



Unsettling Identity: Reading *That Deadman Dance* Novel by Kim Scott

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Abstract

The reviving of the presence, existence, and eugenics of the Aborigines become pivotal issue to be brought up in the literature. Since the coming of the settlers, the Aborigines have seemed to experience shifting identity; living as a nominal population over the settlers; and later on becoming the ones who are attached with the 'exotic' due to their uniqueness and scarcity in number compared to the majority. This condition, from being the natives who own the land into those who become the 'rare' in their own land, provokes crucial issues related to the Aboriginal identity, which is challenging to be further discussed. Through *That Deadman Dance*, Scott tries to resurrect the Aborigine's identity, especially Noongar, in the midst of disappearing Aboriginal communities. This article is aimed at revealing the identity of Noongar people by selecting and grouping the textual data in the novel which portray the Aborigines cultural experience and their indigeneity. Later on, the data were investigated based on Muecke's concept of connectedness to approach the problem. Accordingly, the narrative presented by Scott indicates that he has offered an alternative to view Aborigine's identity which is potentially unsettling; thus, this finding seems to challenge the prescribed identity of Noongar corresponded by the major society.

INTRODUCTION

The historical Australia as settler colonies recalls the 'first contact' between the Aborigines and the settlers. However, the subject of Australia had always been 'settlers' or Attwood called it as 'settler history-making' which provided British people and their white-descendants to be the central subject for the history of Australia (Attwood, 2005). This had lasted long nearly until the late 20th century. The Aborigines have later become the subject of anthropology rather than history since their disappearing in the historical timeline of Australia. Over the next decades, eventually, the Aborigines could reappear after they have been out of history for

hundreds years; becoming the subject in the midst of the current Australian context. This historical line which includes the Aborigines back in history seemed to be a 'vengeance' by these Aboriginal communities in demanding their rights. Nonetheless, in the situated context of Australia, it has been a struggle to locate the so-called national history as it has to deal with the 'past' Australia including such matters over the land rights, native title, treaty, the stolen generations and reconciliation that are still debatable (Attwood, 2005). After all, it has been a great change within the Australian history to trace this 'past' by acknowledging and letting the Aborigines in the history of Australia, particularly as a subject in a broader context of any academic disciplines including history.

Another issue concerned with the Aboriginal communities situated in the Australian context is also seen through their position in Australian literature. According to Huggan, Australian literature covers the literature based on the historical arrival of the settlers (Huggan, 2007). The narratives emerged in sequence by the arrival narratives, settler narratives, and continued with migrant narratives—that these narratives become the pivotal point of Australian literature. Furthermore, the degree of so-called *Australianness* becomes the focus within the writing of Australian literature. Based on the above concept, it disguisedly excludes the indigenous literature from the Australian literature.

There are two conceptualization of Australian literature mentioned by Huggan that Australian literature performs to respond the national concern, which is the nation of the post-settler arrival; this does not belong to represent the indigenous. Secondly, the Australian literature brings out the idea of *Australianess*—to the complexity of cultural difference and to the non-singular identity of being an Australian (Huggan, 2007). In addition, the idea about *Australianness* mentioned by Huggan still obscures the position of Aboriginal literature within the scope of Australian literature. In response to this idea, the Aboriginal literature cannot be synchronized with the concept drawn above albeit there had previously been an indigenous literature (though it was not written).

The Aboriginal literature then come up with the issue of 'the origin world'—the indigenous question whether they are in the origin world; or as the ones who have rights to belong in the origin world. Accordingly, the quest for identity becomes the major theme. Moreover, the Australian literature pertains to the national celebration which obviously goes beyond the question of indigenous self-belonging

within the land of Australia. In fact, the indigenous literature had preceded the current Australian literature. One of the reflections is story passed down from elders through generations. These can sustain the existence of their nation and perpetuate inevitable account of the Aboriginal history. However, to include indigenous literature or literature written by the Aborigine descendants seems never fit in the context of Australian literature.

These two portraits of the Aboriginal people or pertaining to the Aboriginal existence are placed in the context of current Australia, where the colonial period could not be effaced in the history of their communities and Australia. Over time, the history recorded how they survived forcibly letting go of off their children experiencing "stolen generations"; how they made ways back to their 'country' in order to not perish. By this contact with the settlers, the Aborigine communities were introduced to the white's culture but at the same time they were bound by the language, culture, connection to country, and their ancestry (South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council, 2020). Unsurprisingly, bringing up such issues of identity within the Aboriginal literature is challenging and significant in order to contextualize Australia and to possibly view different perspective of the Aboriginal identity established through the literatures.

One of the Australian figures who has strong relation to the indigenous people particularly *Noongar* people is Kim Scott. He has been rigorously writing stories of his elders pertaining to his *Noongar* ancestry and identity (O'Neill & Braz, 2011). Through his writings, he also consequently sustains the continuity of passing down the Aboriginal culture; and this could be also a significant account to reminisce the history of his people. More importantly, he subtly provokes to strengthening his identity and specifically Aboriginal identity. By means of writing stories, the issue of indigenous identity is led towards different perspective compared to most archetypical construction of indigenous identity. Therefore, this is problematic to discuss more what identity is tried to be formed through the performance of Bobby as a central character who is both an Aboriginal dancer and reconciled Aborigine in *That Deadman Dance*.

Furthermore, this character represented in the story denotes complexity that gives readers to not just think about the imaginary historical relation between the Aborigines and the so-called 'friendly' settlers in the first-contact period, but also to provide such tangible source of cultural remembrance especially for the indigenous

Australia (Kennedy, 2016). In her writing, Kennedy found that this provoking story also presents two forms of heritage for both of the Aborigines and the settlers; that, again, the narration of such 'friendly' contact does not merely suggest the changed perception of viewing this white people, but rather to reaffirm settler's tangible 'ownership' in the land of Australia while the heritage (towards country and body) of the Aborigines remains intangible.

Another challenging finding is also presented by Nolan in investigating this novel. She was experimenting whether or not the mastery of special academic background would affect to engage with such provoking story in the novel. She finally found that academic reading provoked thought while book clubs reading eschew to the mastery (Nolan, 2017). In addition, reading this novel also gives eco-critical sense towards especially environmental crisis both natural and social that, through this novel, Scott offers healing for this environmental damage by replacing anthropocentrism with biocentrism (Jumadi & Kurnia, 2017). All of these findings enrich the academic scholarship in order to reveal multiple issues and complexity brought by the novel. That is to say, by stimulating more issues of especially the indigenous and their existence, the cognition of related-social problem would likely offer a new perspective and provide answer to the problem. Therefore, this issue about the Aborigines is put forward in this article as the main reason; as well as to celebrate the longevity of the Aborigines' lives by enriching such findings in at least academic scholarship.

Conceptual Framework

The Aborigines' modernity

The Australian nation was built upon the whites' imaginary about the '*terra nullius*' land; conceptualized by putting national identity which recognizes of (post-settler) cultures and political-related of the nation. This is away from the concept of the indigenous that they do not include into the classified race or ethnic group labelled by the white supremacy. At the same time, multicultural Australia, later on, comprises a wide range of differences among the Australian society. This diverse face of Australia coexists with the face of native Australia, which currently, not long before this last twenty years, reappears in Australian history and Australian literatures. Furthermore, this multifaceted face of Australia, as Huggan suggests, is appropriated with such idea called *Australianess* (Attwood 2005; Huggan 2007), in order to subsume this multiplicity but the Aborigines. However, this formulation of

Australianess does not serve national identity that, in fact, it undeniably represents Australia. Such identification in this issue draws a more complex problem; that the appropriation for the Aborigine's identity leads to a centred concept of defining their identity. Here, it is arguably true that the identification of the Aborigines and their identity can be more proper to investigate with conceptual thinking proposed by Muecke, which is more rooted in the Aborigines' viewpoints and their philosophy.

The Aborigines are, most probably, valued by the grand narration of their ancientness (Attwood, 2005) while this ancientness is a construct within Eurocentric discourse by which modernity is opposed to (Muecke, 2004). The ancientness is put against the central and hierarchical ideology of 'modern'. To depart from this argumentation, the emergence of industrialization is likely the initial point to view what has been brought to this Eurocentric definition of modern as Muecke suggests that "Europe, traditionally thought to be the place of origin of modernity, has forms of (aesthetic) modernism and (material) modernity that are varied and stratified." (Muecke, 2004, p. 132). This creates a relational thinking to what is understood by demarcating time and culture to its modernity, that modernity is defined by dividing such sort of period when related culture produced. Therefore, industrialisation had brought such aspired uniformity although it cannot be ostensibly realized; because in Europe, there are still so many parts of its countries that are still impoverished. Later on, modern thinking has been located in the postcolonial discourse which is understood as a 'construct'.

"(...) The quarrel arises from the fact that modernism and modernity are conceptually split across what is a shifting colonial divide, not only between the West and other countries of the world considered to be in development, but even within Western countries. This conceptual split leads us to claim that an absolute modernity cannot be a simple attribute or achievement" (Muecke, 2004, p. 133)

This argument construes that this construct of 'modernity' is material-base with which representations of modernity are created. Muecke also views that the representation apparatuses can be literature, cinema, art, etc. (Muecke, 2004)

Through this conceptualization of modernity, Muecke tries to view an alternative in redefining modernity within the context of Australia and the Aborigin Australia. First, he presents that modernity, based on postcolonial thought, is a construct; thus it can be deconstructed, later it is understood that there is no absolute modernity. Second, in particularly Australian context, the European modernity brought to Australia became dislocated to its site; modernity became a

source of political desire to get independence from colonial annexation. At this phase, Muecke called it as the 'ruin', because the settlers cannot recognise the new place (Australia) as home, but later on they begin to construct sites to give it a tribute as 'home'. Through this processes, there is a link to connect with the antiquity or ancientness of the Aborigines, which is fundamental to the alternative being posed to a European antiquity (Muecke, 2004). Third, Muecke suggests that the indigenous ancient shapes the indigenous modernism brought by the rapid change introduced by invasion and colonisation. On the other hand, European modernity did not develop without exploitative links with the ancientness of the colonies. So, the past Aborigine has coexisted with the past of the settlers which gives a way to define modernity. Lastly, ancientness and primitivity would probably mean refusing to any changes; but there was a range of response of the Aborigines could adapt and accept the changes, for instance collaboration, inventive adaptation, differentiate power, or even develop new forms of language to be involved in many translation works. Therefore, what Muecke mentions as indigenous ancientness is to some degree their modernity. This view presents an understanding of so-called the alternative modernity of the Aborigine.

The philosophy of 'country'

To discuss about the Aborigine communities and their identity, it is also important to specifically contextualize this issue in order to make a proper approach. The Aborigine people is defined, as what Muecke suggests, through their connectedness or multiplicity of forces called 'contingency'. This connectedness is realized through significant concept of 'body' and 'country' "For the Aboriginal communities, 'societies' and 'the word' are less significant operative concept, or rather, that they have been more recently interposed between body and country" (Mucke, 2004, p. 167). Based on the Aborigines' way of thinking, country is seen through 'landscape' and 'body'.

First, landscape is not only understood as the physical view of a land, but more importantly as cultural expression with which it allows a sense of belongingness and connects with memory of being anchored to this physical land. Muecke draws this understanding through an explanation of a painting which engages the viewers (those who see the painting) with some sort of memories connected with the object painted; later on it brings to such sense of feeling anchored to the object painted. Second, 'body' is as a 'country'; body is defined as connected parts which relate

the Aborigine as 'being' to their kinship and culture; body mobilizes energy which signifies 'vitality' and their vitalistic philosophy, which is conceived through life-forces, movement, vigour, immediacy, connectedness, metamorphosis and 'becoming' (Gelder, 2005). In short, the principle of connectedness or contingency between 'body' and 'country' is the key to see the Aborigine as 'being' and 'becoming'; this serves as "the nexus of Aboriginal philosophy" in order to connect to the feeling of self or within the communities" (Mucke, 2004, p. 171). In the case of a particularly Aborigine community named *Noongar* (of which stories are told in the novel), country is an expression of their spiritual connectedness and becomes the place of significance. Connection to *booja* or country is passed on through stories, art, song, dance, rituals, and ceremonies (South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a study of how position of the Aboriginal people as indigenous community matters in the situated context of Australia. The analysis is organized based on these following critical frameworks on, the textual data in the novel which tries to illustrate a picture of cultures including the encounters of two communities (the Aborigines and the settlers). Second, through the narrative, it serves the span of colonial period and historical timeline of Australia, which explores the understanding of the Aboriginal people's legacy in a broader context of Australian literature. The last but not least is the narrative which functions as counter-narrative to either celebrate indigenous identity or envision an alternative to the situated realities of the Aboriginal people in Australia.

In researching such problematic issue about the Aborigines within the scope of Australian context and literature, it is needed to observe indigenous philosophy since they are as the medium to reconnect with the indigenous communities. It will be helpful to employ such conceptualization drawn in the indigenous philosophy in contextualizing the problem. Basically this conceptualization also provides a proper approach to understand the identity perceived through the Aborigines' viewpoint; so it helps to perceive that the emblematic identity which is Eurocentric is a construct, and therefore it is potential to see an alternative. The textual data in the novel *That Deadman Dance* will be selected based on this issue which is significant to provide evidence. It does not only rely on singular topic in the narrative to answer the problem; but instead the classified data are such dialog and narration which

include *historical processes, cultural experiences of the Aborigines (Noongar), and the connectedness to the 'country' (booja)*.

This connectedness or contingency concept, as mentioned earlier, to research on the indigeneity denies the hegemonic discourse and reduces insidious meaning to seeing the indigenous identity; because this concept highlights the directness toward the object. By using this concept, the Aborigines' identity is seen through the experience and history which reconsiders possibilities of the Aborigines realities. This allows a more nuanced picture of specific location and time in history without requiring community to conform Western notion or pre-conceived spirituality but rather the connection to the 'country' and their relation to their current context.

DISCUSSION

Cultural contact experienced by the Noongar people

This novel depicts the first contact of Noongar people in West Australia with the settlers upon their arrival in the late 1820s. The depictions of many characters here provide multifaceted understanding towards the condition of the colonies in the west part of Australia including the natives particularly the Noongar community. Briefly, this presents an illustration of how the Aboriginal community connect with their ancestral land and their survival during the colonization. The central character named Wabalanginy, historically obtained the first name, Bobby, from the settlers such as Dr. Cross (surgeon soldier) and friends including Alexander Killam (soldier) and William Skelly.

.....

Even Killam, so long away from the mother country, had heard of this name. He who has created law and order in London? He asked. Peel's Bobbies?

No, not he, not him. But yes, Peel is the name behind those men of law and order. Those Bobbies. The three men glanced at Bobby Wabalanginy, sitting by the fireplace.

Nevertheless, you are well informed, Sergeant Killam.

But we have our own Bobby here, do we not?

Wabalanginy was the centre of their attention, then. They returned they look, wanted to know, Who these Bobbies over the ocean?

The name stuck from then. Bobby. (Scott, 2011, p. 156)

Yes, Menak looked forward to seeing Wabalanginy again. Bobby, Cross and the other had named him, Bobby Wabalanginy who'd been born the sunrise side of here and, having seen ships arrive and sail away again over his whole lifetime, had now sailed away and returned. Only Wooral and Menak had done as much, and not for so long. He was a clever boy, Bobby Wabalanginy, and brave. (Scott, 2011, pp. 13-14)

'Bobby' became finally the first name (before his first *Noongar* name Wabalanginy) known among the settlers. The name was given to Wabalanginy, when Dr. Cross met with Sergeant Killam and also Skelly telling how he had been saved by this native boy. The given name by these white settlers accommodates multiple understanding. Firstly, the settlers seemed like identifying this Wabalanginy, as one of those coastal people who practiced his own spirituality and had cultural connection to the place he lived in, stated in the phrase '*these Bobbies over the ocean*'. Secondly, this could also be a way in relating to the coastal people who lived based on their worldview, such as conserving the life in the ocean and balancing ecological existence. Other than that, the name can also be assumed as denoting a transcultural individual who is open to cross-cultural learning during the coming of the settlers.

That is to say, this attaching British name to Wabalanginy is that the settlers wanted to civilize the Aborigines including Bobby Wabalanginy; the settlers therefore no longer called him as 'savage' as the most did towards the Aborigines.

If you want land, Alexander Killam said, follow the rivers inland to the mountains. That's what Cross did. Why Killam himself, if he had the capital...Cross must've been last to get a grant, and he had chosen some very good land indeed upriver from Shellfeast Harbour. It was his native friends who showed him.

Yes, an expedition could be arranged. Several of the natives are quite experienced guides, having helped Cross. They know where the water is, can supply your meals. You'll never get lost, and they'll deal with any other natives you meet. An expedition need last only a few days, maybe a week.

(Scott, 2011, p. 43)

By this means, the settlers could make a way on having capability and knowing more how to deal with this new place far from 'home'. The settlers knew how to navigate the colonies by learning with these Aborigines, those who were exceptionally different because they acculturated, including Bobby Wabalanginy. The excerpts above also show how the settlers made use of their closeness of their friendship with the Aborigines; this had been very strategic and valuable for the settlers to deal with the wilderness on the native land. More importantly, the quoted statement "*You'll never get lost, and they'll deal with any other natives you meet*" suggests that the settlers differentiated those Aborigines who were already civilized with the rest who did not acculturate with the settlers' culture (also described in the earlier excerpt) who were perceived as savage.

The closeness of the Aborigines and the settlers portrayed by the character of Bobby and Dr. Cross grew as the colonies also developed. This so-called 'friendly' settler, Dr. Cross, who liked to seek peace with the Aborigines, can be seen as if it was a mutual friendship. However, this narration might be understood otherwise. It is a sort of mockery that Scott wants to address, that the settlers exploited this friendship to eventually dominate among the Aborigines. As a result, Dr. Cross seemed voluntarily shared his culture to these natives by teaching them to read and write and also share the foods and home in order to gain comprehension of the native land.

As a pioneer to initiate the colony in King George town and later on established it, Dr. Cross came to know that this could not be achieved by himself unless he immersed himself in the life of the Aborigines too, one of which is by exchanging their cultures and experience; this obviously exposed the Aborigines' vulnerability towards their culture; that this friendliness, otherwise, led to exterminate the Aborigines' existence, or at least to slowly eradicate their cultural connectedness. So, the so-called 'friendly' settlers exemplified in the narration seemed to be an oxymoron to defy its friendliness. Scott, on the other hand, considers different aspect through this friendship; the *Noongar's* openness and generosity present a flexibility of their beings in engaging the drastic change after this early contact with the frontiers. This seems crucial because this flexibility denies the hegemonic identity attached to the Aborigines; that they should not be attached with 'primitivity' for they could move and open to any possible changes. It also affirms that they have probably been 'modern' long before the European had this contact. (Mucke, 2004).

The connectedness with the 'country'

The Aboriginal communities particularly *Noongar* people told in the story are people who have strong connection with *booja* or 'country'. This deep rooted connectedness is manifested through their continuity of stories passed down from the elders. This manifestation is also closely linked to their collective memory of their land and people. All of these are reflected through the central character, Bobby Wabalanginy and his dance, the Deadman Dance, which somehow posits their identity as the Aborigines, *Noongar* people, that is viewed beyond the defeat and victimization of colonial oppression (Kennedy, 2016); this also suggests that the decay of their country by the white people is cataclysmic.

Spears were proper flying. Most of the men had a woman beside them picking up fallen spears, and they had to be just alert. Bobby loved this sort of thing: the dancing and dodging more than throwing, and the throwing of insults more than spears. (Scott, 2011, p. 150)

Well, he was young and he was like a spear, thrown and quivering in the air and only the pointed tip, that very spirit of a spear, remains still. (Scott, 2011, p. 158)

Bobby Wabalanginy is such figure of full of spirit, a figure of resemblance towards the Noongar people, and a figure of an Aborigine who, through his dance, provokes a symbolised gesture of how the white people as pale, spiritless like a deadman. To the extent, this dance is also a medium for Bobby to reconnect to his *booja*; and at the same time also to mock the settlers of what they have done to the Aboriginal community, *"they messing up the water, cutting the earth. What, we can't kill and eat them? And we now strangers to our special places?"* (Scott, 2011, p. 392). As the settlers grew more and more on the Aborigine's land and the Aboriginal community was perishing, Bobby felt like a nominal figure whose dance then never could be understood but a sort of festive performance.

There were no more of his people and no more kangaroo and emu and no more vegetable. After the white man's big fires and guns and greed there was nothing (Scott, 2011, p. 160)

He ran a few steps further, repeated the performance and then, laughing and tumbling, came back to his spot in the shade. Chaine recognised him as the boy who'd danced on the ship.

The native boy became very animated and theatrical, made a great show of tossing whatever it was they had given him into his mouth, chewing and swallowing in such an exaggerated fashion that the children squealed and clapped with delight. (Scott, 2011, p. 37)

The excerpts above signify the latter situation when the Aboriginal communities were replaced by the settlers after they well established the settlement. Bobby kept his dance though in order to reconnect to his *booja*. On the other hand, it also reflects the sorrow of the devastated land because of the settlers' greediness. This is expressed in another quote where Manit (Menak's company and one of Bobby's elders) talked to Menak and Wooral.

Nitja Wadjela. Your friends? The old woman said, no longer so friendly and playful. Tjanak! Devils! Smile to your face but turn around and he is your enemy. These people chase us from our own country. They kill our animals and if we eat one of their sheep...they shoot us. Baalap ngalak waadam!The very smell of them kills us. (Scott, 2011, p. 24)

The word *Wadjela* which is Noongar word for referring to the whites (South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council, 2020) deeply connected to both *booja* and collective memories of the land. It is through the memory, the Aborigines can feel

and connect to their ancestral land, towards to what the settlers had done to the Aboriginal community, towards the people they passed the story on, and all of this recollection somehow anchored them to the land, their *booja*.

Furthermore, the circumstance being invaded by the whites had situated the Aborigines as such intruder who would take the sheep they were shepherding. As this is also explained in the story, Skelly and Killam were shepherding and stated that "*Killam was the best of the soldiers*" who would likely shot any of the Aborigines who were getting nearer.

... Killam said he'd best keep an eye out for the natives; he'd fired at some a few days previous because it was the only way to keep them clear of the stock and the garden. Fired over their heads like, and shouted to wave them away, as he was within his rights to do so, whatever the doctor might say.
(Scott, 2011, p. 154)

This also asserts how the *Noongar* people looked like 'beasts' haunting the settlers and their farm animals; the Aborigines were then seen as the ones who would give more risk to the whites in the colonies. For the whites, by destroying the 'beasts' (shooting and clearing them up) seemed to be a good way taming the wilderness in order to make a safe living in the land called new 'home'. More importantly, this even provokes a thought about Eurocentric ideology to perpetuate; that the identity attached to the Aborigines was as the 'beast'. This idea of 'beast' excludes the Aboriginal community as humans; and by attaching this 'beast' quality to the Aborigine individual or collectively, caused the settlers to not have guilt to exterminate the Aboriginal people. Through this narration, the perpetuated Eurocentric ideology defines the native people that somehow they are threatening to the continuity of the colonies' life. This hegemonic view on the natives, *Noongar*, inevitably attached to them as a 'fixed' identity of 'being the beast', 'dangerous', and 'threatening'. By presenting this kind of identity in the story, Scott tried to position himself as a *Noongar* descent to engage with the readers how the Aborigines' identity perceived by the whites, not the identity perceived by their people of *Noongar* community. On the other hand, Scott, through the central character, Bobby Wabalanginy, provides an arguably potential source to view an alternative (beyond this attached identity) towards the Aborigines' identity, generally a contemporary indigenous identity.

To further see this, the *Noongar* identity is then asserted by the connectedness of the Aboriginal people (as an individual and as a collective self) with, based on the vitalistic philosophy, the '*booja*' manifested in their 'body'. The Aborigine's living

body is through passing down the stories of their elders (Cain, Finke, Johnson, McGowan, & Williams, 2001); their 'body' is their country and their 'body' is as a source of this connectedness; and their 'body' too gives them energy to move through the dance, through memories, and through returning to their kinship. Bobby Wabalanginy moved his feet, his body through this Deadman dance; his body rose up the spirit of their people who slowly disappeared as the settlement established and developed. His living 'body' untangled stories of his people to these 'white' strangers. Bobby Wabalanginy kept moving his dance, even his movements seemed to only be a current attraction for tourists, but that was the way where Bobby had returned to his 'booja'. Subsequently, his final dance (in the story) was very significant, how he undressed his European clothing gave him the moment for his spirit to resurrect, return to home—his kinship.

There were the old dances—hunting, ancestral beings, memories and legend—and they did the Dead Man Dance, with its refined display of a gun and a fierce, strategic intention that people now understood so much better. And there were new dances—crowds of coughing bodies, hands brushing clouds of flies from around mouths, barking rifles and falling bodies and stiff limbs. Bobby was at the centre, the others falling back from him like always as he came alive in the Dead Man Dance and gathered together all their different selves.

Bobby danced the sea, jumpy and barely restrained, and the surprise of a dolphin or whale bursting into the air...

Bobby danced many people in the settlement of King George Town, and it was as if they had all come here to join in the festivity...

It was like Bobby was them, was showing their very selves, inside their heads and singing their very sound and voices...

He took off his jacket and, dancing across the room as if with a ballroom partner, left it buttoned below the hat. A human form is taking shape.

Nitjak bwoka. My shirt.

In moments, Bobby wore little more than a thin belt made of human hair, with blonde strands woven through it, A mysterious, well-dressed human form hovered on its toes in the corner of the room like a ghost, a silent witness, a hanging man; like all those things at once.

Bobby was singing softly. (Scott, 2011, p. 376)

In this final dance, Bobby delivered a very powerful message, how he wanted to communicate with the people after their elders, the people who took over his country and those people who dug the shared burial site of his uncle Wunyeran with Dr. Cross. The coffin of Dr. Cross was removed and buried in recent grave near the timber rail, marking it with the title of 'founding father' (Scott, 2011, p. 176; 354); while the bones of his uncle left scattered, unrecognized by the whites. Such disrespectful treatment to Wunyeran remained to occur to Bobby, his people, and his 'booja'. So,

his last dance he performed also asserts his spirit of 'booja', the *Noongar's* struggle, and his expression of resistance to European sovereignty. Lastly, this dance by Bobby is a source of both collective and individual self who cannot be explained with the Eurocentric ideology; otherwise the Aborigines' identity is not fixed. Their identity is not obtained through the eyes of the whites; their identity is performed, it comes from within, inside their living 'body'. Such connectedness to their 'country' is more than a record of their culture; this connectedness is intangible, which the whites were unable to grasp.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The Deadman Dance presents provoking and rigorous story of historical narrative of the *Noongar* people; and obviously some of the names of places, people, and historical events also attributed to the history of early contact with frontiers in Scott's homeland, Albany, West Australia. For example, the story of Wunyeran was related with the story of Mokare, who was well-known as a peacekeeper between the *Noongar* people and early European explorers (Morrison & Collins, 2016), which allows for the interpretation of complex situation experienced by the Aborigines during the settlement. Since the coming of these settlers, the Aborigines experienced such shifting identity; not the identity given by the settlers. Otherwise, Scott, through Bobby Wabalanginy, values different point of view in seeing the Aborigines' identity, that theirs cannot be fit with the Eurocentric ideology. Bobby is valued through his flexibility in this cross-cultural contact which resists the idea of 'primitivism'; that the Aborigines seemed to be reluctant to any changes. Bobby learned without fear (of new language), learned that the Aborigines had been journeying (travelled some places to visit another settlement), and he also learned to keep his spirit rose up (by returning to his *booja*). Most importantly, the identity of the Aborigines offered in *That Deadman Dance* envisions an alternative, that their identity cannot be settled under the eurocentrism but rather by viewing indigeneity which is associated with the Aborigines' connectedness to 'booja'; it is how Bobby Wabalanginy with his *Deadman dance* arouse a sense of belongingness through his experience and rootedness to the country. Through this challenging finding, this article is expected to be able to encourage more research on indigenous literary works that will provide provoking

results; so the literary critic can obviously open to the newly different perspective towards a certain issue in society.

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