Conclusion

They spoke of breeding and uplifting. These two hairy angels wished to seize people in their long arms and haul them to their own level. Their minds held flickering images of canvas Ascensions, with pale fat cherubs spiraling upwards into the light. They saw steps leading up stone pyramids, and realized that some creatures were simply unable to continue higher, even though the steps were there for them. Their noble selves sat at the top and no, they did not see themselves as leering, as guffawing, as throwing scraps to those below. Citizens had made sacrifices, had worked themselves to exhaustion. Now, facing failure, they saw some of us [Nyoongars] looking in from the edge of the town, at corners, crossing streets within the very town. They measured themselves against these original inhabitants, and consequently wanted them pushed further down. Controlled. (K. Scott, *Benang* 119-120)

All literatures represent at heart, the communion or relationship between man and his society, man and his culture and traditions, man and his inner and outer voices, man and want for survival, man and his negotiation, man and his resistance, man and his confrontation, man and his undying spirit, man and his re-negotiation, man and his writing back and ultimately, man and his rebirth or regeneration. In colonized and postcolonial worlds, literature is and has become one of the primary modes to resist colonial authority, evident in the literary voices of the marginalized and assimilated classes of the world, who have steadfastly refused to be mere political objects without
any other aspect of identity. Writings emanating from such regions of the worlds, such colonized societies, have often been termed as the literature against history, for it is understandable that everyone is born in a context and with an inheritance, and in the discovery of such an inheritance through literature is true identity and freedom derived.

During an informal conversation in Kolkata in 2001, Kim Scott had explained his rationale behind taking up the pen to chart the course of himself and his people. The writing began; he clarified, with the motivation of presenting his personal narrative or identifying his place in his own family history, which was part of the wider social/historical narrative of the subjugation of the Aboriginal people. He wanted to deal with his sense of being psychologically injured and racially dispossessed as “the first white man born” in his immediate family— the end result of a long-standing, methodical, state-sanctioned strategy of assimilation or “biological absorption”, as it was called, of the Aboriginal race. Thus, unwittingly or consciously, the writings of Kim Scott, though never intended to be politicized by the author, enters into the public domain, representing both a personal and a public message, which speaks for both his own delusions and those of his Aboriginal community. He tried to negotiate the problematic of Aboriginal identity in both social and political contexts of public life. Thus his first novel, which he decided to work on, after spending time in an Aboriginal community and trying to explore his Aboriginal ancestry, started off. He followed the traditional Aboriginal culture and the conventional technique of storytelling based on oral narration and a polyphony of voices- the narrators and protagonists. But even in such a Bakhtinian plurality of voices, his “writerly” voice stands out, for it aims to give direction, negotiate the past and look forward to the future, a glorious future which would be
similar to the glorious past of yore. In the Aboriginal social and political sphere, it is the
time when, on the one hand, one can find Aboriginal peoples stating their rights based
on differences from the white populace and on the other hand, reviving the past and
Aboriginal heritage. Thus he never pretends that he is representing all Aboriginals; yet
his fiction becomes the collective voice of the community. The traumatic experience of
colonization brought about dislocation and disconnectedness for the First Peoples of the
world and hence, Scott’s journey, spanning his three works, is very much spiritual, for it
aims to recreate and resurrect, re-negotiate the loss of identity.

The relations between white and black Australia, between the colonizer and the
colonized need to be interpreted within a wider spectrum of nationhood, identity and
cultural memory. And hence, as Bhabha writes, the interactions between the two
reveals new uncharted spaces, and opens up new possibilities of a hybrid space. It is or
should be a new space for both the colonizer and colonized which determines the future
course of action. Such a space ultimately opens up newer avenues of interaction,
negotiation and explores newer contact zones between the two cultures: the white and
the black. Thus, Bhabha wants a rejection of the Western models which are restrictive,
for he is of the opinion that resistance breeds and builds up within the interstices of the
very hegemonic power structure which should have inevitably wiped it off. Thus the
hybrid structure would present newer methods of understanding each other, necessarily
generated out of empowerment and resistance. Thus in Australia, as in other
postcolonial worlds, debates centering on nationalism, on colonial opposition or clashes
for self determinism are concerned about restrictions ensuing from such overlying and
migrant cultural formations, for there is usually ‘liminal’ conciliation of cultural distinctiveness when it entails distinctions of race, class, gender and culture.

As already discussed, the prehistory of the Aboriginals reveals a very culturally rich and technologically advanced culture which had a dynamic relation with the land. They had control over their lives and could develop accordingly, as they had great control and ample knowledge of the environment they lived in, through their hunting and gathering procedures. Thus it is without doubt that the Aboriginals were in an advanced state of civilization some thousands of years ago and well before the English started becoming ‘modern.’ And as Bhabha argues about European modernity determining the advancement of the European settlers and generating their rhetoric of superiority, the same can be reinvented for the Aboriginal populace and its culture. Thus, as Partha Chatterjee also states in *Our Modernity*, if the prerequisites for advancement, development, enlightenment, progress of any culture of the world is its modernity, then the Aboriginals were so, thousands of years ago. Hence their advancement as a race and a culture cannot be doubted and that is also why the European discourses of colonialism seem empty and bare.

To take up the cudgels for such a community of people does Scott endeavour, for he always had clear ideas in his mind about the superiority of his Aboriginal community, though he was also disillusioned and lost, at their gradual moving away from traditional practices and rapid loss of identity through the overpowering influence of the colonizer’s imperialistic designs and methods. Thus, through his works, he enters into a journey, a journey from the present state of affairs; he finds the Aboriginal community at the precipice of decay, gradually moving away from traditions, loss of the
past, erasure of memories of shared inheritance and social disintegration; he therefore seeks to recollect the past, his inheritance and giving voice to his people, reaffirm his and his community’s superior identity through a process of re-negotiation in his works. His conscious departure from Eurocentric notions, from the European genre of the novel, would entail him to employ such techniques conceptualized by Bhabha as the use of a non-linear narrative, use of magic realism and use of traditional oral methods of storytelling as well as oral language. Thus, in his works, the narrative moves forward and backward, from the sorry present to the glorious past to even the uncertain future. The narration, which is voiced by multiple representations other than Scott, regularly moves back, to the fond past, though in the case of Scott’s protagonists, it is a none too fond one, as it is also the time when the maximum of oppression and debilitation took place. Still, Scott assumes for himself and his narrative voices, the scope of negotiation through the use of traditional oral modes of storytelling. Similarly, among other things, he tries to seek out the true country for himself and his community. It is only then that Scott is able, through his novels, to “write back” to the hegemonic centre and speak in a mode which is his very own; it is the discovery of the voice of all colonized peoples of the world and of his Aboriginal peoples. And in this process of writing back, he also resists all colonial formations, similar to the Caribbean resistance which Cudjoe mentions with reference to Caribbean literature. Thus Scott’s works justify the words of Harlow and Cudjoe who believe that the act of resistance is the attempt of the colonized and oppressed, to overthrow, depose and overcome all forms of tyranny, torture and coercion disseminated by the colonizer. And as is the case with Scott and his writings, resistance in literature is the outcome of the internal dynamics of the oppressed
community; and it is something which gives birth to a new genre of writings emerging in the Third and Fourth worlds, which are radical, protestant and activist. It is also the presence of an arena of struggle, or Bhabha’s interstitial third space, which gives birth to newer versions of resistance which is continuous and progressive, spanning the community’s social, cultural and political foundations, conditioned by modern day histories of colonialism and oppression and moving to a world of re-negotiation and reassertion.

Thus in *True Country*, he begins his journey, by going to the remote town of Karnama to try to be a part of the Aboriginal community living there. Like many others living in the community beset with problems, he is also at loggerheads with his attempts at reifying a meaningful cultural identity, which would allow him to recover or salvage both himself and his community from the wretched condition. Slowly, as the voices of others, like the elderly Fatima or Gabriella, take over his sole narrative voice and move back and forth in time, he realizes that it is no longer his own quest, but the quest of all likeminded people at Karnama, to decipher the voices of confusion, anger and helplessness generated by cultural relations. And hence, in the end, when he is blown up, into the air with a village elder who symbolizes the glorious past, by a desert wind, he witnesses some kind of a release and a re-birth. Notably, the solutions he seeks are not revealed to him and in the beginning, he encounters a cloud which blinds his vision. But suddenly, in almost an epiphanic moment, the cloud lifts and reveals to him the “true country,” the outline of Karnama from above and he becomes at once aware of his Aboriginality and the way forward – the path of negotiation and re-negotiation. Thus he
does not run away from the tethering problems while writing for his community, for his is a journey undertaken, a struggle initiated towards his ultimate goal.

*Benang* presents his search for the Aboriginal mode of expression, through the magic-realistic and ironic methods of storytelling. As in *True Country*, Scott takes recourse to an innovative amalgamation of fact and fiction, for which he explores and rummages archival materials. Moving beyond drab social realism, he tests the limits of his genre through innovative literary devices and places at the centre of his novel, the assimilationist policies of A.O. Neville and the logic justifying colonialism and cultural subjugation. What he immediately realizes is that his people, his Noongar people, have been far more advanced, progressive and “modern” in the strict sense of the term, than the white settler race for generations. Applying such a simple structure to the complex narrative of the community in *Benang*, he presents a deep-rooted sense of apathy, insecurity, incompleteness and dissatisfaction at the whiteman’s strategies. And in doing so, he continues his journey, where he takes along his readers to be the witness, the active participant in the drama of reclaiming the past. Taking recourse to a multiple voices, once again, along with his own, he adopts a non-linear mode which enables him to intersperse his own story and musings, with that of his uncles and aunts and their reminiscences. Such metafictional narration, along with fantastical imagery and a fractured set of characters, centered in his persona of a singer, take him to a plethora of discoveries, pledges and epiphanic moments. His power of elevation, in the magic-realist mode, once again helps him for he is able to get a bird’s eye view of whatever is happening below: “I hovered over that wedding. A wedding. A White wedding.” (K. Scott, *Benang* 93) This device does seem to recapture the sickly drift of disorientation
which Harley's disputed identity causes in him. It may also be taken as Harley's attempt to distance himself from all the machinations of his grandfather:

The survivors. Only a few, because not only was there a passing awkwardness of my fair skin, the searching for family names, but there was also the fact that I usually hovered in the air just above everyone's head. It was laughable, it was frightening.

“What is he?” I heard them say. (K. Scott, Benang 249)

And elevated to a sublime “height”, he may also want to prove his superiority over all those below. His soaring above things is also symbolic of his intense desire to be free—“Uncle Will said that he envied my unburdened existence” (K. Scott, Benang 166), to break all the forcefully imposed shackles and believe in his independence, prove that he is not “the first White man born” in his family:

As we all relaxed I'd ease myself into the air, and hover like a balloon anchored by a fine line. I was more comfortable that way, but I feared to think what it meant: that I preferred to let it drift, and that it came so naturally to me.

Drifting in the warm smoke, I looked down upon the fire far below me, its shape continually shifting . . . .

The sea, like the fire, formed and reformed and out by the island—even at night—there was that blossoming; white, gone, white, gone white gone.

Like What? Like ectoplasm, like breathing. (K. Scott, Benang 191)

Thus in the end, his journey moves to another level, for all through Benang, he negotiates his position and re-negotiates his identity of not being the first white man in
his family – maybe that belonged to his brother, as Scott notes towards the end of the novel. He is able, thus, to unsettle, if not remove colonial power formations and the relations they generate, in his moments of carnivalesque inversion, a re-negotiation of his identity.

Grappling with the mode of fiction for such a long time, Scott’s journey takes him to a position where, to overcome the tension of the genre, he takes recourse to the mode of storytelling, in the manner of Aboriginal oral tradition. For he is no longer interested in weaving together fact and fiction, and would prefer to deal with live stories and life’s stories and attempt to once again give voice, but through the translation of the oral to the written form. Thus in Kayang and Me, Scott’s journey assumes epic proportions for all traditional modes of narration and expression are at work along with a narrative voice which is once again that of an elderly aunt, Kayang, the representative from the past. Her story attempts to reconstruct, recreate, and open newer avenues:

‘Just ‘cause something’s written down doesn’t mean it’s true either, does it?’

No.

I’m just telling it the way I saw it. That’s all. I can tell you the way it really was, what it was about. Not all that “maybe-this-and-maybe-that” sort of thing.’

Oh.

‘And Kimmy?’

Yes.
'We don’t wanna bore people, unna? We wanna tell a good story. You should know that better than me, you s’posed to be the writer.’

Well, I know a story can be more true than the truth, and I know how a story can get to the very essence, the spirit of something. Especially when it’s something like injustice, and the abuse of power. (K. Scott, Kayang and Me 150)

For her story moves beyond and above the official colonial version of history, filling up intentional gaps in narration and becomes the history of the ‘other’ which tells him why his father told him to be proud of his Aboriginality and what Aboriginality truly denoted. Ultimately, the journey, spanning generations moves towards a sense of regeneration. For it moves from tales and incidents of denial, racism, disparagement, exploitation, murder, rape and domestication to an elevated condition of recovery and reaffirmation, of his and his community’s identity. Thus it looks forward to a new future with pride and satisfaction at the ability to re-negotiate, repossess, reaffirm, reiterate, recover, reclaim and retrieve Noongar identity. And hence, his search which began with Benang and True Country finds fruition in Kayang and Me for he is able to, using experiential modes of all previous encounters of negotiation with the colonizer, re-negotiate his place and identity, as well as that of his Aboriginal community, and it is substantiated through the mode of art, of literature, a literature which speaks from the heart and moves people.