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Anti-nativism in Australian Indigenous Literature

by Teresa Podemska-Abt

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What in today's literary discourse are the reality and the world created by the words: *nativism, nativity, the native, native*? Why do we still speak and communicate with them and use them in different contexts, even though we know that these words often carry a negative emotional meaning load, taking us to spaces, times, and experiences of colonial suffering, despite their basis in academic arguments. In Australia such issues have been addressed by many Indigenous writers, amongst them - M. Langton, A. Moreton-Robinson, Mudrooroo, C. Watego, T. Birch, F. Bayet - Charlton, to name just a few.

For many people the concepts of nativity and indigeneity are strongly entwined. It seems that when one speaks about nativity one thinks about attachment to place, identity, nationalism, love of country and cultivating one's soil. Such an interlock of terminology and concepts leads to breakages of meaning and conflicting definitions. In Australia, the descendants of settlers dispute *nativity* in relation to *indigenouness*; they see themselves in a 'native-born' category. Furthermore, motifs of land and identity in National Literature are still cultivated by non-Indigenous Australian writers, manifesting in strong determination by non-Indigenous Australians to truly express belongingness to the land where they were born or where they have chosen to root themselves. In this light the paradigm of literary *nativism* in Australia becomes problematic. Problems mount if one sees cultures and literatures, thus peoples' minds, in constant dialectics.

As generally agreed, nativism urges a return to native traditions, puts up strong resistance against white culture's modernity and exploitation of the land, embraces anti-mainstream debates, and registers various narrational techniques to romanticise and alleviate spaces in which characters root themselves to find their identity and cultural stability; thus 'usefulness' of the text is seen as the most important value. At the same time these themes can be found formless and indefinite in the Aboriginal literary milieu in Australia, because Indigenous authors practice rhetorics of ununiformed Aboriginality, anti-traditionalism, showing Indigenous cultures in constant movement, while speaking about spirituality as different to the common European understanding of religion; a spirituality deeply interrelated with Indigenous concepts of land, Dreaming and Dreamtime. Noticeably, there are traps and shortages in nativist applications to Aboriginal Literature, as shown throughout the texts discussed in this article.

At the very beginning of my discussion, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the concept of nativism is rather diluted by Indigenous writers who hardly use it, as it bears negative connotations. The word *native* is mostly seen in legal Land Titles, and with the environmental usage of much loved terms, such as *land* and *bush*, firmly eliminating the adjective, because it pertains to a white coloniser's description of *terra nullius* and not at all to Indigenous omnipotent multilayered meanings of Land. Indigenous writers of Australia dispute the concept of nativism and its derivatives, seeing it as a white form of racial, sociopolitical and cultural discrimination against Indigenous Peoples. *It is white scholars who have long been positioned as the leading investigators of the lives,*

*values and abilities of Indigenous people. Indigenous scholars are usually cast as native informants who provide 'experience' as opposed to the knowledge about being indigenous or white (Moreton – Robinson 85). Indeed, within the context of Indigenous history since the British invasion, nativity (-ism) is a twofold concept for many reasons. It evokes colonial and postcolonial times of abuse of Indigenous Peoples; it opens countless painful validations of sociopolitical, cultural and lingual subjugation and oppression. Counter-placed to Australian nationalism, ideological movements of 'native Australians' and 'Native Australian Literary Ethos', nativism is fixed with long detested racial anthropological descriptions of *savage natives*, land dispossession, memories of multiple relocations, social and family structure devastation, tragedies of the Stolen Generation, deaths in Custody and discriminating racist legislations. Bearing psychological/emotional attributes, nativism is not a welcomed category among contemporary Indigenous writers (people) who undeniably crave to ensue the continuity of Indigenous cultures, but do not wish to be tied down to unmeritedly loaded categorisations and untrue representations of white discourses, especially since (as Indigenous authors seem to imply in their texts) Aborigines live (as all Australians) in today's highly developed, modern, changing Australia.*

Anita Heiss's statement expressed in *The Protocols* has gained in this respect a reverential status: *We have now mastered the same language that was once used against us – describing us as barbaric and savage – and we have empowered ourselves to tell our stories, in our styles, for our people* (Heiss, *Protocols* 30). Irrefutably, this edict can be encompassed by the *nativist paradigm*, although Indigenous written literature does not pretend to be, or to be classified, as *native*; evidently, Heiss' words are not about being *native*. She talks about the appropriation of English with which Indigenous authors tell Indigenous stories, stressing empowerment to self-representation and authority to speak. Incontrovertibly, articulating cultural identity and guarding own traditions (*Protocols* 2) is not necessarily an expression of nativism; not only in today's postcolonial world English is universal but postcolonial theories are separating literature into two different models: 'European' and 'other'. More importantly, Aboriginal literature has unavoidably been discussed by a number of writers within the context of the Australian national model. The issues stressed by Heiss must simply be seen as strains that accompany Indigenous literary production and its implementation within the Australian cultural mainstream. These strains are addressed to secure writers and people involved with Indigenous cultures, 'to act rightly and justly' (UN 2006 Declaration), and to avoid further appropriations and misrepresentations (discussed extensively by M. Gale) of which, the most obvious examples include Aboriginal Dreamtime myths and stories and Kevin Gilbert's disownment (MacQuarie Pen... 76) of the *End of Dreamtime*.

In the anthology *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, anxieties between *blacks* and *whites* in current Australia are demonstrated by Indigenous academics who provide a postcolonial critical contribution to understandings of Aboriginal history under (post)colonial rule. Authors *re(de)fine* and assert Aboriginality and Indigeneity along constructs such as 'urban' and 'non-traditional'. Representations of Indigenousness highlight the misuse of the term *native* in its literary, cultural and political sense. The reader of *Blacklines* learns that the adjective *native* and the noun *the native(s)* retain

negative connotations, that whites have a habitual desire to 'continue to 'make' and 'unmake' Indigenous people. In Tony Birch's opinion, 'Aboriginality' is a signifier of *the native*, thus in some cases it also bears a negative, sometimes confusing meaning (*). In a similar vein, Marcia Langton evaluates Aboriginal 'poetic revenge' on curators for racism in the 1970s and 1980s who prized only 'primitive stereotypes'; Jeannie Bell is concerned with denotations of words and concepts, their metaphorical, political and cultural wisdoms. She sees 'language revival' as crucial in representing and preserving Indigenous cultures and sustaining cultural and individual identity. Re-evaluation of the usage of English terms - including *land, tribe, native, dispossession, kinship, aboriginality, indigenusness, myth, history, dreamtime* - is the nucleus of many critical debates that are heard in regard to Indigenous life where knowledge and philosophy are being standardised, stereotyped and linguistically framed by non-Indigenous people. As mentioned, the landscape understood by whites as 'the wilderness' is disputed too; Fabienne Bayet-Charlton elaborates on Aborigines' presence and fulfilment of their obligations to the land, while placing contemporary wilderness legislation within postcolonial political debates on 'the second wave of dispossession' (**). *Blacklines* is a crucial postcolonial discussion that moves the colonial and postcolonial stereotypes and meanings of terminology. It shows that in Australia, unlike the USA, *native* refers most often to plants and animals.

Apparently, for most people in Western countries, Australia immediately calls up images of traditional inhabitants; *tribe* and *native* come to mind with its traditional meanings mistakenly implying that cultures do not change. Again, a modification of terminology is needed, in result the term *indigeneity* and its derivations come to light. Its use is relatively recent and shifts to the category of *identity* that is no longer controlled by the concept of nationality. In contemporary Australian sociopolitical practices, *the native* is re-presented by *the Aboriginal* or *the Indigenous*, so as not to promote misleading labels and associations. If the word *native* is used in Indigenous literature, it calls up links and affiliations with Nature and Land; therefore it is used within contexts and meanings emphasised by Indigenous writing. The meaning of *the Australian Indigenous* has no bearing of *the native's* designations. It contributes to understanding identities and cultures, grasping literary issues tied up to them.

Aboriginal literature stages Indigenous protagonists who speak different languages, have a history of multiple cultural origins and are situated in different territories. Texts destroy stereotypes and indicate that there is no such thing as *the native* who would promote a myth of primitive timelessness, distrustful history and traditionalism. Characters belong to named communities and relate to mapped/named places. Indeed, there is no longer a powerless mass called *natives*, but the critic's choice of interpretational representation explaining aspects of literary constructs, with the nativist theory determining the wording and tools. However - as Indigenous texts promote identities of Indigenous contemporary Australia in which all communities (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) are diverse, complex, recent, and changing, as anywhere else in the world, and texts characterise contemporary sociopolitical and literocultural changes in Aboriginal Literature, the *paradigm of nativism* may as well not work. For example, romanticisation of Indigenous life is not eminent in most Aboriginal texts, nor are there any descriptions of stabilisation of Indigenous physical or

mental spaces, thus supporting the idea that the nativistic imaginary of Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, Jared Thomas' *The healing tree* or Kim Scott's *True Country* will remain unresolved. Additionally, none of the texts champions political agendas or force a literary resistance to the system.

One of the most prominent Indigenous texts that capture issues of representation and multiculturalism, as well as challenging concepts of timelessness and cultural fixity, therefore problematising the literary *motifs of nativity*, is Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*. The novel speaks about cultures and their people that flourish in various spaces and times. The themes are many but Land is a strong literary creation within which inspiring and ambiguous Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds (of spirits, ancestors, their spirituality and beliefs) are evoked in intermixed - realistic, oral and phantasmagoric - narratives that revolve on diverse levels. The story runs in the Indigenous voice, *which has always been rejected in this country* (Wright Int. Source), nevertheless it is probably invented to re-possess it for the sake of (folk) storytelling and Indigenous people; perhaps to re-represent and re-capture the meaning of *the indigenous* because *Carpentaria* does not advocate a comeback to the traditional life, as Desperance has always lived its life accepting changes on the way. Not accidentally, there are diverse voices inscribed in the text - among them - *the voice of the multicultural, the voice of these attracted to the white world, and the outsiders*. By bringing up these characters to the Indigenous world, *Carpentaria* awakes readers to a simple fact - that Indigenous cultures have undergone changes as every other culture around the world. Thus, old perceptions of *nativity* have nothing in common with modern reality. Demonstrating cultural transitions, *Carpentaria* pushes readers to realise that Indigenous cultures and societies are in a constant progress, therefore there is never a possibility for *the native* to stay unaffected by modernity, cultural developments and technologies. *Natives*, their traditions and customs some readers might expect, do not exist. Although some of Wright's characters are well fixed in supernatural behaviours and conventions that would read throughout the nativist paradigm, they transgress conservativeness, and stereotypes. In this way, *the native* becomes revitalised into *the contemporary Indigenous*, a lucid message for readers to avoid any superfluous reading and expectations. Elaborating on myths, superstitiousness and inscriptions of the natural cause, as well as on historic and contemporary events, *Carpentaria* transfigures an invincible Western ideal of Indigenous literature as reflecting on, and reflected upon by cultural traditionalism; the idea of tying the text to *theories of nativism* is ruined; it does not manifest or create itself in Wright's text. Instead, the reader is lead to realise that the text is a construct of plurality in difference. The so-called *native* is just the same as the migrant, ethnic, white, the motorcyclist or a fisherman; s/he is just a human, greedy or generous, or perhaps... *Santa Clause coming to town* (58), a person welcomed in society but, *What if the man is dangerous, contagious..., a maniac and a menace? What if he is a spy, collecting data on our confidential capacities to defend ourselves? What if he is an alien?* (73).

One may argue that within its paradigm, nativism allows inclusions of white culture. Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity gives useful explanations in this regard. But Desperance, a 'contact zone' is culturally multifaceted; the characters are of many cultural and also subcultural backgrounds, thus they exceed the boundaries of postcolonial/nativist theorising. Moreover, the

character of Angel Day complicates the nativist interpretational representation, as her deeds do not necessarily prove that she consciously acts to preserve traditional uniqueness of her culture. Either that or she is not really a hybridised character. She is frantic and desperate in the very way Bertold Brecht's *Mother Courage* was. She is not only a symbol of human survival in cataclysmic earth-shaking times, and indifferent to her culture dying out, rather - she signifies the matriarchal/ human might and hope. Angel simply protects life. Similarly, as *Carpentaria* reveals the strengths of presented Indigenous cultures, and that modern unknown is not feared (but calculated by some), there is hardly a question of threat by *the other*. Reinforcing the strategy of showing Indigenous culture as transgressing conventionality, the novel utilizes literary syncretism. I refer to Wright's extraordinary characters and their mysterious origins. Elias Smith enters the scene by coming out from the sea while all towns' inhabitants *stood together on the foreshore* (48) amazed with his *white hair and beard, walking in the sea* (48). Undoubtedly, the scene has connotations of the Roman Neptune or the Greek Poseidon, or perhaps, with some Christian images as well. This is only one of many literary visions which connects two different worlds within the novel's plot, as well as Indigenous cultures' tropes with the outside culture readers.

Stephen Muecke's observation that *Present-day non-Aboriginal Australians still do not know the extent to which they have been formed by Aboriginal discourses* (7) is a constructive one within the context of Australian numerous cultures - each of a different origin - representing inimitable concepts of which not many are universal. People (in Australia) seem to understand that literature creates history but the problem is that there is a lack of acknowledgement that the history of colonialism and post-colonial time (as it progresses) go far beyond our imagination of what traumas Indigenous Peoples have dealt with (Stolen Generation is an ongoing one). One needs to relinquish traditionalism in thinking and language that postpones comprehension of sociocultural unfamiliarity, as inscribed in Indigenous literary representations. Apparently, Indigenous history articulated in texts does not quite yield to linear chronology. Main and episodic characters who constantly travel in/between spaces of time and mind are flexible and dialectic; possibly, to be able to forget diasporic experiences and events, and yet, to console themselves by reaching out for the future. In fact, stability can be achieved by securing human imagination. This imagination plays a significant role in the construction of *Carpentaria's* characters whose minds appear to be the only 'place' that offers peace in times socially and naturally determined dilemmas. In reality, interpreting the present day of Indigenous Australia is complex, as communities do not live in pristine traditional conditions. Reading Indigenous Literature only through the nativist paradigm would acutely disadvantage interpretations of novels akin to *Carpentaria*. Although they use myths, they are full of fantasy, subconscious imaginary and represent cultures, cultural transition and the changeable histories of lands and people. The point is that Indigenous Australia/Literature has as much progressing history and conceptual terminology thoroughly inscribed in texts, as there is anywhere else. Regrettably, nativist (and postcolonial) theories seem to overlook sociocultural, literary-historical aspects of Aboriginal texts by treating them as if their only aim were to engage in empire-periphery tension, while discarding the formative: historical and natural courses of Aboriginal literary and cultural production.

As can be expected, images of ticked away history and progressive advance of myth are present in many older and contemporary Indigenous titles. The problem is that classical nativism (also often postcolonial theories) believes arts should be socially and morally 'useful' rather than artistic. This is a point where the nativist paradigm is ambushed, as the aesthetic and literary values alluded to in this article's texts are indisputable. One poem that cannot be easily explained within the 'usefulness' and the native concept of idealising tradition is *Dreaming you* (Heiss 42). Although the poem contains 'reality' and 'the unreal' that are beyond the European imaginary of a dream, entwining readers into uniquely Indigenous concepts of Dreaming and Dreamtime, throughout its connection to European understanding of dreaming and daydreaming 'as links to our unknown unconscious zones', *Dreaming you* is open to intercultural interpretation, thus welcoming a range of approaches (including the psychological). Conspicuously, the poem's symbolic meanings are almost impenetrable; its emotional impact – profound. The reality metamorphosed into a dream topos becomes mystical. The poem's subliminal and intuitive dimensions never disappear - *dream is real/ as I am always awoken* (42). But the poem vitalises an everyday life side, which problematises the native perspective. With actuality of the situation, the poem initiates the subject's state of waiting for *a time where/ freedom/ allows us to be*' (42). The word 'freedom' has similar semantic designates as 'dream'. The poem is a masterpiece, but indeed, it needs an informed, projected reader to reveal its fuller meaning. Aboriginal literature has always had multileveled senses and literary functions. But, if a question of usefulness is brought forward, one must ask who considers these texts "useful" and to whom? What does the useful mean? Evidently, in the case of Heiss' poem's artistry and beauty, the qualifier of usefulness is highly depreciative. Theories have always been used to explicate texts but if nativism is used as a tool to liberate a text from its reliance on prior cultural knowledge, we should query its purpose. Conceivably, nativism is still useful to critics constructing postcolonial discourses and professionals from different fields of knowledge, but for most readers (local or not) literature has no theoretical meanings and senses; it is its (re-)creating and imaginative powers that count, does it not?!

Sam Watson's *The Kadaitcha Sung* fulfils the theoretical characteristics of nativism. The novel starts with a literary reconstruction of a myth and shows *the native* who fights for his own growth and revenge on the evil whites whilst initiating mythological powers. All seems to be in a perfect theoretical bind until images of *the native* are distorted by the reader's lack of presupposed cultural and historical knowledge. Firstly, counter-sited to traditional images are *the antinative* ones which inevitably are members of the Australian Native Police. Secondly, protagonists - historical and mythical - are not only *the idealistic natives*, but they are also wicked beings who steer ancient and present-day fights. Fuzzy as it is in its unrealistic reality and realistic peculiarity, the novel deconstructs Aboriginal (traditional/tribal) unity and goes beyond the nativistic descriptions of fixed culture or longing for it. By showing the intercultural diversity of ancient Ancestors, *The Kadaitcha Sung* connects with many cultures and their mythological heroes and plots. Although exclusive and pertaining to Aboriginal Culture, Watson's work represents multicultural facets and re-reads within frames of universal literary motifs and characters. As such, the novel also crosses boundaries of genre, namely - magic realism and places itself within

fantasy works, promoting the literary/ film motif of an ordinary young man becoming the elected one; a hero and his alter-ego fighting malevolencies interweaved into their lives.

Whether Herb Wharton's *Unbranded* has a visual potential is an important question, because it tells the story of a friendship of three men who had established their individuality against their skin differences and simply lived out their own dreams, regardless of natural environments and hostile sociopolitical situations. More than anything else, *Unbranded* is about opportunity and acceptance (if not collaboration); also, about an approval of new multidimensional progress, times and changing tradition. Equipping readers with realistic descriptions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous heroes, *Unbranded* discards the motif of *the naive native and a pure blood native*. Alternatively, the text acquaints readers, mainly those unaware of (post-)colonial situations of *the native/other*, with the Australian picturesque outback; its history and a new Indigenous literary motif (the flock and the rodeo man's life). These *antinativist* elements of the Aboriginal text allow for the literature to be read and reflected upon as the story of yet another account of Life; a life full of lessons not necessarily unique to the experiences of *the native*. Such novels, even if interpreted as contributing to the Indigenous individualistic cultures (Wharton's text included), are not exposes of definite images of characters. Neither do they provide apparent bases for so-called linguistic or stylistic nativist interpretations. Unsurprisingly, when Aileen Moreton-Robinson (88) writes: 'the traditional woman is the woman against whom all Indigenous women are measured, yet in her pristine state she does not exist', she sounds not only rational, but her observation underlines the fact that realities inscribed in Wharton's novel must not be standardised, idealised, sentimentalised and traditionalised because what we read are contemporary changeable experiences of Indigenous characters such as Mulga whose '*thoughts roved across the world. He pondered on the uneasy peace between the Arabs and the Jews, Germany with its reunification, unrest in Russia, the strife of political and religious groups everywhere. He thought of the past, of how much his own life had changed over the years,(...). Things regarded as essential items today, had been luxuries in the old days. His world had changed, and for the better (Wharton 184).*

It will not be out of context to translate the voice of Moreton-Robinson to Jackie Huggins': *I detest the imposition that anyone who is non-Aboriginal can define my Aboriginality for me and my race. Neither do I accept any definitions of Aboriginality by non-Aboriginals, as it insults my intelligence, spirit and soul, and negates my heritage (459).* This is a clear message for critics who look in texts for inscribed literary programs (a program of nativism), that a socioliterary research of Aboriginal texts and contexts is indispensable in order to decode the intention of the text. Ironically, nativist approach to a text allows for literary characters and concepts to be re-represented and interpreted in a way, towards which some Indigenous writers are opposed to when they say 'that they are studied'. Such is also the voice of Tony Birch's poetic words: *I turn to see/ myself/ I am decapitated/ limbless/ my body -/ re-assembled/ in gubbah discourse (158).*

This conflicting - indigenusness contra whiteness - dialogue is also present in a moralist approach in Anita Heiss's book: *Not meeting Mr Right*. The novel is a

witty chick literature text in which a well educated and sophisticated feminist heroine is all but *the native*. Heiss' narrative sets up a fashionable motif of a girl who after a long run finds her love. Aptly, Alice is an Indigenous history teacher who stands for truth in Australia education. The heroine is independent and mindful of her position within various groups of society. An interesting aspect of this literature is its chic, specific age group language, used throughout the story. An excellent Standard and colloquial English are not in denial. On the contrary, the character's and narrator's eloquence seem to form a clear message to readers that the nativistic language debates are not in the story or the text. Present in other postcolonial literatures, the nativistic language discourses are not prominent in a contemporary Australian Indigenous literary creation. My supposition is that, even though some Australian Indigenous authors have been talking about English as the language of oppression, communities of particular languages in Australia are still oral tradition groups, yet writing in English and describing their reading audiences, Indigenous writers aim to reach the English-speaking world(***), thus authors do not advocate for Indigenous languages in literary texts. This seems to cut short yet another trait of nativism when employed in interpretation of Aboriginal texts.

Voices against the white understanding and stereotyping of *the native* and its correspondents - *nativity*, *primitiveness* and *backwardness*, which are linked to images of irrationality and superstition - are found in Indigenous autobiography, life-story or autobiographical novels. Brodie and Langford reflect on white men's attitudes to these concepts. Foolishness, laziness and other diminutive notions (that have been held about blacks in Australian history and literature) are pictured, and glanced off by Indigenous authors. In fact, "the native speaks back". As such, Indigenous autobiography relates to the postcolonial theoretical realm of *nativity*; the protagonist of Sally Morgan's *My Place* battles with her family to come to an understanding of her Aboriginal origins. In Kim Scott's novel *True Country*, Billy comes to a remote far north settlement to detect his history. His search is successful. Although the place is contemporary, an isolated governmental outpost, Billy finds his place of belonging, which happens to be the novel's 'third space' not only for the urban Aborigine to be absorbed but for two cultures to interact; yet again, progressively, and un sentimentally.

The narrative, which not only dismantles cultural and literary stereotyping of Indigenous texts, but also offers an innovative imagery and creation, is present in the poetry of Lionel Fogarty. By taking apart ideas of timeless tribal violence that originated in ancient times, and by philosophical, satiric and symbolic reflection, Fogarty creates subjects forbidding sociocultural and philosophical ignorance of readers. At times Fogarty's poetry is ironic, identities broken, language disturbed and crippled, but *the native* is self-conscious and certain of his roots. The lyrical subject, *the contemporary Indigenous*, is full of ritual ancient songs and dance. S/he is spiritual and aligned with Nature, yet - cynical of 'the other' who in this poetry as in Heiss', happens to be white. Consequently, it is 'a man' who is associated with principal destinations and purposes; *the native's* modern life is shaped by cities, markets and states, and sociocultural differences of people. In this world concepts of *nativity* do not prevail. Who is native and where? Well aware of different contexts in which *the native* can be re-read, the poet uses the term to show its weakness and transgressions. The texts and contexts, once securely known as white representations of *the native* to

white readers, do not belong to these readers any more. As a matter of fact, Fogarty's poetry hardly belongs to any readers. Forced to be attentive to the messages and unusual language this poetry creates, readers are invited to participate in creating *the new*; the new wor(l)d order, not inevitably exclusive to *the Indigenous*, but imagined within non-predictable poetic systems, values and concepts. Like the prose, this poetry does not support the nativist discourse on language. The language and its structure are extremely adaptive and experimental, thus Fogarty's poetics not only melts down traditionalism, but the nativist interpretational lens is refuted. Through profound concepts, Fogarty creates new sequences of language usage and sense, opening endless translations/interpretations. The principle of nativity, which says that writers are essentially coding meaning and sense in their history and native idioms, can barely be applied to Fogarty's poetry. By creating a syntax that reflects and "dances" habitually around words and sketching no line between individual and collective voices, Fogarty creates *the antinative*: *Am we lonely these days/ Am I grief in the wind/ Am us friend to nature/ well hooked me up and/ we'll fish/... Am we lovin' in these days/ Am I sadden these nights/ Forever it possesses you man/ something must tell/ Am I me or you am us (16).*

During the past half-century Australian mainstream policy has moved from the assimilationist doctrine to multiculturalism and then again, in today's Australia - to the mainstream policy. *The native* has negative implications for Indigenous communities and ambivalence of this concept/ term is analogous to the ambiguous position of Indigenous Literature within the Australian literary mainstream (Podemska-Abt 3-4). In effect, Indigenous discourses relegate the *concept of nativity* and texts hardly illustrate or explain *the native*. Indigenous literature clearly demonstrates how the continuing and historical anguish of Indigenous Peoples in Australia renounces slogans. In his speech: *Australia's continuing Neurosis: identity, race and history*, Kim Scott quotes an elder, and his father: 'you can't trust wadjilas (a white person)... You let people know you're Noongar. Be proud of yourself. We're proud of you. You got Aboriginal in you, that's the best part of you.' But then he finishes: *A racist way to talk perhaps, and politically naive. Yes, it's a flimsy basis for any sort of identity. What kind of the identity is native? Is it what white people call you? Or is it what you think about yourself?* Certainly, Scott's query into the term *native* shows its prevalence only within the white discourse; it does not mean anything for Indigenous persons.

In Australia one has to consider whose and what aspects of cultures are reproduced. While recognising goals and functions for Indigenous Literature depicted by Indigenous authors, it is important to remember their comments on the mainstream literary critique and notice the above mentioned Indigenous Literature's unsteady position within Literary History and Institutions. Not represented up to its miscellaneous aptitudes, Aboriginal literature (within literary discourses and social forms of organisation) engages with various systems of signs in the production of texts. These very texts replicate the meanings of a culture, which must be seen as ever changing. Assuming exclusiveness, and inclusiveness of Indigenous Literature, this article's intention was to dismantle the perspective of theoretical nativism in a case of Australian Indigenous Literature, and forewarn that if any nativist interpretational strategy is taken towards this literature, a careful re-consideration of nativism as pragmatic

and theoretical approach to Indigenous texts, is necessary; particularly, if various aesthetic and imaginary characteristics of Indigenous texts, with which they attract non-English speaking readers in Australia and afar, are deliberated. Australia is a society where the term *native* has been in transit for a long time. Nowadays the Indigenous flag does not signify *the native* but rather a symbol of Aboriginality. Consequently, an unreasonable query whether *panaboriginality* is *native* or not would have to arise. There is no doubt, that pan-aboriginality can be pictured as a nativist movement. But in his article - *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality*, Robert Ariss, similarly to Kevin Gilbert (40-41), emphasises the political nature of Aboriginality, which clearly contrasts white constructions of *the native*. According to Mudrooroo (78), Aboriginality must be lived and learned, as it is a cultural practice, not a given form of being. Indigenous literary practices and ideology are in constant transition, the unifying questions are many: Indigenous authors unify on such issues as: Who owns the Indigenous culture and literature? What are the political, social, and economic implications of the literature one produces? Clearly, none of these questions can be disregarded by contemporary theories that are to open discussions and stir creative thinking. Paradoxically, within all literary categories the authors illustrate the life of their communities and environments regardless of theories, shifting and changing complex ideas that are imposed by them. Indigenous authors challenge theoretical discourses and alert readers and re-readers to value Aboriginal texts for what they are, and not for what they have been represented by literary and theoretical criticism.

Endnotes

* The term "Aboriginal art", for instance, is taken almost automatically to refer to the art of Australian Aborigines, though the term "aborigine" is also used for the descendents of the first inhabitants of Taiwan and the Malay Peninsula. For further reading see: Burns Coleman, Aboriginal Art, Identity and Appropriation, Ashgate: Aldershot, 2005.

** An assertion of settler connection to the land was an instrument against indigenous claims of attachment to land. By affirming their affection for the landscape, the settlers (and contemporary nationalists) reduced the Indigenous People bond with place.

*** Although he did not always think internationally, adequate and distinctive are J. Davis's words: "I'm very conscious of the fact, too, that I want make a few bob. I know most of the people who are going to buy my books are going to be white people because there is more of them. But I certainly keep my people in mind all the time, all the time. (...) Sometimes I'd like to write more strongly than I do, but I don't think I'd really put it in for publication. I just think I write for people. People are people for me and that's full stop." See: Strauss, D. ed. Facing Writers. NSW: ABC Enterprises, 1990:18.

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