

RETRIEVING THE LOST IDENTITY THROUGH KIM SCOTT'S FICTIONAL WRITINGS

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Abstract: Australia is one of the most multicultural countries in the world. Postcolonial theorist Diana Brydon (1987) identifies Australia as one of the settler colonies where the English language and literature were transported whether by settlers, convicts or slave masters to a foreign territory. And from there it was much more difficult to eradicate an internalised Englishness that militated against developing an indigenous identity. It creates the backdrop for possibilities of postcolonial sociolinguistic and socio-cultural resourcefulness and creativity. There is no point in denying that Australian literary traditions have its genesis in Anglo- European colonialism. Australia is the home for immigrants from more countries than the United States. The problem of assimilation and its counter openness continue to be fore-grounded in literary works of the Aboriginal Australian canon. Creative writing by Australian Aboriginals came to be recognised only in the second half of the 20th century. The growth of aboriginal literature is directed connected to the rise of Aboriginal political power. The issues of Aboriginal people and their ramifications become questionable points in the works of Aboriginal writers.

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Introduction: Australia is one of the most multicultural countries in the world. Postcolonial theorist Diana Brydon (1987) identifies Australia as one of the settler colonies where the English language and literature were transported whether by settlers, convicts or slave masters to a foreign territory. And from there it was much more difficult to eradicate an internalised Englishness that militated against developing an indigenous identity. It creates the backdrop for possibilities of postcolonial sociolinguistic and socio-cultural resourcefulness and creativity. There is no point in denying that Australian literary traditions have its genesis in Anglo- European colonialism. Australia is the home for immigrants from more countries than the United States.

The problem of assimilation and its counter openness continue to be fore-grounded in literary works of the Aboriginal Australian canon. Creative writing by Australian Aboriginals came to be recognised only in the second half of the 20th century. The growth of aboriginal literature is directed connected to the rise of Aboriginal political power. The issues of Aboriginal people and their ramifications become questionable points in the works of Aboriginal writers. The land issues, the executive policies implemented by the white advents, the most condemnable genocide culture, and claim on the traces of aboriginal existence (*Terra-nullius*), stolen attitude and so on find place in the fictional works of Aboriginal writers. The identity of the Aboriginals, the sense of belongingness, stolen loss of culture, misrepresentation and devaluing attitude of these people are highly interrogated and questioned the powerful phrases like 'First Peoples Literature', 'Literature of Native People', 'Aboriginal literature', 'Fourth World Literature' and so on. The act of writing often becomes more than something creative for some Aboriginal people who seek to use the process as a vehicle for analysing, processing, determining, understanding and asserting their identity. With the representation of Aboriginal issues through the fictional form has made the humanity to think broadly and act humanly. As a result, after the 1960s, Aboriginal people successfully gained Australian citizenship and voting rights. Land rights agitation such as the Yirrkala Bark Petition and the Gurindji Petition draw nationwide attention to the cause of the aborigines. Later followed by Larissa Behrendt (2003), Jack Davis (1970), Lionel Fogarty (1983), Kevin Gilbert (1971), Jane Harrison (1998), Ruby Langford Ginibi (1964), Doris Pilkington Garimara (1996), Kim

Scott (1993), Alex Wright (1997), Sam Watson (1990), Tara June Winch (2006), Big Bill Neidjie (1985), Bruce Pascoe (1982) and so on.

Kim Scott's *True Country* (1999) and *That Deadman Dance* presents similar kind experience. Having found his roots in Aboriginal community, he wishes to go back his true country. He spent some of his early earlier years in a variety of job positions. Yet it was only after working in a remote school in an Aboriginal community in north of Western Australia. He felt the voice within him rise and egg him on to research his own family history. While his experiences in Karnama provided him the material for his first novel *True Country*, his research of whatever he could lay his hand on, resulted in his magnumopus, *Benang* which traced his own and family's history and helped him deal with his problems of self-identity.

In *True Country*, Scott takes recourse to a very distinctive and typically Aboriginal method of narration. It is both an inclusive and collective narrative structure which helps him give power to both listeners and narrators. There is a plurality in the multiple voices who speak, polyphony of voices through which Billy's own story becomes relative. Thus his own is the lead voice among a host of other Aboriginal voices in multi-voices narrative structure and such a technique helps Scott to bring out the diversity among various communities, while at the same time, he recognizes the shared heritage and ancestry as an Aboriginal community. Issues around the damage, protection, and evolution of culture, as well as the importance of language in acts of colonisation and resistance, form the foundation of *That Deadman Dance* were discussed as a focal issue. In the novel, Scott imagined a contact history between Noongar people and non-indigenous people (both British settlers and American whalers) in an imagined landscape closely inspired by his hometown, Albany, and the surrounding area on the south-east coast of Western Australia. As Scott notes, some historians have called this area 'the friendly frontier'. Scott takes this landscape, together with historical accounts and testimonies of indigenous and non-indigenous people as well as the work of the Wirlomin Noongar Language and Stories Project, to imagine a place in which the term 'the friendly frontier' makes sense but is also disquieting. The resultant story ran from 1826 to 1844, although not chronologically narrated. Jumps in time, forward and back, give the story a charged feel by showing how European settlement builds sturdy foundations, something that seems unlikely in the earliest uncertain moments of occupation.

The current proliferation of mining activities on Aboriginal land, for example, poses an immediate threat to Aboriginal survival. In very part of Australia, the conflict between the indigenous and the mining interests display in the starkest relief of the desperate struggle for survival and the inexorable mechanisms of dispossession. Aboriginal people are demanding rights in land, including full mineral rights and rights in renewable and non-renewable resources. They are also demanding full right of veto over mining and exploration proposals on their lands, protected by Commonwealth legislation. The National Aboriginal Conferences, Aboriginal Land Councils and other organizations are engaged in new strategies, particularly in the international arena, to prevent the further loss of Aboriginal lands and the destruction of Aboriginal societies at the hands of racist State Governments, mining companies and others. The Australian Aboriginal people at present are much concerned about the failure of the Australian Government and other countries in the Western world to take positive action to recognise the indigenous people's inalienable right to determine their future and continued existence in their own country. A growing international readership and viewership for indigenous storytelling, methodologies and cultural production is evident on many fronts. The expanding place of indigenous literature in the world is marked by indigenous presses, websites, academic courses and journals. Thus, by probing into the details of Aboriginal history, one understands the hierarchical 'binary oppositions' constructed by the dominant Western paradigm between Western and indigenous notions of power, legitimacy and authority. Aboriginal writings explore language and discourse as a source of indigenous oppression.

True Country (1993) with the theme, **Retrieving the Lost Identity** again by Kim Scott concentrates how the story offers a picture of a disintegrating culture which faces serious social problems. *True Country* traces a young teacher's journey to the Aboriginal community in Karnama to find his roots. Billy Storey,

the main protagonist of the novel, stands between two worlds -- the Aboriginal and the white. He does not know where he belongs. He sets off the journey to a faraway mission which should help him to find his true identity. Billy, "(...) a young schoolteacher from Perth who, although genetically part Aboriginal, is sufficiently light-skinned to have passed as white throughout his life, and whose upbringing and cultural orientation have in most respects been Euro-Australian" (Pascal: 3), is eager to learn something about Aboriginal people and also about the place where he partly belongs.

Billy learns about history in Karnama from two sources. One of them is a written account in the mission journals which is quite reliable but it is not as interesting as a lively narrative of Fatima, an old Aboriginal woman, the first person born in the mission. These two modes of narrative - Western and Aboriginal - seem to "complement and enrich one another" (Pascal: 5). The archival material and communal memory fade into one another. Billy is fascinated by Fatima's storytelling which seems to fill the gaps in the written record. Both oral narrative and print text are valid and significant for creating the picture of Aboriginal history. Traditional storytelling is rather a social event. It is cooperation between the narrator and the audience. The people listening to the stories of Aboriginal people are involved in the narration.

That Deadman Dance with the chief idea of capturing the Cultures, focus has been made that novel is a 'contact' novel in the sense that it deals with the frontier of cultural contact initiated by European colonisation. The setting is the south coast of Western Australia, which saw the earliest protracted contact between Europeans and Aboriginal people west of the Nullarbor. Sealers and whalers used the coves and islands of this sunken coastline to base their shore operations. Ships anchored for periods of months and interacted with the local Noongar people. In 1826, fearful of the French sniffing around, a garrison force was sent from New South Wales to the site at present occupied by the town of Albany. Three years later, in 1829, the Swan River colony was founded. In 1831, the southern garrison was withdrawn and the settlement came within the administration of the new colony. Scott's novel takes place through these years of informal colonisation, in which the fragility of those arriving was felt more acutely than it would be later in the colonial timeline. Certain pragmatic compromises were reached. This obligation to play nice was, as the novel makes clear, driven by practical realities. The novel gives a 'sense of the experience of intrusion not from a descendant of intruders but from a child of the true possessors'. Having found his roots in the Aboriginal community, the novelist Kim Scott projects an accurate picture between the dealings of Noongar community and the new arrivals. The new arrivals or the white advents always adopted brutal methods to deal the aboriginal communities especially Noongar Community. As a result, there is always a pleasure built up or cruel conflict atmosphere between Noongars and the white advents.

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