disrupting colonial logic. Experimenting with the dialogic style of writing, Harley deploys writing as a means of liberation.

Much contemporary debate regarding the identity of Aboriginality and Non Aboriginality argues that cross cultural encounters play the deciding role. However, self limitation reflects the political and social actions of the people. Choosing the uncertain narrator to portray the inter subjectivity of the self and the imaginative desire, Scott presents Harley as the ‘first white man born’. He is the end result of his grandfather Ern’s eugenicist project. The aim of this project is to make people participate in the wider official assimilation of biological and cultural absorption of Aboriginal people. Harley tries to reverse his grandfather Ern’s project by reconnecting Nyoongars with the cultural knowledge of Nyoongar. In the process of constructing Harley’s identity, Scott becomes a witness to Aboriginal identity through embodied practices of dialogue and story telling. Scott in the process
of becoming, subscribes to the position of Aboriginality. Harley in order to overcome the vulnerable position examines the interconnectedness of history thrust on Aboriginals with a post colonial perspective of Australian history. But Harley’s indeterminacy highlights the vast possibilities available to him. His propensity for elevating the Aboriginals, satirises the colonial regime’s project to raise the lives of the Aboriginals.

In articulating the cultural differences, Scott initiates an empowering political process for Aboriginals. This process becomes a probe into micro and macro political initiatives that constituted contemporary aboriginal realities. Scott envisages local, national and global Aboriginal communities anchored in history and the land in a process of coming into being. Declaring his identity to be provisional, Scott contests the essentialised racial identity constructs. Scott subscribes to the perception of Frantz Fanon. Fanon in Black Skin white Masks observes: “in so far as I do battle for the creation of the human world-that is a world of reciprocal recognitions” (218). In the acting of creating oneself, Scott proves that one is not a slave to history. Lisa Slater in the essay “Kim Scott’s Benang: An Ethics of Uncertainty” analyzing Harley’s search for identity observes: “…Harley from speaking of himself and his world…searches for a narrative mode that takes its shape from the living heteroglossia of the self and world. Benang is both quest and an answer” (152 JASAL 4.2005).
Facets of Aboriginality

Aboriginality is not formed of singular factor in the contemporary situation. There are several factors responsible for the formation of Aboriginality and Aboriginality exists in different forms. Benang describes these different forms of Aboriginality. Every character in Benang has his/her perception of Aboriginality. These perceptions are shaped by individual experiences of coping with the political and social circumstances. Scott reveals the stories of the characters Fanny, Harriette, Harely, Jack, William Coolman, Sandy One Mason etc., only to prove that Nyoongar culture gets handed down to the next generation. But the hostile environment prohibits many Aboriginals to live out Aboriginality. Harley addresses such Aboriginals as ‘Shell People’ and describes the living situation to “a mollusk that withdraws until it is safe again” (455). William Coolman and Sandy One Mason are the characters that conceal their Aboriginality as it is the only possibility to lead decent life. William coolman with his fair skin avoids himself from being brought under Aboriginal identity. Distancing even from his mother Harriette, he marries a white woman from post war Germany. He refuses to reveal his Aboriginal identity and relations even to his children. As a result he experiences isolation and cultural alienation throughout his life. He teaches Harley how Aboriginals are conspired in their own eradication. Sandy One Mason leads almost similar life and subscribes to the ways of the white society. He registers his children as members of the white society and
arranges their marriage with white Coolman twins. He completely imbibes
the white man ways of living and believes “this might be the way to do
things, the way of surviving” (346). Despite all these attempts Coolman and
Sandy Mason are often rejected as equal members of the white society.

Probing the racist reactions of the white people and elucidation of the
official documents Harley discovers the White’s conception of Aboriginality.
This is based on epidermalisation of identity where whiteness is presumed as
biologically inherited quality. The discourse created around the debate of
identity constructed around the skin colour paves the way for consolidation of
power relations. This perspective is represented in the character A.O.
Neville, a semi fictionalized character that pursues eugenic project. His
fellow eugeniscists Ernest Solomon Scat and Sergeant Hall also represent this
perspective. Neville’s book *Australia’s Coloured Minority: Their Place in
Our community* (1999) represents the cruelty and narrow mindedness of
practiced scientific discourses. The characters Ern and Hall displayed
lecherous desire that lurks behind the white superior mentality. This kind of
white conception of Aboriginality further consolidates the construction of
White identity. Chris Healy in *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as
Social Memory* (1997) observes: “the products of endless babble about
Aboriginality are not ways of imaging ‘Aborigines’ but ways of imaging
‘White Australians’” (95). Harley’s exploration to construct his Aboriginal
family line got initiated by his grandfather’s documentation of his amateur
breeding project with Nyoongar women. So, this becomes central facet of Aboriginals in *Benang*.

**Discovered Aboriginality**

Ernest begins eugenic programme of controlling the breeding among Nyoongar women, inspired by A.O. Neville’s eugenic ideas. Determined to be the creator, Ernest as ‘the first white man born’ sees the success of his goal in Harley. When Harley finds the breeding project of his grandfather, he finds himself embroiled in negative connotations of self pity, anger, frustration, hate and doubt. He sees himself as Ern’s ‘living proof’ and ‘conclusive evidence’ and goes to the extent of describing himself as ‘fuck-me-white’, ‘faceless, empty scrotumed, limp-dicked first man born’ (31). When every trace of Aboriginality is wiped out, he sees himself as “castrated, absorbed, buggered-up, striving to be more than a full stop, to sabotage his grandfather’s social experiment” (449). He becomes another man “without a history, plucked from the possibility of a sinister third race” (29). Harley feels impoverished of consciousness, weakened and reduced to dramatic impact of his loss. He drifts himself with the so called propensity for elevation: “I thought of all the things I did not have unsettled, not belonging—the first white man born- I let myself drift. I gave up and drifted. (109). To describe the uprooting condition of Harley and to literally elevate him Scott adopts the literary technique of *Magic Realism*. Scott admits that he is motivated by Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *One Hundred years of Solitude* (1967), and
Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight Children* (1981) that employed *Magic Realism* as a literary technique. Employing magic realistic features helps to construct tragicomical parody of the genealogical assimilation project. Harley after rediscovering his Aboriginality considers drifting as a spiritual gift among Aborigines. He tries to find a way back to his Aboriginal roots through the documents of his grandfather. Beginning his shifty, snaking narrative, expresses his surprise as to what it would become: “A Family history? A local history?, An Experiment? A fantasy?...To achieve against Grandad’s failure? To better him? I think it was simply that, in such isolation, I had nothing else” (33). Working against the white ways of thinking, Harley narrates the history of the four generations of his family line. He feels that he is writing only about death and the end of the worlds. He firmly believes that he is trying to save his ancestors from being forgotten by exploring his grandfather’s words. In this process, Harley feels isolated and discovers that Aborigines are bound to suffer from loneliness. It is only with the coming of Jack and Will who are cousins of his father Tommy, Harley ends his isolation. Harley also meets his great grand parents Fanny and Sandy One Mason. Fanny becomes a major source of information on Nyoongar’s culture, as she belongs to “true ancestors, those of my blood and land line” (49). Fanny is a proud woman who moves solid and who holds herself straight. She holds the original name as *Benang Pinyan Wonyin*. *Benanag* is a Nyoongar word meaning tomorrow. Scott intentionally titles the novel
Benang accentuating the survival of Nyoongar’s from the oppression. Harley expresses his anguish that their concerns and problems still need to be dealt with in the future. In the novel Fanny in many ways contribute a lot for the survival by keeping the traditional bonds strong. With her daughter Harriette, she rescues the children conceived in due to the rape of Aboriginal women and takes care of their education. She keeps them together and separates them during the time of violence. Fanny acts as a stable centre around which her relatives revolve. She nourishes the cultural values of Nyoongar culture and hands them to her next generation. She sings with her grand children, draws symbols in the sand for them and teaches them how to hunt and to follow traces. She tells stories during the daytime and at the fire site. Despite imparting modern education to children, she thinks that she has ‘things to teach them also’ (471).

One of the stories that Fanny hands down to the younger generations is the story of Curlew. This story of Curlew appears in several parts of the book. Harley in the later part of the book takes his children to Dubitj Creek (451) and hears the cry of the curlew. Will also hears the story of Curlew from his mother Harriette. This aspect conveys that the Aboriginal stories survive under adverse political and social circumstances. But the content of many of the stories narrated by Fanny is about the loss of the Aboriginal children, separation of the Aboriginal children by the Government: “She witnesses how Aboriginals are shot and hung on a tree. She sees Aboriginals begging,
‘huddled in groups’ and ‘slumped together’ (479). She exposes the brutality against the Aborigines that went unabated with levity and without legal consequences which was only justified and explained by the fact that Aborigines were a pre historic form of mankind who would die out soon. Michael Dodson in the essay ‘The End in the Beginning: Redefining Aboriginality’ says: “extermination was not a criminal act, but the expediting of nature” (Michele Grossman (ed). Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. 2003. 24-42). Fanny Benang is a witness for the elimination of her people: “Fanny Benang Mason saw her people fall”(493). Harley discovers Aboriginality through his great grand mother Fanny. He feels that he is saved from becoming a victim to cultural degradation: “she later saw me looking for her, and came to save me” (464). Harley virtually sees the difference between Ern’s dictum of including official documents and Fanny’s experiences of Aboriginal perspective. He understands that Ern’s project has completely ignored and distorted Fanny’s experiences of Aboriginality. In order to experience Aboriginality, Harley feels the necessity of traveling like Fanny through the traditional country and join Nyoongar people rather than back tracking his family through colonial paper work. However, it is the self introspection and Jack’s encouragements that make him discover his hidden Aboriginality. Jack says: “You feel it in your heart? Say it like you feel it, You should just relax, feel it. You gotta go right back, ask your spirits for help” (110). Through these remarks, Scott
emphasizes that Aboriginality is something that lies deep within a person, who belongs to an Aboriginal family line. Harley says: “It is not always so easy, to speak from the heart. It is not an easy choice, and it is not easy to find your way out from the heart. And neither is it necessarily a subtle thing.” (463).

Scott projects the resonance of his own feeling of cultural dislocation in Harley. He determines to explore his own ancestry in the wider social history of Aboriginals. To achieve this, he uses Harley as a paradigmatic narrator. In his interview with Susan Madalia, Scott says that his investigation of personal history moves from one phase to another phase: “from a sense of being psychologically damaged and spiritually disinherited to a healing identification with his people and the land” (Fermantle Press-Book Club Notes. Dec. 6. 2008). Finally, through his exploration, Harley succeeds in reconnecting himself with the Aboriginal origins and existing community. He discovers that he had a physical relationship with two women when they were teenagers, who help him to grow from bitterness and isolation in life. Finding out that he has two children with these women, he sees himself in the children. The children provide him a sense of future and keep him on the ground. These relations help him when he drifts away from participating in singing and dancing in the campfire of his people. Jack shouts at him: “You Kartwarra, that it? You’re something special, you know” (164) and takes him on a journey to learn more about Aboriginal culture.
Harley experiences traveling back in time when he participates and reenacts Aboriginal performances. His search for an identity becomes a “quasi magical relation” and provides him a kind of aerial vision. He establishes self confidence, a feeling of belonging and proclaims himself proudly a Nyoongar. Through meeting Aboriginals he gains strength “from the heart of all of them” (495) and discovers that he is one among the community. Heinz Schurmann-Zeggel in *Black Australian Literature- A Bibliography of Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Oral Traditions and Non-fiction, including Critical Commentary, 1900-1991* (2000) argues that many Aboriginal texts with autobiographical elements are regarded as recovered personal identities and author’s search for identity. Schurmann Zeggel further argues that search for an identity is locating oneself in a particular world of meaning. To him search for an identity implies exploring family lines, recuperating knowledge of lost culture and a journey into the past. Though *Benang* is a fictionalized narration of history, it fits into the framework of autobiographical narratives. Scott confirms this perspective in one of his interviews: “Reclaiming a heritage” (K. Kunhikrishnan, The Hindu- Literary Review. Nov. 29, 2008).

Lisa Slater in the essay “Kim Scott’s Benang: An Ethics of Uncertainty” observes that Scott has introduced Harley as an ambiguous character. Harley liberates himself from the limited identity assigned to him by his grandfather and finds another identity. He rewrites Ern’s documents on the white system of racism. In this process Scott tries to prove that
Aboriginal identity is culturally constructed and is always in the process of becoming: “positions indignity, like all identities, as culturally constructed and always in the process of becoming” (Slater. 2005.150).

Michael Dodson in the essay “The End in the Beginning: Redefining Aboriginality” examines the issue of unequal relationships between Aboriginals and Non Aboriginals. Scott portrays this by letting several characters study themselves. Harley shapes himself on constant change. Kathleen and Jack wondering about their lesser brain capacity exhibit gloomy and distorted reflections. Topsy encounters incompleteness, while Sandy Two uses tiny mirror to look like a white man by shaving and slicking his hair. Sandy One looks at her reflection in a water hole. Fanny refuses to look at her reflection as she is grounded in Nyoongar culture. The other characters allow the white conception of Aboriginality to sneak in their mirror reflection. So, in the search for an identity, Scott advises through the character of Jack to throw and break the mirrors.

When Harley reconnects with his Aboriginal community, his search for an identity comes to an interim end. This conveys the idea that belonging to a community plays a crucial role in the formation of personal and cultural identity. This is one of the aspects seen strongly in Aboriginal literatures. So, it is wrong to consider Aboriginal writers and their literature as distinctive entities. Scott cautions the readers from the confusion of separating literature and reality. Scott’s refusal to be identified as a
spokesperson of Nyoongars creates gaps that signify the silences or gaps meant for accommodating Nyoongar stories. It is pertinent to observe that in Aboriginal identity, it is the community’s story that gets retold rather than individual’s version. Mudrooroo Narogin in *Writing from the Fringe- A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature* (1990) says that “Aboriginal Writer is a Janus-type figure with one face turned to the past and the other to the future” (24). Apparently, Aboriginal writer has to play this role as they feel that their history to a larger extent is not represented adequately. So, in their attempt to end their silence, Aboriginal writers deconstruct the common notions of history. To establish a new historical discourse, Scott conducts research over a five year period investigating the several resources. Scott lists them at the end of the novel. Pablo Armellino in the essay “Australia Re-Mapped and Con-Texted in Kim Scott’s Benang” evaluating the outcome of Benang says that it is an “imposing metahistoriographic fictional work … an historical narrative in the traditional sense” (*The Pain of Unbelonging*. Ed.Shelia Collingwood- Whittick and Germaine Geer. 2007). In response to the authenticity of this perspective Van Toorn in the essay “Indigenous Texts and Narratives” says *Benang* takes “ a different path through Western Australia History and illustrates the social and psychological repercussions of the official assimilation policies” (*The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature*. Ed. Elizabeth Webby. 2000. 19-49). To further consolidate its authenticity, one can find an analogy in considering
Aboriginal voices as the voice of ‘Subalterns of Australia’ toeing the line of Gayatri Spivak famous essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*

Understanding *Benang* in the light of Aboriginal consciousness obviously reveals many facets of Aboriginality formed by social and political circumstances. Scott uses these facets of Aboriginality to emphasize the inevitability of these forms in the construction of identity. The representations of Aboriginality succeed in giving strength and create the required self consciousness. They also serve as instruments in establishing a new historical discourse by accommodating a neglected perspective. By introducing unhealthy post colonial character Harley, Scott settles unsettled logic of white western supremacy. Scott reveals his own position avoiding moralizing and demands from his readers.

Scott’s *Benang* succeeds in constructing a more serious and a highly intellectual Aboriginal identity. The void created in Sally Morgan’s representation is completely filled in Scott’s representation of Aboriginality. Apparently, the subject of Aboriginal identity has moved from the representation of Sally Morgan to the writers like Scott to find better formations and has acquired appreciable universal, intellectual and contemporary cultural paradigms. Scott’s *Benang* has consolidated the Aboriginal identity in all its circumscription and paved the way for the serious consideration of the influence of contemporary cultural aspects that most Aboriginal women encounter. The realization of Aboriginality, explored
in understanding the experiences of contemporary Aboriginal women’s predicament in coping with the present culture reflected in the works of Anita Heiss is discussed in the following chapter.