

Ice Dreaming

Reading Whiteness

in Kim Scott's

Benang: from the heart

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for admission to the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
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This work is dedicated to D.M.

Also for Eleanor and Zoë,

my light and my life.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.

Kris Harman
28 May 2004

Abstract

Through a close reading of Kim Scott's *Benang: from the heart*, this thesis interrogates what whiteness in an Australian colonial context looks like from an Aboriginal perspective. Its central proposition is that Scott's narrator, Harley, discovers whiteness as a consequence of discovering his Aboriginality. It suggests whiteness is imbued with a power that arises through its invisibility and its ability to racialise and circumscribe non-white others. When this process is reversed, and whiteness is made visible, its power is diminished. Harley (re)places whiteness into an Aboriginal paradigm from within which he imagines a syncretic future for Australia.

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Kim Scott. Oceanic in its rhythms and understanding, brilliant in its use of language and image, moving in its largeness of spirit, compelling in its narrative scope and style, this intriguing journey is a celebration and lament of beginning and return, of obliteration and recovery, of silencing, and of powerful utterance. Both tentative and daring, it speaks to the present and a possible future through stories, dreams, rhythms, songs, images and documents mobilized from the incompletely acknowledged and still dynamic past. Year: 1999. Other readers will always be interested in your opinion of the books you've read. BENANG From the Heart. Harley, a man of Nyoongar ancestry, finds himself at a difficult point in the history of his country, family and self. Benang: From the Heart is a 1999 Miles Franklin Award-winning novel by Australian author Kim Scott. The award was shared with Drylands by Thea Astley. One of the main contexts in the novel deals with the process of "breeding out the colour". This was a process in which children were forcibly removed from their homes and assimilated into the white Australian society. These children were forced to "breed" with white Australians in order to lessen the appearance of the Aboriginal in them. It was believed