

**David Malouf's**

***Remembering Babylon and An Imaginary Life:***

**Identity Processes in the Postcolonial Borderland**

**Written by**

**Karin Devaney Askeland**

**Department of Foreign Languages**

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## Introduction

### Postcolonial theory as a Borderland

This thesis revolves around questions that pertain to what we often call postcolonial theory. More specifically, it focuses on the formations, expansions, and negotiations of boundaries in two novels, namely David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*. Before I introduce these two works I will briefly outline some key ideas in postcolonial theory, but more particularly how the space created in the after-math of colonization produces emergent boundaries and corresponding challenges to the dynamic of self and other.

Postcolonial theory emerged as an attempt to understand the consequences of colonialism and is a theory filled with contradictions. To understand what postcolonialism is, is in fact complex, and the following, rather broad definition illustrates this: the term postcolonial covers "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Ashcroft et al. 2004, 2). The definition makes clear how vast the area is, both geographically and culturally. The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* moreover argue that:

...the term post-colonial might provide a different way of understanding colonial relations: no longer a simple binary opposition, black colonized vs. white colonizers; Third World vs. the West, but an engagement with all the varied manifestations of colonial power, including those in settler colonies. (200)

Postcolonial theory has also been defined as "...the attempt to understand the problems posed by the European colonization and its aftermath" (Culler, 130). In her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* Ania Loomba argues how "...for literary criticism, it meant that

history does not just provide a background to the study of texts, but forms an essential part of textual meaning; conversely, texts or representations have to be seen as fundamental to the creation of history and culture” (39). History is, in many ways, more important to postcolonial theory than to many other literary criticisms. The era of colonization is formally over, but borders are still appearing through definitions and perceptions. Postcolonial literature is consequently often used by writers to emphasize –“the other’s” side of the story; as Jonathan Culler puts it, “...post-colonial theory and writing has become an attempt to intervene in the construction of culture and knowledge, and, for intellectuals who come from post-colonial societies, to write their way back into a history others have written” (131). This position allows those who have been dominated to define themselves and their own space, stressing the effects of colonialism. Common to all of the definitions above, however, is the meeting of self and other and consequently the importance of identity formations.

Nevertheless, from the rise of this theory there have been, and still are, many skeptics. They are questioning, among other things, the position of the narrator in this theory and if it is in fact possible to voice the silenced. An example of such a critical discussion is Gayatri C. Spivak's essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” From “writing back” postcolonial theory has become a much more wide-ranging theory. The idea of an empire and a margin has again surfaced after the different terror events, such as 9/11. Despite the theory's many shortcomings postcolonial texts are able to portray colonialism's politics, history and effects. The theory moreover introduces a range of literary tools that are possible to transfer to various theories.

Postcolonial theory lends itself well to explore representations of spaces consisting of borders and crossings. Identity processes that take place in this complexity of borders and boundaries are essential, and in many cases the complexity is a result of the empire's imposition on local cultures. Part of the rationale of colonialism is to bring what is perceived

as “civilization” and “right” into the “wilderness.” This was often justified through religion and Christian law. Keeping “wilderness” from “order” or “good” from “bad” was an underlying principle and could be defended through, for instance, the third book in the *Bible*, “Leviticus,” which states what is forbidden and what is allowed: “Keep my decrees. Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material” (19:19). This underlies, in part, the ideology that at least the British Empire brought with it.

The colonial era brought new ideologies and with these new borders formed new and fundamental divisions between different cultures. To introduce the ideas of border poetics, a textual representation of challenges in relation to borders, Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe argue that:

The border is always presented, masked, represented and medialized. Identity is unthinkable without border processes, whether individual or communal. Borders involve movements of people from one place to another; attempts to control space with borders, creating situations of radically asymmetrical relations of power; and attempts to imagine the spatial dislocations of people, objects, or ideologies within the globalized economy. (12)

Both ideas and identities that exist in a liminal, postcolonial space require a process of crossing boundaries, which results in a transition in both thinking and behaving. The border is not just a territorial line, but a dynamic process. According to Schimanski and Wolfe border poetics can consequently also be seen as an object of negotiation, in the same way as a border, and they explain how: “a focus on borders in literary texts and other aesthetic works can have an exemplary force for the analysis of the concentrated complexity of narrative and figurality

found in other forms of discourse within a wider political and cultural field” (25). They wish to highlight the border and border experience which is central in the discussion of for instance, identity, mediality, ethics and gender. Schimanski and Wolfe discuss borders as something in constant process: “We suggest that the border must be seen as dynamic, a phenomenon constantly undergoing processes of both fixing and blurring” (13). In addition to this they state how: “Border poetics investigate the ways in which borders are negotiated within medialized forms of production. We might call this the new aesthetics of border poetics and of the border-crossing narrative in particular” (16).

Two authors from the U.S. – Mexican borderland exemplify the negotiation that occurs. One dimension is represented by the distinctions Richard Rodriguez makes in his *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* when dividing social space into the private and the public. An example he uses is how his mother tongue, Spanish, was part of the private while English was part of the public sphere. This eventually changed during his childhood when the nuns from his school came to his house to talk with his parents about their son’s language “problems” (20). When he started using English as his only language he also felt that he finally belonged in the public space. After crossing this border Rodriguez feels he has chosen to sacrifice the private in order to become completely public and function in the public world. The complexities of living with a border can be seen in the difficulties that emerge afterwards. He talks of himself as an assimilated middle-class American man, but at the same time compares himself to Shakespeare’s character Caliban from *The Tempest*: “I have taken Caliban’s advice. I have stolen their books. I will have some run at this isle” (1). The implications of this symbol can be seen in comparison to how Rodriguez started to use English as his first language, in the same way as Caliban learned to speak Prospero’s language, because it was the language of power and in many ways forced on him. Even though Rodriguez does not initially wish to use English and be a part of the public sphere he



understands that he has to in order to be a part of the power and knowledge that lie within the English language.

The borderland writer Gloria Anzaldúa and her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* is, on the other hand, an example of the attempt to close the gap that exists in a borderland. She has incorporated all her history and feelings towards the present borderland that she is living in and labels herself as a border woman. She describes the language that she has created through mixing her different languages, as her new language. She has found a space without boundaries, stating that: "I am the embodiment of the *hieros gamos*: the coming together of opposite qualities within" (41). To achieve this she had to live without borders (217) and because she managed to do this she has now taken control herself and is no longer controlled by others' borders or definitions. Rodriguez and Anzaldúa consequently illustrate different ways of dealing with borders.

In his book *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, Against Margins* Rafael Perez-Torres addresses these kinds of border negotiations when he talks about the flux and fluidity that can be found in the borderland:

Viewing the borderland as an interstitial site suggests a type of liminality. The betweenness leads to a becoming, a sense of cultural and personal identity that highlights flux and fluidity while connected by a strong memory of (a discredited) history and (a devaluated) heritage. (12)

The colonial rationale may have tried to stress division of certain aspects, but the cultural disorder created in a borderland often results in a flux and eventually in mixture, as here indicated by Perez-Torres. Identity processes found in the postcolonial border space is never static and can be describes as a constant series of crossings. Regarding the postcolonial space

as a borderland, based on the contrasting cultures often displayed through postcolonial theory, Pérez-Torres' argument in relation to between-ness and identity can be used to illustrate concerns regarding identity formations in the postcolonial space:

This vision of the multicultural self as translator suggests that the subject of the borderlands crosses numerous cultural and historical configurations. Rather than underscore place, this view foregrounds the movement inherent in a constructively decentered subjectivity: marginality that is both critical and powerful, but one that is multiplicitous and in flux. (141)

To explore the challenges that have now been briefly touched upon I could have chosen amongst a number of different works, and from almost any number of different places in the world. The aspects above prevail in most postcolonial literature. I have, however, chosen to use two books by the same author to explore identity processes in the postcolonial borderland. These are David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1994) and *An Imaginary Life* (1978).

### **David Malouf: *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life***

*Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life* are particularly suitable for the exploration of the kind of aesthetics of identity formation that I will look at here. An essential aspect of Malouf's authorship and his novels is precisely the representation of different dimensions of identity processes, and in particular the dynamic of hybridization. Questions revolving around the in between created by borders of identity and nature are central in both *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*. This is perhaps not surprising, since Malouf himself is a Lebanese-Australian and was raised in a home of multiple cultures. According to the British Council's internet page "Contemporary Writers" Malouf's father was a Lebanese-Christian

and his mother an English Jew from London, who met and married each other in Australia. David Malouf was born in Brisbane and graduated from the University of Queensland in 1955. He has later lived in both England and Italy, but is now, again, living in Australia. His works often revolve around cultural centers and peripheries, and the subject of not belonging can be regarded as a general theme. He writes in the genres of autobiography, drama, fiction, libretto, poetry and short stories, and since 1970 Malouf has published approximately 20 works. His latest novel published is *Every Move You Make* (2006) and *Typewriter Music* (2007) is his latest poetry collection. *Remembering Babylon* was shortlisted for the 1993 Booker Prize and winner of the 1996 International Impac Dublin Literary Award. It received a positive response by the critics and the main elements of their praise were Malouf's beautiful prose and storytelling. A small part of the novel is in fact based on a real event, and in a note at the end of the novel Malouf provides the following background:

The words Gemmy shouts at the fence in Chapter 1 (the seed of this fiction) were actually spoken at much the same time and place, but in different circumstances, by Gemmy Morril or Moreell, whose Christian name I have also appropriated; otherwise this novel has no origin in fact. (183)

In *Remembering Babylon* the readers are invited into the borderland between the Aborigines and the Europeans, the colonized and the colonizers, the perceived primitive and civilized through a half and half, European/ Aboriginal boy. The novel is concerned with a boy named Gemmy who is taken in by Aborigines after he floats in from the sea, and after 16 years reenters into the "civilized" society of the European settlers in Australia. The readers are introduced to the settlers and their first meeting with the unknown, and throughout the story follow the developments that occur in the settlement with Gemmy present. We also see the

development of Gemmy himself and his ambiguous feelings both towards the settlement and the Aborigines. The McIvor family is important because it is the children in this family that initially find Gemmy and the parents agree to let Gemmy live with them. Because of this the family experiences some resentment from the settlement as time passes because of the fear which many of the settlers feel towards the unknown. At one point the family start to separate themselves from the others in the settlement, but at the end of the book, when Gemmy is gone, they are again part of the community.

Essential characters, in addition to the McIvor family, are the minister Mr. Frazer, the school master George Abbot, and Mrs. Hutchence. Mr. Frazer is the one who accepts Gemmy immediately and tries to write down his story. He spends a lot of time together with Gemmy, finding him valuable in his botany work, and towards the end of the novel he goes into the nearest town, Brisbane, trying to explain how valuable Gemmy has been in the process towards being able to live on this new land. Mr. Abbot, on the other hand, is a young man of high standards and the reader's first meeting with him shows his resentment towards both Gemmy and the community, but eventually he starts to like Gemmy and finds his place in the settlement. He also plays a big part in writing down Gemmy's story in the beginning of the novel. Mrs. Hutchence is the only one in the settlement who lives in a proper house, together with a young woman. She keeps her own bees and is not like any of the other settlers. They have even tagged her as somewhat different because of where she lives and how she behaves.

The narrative starts by placing Gemmy, an unknown creature, in the settlement and at first it is their own curiosity that occupies the settlers. But soon after his arrival the settlers start getting suspicious concerning Gemmy's "savage" mentality and the question of whether he might have been in contact with "the blacks" in the bush. Many of the settlers try to get information from Gemmy about the blacks' whereabouts, and their concern reaches a peak when two aborigines are seen together with Gemmy on McIvor's land. Then one night

Gemmy is taken from his bed and beaten up by some of the men from the settlement and Jock McIvor is the one who saves him. After this Jock decides that it would be best if Gemmy went to live with Mrs. Hutchence, but Gemmy does not stay there long and soon vanishes into the bush again. Before he leaves the settlement for good, however, he goes to recover and destroy the papers that Mr. Abbot and Mr. Frazer wrote his life story on.

*An Imaginary Life* was published 16 years earlier and it can be argued that *Remembering Babylon* is a continuation of *An Imaginary Life*. This is because the latter is about a child that has been raised in the forest, but now comes out of the dark only to live in a settlement for some time before he disappears back into the unknown. *An Imaginary Life* is a narrative that tells the fictional story of the Roman poet Ovid who has been placed in exile in the village Tomis, which according to Ovid is located at the end of the world. Ovid is at first completely shut out of the settlement, but eventually he manages to learn some of the language and be a part of the community's routines. He is also eventually allowed into some of the local customs, such as their hunting expeditions.

On their first expedition into the forest Ovid is told the myth about a boy. Supposedly there is a child that lives in the forest who has been raised by deer. During this expedition Ovid catches a glimpse of the Child and he cannot stop thinking about him after that. When they go back out a year later Ovid is disappointed when he does not see him, but the next year he manages to connect with the Child. After some time the poet convinces the settlers that they should capture the boy and bring him into the village. When this is done the Child lives with Ovid and after some time they are able to communicate and find some common ground. Even though Ovid tries to prove to the settlers that there is some human mentality within the Child, there is skepticism towards him, and especially the old woman that they live with fears the Child's intentions and his "evil powers." Eventually Ovid realizes that their only hope is

to leave the settlement and in the fourth chapter they escape into the unknown, “beyond the end of the world.”

I have structured my thesis by first looking at different concepts that are of importance, such as hybridity, third space, dark knowledge and borders. Besides this, chapter 1 will also introduce an important quotation from *Remembering Babylon* which indicates the theme of the thesis. In chapter 2 the novel *Remembering Babylon* is in focus, when discussing the overcoming of boundaries between self and other that is represented here through the settlers and Gemmy’s identity processes. The otherness that is found in *Remembering Babylon* is for the most part an external otherness, whereas in *An Imaginary Life* the boundaries that Ovid deals with mostly exist within. My structure of analysis is therefore somewhat different in relation to the two novels. When dealing with *Remembering Babylon* I will base my reading on the characters’ processes, whereas *An Imaginary Life*, which brings us to chapter 3, is approached through the concepts in between space and dark knowledge. The characters and their identity processes are all influenced by space and I will here place the novels in a border poetics. Dark knowledge, however, is closely linked to the idea of a more internal otherness, through its internalization. This internalized otherness is a way of creating boundaries within oneself and making one’s identity process, and consequently the possibility of reconciliation, even more challenging.

The order of the two books is reversed in this thesis, considering that *An Imaginary Life* originally precedes *Remembering Babylon*, regarding both the fictional time aspect and publication. However, since the characters in *Remembering Babylon* represent important identity processes whereas *An Imaginary Life* brings the nuances and reconciliation that occur to a new level, I have chosen to first focus on *Remembering Babylon*.

Emerging from the readings of chapter 2 and 3 is an idea of reconciliation across borders that I will, in chapter 4, read in relation to the reflections of the religious philosopher

Martin Buber and his work *It and Thou* (1937). Buber and his *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships stress this project of reconciliation, bringing a new depth to Malouf's reconciliation of borders in his two novels. My readings hint at a reconciliation of the ambiguity that exists in the borderland, by overcoming the boundaries that exist between the self and the other, through hybrid identity processes.





## Hybridity, Third Space, Borders and Dark Knowledge

*...consciousness never gravitates towards itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness. Every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle, or is on the contrary open to inspiration from outside itself – but it is not in any case concentrated simply on its own object; it is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person.<sup>1</sup>*

Certain terms and concepts emerge from the space of borders that Malouf occupies and represents, such as hybridity, third space, borders and dark knowledge. The term hybrid came into use in the English language already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while its more common use dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its origin is from the Latin word *hybrida*: “offspring of a tame sow and wild boar, child of a freeman and slave, etc” (OED), and hybridity in literature is found at least as early as in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and with the noble savage Caliban. There are many different definitions and understandings of the term hybrid and I will here look at some of them. Etymologically the concrete meaning of the word is that of crossing, but the word is mostly used as a metaphor. This is an interesting doubling in itself, seeing how the word metaphor means to “carry over.” The indications of the word hybridity in its old use, the crossing of two different animals eventually creating a third species, have consequently crossed over to the cultural sphere, where crossing two cultures creates something in between, a third space.

The word hybridity can also be used in a variety of other manners, for instance as a literary tool: “hybridity is not just a metaphor for cultural negotiation, it is also a tool for

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<sup>1</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. (Ed. Caryl Emerson. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984: 32).

examining the inequalities and exclusions that are established in the guise of cultural purity” (Papastergiadis, 43). A critic who is often associated with postcolonial theory and hybridity is Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha discusses the concept of a third space, colonial doubling and purity in relation to hybridity, which will be discussed further below, arguing that “...the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetitive and different” (153). He also says that:

Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition. (162)

Bhabha gives the hybrid power to challenge boundaries and he discusses the issue in light of, among others, the third space. This is a space of enunciation where, Bhabha argues, all cultural systems are created and because of this it is not possible to achieve a “pure” culture. By using this term Bhabha wishes to challenge the notions that create our perception of culture as bounded and eventually be able to remove the duality of self and other.

Another term Bhabha uses is *purity* which reflects on the boundaries that exist in relation to “colonial doubling” and hybridity. “Colonial doubling” reflects a space of division and it becomes a space where specific colonial discourses are seen and where the importance of authority and authenticity is stressed. Most often it is the colonizers who create this division, emphasizing their own authority in order to stay in control. Authenticity is also an important concept because of the division it implies between what is right and what is wrong in the eyes of those with power and authority. The colonizers, during the colonization, did not separate between their power and authenticity, but today on the other hand, knowledge

created by the colonizers regarding “the others,” can not be regarded as something objective, but rather labeled as a kind of *dark knowledge*.

The concept of dark knowledge is complicated. I have borrowed it from Lee Spinks, who introduces this term in his essay “Allegory, Space, Colonialism: *Remembering Babylon* and the Production of Colonial History.” Spinks uses the concept to indicate the pressure and domination that came with the white man’s presence in Australia. The different aspects of this concept will be looked at more closely in chapter 3, but I will employ it in a slightly different way than Spinks. Because of the European’s own history and the situation that they found themselves in when creating this knowledge, it can not be looked at as a historical correct knowledge. Therefore I understand dark knowledge as the repressive knowledge that is created by the colonizer to control those who have been colonized. This creation of knowledge in the colonial space can be linked to Bhabha’s “colonial doubling:” The doubling exists in the contradiction between the perceptions of how things *are* and how things should *be*.

In relation to this it is natural to look at Said and his concept “orientalism,” how knowledge and power are creating the Other: “The nexus of knowledge and power creating “the Oriental” and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusive academic matter. Yet it is an *intellectual* matter of some very obvious importance” (2003, 27). It is suitable to juxtapose dark knowledge and Orientalism and this echoing will be discussed later in the thesis.

Another critic who is important when discussing hybridity, and whose views Bhabha often brings up, is Frantz Fanon. Where Bhabha argues that colonial identity will always be an issue of instability and difficulties, Fanon stresses the moment the “colonized black man” realizes he cannot become white and when it is too late to go back to being black: “I wanted to be typically Negro – it was no longer possible. I wanted to be white – that was a joke”

(132). The “colonized black man,” involuntary, ends up as a colonized person living between two cultures and the two binaries of “Negro” and white. As a response to this Bhabha explains, in the introduction to Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, how Fanon’s black/white division is not quite as neat after all:

‘Black skins, white masks’ is not, for example, a neat division; it is a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once which makes it impossible for the devalued, insatiable *evolué* (an abandonment neurotic, Fanon claims) to accept the colonizer’s invitation to identity; ‘You’re a doctor, a writer, a student, you’re *different* you’re one of *us*.’ It is precisely in that ambivalent use of ‘different’ – to be different from those that are different makes you the same – that the Unconscious speaks of the form of Otherness, the tethered shadow of deferral and displacement. It is not Colonialist Self or the Colonized Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness – the White man’s artifice inscribed on the black man’s body. (xvi)

This quotation describes how the colonized in some ways becomes trapped in the middle, just like Fanon illustrated with the “colonized black man” who could no longer be either black or white. It is here possible to see the figure of colonial otherness that Bhabha refers to and the distance of in between that constitutes this figure. “In-between” moreover plays on the idea of the borderland. Bhabha develops the idea of distance further and argues that it is not merely the labeling of “the other” that creates this separateness between the colonizer and colonized, but rather the depiction of what the white man has committed towards the black man’s body. What is then left for the “colonized black man” who is caught in between? I will argue that

hybridity can, in such an in between state, function as a state of being that is always in change and never something absolute.

As a final point related to Fanon and his argument concerning the divided self-perception the “colonized black man” experiences in the white world, I also want to include the term Manichaeism. Manichaeism as a dualistic religious system that illustrates the supposed primeval conflict between light and darkness (OED), a conflict that is transferable to the distinctions between black and white skin, and furthermore that can be argued is produced by the white man, as seen in relation to the prior discussion concerning the rationale of colonialism.<sup>2</sup> The idea reflects much of Fanon's thoughts and gestures towards how there is a conflict between dark and light skin created by western civilization's belief systems. The prejudices that are connected to black skin are created by the white man and included in these prejudices is the presumed fact that the black skin reflects the character of the person that inhabits it.

The characterizations which throughout history have been created by the colonizers concerning the colonized are such as uncivilized, unintelligent, harsh and raw. Through the linking of knowledge and power the colonizers managed to create such characterizations regarding the “wilderness” that eventually became an ideology. The conflict of self that Fanon describes above is of course entangled in questions of identity. In the postcolonial space the definitions that are forced upon those who are living there clearly effect the perceptions of one's own self. If these definitions are repeated enough times one will start to believe them and embed them into one's sense of identity. This will be illustrated in relation to Gemmy in *Remembering Babylon* and how his idea of self is given to him from both sides of the borders, and eventually creates a divided sense of self.

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<sup>2</sup> The dual system of Manichaeism was developed by Fanon in his book from 1961, *Wretched of the Earth*.

As Bhabha indicated earlier it is difficult to create a neat division and one's identity process is closely linked to the idea of a disturbing in between-ness. An identity process is not something labeled as being neither-nor, but rather something undetermined in the middle. Stuart Hall, in his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," argues how identity is a constant process:

Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation. (392)

This goes well with the undetermined and shifting space of the borderland, and I wish to take this further by bringing to bear the Maori writer Irihapeti Ramsden's argument regarding identity. Ramsden states that "[i]dentity is a constant series of borders, of crossings and recrossings" (29), and this reciprocity can be further related to hybridization as process. It is the gap that exists between cultures that defines the possibility of a third space, and hybridization can be understood as the same process of reciprocity Ramsden describes, a process of back and forth, of living in the borderland and therefore with an identity that can not be said to be one or the other, but something in between. This cultural space has its correspondence in nature, namely the ecotone. This is a region of transition between two biological communities and will be an important concept later in the thesis in relation to the marginal sphere in both *Remembering Babylon*. and *An Imaginary Life*.

Hybridization will never become absolute, and vital to hybrid identity processes is the aspect of nature. The word *nature* describes the physical world, but also the essential character qualities of a person. The OED defines "nature" as the "inborn or hereditary

characteristic as an influence on or determinant of personality,” and in relation to this hybridization can be seen as a process to develop, and even transcend one’s nature and elements of identity.

As a contrast to hybridity there is the manifestation of fundamentalism, the desire for purity, neatness and order underlying the skepticism to hybridization as is often seen gestured towards in *Remembering Babylon*, for instance in the beating of Gemmy. Richard Rodriguez talks about such skepticism in his book *Brown*, warning of how too much mixing and hybridization will result in the desire to step back and in some ways considering one’s own identity in terms of purity: “As lives meet, chafe, there will be a tendency to retreat” (227). The mixing and hybridization that Rodriguez mentions is what he refers to as “Brown.” This term is exemplified by a concrete color and even though Rodriguez probably does not mean to indicate the mixing of race, there is at least a slight gesture towards miscegenation already in the idea of the color. Rodriguez describes Brown, among other things, as impurity (xi). Brown can be seen as a complementary concept to hybridity, but more specifically directed at the Americans. The idea of “lives chafing” is an appropriate way of arguing that hybridities and ecotones cannot be posed as universal “solutions” to problems and conflicts of cultural identities, there are also many examples of withdrawals from borders.

As we see postcolonialism deals with a variety of conflict issues, but the negotiation and representation of emerging boundaries is perhaps the most persisting. Both *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life* will show this in different manners and by a way of introduction to the analysis of the two I have chosen to highlight one specific passage from *Remembering Babylon*. It illustrates the ideas and complexities I have introduced so far:

This is what is intended by our coming here: to make this place too part of the world’s garden, but by changing ourselves rather than it and adding thus to the richness and

variety of things. Our poor friend Gemmy is a forerunner. He is no longer a white man, or a European, whatever his birth. But a true child of the place as it will one day be, a crude one certainly, unaware of what he has achieved – and that too perhaps is part of His intention: that the exemplum should be of the simplest and most obvious sort, deeply moving to those who are willing to look, and to see, without prejudice, that in allowing himself to be at home here, he has crossed the boundaries of his given nature. (Malouf, 121)<sup>3</sup>

The passage revolves around how coming to Australia will change both the colonizers and the colonized, as a process of reciprocity, or what Ramsden calls re-crossings. The readers are introduced to the rationale of colonization: “This is what is intended by our coming here: to make this place too part of the world’s garden, but by changing ourselves rather than it and adding thus to the richness and variety of things.” Mr. Frazer uses the word “intended” as if it is all a part of a divine plan to bring Australia to the European “civilization,” reflecting the underlying principle of how the settlers are the one’s who know how things ought to be. The readers learn that a reason why they arrived is “to make this place too part of the world’s garden,” illustrating the division between civilization and wilderness. In this one sentence Mr. Frazer gives the Europeans a power and a responsibility that is not theirs to keep.

Loomba argues that: “one of the most striking contradictions about colonialism is that it needs both to ‘civilize’ its ‘others’ and to fix them into perpetual ‘otherness’” (145). Colonialism can therefore be seen as a contradiction. It strives to keep “the others” as something belonging to the wilderness, because this is a way to control them and the colonizers’ own fear, and at the same time it tries to civilize them, because then the colonizers

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<sup>3</sup> All subsequent references are from: Malouf, David. London, Vintage; 1994.



know what they are. Thus the colonizers will be in possession of power because they are the “true civilized” people that set the standards while the others are merely wearing masks, pretending to be something they are not.

The settlers in *Remembering Babylon* are afraid of the unknown beyond their gardens, but the more terrifying wilderness that is found throughout the book takes place within their civilized community, perpetuated by their neighbors:

That was when the real fear, the real anger took him. That in the middle of the night his wife and daughter should be standing out under big clouds at the edge of the dark, hanging together and watching him drag a helpless creature, half out of his wits, back from a moment of senseless bullying, while the men who had done it – neighbours! – were creeping home to crawl in beside their own wives, safe in bed. (115)

Here Jock McIvor, the father in the family, states his fears after Gemmy has been beaten up, when he realizes that he has as much reason to be afraid of his own “civilized” neighbors, as the Aborigines, if not more. This perceived civilization is juxtaposed to the wilderness that is supposedly inherent in the Aborigines whom Gemmy spent 16 years with. The readers are introduced to this group of Aborigines when they draw closer to where the settlers live, not to do harm to anyone, but to take care of their sick friend Gemmy. The juxtaposition of the two groups overturns the reader’s views concerning who appears to be “wild” and who appears as “civilized” and caring.

In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* Loomba discusses Freud’s criteria in relation to human civilization, and how the gap existing between instinctive and reflective human beings is essential (118-119). Her argument can be brought to bear on the incident described above in Malouf’s novel. Referring to Freud, Loomba argues that reflective thought is not available to

the primitive man because he has yet to be civilized. The instinctive and primitive human being has not developed into an adult human being and can be compared to a child or a civilized “neurotic,” while on the other hand there is the reflective, civilized and rational adult European male. Gemmy is on several occasions described as a child because of his behavior, and yet these – allegedly - civilized men who beat Gemmy half to death are acting on their irrational fears and behave according to their instinct of protecting their family and land. Gemmy’s visitors are in contrast to this behaving very reflectively. They come during the day, because they do not feel they have to hide their actions in the way the settlers do during the night. One of the workers on the neighbor’s farm sees them and thinks to himself: “Didn’t even bother to move to the shade side of the shed, as a white feller would, where they couldn’t be seen” (86). The Aboriginals stay on McIvors’ land not to offend any of the settlers and at the same time manage to care for Gemmy and bring him what he needs.

I will argue here that one can view the behavior of the neighbors as a form of masking. By wearing a mask of civilization they are able to hide their feelings, but when the mask is removed it is frightening to see their true face. As I have already mentioned, one of the basic motivations in colonialism, namely to “civilize” the “wilderness”, does not always function as it was intended. It can also be legitimate to question, as seen above, how necessary it in fact is to civilize the “wilderness,” also concerning why it is the colonizers that are the ones to define what the word civilized means. The colonial un-forming and re-forming of the colonized and the colonized land comes across already in the first sentence in of the quote: “This is what is intended by our coming here....”

The intention of re-forming the land and people is also reflected in the quotation: “...by changing ourselves rather than it and adding thus to the richness and variety of things.” This is a very untypical statement for the colonizing tradition. Most of the colonizers travelled out to the different countries believing that they should try to incorporate all other countries

and humans into European values. When Mr. Frazer argues that they should not change the country, but rather themselves, this indicates a great deal of insight. When he reflects on how they will be able to add to the richness and variety of things he has entered into the space of hybridity. Mr. Frazer argues that the best solution for both the colonizers and the colonized is if the settlers manage to change and let themselves be affected by the country surrounding them. This state of in-between-ness, connecting the European home country and this new “wilderness” within oneself would be a good illustration of how the mixing of cultures creates a hybrid, both in terms of a society and an individual. This also reflects back on the illustration from Anzaldúa earlier, how she incorporates her history and languages into her own being. If the settlers are able to let themselves be affected, they will be part of creating a more hybrid culture and more hybrid identities, and as a result of this add to “the richness and variety of things.” “Things” must here be understood both as their own society and Australia, but also as adding something to the world’s garden.

“Letting oneself be affected” can also be conceived as a shifting of consciousness, and in relation to hybridity this is an important idea that is represented by, for instance, Gemmy. He once had a different perception of the way things are, and the way he views and interprets his experiences and what is happening around him has been altered because of how he has crossed a border of consciousness as a result of being intermingled with the Aborigines and their culture. His shifting of consciousness that occurs again with his re-entry to the settlers’ community moreover illustrates Ramsden’s idea of identity formations through crossing and re-crossing.

In the middle of the passage the importance of hybridization is gestured towards and more importantly, Gemmy himself as a figure gesturing towards the future:

Our poor friend Gemmy is a forerunner. He is no longer a white man, or a European, whatever his birth. But a true child of the place as it will one day be, a crude one certainly, unaware of what he has achieved – and that too perhaps is part of His intention: that the exemplum should be of the simplest and most obvious sort...

Gemmy is here described as a “forerunner,” he has taken in Australia and is no longer seen as a white man or a European, but “...an in-between creature” (25). Gemmy is also described as a true child of the place as it will one day be, reflecting how Mr. Frazer sees it as a part of God’s big plan to create a society that has its foundation in a hybrid culture that has been created by mixing two or more cultures.

We furthermore hear that God himself has chosen Gemmy because he is a human of a crude and simple sort, and it is easy to find other examples of this in the Bible where God chooses one of the weakest to set an example.<sup>4</sup> Gemmy generally inhabits the characterizations that “morally correct people” who set the standards in the Bible inhabit: they are often poor, social outcasts, weak and to some extent sick. In some ways Gemmy is much like those “chosen ones” in the Bible. If Gemmy in fact can be seen as an example of the “chosen” one he then completely reverses the biblical representation of division I discussed earlier. The warning against mixing that is mentioned in Leviticus is turned around when Mr. Frazer portrays Gemmy, the hybrid, as a forerunner and a true child.

The passage ends: ...“the exemplum should be deeply moving to those who are willing to look, and to see, without prejudice, that in allowing himself to be at home here, he

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<sup>4</sup> One is David, Isais youngest child who fought, and defeated, Goliath, an interesting point in relation to Mr. Frazer’s reflections concerning God’s intention is the quotation earlier mentioned from Leviticus regarding division. In connection to hybridization and the discussion of antinomianism this connection is interesting, but too big to discuss in this thesis. The question of universalism is also a part of this concern, in so far as the colonizer perceives his “other” in need of learning universal law. Is it even possible with “something” which could work as a universal moral code? What does in fact “universal” denote?

has crossed the boundaries of his given nature.” These last few lines touch very delicately upon the issue of border crossings and the boundaries that exist where multiple cultures meet and interact. As mentioned previously Gemmy’s shifting of consciousness is one way of crossing boundaries. This “given nature” that he has crossed away from can be described as that of a white, European born male, but the question remains, what has he crossed over to? What was found on the other side of the border? In the eyes of some of the settlers he is “a parody of a white man” and they discuss how “to bring him back” (35). Even though he has crossed a border and is no longer a white male there is still something that connects him to the settlers. Gemmy is trying to cover the space that exists between them, not break from one world to another (29). He has entered into the gap between these two worlds and is trying to become a bridge, but is his hybrid bridging strong enough? Or is he merely caught in between in the space of the borderland in the same way as Fanon’s “colonized black man.” If Gemmy actually can be seen as the bridge, it is then possible to argue that hybridization is in fact at the core of all cultural development, as Bhabha argues.

My reading of Malouf’s two novels especially stresses hybridization when dealing with cultural negotiation, but all the concepts that have been emphasized in this chapter are important when discussing identity processes in the borderland. Through these concepts it is possible to explore the sense of otherness that occurs in the meeting between self and other, found in both of Malouf’s novels. The sense of otherness is essential both in postcolonial theory and border poetics, and the concepts discussed will help to illustrate the negotiation of identity processes that occurs in the postcolonial space.



## *Remembering Babylon*

### **Gemmy**

The starting point in this narrative is Gemmy, the in between creature. During the McIvor children's (Lachlan, Janet and Meg) first encounter with Gemmy they describe him, among other things, as a scarecrow (3) and a waterbird (2) and make constant references to something in between and halfway. When they first see him these are the descriptions of what they see:

But it wasn't a raid, there was just one of them; and the thing, as far as he could make it out through the sweat in his eyes and its flamelike flickering, was not even, maybe, human. The stick-like legs, all knobbed at the joints, suggested a wounded waterbird, a brolga, or a human that in the manner of the tales they told one another, all spells and curses, had been *changed* into a bird, but only halfway, and now, neither one thing nor the other, was hopping and flapping towards them out of a world over there, beyond the no-man's-land of the swamp, that was the abode of everything savage and fearsome and since it lay so far beyond experience, not just their own but their parents' too, of nightmare rumours, superstitions and all that belonged to Absolute dark. (2)

At the edge of the settlement they encounter this unknown and feared creature. The figure is immediately feared because of how he comes out of the "Absolute dark" that that they do not know, but Lachlan quickly ignores his fear and goes towards Gemmy with his stick raised as a gun, to take control over him. The power that Lachlan shows resides not only in the raised stick, but also in his conceptualization of Gemmy. Gemmy is labeled because of how Lachlan describes him and because of the images created later by the other settlers, and these descriptions become what define Gemmy's character. He is portrayed as a human non-human

with stick-like legs, flapping towards them. Lachlan uses the word *changed*, but how and why is the figure changed? Gemmy has now become something that looks half human and half bird, with one foot in each world. On the other hand Gemmy is also described as “neither one thing nor the other,” which indicates that he does not have any definite connections to neither worlds, but is merely in an in between, border space.

This in between space exists on several levels and one is that of civilization. The Aboriginal world is depicted as the no-man’s-land of the swamp where all the savages live. The quotation above is also a description of how the settlers do not know anything about what belongs to the “Absolute dark” and because of this it becomes necessary for them to rely on superstitions and rumors. When confronted with someone from this darkness their need to control the creature and his unknown powers become fundamental in their everyday.

Most of the descriptions of Gemmy put him in the middle of something. He is, in other words, often characterized by means of ambivalence and ambiguities, the opposite of the Manichean either – or. A scarecrow, for instance, is a creature that is not only meant to scare birds away, but also something that looks like a human when in fact it is not. This is an example of the uncanny, what was once familiar has now become something strange and unsettling. A water bird is another being that belongs in two different elements: not only can it fly, thus belonging to the air, but it also belongs to the water, hence its name. Gemmy also belongs in two different elements, or worlds, after once having belonged completely to the western and Aboriginal worlds respectively. The bird type *brolga* that he is compared to is “a large grey Australian crane which has an elaborate courtship display that involves leaping, wing-flapping, and trumpeting” (OED). This description not only hints at Gemmy’s behavior, his flapping of arms, and the “courtship” that he is indicating towards the children and the western settlement, it is also worth noting that this bird lives in the physical geography of a wetland. The wetland in itself illustrates even more the in between-ness of Gemmy’s



existence, since this is land which at the same time is covered with water. It is a saturated land, in other words both land and water. In addition to this most wetlands can be described as an ecotone, a “region of transition between two biological communities” (OED).

I will suggest that the above also accurately describes the function that Gemmy incorporates throughout the book, namely a person embodying the transition between two cultures. The ecotone is a border area which in this case creates a boundary between the cleared area inhabited by the settlers and the bush where the indigenous live. This type of environment accommodates species from both cultures, creating a mixed milieu often with very adapting animals, as can be seen in Gemmy, who is a diverse, mobile creature.

The passage quoted above also touches on the tales that the settlers tell each other and how they fear the unknown darkness because it is beyond their experience, both that of the children and the adults. Because they do not know anything about what lies beyond the swamp all the settlers have are their rumors, tales and superstitions about what spells and curses that exist beyond this border. Not knowing is what makes their fear so real and vast, and the settlers need to find a way to control what they are not familiar with. One way is to relegate what lies beyond to the space of the other. One of the reasons why such a term as “the other” has been so widely applied when describing the colonized is because by labeling, and in that way to some extent, controlling “the other”, the term pushes them away as something other and different.

In order to control the unknown there is also a need for a certain distance between the civilized and ordered and the savage and disordered. An example of this is the fear that the settlement shows when Gemmy with his “savage” mentality comes too close to their civilization. This distance is, among other things, created by the labeling of the unknown as “the other” and is an excellent example of appropriation: “...by naming things, we take possession of them” (Spurr, 32). The ones that are able to define what is right and what is

wrong can at the same time label the “other” group and end up with the power. This can be seen in relation to Said’s statement mentioned earlier, how it is knowledge and power that create “the other.” Historically, the British had a need for this in order to control the indigenous and their “Absolute dark” that was alien to them and therefore feared. However, this can be said to be true of all groups of people, what is outside is inherently foreign and hence chaotic; inside is neat and safe. The Greeks, for instance, referred to the northern tribes as Barbarians. The colonial enterprise on the other hand can be seen as unique in the sense that these kinds of perceptions were systematized into one ideology affecting the entire world. Colonialism’s systematization of ideology and knowledge affected the world’s perception of how things were, and Loomba, among others, explains how power and knowledge are connected with the circulation of a European ideology:

Knowledge is not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power. This Foucaultian insight informs Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, which points out the extent to which ‘knowledge’ about ‘the Orient’ as it was produced and circulated in Europe was an ideological accompaniment of colonial power. (42)

In *Remembering Babylon* the readers are introduced to this power struggle already in the initial scene, when the children face this unknown creature and the boy needs to control it in order to protect them. The first sentence that Gemmy cries out is: “Do not shoot. I am a B-b-british object!” (3). In this scene of both physical and mental hybridization the readers are introduced to a sense of de-humanization and objectification inflicted by colonialism. The de-humanization effects Gemmy’s process of hybridization. Because Britain is emphasized in the hierarchal arrangement (for its wealth and imperialist power) that exists in colonialism it is difficult for Gemmy to completely become the one or the other, and he is no longer in control

of his own evolvment. He becomes an object in his own identity process, trying to find his own subjectivity and unity of being. In addition to this is also language an essential part of objectification. Bill Ashcroft makes a note concerning this in his essay “The Return of the Native: *An Imaginary Life* and *Remembering Babylon*”:

The irony of this is patent, for the dredging up of the words has itself objectified him in the language of power. His own subjectivity, developed so differently within the discourse of Aboriginal life is now made to enter the ambivalent marginal state between cultures, the edges of the empire, the region in which subjectivity itself comes into question, where its potential for transformation is realized. (57)

Even the language confusion that Gemmy is feeling places him in an ambivalent, marginal state between cultures. Both language and place are brought into the process of hybridization.

Throughout the novel metaphors are essential, as seen above with the different descriptions associated with Gemmy, such as waterbird, brolga, wetland and ecotone. The place where the initial scene happens, at the edge of the paddock, can also be seen as a metaphor because of how Gemmy is not only physically located at the edge, but also mentally, as in a borderland. Many of these metaphors relate to the in between-ness that illustrates Gemmy’s position between the two cultures. James Bulman-May argues in “Alchemical Tropes of Irish Diaspora in David Malouf’s *Conversations at Curlow Creek* and *Remembering Babylon*” that these descriptive metaphors, such as those of the waterbird and human-non human, can be related to Homi Bhabha’s third space of hybridity and its relation to language: “It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (69). Bulman-May here shows the

need to be able to connect with one's own language in order to remove the division that can be felt between the cultures, and accordingly manage to connect with one's inner self through the process of hybridization. Again, I wish to comment on the sentence: "Do not shoot. I am a B-b-british object" (3), since this is an instance of language and self, and the other of our self. Gemmy only partly connects to the British language and consequently creates a division, or one could argue a doubling, when describing himself as an object. It can be read as a reference to the other of his self, created through cultural division and language confusion. This is a sentence fused with implications.

The language in *Remembering Babylon*, both direct dialogue and 3. person narrative, can be seen in relation to the element of magical realism in the novel, but also in relationship to the landscape.<sup>5</sup> The description of the settlement's surroundings changes a great deal throughout the book. It is initially illustrated by the children, and then later in the novel by for instance Jock or Mr. Frazer, albeit in a very different manner. The "magical powers" of language will be discussed later in relation to the papers that Gemmy's story is written on. Another important matter is how the language changes the progression in the novel. Different points of view and repetition creates a mixture of a linear and cyclical reading process. The novel can be seen as cyclical not only because of how the text goes back and forth both in time and space, but also in terms of who is telling the story. Where chapter 1 revolves around Gemmy's introduction to the settlement, chapter 2 goes back to when he first came to Australia and lived with the Aborigines, and then back to Europe when Gemmy was known as "Willett's boy." The third chapter takes the reader back to the present.

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<sup>5</sup> In relation to the Latin American Magic Realism I am not arguing that *Remembering Babylon* fully fits into this genre, but it may have certain elements that resemble it. This novel does for instance use some magical elements in an otherwise realistic setting and it also combines the internal and external reality existing in man. In addition to this both the genre and the novel are concerned with the perception of 'the other', border transgressing, and to look at the world as something whole. (Rios. "Magical Realism: Definitions")

In the novel it is indicated how Lachlan, who has been taken in by his aunt and uncle, as a child is protecting himself, from entering the world his cousins are introducing him to, because of the fear of losing his own world (50). This is a good example of the skepticism that many settlers bring to the new world, and why it is often difficult for them to take everything in. As Janet, Lachlan is always eager to look into the future, making plans for what he is going to accomplish, and at one stage Janet explains that: “Her view was that when *real life* caught up with you, it would not be in a form you had already imagined and got the better of” (55).<sup>6</sup> As children they discuss adulthood as the real world, but when they are finally there they keep going back to their childhood, dwelling on the importance that belonged to the past, as will also be seen later with Ovid. This oscillation, seen in their reflections, replicates both the narrative cyclic pattern and the retrospective point of view.

An example of how the point of view is changing is when Gemmy is beaten up in chapter 12 and the reader is introduced to this through Gemmy and then, in chapter 13, first through Jock and later, symbolized with a line break on page 115, through Janet. The novel is, however, also linear because of the constant progression through time, with the occasional retrospections or lingering on certain episodes. This can be seen as an additional metaphor of the occurring hybridization, where understanding one’s self takes place as an oscillation between different kinds of knowledges and perspectives: it is the “crossing and re-crossing” that creates the process.

In addition to the oscillation that can be found in between the progression and retrospection another important point is the conception and representation of space, which both Bulman-May and Foucault are concerned with. Bulman-May states how: “The ontological questions raised by the metaphorical positioning on a threshold in a Foucauldian

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<sup>6</sup> My italics

“other space” are addressed extensively throughout the Australian writer David Malouf’s “*oeuvre*” (65). Bulman-May does not use the term heterotopos to a wider extent, but argues instead the positioning of “the postcolonial subject on various kinds of thresholds” (65). Foucault’s heterotopos is a place that exists and is formed within the founding of a culture. In his famous essay “Of Other Spaces” Foucault divides space into utopias and heterotopias. Further he divides heterotopias into several different principles, and the principle regarding places for individuals in crisis, can be related to *Remembering Babylon*:

In the so-called primitive societies, there is a certain form of heterotopias that I would call crisis heterotopias, i.e., there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc. (24)

Because of the ambivalent relationship Gemmy has with both the society and the humans around him it is possible to look at him as someone who is located in such a crisis heterotopos. In addition to this Foucault also states how “[b]rothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopias....” (1986, 27). Looking at the “other space” and Malouf, Bulman-May points out the beauty created by Malouf in *Remembering Babylon*, of how Malouf is placing the difficulties of power manipulation in a marginal space. As seen above concerning the definitions of Gemmy the power struggle of defining “abnormalities” begins immediately when Gemmy steps out of the bush. Because of this conflict it is possible to argue that the colonialists themselves are stressing, and even creating, the identity process that takes place in this “other space.”

Language and the idea of denied knowledge can furthermore be seen in relation to Bulman-May's argument that: "The proliferation of alchemical metonyms clustering and intersecting around the central characters stresses the graphics of individuation, especially with regard to the postcolonial predicaments of diaspora, displacement, migration, hybridity, etc" (65). In their description the colonists label Gemmy with metonyms that hint at his magical transformation process and at the same time emphasize the manner in which they single him out from the group, even though he is the same as them and in that way creates a disturbing distance, placing him in between the settlers and the unknown. An example of such a metonymy is when Gemmy is described as a scarecrow (3). Even though he resembles something familiar to them, he is nevertheless different. This is an interesting aspect because of how metonymy differs from metaphors in how it cannot cross a conceptual domain: it stays within the same. In other words, it is very appropriate that metonymy is used to create division, since metaphor signals crossing, i.e. hybridization.

As seen in the different ways of portraying Gemmy he is clearly in an in between state, and to draw on Bhabha's previously quoted "disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness" can help to also illustrate the shifting nature of Gemmy. By looking at how Gemmy's presence causes the unsettling of the settlers, it is possible to see how this "disturbing distance" affects both the settlers and Gemmy. The colonizer himself has become "the figure of colonial otherness" because even though it is he who defines what is different and what is the same, through Gemmy's strong presence he has also become different. The doubling that the colonizer is experiencing is a result of how they cannot be two places at once, in this case, not in both Scotland and Australia and consequently the cultures these countries represent. Another issue is how hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that "other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse

and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition” (Bhabha, 16). Hybridity can therefore become a powerful response process in order to reverse the effects of colonialism. This may turn around what has been denied or rejected by the colonizers, because this process is not a part of the colonial representation. For instance, “alien” knowledge from the “bush” may, through hybridity, be reversed into something positive. In that way the basis of the definitions and power, namely the appropriation referred to previously can be destabilized. These denied knowledges can be seen as being at the core of the encounter between Gemmy and the settlers because of how they juxtapose the familiar and the unfamiliar.

There are different kinds of knowledge: there is the knowledge that the settlers have concerning themselves, and the knowledge they have concerning the Aboriginals, the “others.” The settlers struggle with not understanding their own full nature, not being aware of every aspect of self, and on the other hand many of them are disturbed by what they might learn about their own nature. This is seen in Mr. Abbotts concern regarding how alike Gemmy is him self: “...Gemmy, might be closer to them, to *him*, than he knew” (163), and also in the settlers’ reflections regarding Australia’s and the land’s influence on them. When they are looking at Gemmy they wonder if they truly can lose their identity, seeing how much he has changed: “Could you lose it? Not just your language, but *it*. It” (36). In Gemmy the settlers only see the loss of the familiar western identity, they do not manage to see or appreciate the new parts of his nature, the unfamiliar. Gemmy has not lost *it*, he has merely changed his identity. The fear they feel towards Gemmy does not only have its basis in how they do not know him and his ways, but also in the fact that he is an example of how it is possible to move away from the familiarity of western civilization, which, in a sense, is a metaphor of the loss of self and movement towards becoming the “other:”



It was the mixture of monstrous strangeness and welcome likeness that made Gemmy Fairley so disturbing to them, since at any moment he could show either one face or the other; as if he were always standing there at one of those meetings, but in his case willingly, and the encounter was an embrace. (39)

He is the same as them, but at the same time very different. Gemmy represents the possibility of loosing their language, civilization, whiteness – “*It.*”

However, some of the settlers eventually stop being concerned when they witness the influence the land has on Gemmy and themselves. When they realize that the land and Gemmy do not represent a negative influence, their fear of loosing their western-ness is not so great anymore. The irony here is that they have in fact already started to move away from some of the rules that were common back home, in Scotland, which the readers are presented to through the eyes of Mr. Abbot. His contempt towards some of the settlers illustrates how their manners are no longer “civilized” behavior: “When he was invited out, he was, often enough, the only one at the dinner table wearing shoes” (40-41).

The settlers are all concerned regarding their identity and so is Gemmy. The papers with his story and the recordings are important points regarding knowledge. In the first days that Gemmy spends with the settlers his story is written down by Mr. Frazer, the minister, and the schoolmaster, George Abbot. At first Gemmy finds this very exciting and approves: “He had shown them what he was. He was known” (18). But after a while the process becomes very disturbing to him and he eventually wants his papers back. He believes that the papers his story is written on possess a certain magic that makes it difficult for him to be himself completely. As previously mentioned, *Remembering Babylon* has certain elements of magic to it and the papers are one of them. As Gemmy describes them when they are dissolving in the rain, it is the “black magic” of the letters that is vanishing, implicating the magical powers

of language. Gemmy believes it possible to capture someone's identity by writing it down. He also gives certain magical powers to the sheets when he smells them and reflects: "Was that the smell of his life, his spirit, the black blood they drained out of him? No wonder he felt weak" (18). The colonizers come into possession of his life because it is they who have written the text and his story and consequently pinned down his cultural identity and removed his "black blood." Not wanting to realize, at that time, the effects the Aboriginals in fact had on Gemmy, Mr. Frazer and Mr. Abbot remove that part of him, draining out the black in him. Not only do "they" now hold the power and knowledge, but also the formation of his identity is in their possession. While Gemmy does not understand completely why he feels so strongly about these magic papers, the readers are aware that when they were written it was not only difficult for Mr. Frazer to understand what Gemmy tried to say, but that Mr. Abbot made things up intentionally:

The details of his story were pieced together the following afternoon from facts that were, as he told them, all out of their proper order, and with so many gaps of memory, and so much dislocation between what he meant to convey and the few words he could recover of his original tongue, that they could never be certain, later, how much of it was real and how much they had themselves supplied from tales they already knew, since he was not the first white man to have turned up like this after a spell among the blacks. (14)

This quotation shows how language and stereotypical ways of thinking create borders. Because of Mr. Frazer and Mr. Abbot's way of thinking, particularly Mr. Abbot, they will not be able to see everything that comes with Gemmy: they have already to some extent labeled him and given him certain characteristics. They themselves have created a mental border that

unconsciously delimits their understanding of Gemmy and his new being, and at the same time inflicting certain restraints on Gemmy. At the end of the novel Gemmy eventually gets the papers with his identity back and hence the power that came with this knowledge the settlers created regarding him is destroyed.

Lee Spinks refers to this knowledge as “dark knowledge:” “Elsewhere this dark knowledge casts its shadow over incidents replete with the most awful paradox, none more moving than when Fairley, upon the brink of his final disappearance, witnesses the dissolution of his *proper ‘historical’ identity* in the cleansing Queensland rain” (173).<sup>7</sup> Because of how the colonizers’ knowledge is “superior” they are able to use this power to their advantage and create historical identities how they feel fit. Seeing how this knowledge is not always correct and often regulated in the eyes of the Europeans it is appropriate to label it a “dark knowledge,” in the same way as the settlers label the Aboriginal territory that they fear and do not know as “Absolute dark.” Their fear can be seen in Lachlan’s immediate reaction when he first sees Gemmy, assuming that the settlement is being raided even though they have never really seen any blacks since they settled there. A fitting conclusion to the readers’ meeting with Gemmy is when, on his way out of the settlement, he watches the papers that his historical identity is supposedly written on vanishes in the rain. When Gemmy has eventually decided to leave the settlement and the boundaries inflicted on him here, he is, both mentally and physically, trying to wash away the identity that has been imposed on him by the colonizers:

He still carried in his pocket the sheets of paper on which they had written down his life. He took them out now. They were sodden. Rain had begun to wash the writing

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<sup>7</sup> My italics

from them, the names, the events; their black magic now a watery sky-colour, the sooty grains sluicing away even as he watched; the paper turning pulpy, beginning to break up in his hands, drooping like soggy crumbs from his fingers into puddles where he left them, bits all disconnected...*and my friends Billy an...pretty little black patch over...thunder Then ... of every colour of...* (165)

Gemmy has finally accepted the process within him and does not wish to “be known” through the definitions and historical identities imposed on him by the white man. Again, it is possible to draw on the first sentence Gemmy utters where he labels himself a British object. This is reflected through the definitions and identities that he is given, he is not the subject of his own story, but merely a British object. In the same ending scene Gemmy reflects on the process that exists in nature: “There was no finality in it. He knew that. One life was burned up, hollowed out with flame. To crack the seeds from which new life would come; that was the law” (164). He realizes that as the environment around him changes, he himself and his identity are also always changing.

The irony is that the papers Gemmy was given by Mr. Abbot are not the history of his life, but merely essays written by the kids who attend school in the settlement. The fact that he is only destroying children’s writing can be interpreted as a symbol of how the colonizers still have the power even though he tries to escape it. Gemmy can never truly wash away the white part of himself because of his own “given nature,” and just as Fanon’s description of the “colonial black man,” Gemmy is caught in the middle. Gemmy’s papers reflect Bhabha’s previously quoted “white man’s artifice inscribed on a black man’s body;” it was two of the settlers who described Gemmy, not he himself. By destroying the papers Gemmy is now removing himself from their descriptions and the “estrane basis of authority” (Bhabha, 162). It can be argued that Gemmy is removing himself from the dark knowledge, regarding the

obscuring qualities that can be seen in the papers. There are many implications to be found in relation to these papers, and one aspect that is essential is how the knowledge that is written on them is produced by the colonizers. In addition to this there is the illustration of dark ink that is washed away and Gemmy even thinks of these papers as controlling some sort of “black magic.”

The process that is shaping Gemmy’s identity and some of the other characters is, as mentioned, based on the crossing of borders, on going back and forth between cultures, and the relationship towards their own nature and the nature around them. Ashcroft comments that: “Because what is also accomplished by the ‘worlding of a world’ is the simple binary division of black and white, imperialism’s racial binarism which relentlessly antagonises the hybrid development of post-colonial society” (1993, 56). Considering the space between the different lives that exist in the postcolonial sphere, there is a need to cross big distances in order to function in both, which is why hybridity is essential. It is needed as a process because in this way it helps to bring together the different manners of interpreting the world and create a smaller separation between the lives that people such as Gemmy need to move between.

The fence that Gemmy literally hangs on when he first encounters the settler-children can be seen as precisely such a border between the two lives that he is divided between, and because of the separation that he feels he ends up mixing two “natures.” Mr. Abbot, when sitting at his desk, reflects on his own nature and states that: “A man may have two natures” (161). The feeling of two natures can furthermore be linked to dark knowledge because of the division of cultures this knowledge creates. “Dark knowledge” is created by the Europeans in order to identify the Aborigines based on their perceptions, but since this often is the “wrong” knowledge it creates an even larger division than would have been originally between the European and Aboriginal cultures.

In *Remembering Babylon* Gemmy is a clear example of this, but I would argue that to view Gemmy as someone with two natures is rather contradictory in relation to hybridity, considering how hybridization does not divide, but is rather a process that negotiates the different sides and aspects that exist within one's identity or nature. The readers are introduced to one of Gemmy's natures when he is trying to fit in with the settlers, which we can think of as his material side, and the other when he is in complete contact with the nature around him, the spiritual side. When it may seem as if he has two natures, he is merely wearing a mask to fill in the blanks in order to function in the current culture, and that he does in fact only have one nature, but the one he has is constantly shifting, existing in an in between space containing different aspects.

Genevieve Laigle argues in "Approaching Prayer, Knowledge, One Another: David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*" that because the settlers in *Remembering Babylon* have moved such a great geographical distance, they are forced to "explore their own identities" (78), and at the same time become aware of a new side of themselves and "see a new perception of the world" (80). We could say that by doing this the settlers are experiencing a shift of consciousness: Their consciousness is the basis for their personal identity and when this shifts it creates a change in their identity as well.

Gemmy is a character that also shifts because of how he feels drawn towards different sides of himself. In fact he does not plan to leave one sphere and go into another, he just wishes to bridge/cover the ground that exists between the two:

So when the next day he began to run towards the boundary fence and the paddock where the three children stood staring, he had no notion of abandoning the tribe, even less of breaking from one world to another. It was a question of covering the space between them, of recovering the connection that would put the words back in his

mouth, and catch the creature, the spirit or whatever it was, that lived in the dark of him, and came up briefly to torment or tease but could be tempted, he now saw, with what these people ate and with the words they used. (29)

The memories that he has from his earlier life are referred to as the “creature” or “spirit” that lives inside him, and can symbolize the life that he has become acquainted with through the Aborigines. Because of the way Gemmy describes this creature inside him it is clear that he is constantly crossing mental borders in order to live with himself. What Ramsden calls “crossing, re-crossing” is a way to see the shifting of consciousness that Gemmy is experiencing. The process can also be seen in the way he is thinking about his different “natures.” His English origin, the one that he knew as a child, he is at first very proud of. At one point he is standing in the middle of all the settlers trying to impress them and convince them of how much he knows about their culture (9-14). More often, however, the readers see his affection and connection to his other aspect, the spiritual side:

The land up there was his mother, the only one he had ever known. It belonged to him as he belonged to it; not by birth but by second birth, by gift, and not just for his lifetime either but for the whole of time, since it was for the whole of time that it existed, as he did too so long as he was one with it. (108)

It is possible to argue that the spiritual side is the most noticeable one because it is here juxtaposed with the settler’s culture and the strongest one because it is most recently applied. At times Gemmy is also able to remove himself from his body, to transcend the life that is happening around him: “As for Gemmy, he simply vanished; not into the bush, as one or two fellows predicted, but into his own skin, behind his own dim but startled eyes” (104). He

“transcends himself” and starts to wear a mask in order to not face what is happening around him, a mask of protection.

However, Gemmy does not completely find his place in the aboriginal settlement either, much because of his questionable status: “He was accepted by the tribe but guardedly; in that droll, half-apprehensive way that was proper to an in-between creature” (25) and he was, as seen, given a similar status by the European settlers. The readers learn that with the Aborigines Gemmy experienced to live and be a part of one life, but then also to have something else inside him, which at times tries to surface. Because of the different lives that exist within him Gemmy becomes a tormented spirit, but the Aborigines believe that he at one time will, fully, become a part of them: “The cries he uttered in his sleep, the terrors that assailed him, were proof that although he had the look of a man, he was not one, not yet. A day would come when, fully arrived among them, he would let go of the other world” (25-26). The Aborigines acknowledge that Gemmy’s full self is not present with them and therefore he has not yet become a man. Only when he is able to arrive among them with his full self will he let go of the other world. However, I argue that Gemmy does not have to let go of the other world, but come to terms with it in order to find his peace with his other self, and by doing this arrive fully among them as a complete man.

As mentioned earlier some of the settlers ask themselves questions concerning identity when they met Gemmy: “Could you lose it? Not just language, but *it*. It” (36). Gemmy does not lose his identity and it can be argued that it is difficult to talk about identity as an “it.” Identity cannot exist as an “it” because that would mean that one would have to make it something absolute, which is not possible. It follows that if one’s identity does not exist as an “it,” it is not possible to lose it, either. Gemmy has merely moved back and forth in his development of crossing boundaries, wearing masks and shifting his consciousness, but it is all a part of the process of coming closer to seeing which eventually makes him see his full



self. This identity process takes place on multiple levels, such as the geographical, mental and cultural. Spinks argues in “Allegory, Space, Colonialism: *Remembering Babylon* and the production of Colonial History” that Gemmy is part of the hybrid process, but that he does not manage to exist as a hybrid: “The persistent spatial reconfiguration of Fairley’s chaotic traffic between cultures insists that he is either located on the *one* side of the fence or the *other*: he cannot be allowed to occupy *both* positions at the same time” (172). Spinks here seems to suggest that hybrid is a once and for all, but I will argue it relies on a perpetual oscillation between for instance in between spaces of self and other. However, in relation to Gemmy’s hybridization an important word from Spinks’ argument is *allowed*. Gemmy as an individual could, as we have seen above, have managed to live his life as an in between creature if he had been accepted as one. Instead he has to live with a mask and negotiate multiple boundaries if he wants to live within a community, and this can be seen both in his encounter with the Europeans and the Aborigines. It may be that Gemmy cannot live in between, as Spinks argues, since he eventually leaves the settlement, but other characters can. In the next part we will see how Gemmy’s presence influences the settlers and how the different settlers live with the different borders.

### **The Settlers**

As seen above Gemmy is portrayed in many different ways, in terms of language, metaphors, and various descriptions. The same can be said about Gemmy’s *presence* which causes unsettlement in the different characters. In *Remembering Babylon* we can see how Gemmy is affecting the people around him, and this can perhaps be seen most clearly in Jock, Mr. Abbot, Janet and Lachlan. Gemmy is, unconsciously, helping them find their more spiritual side, to become a part of nature, see the world with new eyes, and fully open themselves to a part of them that is there, but has not really been allowed to surface. In the initial quotation in

the first chapter we saw how Gemmy is “deeply moving for those who are willing to look, and to see, without prejudice, that in allowing himself to be at home here, he has crossed the boundaries of his given nature” (121). Many of those who come near Gemmy also manage to cross the boundaries of their given nature by letting them be affected by him and discover a new aspect of themselves, a new self and a new nature. Because of their encounter with the hybrid, many of the settlers change their perspective, often concerning both themselves and Gemmy. A good example of this is Janet.

She has a special connection with Gemmy from the beginning and they are both aware of this: “He would catch her regard upon him, it was solemn, and an odd feeling would come over him that she was trying to see right through him, to catch his spirit, aware, as the others were not, that he was not entirely what he allowed them to see” (32). At one point the readers get to see Gemmy and his self through the reflections of an adult Janet, and in a conversation with Lachlan she explains how she perceived Gemmy while he was still hanging on to the fence: “I don’t know. Except that I have never seen anyone clearer in all my life. All that he was. All” (177). Janet is able to see Gemmy’s spirit<sup>8</sup> and see past his mask and later in the book Gemmy can see Janet’s spirit after she has changed during her confrontation with the bees (129-130). She is able to see people for who they are and at the same time reflect on her own multiple layers. One illustration of this is when she discovers another skin, a delicate pink one, behind a scab on her knee, revealing a finer being of herself that had been covered inside her:

When she got up and walked out of the paddock, and all the velvety grass heads up, haloed with gold, she felt, under the influence of her secret skin, suddenly floaty, as if

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<sup>8</sup> I choose to use the word spirit in lack of a better word, since, really, no one can actually see a spirit, but it is the way Janet, as seen, describes it herself.

she had been relieved of the weight of her own life, and the brighter being in her was very gently stirring and shifting its wings. (53)

In this scene her own skin can be seen as a mask, not showing her full potential. The floating identity that inhabits her can be read as the beginning of a hybrid process, her own life juxtaposed with this brighter being, and the non-absolute in this world on the edge. Janet has been able to open her eyes to the beauty of the nature around her and because of this manages to become perceptive to the idea of a fuller self, a more spiritual life. This is mostly because of the influence from Gemmy and Mrs. Hutchence together with her bees. The hybrid existing in Janet is symbolized in how she operates with many names. In addition to her Christian name, Janet, she has her imaginary double name, Flora Macdonald (54) and the name Monica that she will take later as a nun (167).

Janet grows fond of Mrs. Hutchence and her bees, and it is in relation to the bees that Janet's change is seen one day after she and Mrs. Hutchence have finished their work. Just when Janet has taken off her bonnet and veil and before she is able to make a sound the swarm of bees is on her. The bees completely overcome her and when her whole body is covered by them she becomes a part of their single mind:

Her own mind closed in her. She lost all sense of what her feet might be, or her dreamy wrists, or whether she was still standing, as she had been a moment before, in the shadowy grove, or had been lifted from the face of the earth. The bees have their stomachs full, her mind told her, they will not sting. Stand still. Stand still. It was her old mind that told her this. She stood still as still and did not breathe. She surrendered herself. You are our bride, her new and separate mind told her as it drummed and

swayed above the earth. Ah, so this is it! They have smelled the sticky blood-flow. They think it is honey. It is. (129-130)

This quotation shows how Janet's consciousness shifts to a new state of mind, connecting with the earth and her spiritual nature. Through the power of her beliefs she manages to transcend and be "lifted from the face of the earth." Because of her meeting with the bees she has entered into a sphere where she sees everything more clearly and becomes more at one with the nature:

She had remained cool inside, and when the flames drew off what was restored to her had a new shape, was simpler; she had emerged with a new body, which the world – and this was the point – had dealt with to its limits and let go, and from now on, however things might appear, it could not destroy. (131)

I will suggest that through this experience Janet connects with her inner, spiritual self by using the light from inside her and now no "living darkness" can harm her (131), not the "Absolute dark" nor the "dark knowledge." The world had dealt with her body "to its limits and let go" Janet has exceeded the earthly boundaries and by doing this she has transcended them.

Later as a nun Janet "set herself apart from the world" (166), but she is still absorbed with the world of the bees. The readers are told how as an adult she will become even more connected to the breeds and cross-breeds in the bee business and even, ironically, "create one or two new ones – actually bring them into being, whole swarms that the earth had never known till she called them" (130). Janet functions as a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds because of how she is the one who is able to "call" on these new breeds. This

can be read as a link back to her immediate connection to Gemmy and also her reflection mentioned earlier, made later in life, regarding the first time she saw Gemmy when she saw him clearly for “all that he was.” (177). Through Janet’s connection to nature she has found her third space and her other self. This connection was developed through her relationship to Gemmy, Mrs. Hutchence and the bees and is a part of her third space: “Something Gemmy had touched off in them was what they were still living, both, in their different ways” (180). Jock, as an addition to Janet, is also influenced by Gemmy’s presence and Gemmy becomes a part of both her and Jock’s process, especially regarding Jock’s relationship to the community.

The distance between the individual and collective is seen in Jock’s development when he draws away from the community because of the resentment he meets. In some ways the neighbors stay together because of the common fear of the “Absolute dark,” but now that Jock no longer fears the darkness he has become different. The feeling of independence from the community becomes strong in Jock when at the same time he, once again, connects with his wife, Ellen. How identity is a process is very clear when it comes Jock throughout the book. The readers are told he had a very light nature back home in Scotland, but that his “true,” more harsh, nature appeared when arriving in Australia. Towards the end of the novel, when he has found his spiritual side, he appears to be “light” again, but then eventually he drifts back to his friends and to some extent his old harshness. Lachlan has been watching his uncle and understands how: “Something had been destroyed in him that could not be put right” (147). The trust that Jock had in his surroundings has been destroyed, but he did receive something else. Unfortunately, he does not allow himself to stay with, or explore the feelings that he found in relation to nature. Civilization expects to keep everything of his old nature, perhaps the “it,” in order to fit in. Lachlan explains how they: “...kept up the pretence that life, in something like the old form, had resumed and would go on” (147). This shows how

Jock, like Gemmy, wears a mask as a solution to either protect himself or to adjust to a community filled with prejudice.

Jock's development can also be seen in how he is changing his behavior and feelings towards Gemmy. At first he feels a kind of repulsion, but he gradually finds himself defending Gemmy when his neighbors are worried. The turning point concerning Jock's acceptance towards Gemmy comes after the neighbors have kidnapped Gemmy from his bed and taken him away from their hut to beat him up. Jock goes after them to help Gemmy, and after carrying him back to the shelter of the lean-to of their hut Jock goes in with him so he can comfort him and lay next to him:

Laying aside his rifle, he crawled with him into that musty, dark smelling place, and did a thing he could not for his life done a week, perhaps even an hour ago: he sat huddled close to him in the dark, and when he shivered, drew him closer, pulled the old moth-eaten blanket around the two of them, and with the man against him, heard his juddering breath, and smelt it, while the outside moonlight fell on the cleared space round the hut where his wife and children waited. (115)

The description of Jock laying aside his rifle can be seen as a symbol of him crossing his own mental boundaries and putting aside his judgments. When holding Gemmy close and smelling his breath he realizes that he is not so different from himself after all. After this, Jock starts treating Gemmy as a fellow human being and his change can also be seen in his growing relationship to nature. Incidents such as when he is watching the "...bird's beak drawing long silver threads out of the heart of the water..." (98) or wading through the waist-high grass illustrate a new awareness:

When he looked closer it was hundreds of wee bright insects, each the size of his little fingernail, metallic, iridescent, and the discovery of them, the new light they brought to the scene was a lightness in him – that was what surprised him – like a form of knowledge he had broken through to. It was unnameable, which disturbed him, but was also exhilarating; for a moment he was entirely happy. (97)

Through his connecting to nature he is experiencing the same lightness that could be seen in Janet's experience with the bees, and his description of being entirely happy can be seen as the moment Jock transcends and becomes his full self. Unfortunately, he does not manage to keep this relationship to his surroundings.

In Jock the readers are exposed to the juxtaposition between European expectations to nature and the more open spiritual relation to nature that Gemmy is representing and bringing to them. Jock does not want to stand alone in the community and is disturbed by the difference that is occurring between him and the other neighbors. He is reflecting on what “[a] grown man of forty...” (97) is doing when he is connecting with nature in a way he has not done before. The expectations that he is feeling from the community restrict Jock from completely giving into this new aspect he has found in himself. On the other hand he acknowledges, now that he is looking, that the communal warmth is not only positive:

He had never been a thinker, and he did not now become one, but he began to have strange thoughts. Some of them were bitter. They had to do with what he saw, now that he looked, was in the hearts of men – quite ordinary fellows like himself; he wondered that he had not seen it before. What the other and stranger thoughts had to do with it he did not know. It was as if he had seen the world till now, not through his own eyes, out of some singular self, but through the eyes of a fellow who was wrapped

always in company, even when he was alone; a sociable self, wrapped always in communal warmth that protected it from the dark matters and all the blinding light of things, but also from the knowledge that there was a place out there where the self might stand alone. (97)

After Gemmy came into the community Jock started to see things more clearly, for instance what really is in the hearts of his neighbors, but also the environment around him is clearer. He describes his new found clarity as seeing the world with different eyes and no longer through the set perspective formed by the community. He is finally looking at the world with his full self and on his own, not through the prejudices and descriptions created by the norms of civilization. The shifting between cultures and between the collective and individual life, however, makes it difficult to find a path in the middle that would include both.

The change in Jock is not a result of a conscious development, but rather an involuntary influence. When Jock is reflecting on his relationship to his neighbors he confirms how: “*Was* he changed? He saw now that he must be, since they were as they had always been and he could not agree with them” (96). Jock eventually manages to “go back” to a certain extent, at least enough for the community to be at ease. Because of the expectations that have been placed on him by the society Jock can not allow himself to let Gemmy’s influence on him become something permanent, even though it has become a part of him. He is forced to wear a mask in order to function in the society that they live in and because of the power that exists in expectations and collectivity.

Mrs. Hutchence is one of the characters that most clearly illustrates hybridity embedded in identity. There is something special about Mrs. Hutchence, and everyone who meets her can feel it. Leona, the younger woman who lives with her, explains: “She sees *into* people, it’s a gift” (83). Mrs. Hutchence is connected to her spiritual side and is part of the



nature around her, and at the same time she lives in a normal house as part of the western civilization. Mr. Abbot describes her as a puzzle (75) and apparently she does not give her surroundings much information. If there were any information in the house, the settlers do not understand it (76). Mrs. Hutchence has created a mixture of the Australian and the European by taking in her new surroundings and at the same time bringing with her objects and customs that are utterly foreign to both places. They are also of a sophistication that resembles that of the metropolis:

They had come down, it was said, from the Islands, from Macao, or maybe it was Malacca, and while their house was building had roomed with a widow in Bowen – though no one knew anything of them in Bowen either, save that they had come with a steamer with a whole household of furniture, real furniture of a kind people had never seen, carved chests, wickerwork lounges, three or four elaborate birdcages, and seemed quiet and respectable enough, except for the accent, which the older lady had and the younger lady did not. (75-76)

The settlers are disturbed by the mixture of the bush and civilization when they see her wearing a dirty bombazine and boots and at the same time serve tea in bone china cups (76). She is very different from the other settlers and they look at her as “on the wrong side of things” (77). Even though she is different there is no need for her to wear a mask, as so many of the other settlers do, because she has found her third space, a sphere where she can exist on her own terms and belong and at the same time be true to herself. Her third space can here be seen in relation to the before quoted reflections by Mr. Frazer: “This is what is intended by us coming here: to make this place too part of the world’s garden, but by changing ourselves rather than it and adding thus to the richness and variety of things” (121). One can argue that

by fulfilling the idea expressed in this quotation she has been able to create a “pure” culture in a third space and removing the duality existing outside it. Mrs. Hutchence has managed to transcend her “given nature” and by doing this adding “to the richness and variety of things.”

In addition to Mrs. Hutchence, Jock and Janet’s hybridities, border-crossings and masking are represented in many of the other characters. Lachlan, Mr. Frazer and George Abbot, even the collective community can to some extent all be argued to experience hybridization. Mr. Frazer is the character who is the most aware when it comes to the changes that occur, and are needed in this community. He wants the colonizers to “rub their English eyes” and look again in order to see the potential that the country they have settled in offers. I have chosen to cite this quotation at length, because it beautifully expresses Mr. Frazer’s thoughts and intentions towards this land, and in addition it touches upon many of the main concerns both in the novel and in this discussion:

We must rub our eyes and look again, clear our minds of what we are looking for to see what is there. It is not strange, this history of ours, in which explorers, men on the track of the unknown, fall dry-mouthed and exhausted in country where natives, moving just ahead of them, or behind, or a mile to one side, are living, as they have done for centuries, off the land? Is there not a kind of refractory pride in it, an insistence that if the land will not present itself to us in terms that we know, we would rather die than take it as it is? For there is a truth here and it is this: that no continent lies outside God’s bounty and his intention to provide for his children. He is a gardener and everything he makes is a garden. This place too will one day, I believe, yield its fruits to us and to the great banquet at which we are guests, the common feast; as the Americas brought corn and tomatoes and sweet peppers, and rhubarb and the potato, that bitter root of the high Andes that women, over long years, by experiment

and crossbreeding, have leached of its poison and made palatable, to be the food of millions. (There is a lilyroot here that the women know how to boil and make edible.) The children of this land were made for it, as it was for them, and is to them a rich habitation, teeming with milk and honey – even of much of its richness is still hidden; but then so was the milk and honey of the Promised Land, which was neither milk, in fact, nor honey, and the land itself to all appearance parched and without promise. We must humble ourselves and learn from them. The time will come when we too will be sustained not only by wheat and lamb and bottled cucumbers, but by what the land itself produces, tasting at last the earthly sweetness of it, allowing it to feed our flesh with its minerals and underground secrets so that what spreads in us is an intimate understanding of what it truly is with all that is unknowable in it made familiar within. (118-119)

Mr. Frazer is able to reflect upon the “undiscovered” richness of the land and is concerned with how the settlers should no longer be preoccupied with what they want to see, or expect to see, but rather with what really exists. This is one of the reasons why he finds botany of such a value. He believes that they will one day no longer depend on their old habits of wheat and lamb, but will be able to survive based on what their new land can give them and then eventually bring their own to the land.

As mentioned here, and as seen earlier in some of the characters, to experience the land on its own terms is essential. Jock for instance managed to move away from merely looking at the land based on the terms of the community, and Mrs. Hutchence has already accepted the land as it is and also brought her own to it, by building a normal house, in the bush. In addition to this Mr. Frazer indicates that crossbreeding (hybridity) has been, and again can be helpful in trying to fit in and understand a new place and its customs. The

crossbreeding mentioned here can be seen as an implication towards Janet's bees and a way of bringing their own to the land, and also illustrating Bhabha's point, again, on the cultural development that exists in between in relation to his third space.

When the settlers have finally seen the land as it is, the land and an intimate understanding of it will then spread within them and become a part of them. By making the unknown familiar other settlers will be able to connect with the land, as some of the settlers already have, and through this also come more into contact with the spiritual and full self. The intimate understanding of the land that Mr. Frazer is addressing contrasts with the dark knowledge that has been discussed previously. By removing the dark knowledge there will be less of a distance between the binaries within this crisis heterotopos and at the same time it will make it easier to live with the boundaries and borders that exist here.

During one of their many walks, Gemmy expresses how Mr. Frazer truly understands what Gemmy is showing him and how his drawings are a confirmation of this: "The drawings for him have a mystical significance. They are proof that Mr. Frazer, this odd white feller, has grasped, beyond color of weight or smell, the *spirit* of what he has been shown" (118). Both Mr. Frazer and Mrs. Hutchence have managed to accept the spiritual world that is surrounding them, but so, too, has George Abbot. He is the schoolmaster and has let the settlement believe that he is around the age of 26-27, when he in fact is merely 19. He is trying his best to act as an adult in order to achieve respect and gain some sort of authority, wearing a mask to hide his true age and uncertainty. Mr. Abbot is however a reflected young man and is aware of the mimicry that he is performing: "He knew the falseness of his position and hated it" (40). The process that is happening with Mr. Abbot can be measured in somewhat the same way as with Jock, namely in his acceptance of Gemmy. His development is perhaps best portrayed in his last meeting with Gemmy:

Gemmy had repelled him then. Something in the muddiness of his eye, the meaty stench he gave off, a filth, ingrained, ineradicable perhaps – most of all of his cringing eagerness to please, had challenged his belief that suffering, even the most degrading sort, would bring out the best in a man, and that the spectacle of it must inspire noble sentiments. Well, no noble sentiments had come to him when he was faced with Gemmy. If what had survived in this brutish specimen was, as Mr. Frazer appeared to believe, naked essential humanity, then it was too little. He held his nose. He wanted no part of it. What a high-minded, fastidious little theorist he had been. Was youth an excuse? Unhappiness? He no longer thought so. (162-163)

Mr. Abbot was afraid, as briefly mentioned above, that Gemmy should be closer to him as a human than what he wanted him to be, because he does not want to believe that he also can turn into such a creature which he is faced with. Mr. Abbot is worried that if removed from civilization one will no longer be civilized, and if Gemmy is close to him as a human what will then happen to him-self, situated in this deserted place. In the last part of the book, on the other hand, he knows that Gemmy is close to him and he even believes that what can best be seen in Gemmy are “the qualities of men” (163). The process seen in Mr. Abbot, created by the visits at Mrs. Hutchence’ house and his meetings with Gemmy, results in Mr. Abbot having opened his eyes to something new. He no longer feels the need to wear a mask and is not afraid of showing that he cares. The readers’ final meeting with Mr. Abbot is when he is about to run after Gemmy to catch up with him. This illustrates how he no longer is too proud, and he, who normally would not even think of running, since this is a child’s behavior, is now running to be with Gemmy. Gemmy, whom he earlier felt disgusted by, he suddenly wishes to walk with, for everyone to see. By opening his eyes he has managed to see beyond his own and the community’s expectations.

The community as a whole can also be argued to contain a certain hybrid quality. The settlers are all very morally correct on the outside, but when they are in the dark they no longer feel the need to uphold this morality. This, too, connects to dark knowledge, seeing as how it is when night falls that they practice this knowledge, as for instance when they take Gemmy. There are many examples of how they are wearing a mask, not just in their beating of Gemmy, but also in their behavior towards him and towards each other when he has disappeared. Gemmy describes them as wearing “wooden expressions” and that “[t]hey hid what they felt as if they were ashamed of it...” (57). After Gemmy has vanished from the community they all start wearing masks, both those who wanted Gemmy there and those who did not: “With Gemmy’s removal to a distance a kind of normality did come back to them in a pretence on all sides that what had occurred was a misunderstanding and no harm done” (146). The collective community is experiencing hybridization because of crossings and re-crossings of borders by some members of the settlement, resulting, at times, in change in the collective balance. An example of this is when Jock removes himself from the community. Some of the settlers can be said to not have opened their eyes at all, others are just getting started, such as Jock and Mr. Abbot, while a third group consisting of Mr. Frazer, Mrs. Hutchence and Janet have managed to open their eyes and minds and truly look. Seeing how the members are representing different stages in a process of hybridization, this can hint toward a possible future, where the communal, or at least parts of it, takes the “forerunner’s” example.

A different process is that of ageing and developing and the hybridity that results from this. Lachlan, for instance, not only evolves because of the setting he suddenly finds himself in, but also on account of how he is simply growing older. The readers follow his state of in-between-ness (144) in relation to the different age groups; one group is at the playground while the older boys merely hang around the shop, and during the narrative he feels himself

drawn between the two. It is either one or the other. Lachlan does not reflect on the process of moving from one group to another because as a young boy he still feels how: “everything presented itself in the absolute” (147). This kind of ordering and neatness is common of a child’s simple assumptions. A different absoluteness, on the other hand, is found in the determination of the “Absolute dark.” The settlers use a child’s absoluteness when defining this darkness and it is through their own fear they are driven to naive and ignorant assumptions. These assumptions can be linked to the advance of dark knowledge. Because the settlers are placed in an undetermined place their need to categorize difficulties becomes stronger than it would have been in Europe. Consequently they create labels such as “Absolute dark” and have a need for both absolute and dark knowledge.

The readers follow Lachlan’s process of ageing and his reflections in relation to the conflicts around Gemmy: because of Gemmy Lachlan is forced to explore new aspects both concerning himself and the land. In Lachlan’s last meeting with Gemmy he finds it awkward because of the distance that has grown between them:

He looked back once and saw that Gemmy too had turned, about sixty yards off, and they faced one another down the white ribbon track. They were too far off to be more to one another than figures whose eyes, whose real dimensions even, were lost to distance. (149)

This passage indicates how Lachlan never completely managed to see all that Gemmy was. Because of the distance that existed between them, which Lachlan was not able to cross, the real dimensions and the real Gemmy were never truly displayed in the eyes of Lachlan. Even though it seemed in the beginning of the novel that Lachlan and Gemmy had a special bond, Lachlan does not change in the same way for instance Janet does, and ends up feeling

uncomfortable with him. As an adult Lachlan goes into the bush in search for Gemmy, “tying up one of the loose ends of his own life, which might otherwise have gone on bleeding forever” (179). His relationship with Gemmy follows him into his adult life, more specifically the fact that he did not, at that time, manage to cover the space between them.

### **The Garden of Eden**

In the quotation describing Gemmy as he comes “flapping” towards the settlers, he is characterized as “neither one thing nor the other,” but by looking closely at Gemmy and some of the other characters it is clear that they are not “neither one thing nor the other,” but quite the contrary, they are *both*. As earlier mentioned, being neither-nor may indicate no definite connections to either world, but by looking at the characters’ hybridizations and crossings back and forth between the different worlds I would argue that they are in between, yet also connected to both. In Mrs. Hutchence’ “third space,” for instance, she has included both worlds, the furniture connects her to the material world and her special bond to the nature brings in the spiritual aspect. Living at the edge of the settlement she illustrates how it is not possible at this point to live inside the society with the blend that she is representing, but as Mr. Frazer’s notes indicate, it might be possible one day.

The different characters in *Remembering Babylon* illustrate various ways of dealing with this process and they also create a clear picture of the crossings and re-crossings that are found in this development. This novel explores the debate regarding nature versus nurture by positing Gemmy as what Mr. Frazer calls “naked essential humanity” (162) and by discussing the nature of men and the influences by their surrounding environment. The readers witness how identity processes are created through the combination of both nature and nurture. Gemmy, among others, is affected by both, just as Mr. Frazer argues that by mixing the



richness of the land, nature, and the settlers' origin, nurture they will together add to the richness of the world's garden.

The final chapter in *Remembering Babylon* appropriately therefore takes place in the garden behind the convent where Janet, now sister Monica, is living. This garden can be seen as the Garden of Eden and as a symbol of a new beginning. In addition to this Lachlan eats an apple every time that he visits Janet, further supporting the image of the Garden of Eden (175). The time when this happens, in the middle of World War 1, contrasts the hope of a new beginning with the violent battles over boundaries, between the people and cultures of the world. This may be seen as suggesting an apocalyptic element, playing on World War 1 as utter destruction after which the next step again will be a new beginning, a new garden. The novel ends by illustrating to the reader how knowledge about one another and awareness of one's own nature bring decreasing distance between humans, and eventually beautifully points out how everything is a part of everything, in a perfect union of sky, moon, water, earth and fire: "As we approach prayer. As we approach knowledge. As we approach one another" (182). I choose to let this line conclude this chapter and this part of the discussion. It is a beautiful example of how Malouf represents a poetics of borders. Through identity processes the characters have been crossing and re-crossing borders and eventually approaching something bigger than them, perhaps gesturing towards some sort of reconciliation. However, there are many different challenges that need to be dealt with and two of these challenges will be discussed in the next chapter; the postcolonial space of the borderland and the concept of dark knowledge.



## *An Imaginary Life*

Some see *Remembering Babylon* as a thematic continuation of *An Imaginary Life*, and Gemmy as an extension of the Child. This is because of how the Child fades into the distance at the end of *An Imaginary Life*. When Gemmy then comes out of the forest in *Remembering Babylon* it is a possibility to imagine what could have happened to the Child. This possible continuation is however not my focus and will not be taken into consideration. I am more concerned with the textual strategies that Malouf uses, and will instead take into consideration how the border poetics that we see in *Remembering Babylon* is represented on a slightly different level in *An Imaginary Life*.

I am also aware that the setting of *An Imaginary Life* predates both colonialism and the Enlightenment with approximately 1500 years, but the negotiation of themes pertaining also to the postcolonial nevertheless makes the novel highly relevant in this context. In relation to *An Imaginary Life* and the postcolonial perspective Bill Aschcroft argues that there are many aspects of this novel that makes it postcolonial: “[ ] I want to show that it is not the linking of language and subjectivity so much as the addition to space to this signifying chain which makes the novels post-colonial” (1993, 51). More generally, the novel revolves around meetings between self and other, between what is perceived as civilized and barbarian, between empire and outpost, and in this sense *An Imaginary Life* is timeless in its relevance to the questions I focus on in this thesis.

### **In-Between Space**

In both of Malouf’s novels the exact space where everything occurs is important: this is place infused with history, time and memory. The space where *An Imaginary Life* takes place is described as “the ends of the earth” (7). By being placed at this “edge” Ovid is forced to look

beyond his own language and descriptions to where his own full self exists. Space is a continuous area which is not locked and indicates change. It also includes time and, as Said argues: “So space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here. The same process occurs when we deal with time” (2003, 55). Through the book the reader follows Ovid’s struggle to survive in the exile that he has been placed in, and the interconnectivity between Ovid’s process and the place where he is living in a constant negotiation between nature and culture. There is also irony embedded in how civilization tags this space as exile and isolation, considering this is where Ovid is finally able to connect with the universe. The Child is also clearly affected by his surroundings and when he is removed from his natural setting he starts to change.

Space is seen differently in different cultures and Dr. Jena Habegger, in her lecture “Experiments in Narrative Space and Infinite Storytelling” refers to the idea of describing space as either open or closed. I believe that this description is well suited when dealing with Ovid’s position. At first when he is in exile he finds himself in a closed space, because he is mostly preoccupied with how he is forced to be there. Eventually he moves into an open space after opening his eyes to the new culture that is surrounding him and he starts to participate in their routines and language. It is in this open space of infinite possibilities that he is able to see his other self and what he can become. Again, it is through border crossings that Malouf’s characters manage to evolve.

A concept introduced in the discussion of *Remembering Babylon* was ecotone, a border area in more ways than one. In *An Imaginary Life* we can find at least two examples of such ecotones. One is the swamp where Ovid and the Child go to learn and play, which in several ways exemplifies such “a region of transition.” Not only is a swamp another example of saturated land, but it also functions as a space of transition. Ovid and the Child have found

a place where they are able to be alone and even though they are near the settlement they are still out in the open. Moreover, when they find themselves on the island in the swamp Ovid tries to find a way to make the teaching seem like a game in order to keep the Child happy. This reflects Freud's argument in "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" regarding imaginative activity: "Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or, rather, re-arranges the things of his own world in a new way that pleases him" (42). The Child at play and Ovid as the poet situated in this borderland are in the perfect position to create their own world and elevate their own subjectivity.

In the beginning of Ovid and the Child's lessons Ovid is mostly concerned with the Child's development. He is trying to guide the Child to finding the notion of human language through games: "Gradually, one sound at a time, we are finding human speech in him. It is a game he delights in. He is childishly eager to show me that he can imitate me as well as the creatures" (87). Eventually Ovid realizes his own process and by absorbing what the Child is trying to teach him Ovid wishes to transcend his own subjectivity:

A whole hidden life comes flooding back to consciousness. [ ] So too, in my lessons with the Child. When I try to articulate what I know, I stumble suddenly on what, till what moment, I did not know. There are times when it comes so strongly upon me that *he* is the teacher, and that whatever comes new to the occasion is being led slowly, painfully, out of *me*. (91)

Ovid's consciousness is clearly shifting and he is trying to understand and become a part of the Child's consciousness of the world. The Child is, as seen with Gemmy, unconsciously encouraging the people around him to expand their own view of the world. This quotation

even hints to a certain symbioses between Ovid and the Child. Ovid's process is not only promoted by space, but because of how his surrounding allows him to "rearrange," to use Freud's word, the order of things in his new world he is more likely to succeed in letting the universe in.

The other, more metaphorical ecotone is the village. Ovid describes it as the last outpost of the Roman Empire and beyond it is only the unknown (9). On one side of the village is the Roman Empire and across the river on the other side is where the "real savages" live:

The river is now our protection. But two months from now it will become a bridge of ice and the hordes from the north will come pouring across it, plundering, raping, burning. My people here are only relatively savage. The real barbarians I have yet to see. (16)

The river is a gap that functions as both protection and bridge, based on the course of nature. This can be seen as symbolic of what "civilization" encounters in the meeting with their new land. They may use the division between themselves and "the others" as a protection not to get too close to the unknown and what they represent. However, it is also possible to fill the gap, or to use Bhabha's term, remove the "disturbing distance" to connect to nature around them. In the same way as we saw Gemmy bridging the space between, we here see Ovid and the Child covering the disturbing distance by connecting to their surrounding nature. The concrete, geographical borderland that Ovid and the Child find themselves in, further underlines how they also experience a cultural borderland. Ovid and the Child are experiencing a sense of in between-ness both in terms of space and state of mind. Early in the novel Ovid describes his surroundings, and the reader is introduced to both:

I have found no tree here that rises amongst the low, grayish brown scrub. No flower. No fruit. We are at the ends of the earth. Even the higher orders of the vegetable kingdom have not yet arrived among us. We are centuries from the notion of an orchard or a garden made simply to please. The country lies open on every side, walled in to the west and south, level to the north and to the northeast, with a view to infinity. The sharp incline of the cliffs leads to sky. The river flats, the wormwood scrubs, the grasslands beyond, all lead to a sky that hangs close above us, heavy with snow, or is empty as far as the eye can see or the mind imagine, cloudless, without wings. But I am describing a state of mind, no place. I am in exile here. (7-8)

The equation between space and state of mind is interesting, and the Norwegian writer Orm Øverland, for instance, says that: “[immigrant, emigrant, and exile], however, are not only about departure and entry as acts but states of mind” (Øverland in Johannessen, 382). As we see Ovid’s reflections concerning the loneliness and deserted feeling of no flowers or fruit and the empty sky is beyond imagination. “Infinity” is here used with an indication of hopelessness, illustrating how the country goes on for ever, and how neither time nor land has an ending here. Ovid comments on how there does not exist an orchard or garden made to “please,” and this will be seen later in the book when he creates his own “useless” garden. Ovid’s surroundings are clearly influencing his state of mind and it is apparent how space becomes important both for him and the Child. The state of mind that exile represents forms the need of an evaluation and development that is achieved through a constant questioning of the past.

As mentioned in chapter 2, Foucault, in his essay “Of Other Spaces,” is occupied with surroundings and how this affects the people living there. He argues:

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and knaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in kind of void, inside of which we can place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (23)

This reads like a description of the mixed space in *An Imaginary Life*. Ovid illustrates how space and identity processes are connected, and how it is, among other things, the surrounding nature and lack of ability to communicate that, to use Foucault's words, draws Ovid out of himself. It is here in this isolation that Ovid sees the possibility to be a part of a whole. Ovid also talks of a process of becoming which echoes Foucault: "So it is that the beings we are in process of becoming will be drawn out of us. We have only to find the name and let its illumination fill us. Beginning, as always, with what is simple" (26). He is here explaining how it is in this space, where his life has been "stripped to its simplest terms," that with a new beginning it is possible to come in contact with one's other self.

As with Jock in *Remembering Babylon* it is the in between space that allows the self to stand alone. Ovid, too, finds himself in an isolated space without the boundaries created by society's expectations to hold him back from completely finding his full self. When Ovid is removing himself from civilization he is also removing himself from these limitations. Because of how Ovid and the Child are experiencing to be forcefully placed in a "wrong" sphere they are also forced to look inside themselves in order to evolve and adapt. In contrast to the settlers in *Remembering Babylon* there is a more urgent necessity for Ovid and the



Child to adapt because of their feeling of isolation. Lene Johannessen deals with the difference in motivation regarding the immigrant and the exile and argues that:

While the exile goes through an unwilling/unhappy separation from the home, the immigrant leaves voluntarily (even if the reasons for doing so may be severe that the question of volition in truth becomes hypothetical). As importantly, however, the immigrant comes to the new environment with the *objective* of making it his/her new home environment. To the exsul (a banished man), the new surroundings is a necessity, oftentimes an imposed necessity. The exsul differs most fundamentally in that there is no crossing back – only the hope of doing so. (382)

The settlers in *Remembering Babylon* find themselves in Australia, perhaps not completely content, but nevertheless by their own free will and, as argued, “with the objective of making it” theirs. Ovid is on the other hand banished to the village Tomis and is eventually forced to make this environment his own. Eventually though Ovid realizes that he does not even wish to return to Rome. His way out of exile is through his own identity process and with the Child as his guide, not Rome.

As with the community in *Remembering Babylon* one can also describe the village Tomis in *An Imaginary Life* as a crisis heterotopos. Foucault explains how heterotopias can function as a relation between two poles:

The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by

those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be heterotopias, not of illusions, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. (27)

Tomis is a good example of a village that functions in relation to the “space that remains,” and also “between the two respectively, extreme poles,” here the Roman Empire and the unknown wilderness. I would also argue that the village creates a space that is “other” and therefore functions as “another real space.” This is the perfect, whole space that Ovid is trying to get in contact with, and because of Tomis’ connection to nature the village is able to create a passage to this world.

Ovid’s dreaming and day-dreaming can in relation to Tomis also be seen as a metaphorical crisis heterotopos. He is experiencing an unsatisfying reality and he has therefore created a need for something more, which is echoed in Freud’s argument of how human beings are designed. In *Poetry in Theory* Jon Cook argues that:

According to Freud the shaping of a human animal into a cultural being depended upon the repression and reshaping of primary drives for gratification. This process of repression created the split between the unconscious mind, sometimes presented by Freud as the repository of repressed drives, and the conscious mind that regulated the human relation to reality. (41)

Because of the division between the unconscious and the conscious a human will always long for something more, and this is often expressed through either creative writing or day-

dreaming. Ovid is often experiencing some sort of dreaming, not sure whether he is asleep or awake: “I fall asleep thinking such thoughts, and half wake to find myself alone, with only the stars overhead, then fall into a deeper sleep, and dream; or wake again, I cannot tell which” (45). In addition to this he is also a creative writer, a poet. Freud states how such dreams are: “either ambitious wishes, which serve to elevate the subject’s personality; or they are erotic ones” (Freud in Cook, 43). The division that Ovid’s self is experiencing has become clearer to him after he moved into this isolated space of Tomis, and he has become more conscious of his desires. It is only when he has found his full self that he will become completely fulfilled.

The concept of the garden can be linked to both *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*. We recall how in *Remembering Babylon* they were to make Australia a “part of the world’s garden,” and how the symbolic Garden of Eden figures at the end of the novel. In *An Imaginary Life* the garden can be seen as a domestication of nature, but also a new beginning. The importance of the symbolical garden in this narrative can be related to Foucault’s statement of how: “The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world” (26). Ovid himself has created his own garden in the settlement and says that “[a]ll it needs is belief” (26). Belief is essential when trying to create a part of the world’s garden, and this is seen in both novels. The absolute faith that Janet experiences when the bees overcome her can also be linked to this statement and to the idea of connecting with nature (131). In addition to this another symbolic importance of the garden image is the domestication of nature. A garden is nature, only formed by human hands. Ovid is making the seeds “tame” by only letting them grow within certain borders of his garden. Nature is not growing freely, but nature and humans are fused together. It is possible to see in this a symbolism of a new beginning mixing of the best from two worlds to create a hybrid, as with both Gemmy and the Child.

Language is also closely connected to the space one lives, and the power of language is active in creating this space. Malouf states in relation to this how: “Through the power of words the land comes to exist as a thing felt on the pulse, imprinted in the inward eye, and therefore fully seen at last, fully experienced and possessed” (Malouf in Nikro, 1). Malouf is here making a general statement, but his explanation can be linked to Ovid. Ovid encounters two new languages in addition to his own Latin and even though he does not at first appreciate the two to the full, he eventually finds comfort in both. Because of this he tries to move beyond the Latin culture and his own language filled with division. In between-ness in *An Imaginary Life* is used as a way of achieving self understanding and eventually transcendence. Because language is closely connected to space it also becomes an essential part in Ovid’s transcendence.

By describing and naming place in our language we appropriate it, making it our own. Ovid’s attempt to define his exile can also be seen in relation to the space he is now located. By defining exile he creates a process within himself and places himself in that context. Since he is a poet, it is the lack of language that, among other things, makes this space the exile that it is for him. On the other hand, the same makes him receptive to what lies beyond himself: “As if, having no language of my own now, I had begun to listen for another meaning” (17). This quotation shows the importance of Ovid’s space of exile and the isolation of language: they both force him to try to find a new way, out of this space and out of exile and isolation. When it is not possible to go back to Rome he must find another way.

One of the roles of language in *An Imaginary Life* is to connect the “real” and the “imaginary” space. When the Child turns sick in the middle of the story his only connection to the world during his worst delirium is one word that he manages to cry out. To this Ovid responds that: “He has discovered it at last in his delirium. It has come to the surface of his mind. His tongue has discovered how to produce it” (114-115). Here it is the language that

links the Child to civilization and what could be referred to as the “real” space. On the other hand, it is through the “nature language” of the Child that Ovid is able to connect to the “imaginary” space that he wishes to become a part of.<sup>9</sup> In order to do so Ovid needs to remove himself from the Latin language of division and into the structure of the nature language and by doing this loosing his sense of otherness, to become like the Child: “He has no notion of the otherness of things” (92). Ovid eventually becomes a part of the Child’s language and the system this represents. There are no divisions and no feeling of otherness:

Now, lead by the Child, I am on my way to it. The true language, I know it now, is that speech in silence in which we first communicated, the child and I, in the forest, when I was asleep. It is the language I used with him in my childhood, and some memory, intangibly there but not quite audible, of our marvelous conversations, comes to me again at the very edge of sleep, a language my tongue almost rediscovers and which would, I believe, reveal the secrets of the universe to me. When I think of my exile now it is from the universe. When I think of the tongue that has been taken away from me, it is some earlier and more universal language than our Latin, subtle as it undoubtedly is. Latin is the language for distinctions, every ending defines and divides. The language I am speaking now, that I am almost speaking, is a language whose every syllable is a gesture of reconciliation. We knew that language once. I spoke it in my childhood. We must discover it again. (94)

Ovid here describes the Latin language, a language of power, as a language that creates distinctions. The Child has, however, introduced him to a language that unifies and is a part of

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<sup>9</sup> What the Imaginary in fact *is*, is left open, and as with the novel’s title may have a multitude of meanings and interpretations.

the universe. He also reflects that this is the language that he spoke as a child, and that the world again needs to find this language. Ovid uses the word reconciliation and this is a hint towards Ovid's own process. Through such an identity process it is possible to achieve reconciliation not only with one's other self, but also to approach the world. The shifting of language is essential to Ovid and it symbolizes his identity process because language, in this case Latin, also represents community and its demands and expectations. Language defines us and incorporates our "true" selves. As a child, when his mind is most perceptive to the world around him, the language of nature is closest to his heart. The open-mindedness of childhood is repressed by not only the world and community surrounding us, but also by language.

During his adult life the Latin language is what is absorbed in his own consciousness, but when he is in exile in Tomis the language they use there becomes a part of him at the same time as he is once again managing to connect to nature. Through Ovid's shifting of consciousness he is also shifting the language that he feels fits him best. This process can also be seen as a regression, where he reverts to the language of origin, the language of his childhood, through a middle-stage represented by the language of Tomis. The complications of this can be explained through Ovid's reflections concerning his childhood:

A whole hidden life comes flooding back to consciousness. So it is that my childhood has begun to return to me. Not as I had previously remembered it, but in some clearer form, as it really was; which is why my past, as I recall it now, continually astonishes me. It is as if it had happened to someone else, and I were being handed a new past that leads, as I follow it out, to a present in which I appear out of my old body as a new and other self (91).

It is through the recognition of his childhood and his origin that it is possible for Ovid to become part of the universe. His identity process helps him to reconcile with what lies in his past, and through this change his own consciousness to become a new and other self. This is related to *Remembering Babylon* and Gemmy's crossing and re-crossing, and shifting of consciousness. Through Gemmy's recollections of life in England and life with the Aborigines he is shifting his own consciousness after starting to think about his past in a different way, crossing his own mental borders and because of this closing the gap to his other self. At one point Ovid achieves a timeless space, no longer separating the past, present and future, but uniting all the periods of his life.

It is through this language Ovid is able to approach the unity of things, and because of this new language he starts to see things differently. This is because he is using new words to describe the world, and therefore the world also changes and becomes "new." Saadi Nikro argues in her essay "David Malouf: Exploring Imperial Textuality" how: "The landscape is informed by the power of language, and embodies the image of the self" (5), and when Ovid is able to embody the image of his own self through the use of the "nature language" and not Latin, he becomes part of the whole.

Ovid and the Child communicate through the nature around them, and the reader is able to follow how Ovid becomes more and more a part of the nature the closer he gets to his own death. Ovid's knowledge about the people and space around him is one of the things that helps him through this process, and Andrew Taylor indicates that this kind of communication is important in both *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*: "In [Malouf's] novels, what remains central is not how characters communicate to others, but how they communicate to themselves, and how what they know might relate to what is not themselves" (124). The communication that Ovid eventually experiences with the universe and the space that he inhabits creates the unity that he has been longing for.

A space that is produced through colonialism and portrayed in postcolonial literature can be seen as hybrid. The hybrid can be exemplified with coexisting languages, unnatural boundaries, controversial knowledges, and can be described as a rather undetermined space where things, such as identities, are always in transition. The postcolonial space is a state where there are multiple borders, but also where it is possible to constantly cross the borders and boundaries one encounters. According to Bhabha, in order to emerge as the other of ourselves, as he puts it, we need a third space. The space that is portrayed in Malouf can exist as a third space if one is willing to look. The problem here is the difficulties that arise when trying to see and understand what lies within. Mikhail Bakhtin explains:

*Creative understanding* does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be *located outside* the object of his or her creative understanding – in time, in space, in culture. (“Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff,” 7)

A challenge concerning creative understanding is being able to see what is essential when hovering between self and other, respectively the dialogic relationship that exists between these two binaries, self and other. This is exactly what the space of the postcolonial borderland manages to bring forward, in this case in Ovid. Because of the time, space and culture Ovid has been placed in, he finds himself outside both his own and others perceptions of himself. Therefore he is able to rub his eyes and see.

Through this third space it is possible to make one’s own codes and eventually look away from the dark knowledge that has been created, regarding both other and self. Bhabha discusses how cultural knowledge will no longer be an open and expanding code and



therefore it will be possible to remove oneself from the history that is embedded in the space where one is living:

The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the original past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people. In other words, the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation which Benedict Anderson so perceptively describes as being written in homogeneous, serial time.” (54)

When living in a marginalized space one is forced to explore one’s own identity and this is affected by for instance the history of the space, the knowledge and ideology. This is seen at several occasions concerning Ovid, for instance when he is trying to reconcile himself with his own past. If one is able to look beyond and cross the boundaries and borders it is possible to create a third space where one can form one’s own codes and knowledges. This crossing is what we have seen in *An Imaginary Life*, exemplified by Ovid. The reconciliation that Ovid is hinting at is challenged by, for instance, dark knowledge and this is one of the reasons why I have chosen to focus to such an extent on this concept.

### **Dark Knowledge**

I will borrow Spinks term “dark knowledge” and develop this further in order to grasp all the elements and dialectics embedded in this concept. Spinks uses it, as quoted earlier, in relation

to the different versions of self-representations that Gemmy is struggling with, displaying the shadows of colonial repression. I will elaborate on this term in the following discussion. As seen already in the phrase of “dark knowledge,” the word dark indicates dubiousness. Dark has through all times been used as something that is not the way it should be, as seen with the reference to the “Absolute dark” in *Remembering Babylon*. Here absolute darkness is a reference to the unknown. In the western binaries of black and white, darkness has always symbolized something negative, as we will see below in relation to the Enlightenment. This is also the case in *An Imaginary Life*. When Ovid is watching the Child’s wilderness being “drawn out” of him, he reflects that: “It was as if the shaman were singing the wilderness from him, leading it north in his trance towards the polar circle of eternal whiteness, taking it down through a hole made with a fish bone, under the ice” (63-64). Moving away from the wilderness is regarded as positive and therefore expressed through eternal whiteness. Consequently, “dark knowledge” as seen here gestures towards the concept dark as inherently negative and bad.

Aschroft discusses the representation that is preceding Africa but I will argue that his reference to Africa can here be transferred to most postcolonial areas. The ideas he puts forth can moreover be viewed as dark knowledge:

The overarching problem with the various questions of identity, legitimation, authenticity in Africa, however practical and pressing these issues may be, is one of representation. Whereas Orientalism, for instance, is the discourse of knowing which controls the “Orient” it is the “discourse of the unknown” which generates the idea of Africa, for it is the unknown into which knowledge must advance, thus the *idea* of Africa precedes and justifies colonialism; it is an epistemological idea, and this *idea* persists to the present. It is precisely this idea which must be dislodged, and it can

never be while Africa remains the simple binary opposite of Europe (or the West).  
(2000, 2)

It is the fear of the unknown that initiates dark knowledge and its representation of “the other.” Not only does dark knowledge precede the postcolonial space and people, but because of its power it justifies the colonial rationale: knowledge becomes a way of controlling both culture and politics because of the power it holds. The binaries that have been created as a part of dark knowledge affects the identity processes in the postcolonial space. This is not new, and Enlightenment ideals perpetuated this already existing notion of “dark” as something threatening.

One of the problems with European knowledge in relation to “the others” is how it is often regarded as the self evident truth, when not all western scientific progress necessarily is the right one. Loomba confirms this:

It is easier to accept such blurring of ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ in older texts, but we often assume that with scientific advances, misrepresentation decreases. As a matter of fact, far from being an objective, ideology free domain, modern Western science was deeply implicated in the construction of racist ways of thinking about human beings and the difference between them (56).

This subjective science is one of the reasons why it is possible to label the European classification of “the others” as the object of a dark knowledge. The stereotypes that were created through this line of thought did not create a “truthful” image of “the others.” An example of this non objective, non ideology free domain is the European intellectual movement we know as the Enlightenment.

In this movement the binaries were clear when talking about “white” civilization and reason, on the one hand and, on the other, “black” unreason and savagery. The Enlightenment has become more and more linked with colonial history and has created a connection between Western knowledge systems and racial theory. The interpretations that were made through this movement were not necessarily intended to promote racism, but that was often the result. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze makes the following connection between colonialism and the Enlightenment in his book *Race and the Enlightenment*:

European Enlightenment thinkers retained the Greek ideal of reason, as well as this reason’s categorical function of discriminating between the cultured (now called the “civilized”) and the “barbarian” (the “savage” or the “primitive”). It can be argued, in fact, that the Enlightenment’s declaration of itself as “the Age of Reason” was predicated upon precisely the assumption that reason would historically only come to maturity in modern Europe, while the inhabitants of areas outside Europe, who were considered to be of non-European racial and cultural origins, were consistently described and theorized as rationally inferior and savage. (4)

How the Enlightenment plays on colonialism and visa versa is quite clear in this view. The racial ideas that came out of “the Age of Reason” can be labeled as a part of the dark knowledge constructed by Europeans. The West created a set of binaries and perceptions and through their colonial power created a world wide ideology: “Enlightenment philosophy was instrumental in codifying and institutionalizing both the scientific and popular European perceptions of the human race” (Eze, 5). This ideology expanded through colonial repression, and the shadows that came out of this are what I am referring to as “dark knowledge” and it is also perhaps indicated by Said’s concept of “imaginative knowledge.”

Said states that there exists something beside positive knowledge: “We need not decide here whether this kind of imaginative knowledge infuses history and geography, or whether in some ways it overrides them. Let us just say for the time being that it is there as something *more* than what appears to be merely positive knowledge” (55). I am unsure if it is possible to use Said’s reference to imaginative knowledge as a complementation of dark knowledge. Whether or not this can be seen in relation to Spinks’ concept, it is nevertheless an illustration of how there exist several different knowledges. The idea of several knowledges stresses the importance of the concept dark knowledge, regardless of the complimentary function of imaginative knowledge.

Both Said and Fanon are occupied with the binaries that are created through colonialism, and how these affect the people living in this borderland. Fanon argues around the impact colonialism has had on “negroes” existence, and how the “negro” will try to be white. When this fails he also realizes that he has lost touch with his “black” roots. Colonialism has resulted in societies with great racial differences, and through these ethnical categories that is not neither-nor, but a space of in between. Dark knowledge constitutes its objects into being, but when internalized by the “objects,” there exists the possibility that knowledge changes direction, as seen here with the “negroes.” By creating hierarchical binaries the “negroes” wish to be white and, according to Fanon, eventually end up as something in the middle, perhaps brown. In *Brown: the Last Discovery of America* Rodriguez quotes José Vasconcelos and I wish to use the same quotation here:

The days of pure whites, the victors of today, are as numbered as the days of their predecessors. Having fulfilled their destiny of mechanizing the world, they themselves have set, without knowing it, the basis for the new period: The period of the fusion and mixing of all people. (225)

This quotation hints at what comes after the structured binaries created by colonialism and looks at the possibility to embrace the borders that exists, ergo removing dark knowledge. The reaction to western structures and the mechanizing of the world is fusion. We are now moving into a period of mixing and this is exactly what Fanon is illustrating. Because of the western division of black and white, and how the colonial “Negro” does not fit into any of these labels, he is forced into an in between-ness. It is a result of the past’s divisions. It can also be seen in connection to Gemmy and the Child. It is no longer “the victors of today” that will set the standard, but Frazer’s “simplest sorts.” Thus have binaries created a racialism that has suffused the colonial project and also its aftermath.

The creation of identity is also formed through one’s identification of race and if one is only to see oneself through the revelation of others, this will result in a negative influence. Jean Paul Sartre touches upon this when arguing: “The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew: and that is the simple truth...” (Sartre in Fanon, 107). Such a revelation can be seen as a part of dark knowledge in the way it is formed by the colonists and forced on those of a different race, their own self perceptions and self consciousness.

The whole colonial rationale can in fact be argued to have its basis in racial thinking, considering its hierarchical classification of cultures and human groups. “The others” and the perception of things are constructed through the use of dark knowledge by the colonizers:

But no matter how we assess the colonial interactions, it is clear that colonialism refracted the production of knowledge and structured the conditions for its dissemination and reception. The processes by which it did so testify both to colonial power and to its complex interactions with “other” epistemologies, ideologies and ways of seeing. (Said, 62)

The Enlightenment's framing of knowledge made colonialism an accepted world wide movement. Briefly stated, colonialism created an ideology through the power of darkened knowledge and institutionalized "blacks" as unreasonable and the white population as reasonable. As seen in Eze's previous quotation Enlightenment philosophy was used in creating these perceptions and forming the codes and institutions that now divided the human race. These perceptions had a global effect and cultures all over the world consequently acquired this "dark knowledge." Essential in this discussion of dark knowledge is its ambiguity, though. It is "dark" in the sense that it clouds any true vision of the other, and "dark" in that it arises from prejudice.

Foucault deals with the structure of knowledge production and the exercise of power. In his essay "The Subject and Power" he looks at knowledge, power and ethics as representing the subject, and the struggles which appear for instance in cultural conflicts: "To sum up, the main objective of these struggles is to attack not so much 'such and such' an institution of power, or group, or elite, or class but rather a technique, a form of power" (781). The form of power that Foucault here mentions in relation to knowledge can be seen as an echo of the production of dark knowledge regarding the relationship between strategy and power. The struggle that evolves between two binaries, in *An Imaginary Life* this is between the civilized and the unknown darkness, becomes a production of power. It generates a technique that produces knowledge, a dark knowledge. The instability which produces the knowledge struggle or negotiation is a result of cultural conflict, as seen in postcolonial areas.

Part of the conflicts between cultures is the problem of language. Language itself can even be seen as an ideology, not merely a subject matter in *An Imaginary Life*. The codes of the dominant culture are forced upon the natives, and as seen with Ovid this can be experienced as a total isolation. Through the appropriation of language cultural experiences

become more difficult to express: “Chinua Achebe (quoting James Baldwin), noted that the language so used can ‘bear the burden of another experience’ and this has become one the most famous declarations of the power of appropriation in post-colonial discourse” (Aschroft; 2000, 4). Language can in this way be seen as a part of dark knowledge, the impact of having to express one’s own experience through a language meant for another experience will be seen later in this discussion.

Even though Ovid is in possession of the “dominant” language he cannot use this in the village of his exile and this result in the villagers’ language being the language that holds the power. Therefore Ovid ends up in what he characterizes as isolation. It is possible to place the different languages in a state of hierarchy, where the villagers’ language is the dominant one, Ovid’s language in the middle and the Child’s language the “lowest” one. We see an example of how a language that is imposed on a person can also function as carrier of dark knowledge when Ovid tries to teach the Child to speak. He believes that the language the Child already has is not enough because it is not “civilized” and he is not able to communicate with words. Ovid is determined that the Child should learn a language, but rather than teaching him the world language Latin, he teaches him the language of the village: “I have come to a decision. The language I shall teach the Child is the language of these people I have come among, and not after all my own. And in making that decision I know I have made another. I shall never go back to Rome” (90).

This decision can be interpreted in a number of ways. First it can be seen as a result of the language hierarchy that exists in the village, exemplifying a typical colonial hierarchy. It is the strongest language that will become the natural one to learn and as an effect of this the language becomes even stronger. Another aspect of this choice could be the fact that Ovid sees something in this language that he does not feel Latin inhabits, which also explains his decision of not returning to Rome:



I now understand these people's speech almost as well as my own, and find it oddly moving. It isn't at all like our Roman tongue, whose endings are designed to express difference, the smallest nuances of thought and feeling. This language is equally expressive, but what it presents is the raw life and unity of things. I believe I could make poems in it. Seeing the world through this other tongue I see it differently. It is a different world. Somehow it seems closer to the first principle of creation, closer to whatever force it is that makes things what they are and changes them into what they would be. (59-60)

Because of the unity of things felt through this language Ovid wants it to be the language that the Child should learn. As seen in the earlier quotation Ovid uses the word "reconciliation," and this seems appropriate: not only is it the reconciliation of Ovid's different languages, but also the reconciliation of what the world in his eyes has been and what he now realizes it should be.

The two languages are equally expressive, but the villagers' language presents the "raw life and unity of things." This language can also be seen as a something in between Ovid's "civilized" and the Child's "un-civilized" language, and exemplifies the imperial power that exists in language. Ovid wishes to teach the Child the most powerful one, but does not consider, at least initially, that this might not be the best language. A common postcolonial challenge is how the colonizers force a new language on the natives. This often results in the loss of one's own language which is central in one's identity process. The identity process is consequently challenged when the possibility of expressing the nuances that exist in their culture is removed together with their language. Ovid can be seen as a reversed example of this. These challenges can be argued to be a part of dark knowledge. If

everyone started using English as their first language, an increasing number of people would attain an English perspective, making the colonial rationale and dark knowledge even more powerful.

When Ovid begins to use a new language he also begins to look at the world in a new way, and this is relevant regarding colonialism as well. Ovid, however, in relation to colonialism, goes the other way. Through his process in the novel he eventually discovers the importance of the Child's language, and it becomes what Ovid learns and is a part of. Because of this he gains a better language and a better perspective, and through this he is moving away from dark knowledge and rather towards a way of reconciliation. Ovid is removing the divisions that used to define him. On the other hand, the new language also in some ways defines Ovid, or at least brings something new, but now it is from the village's point of view. One of the indications of this is when Ovid first encounters the Child.

The incidence in the forest is described as follows: "Something, as we face one another in the darkness, has passed between us. We have spoken. I know it. In a language beyond tongues" (57). Something comes out of the darkness, and as illustrated in the forest it is in the darkness that Ovid first experiences this true language. Even though the dark knowledge of perceptions and codes are blocking our eyes, we should, as Mr. Frazer puts it, rub our eyes and see what is around us, as Ovid does in the darkness of the forest.

Another dimension of dark knowledge is the oscillation that constitutes it into being. This oscillation can be seen in how dark knowledge actively darkens and obscures vision, but it also draws actively on fear, even fear of the dark. The term dark knowledge can, consequently, be seen as an echo and complementation of Said's concept of orientalism. Orientalism is grounded in how something is created as the unknown, but also in how something comes out of this creation. The production of knowledge can be looked at as an oscillation between these two created through some sort of negotiation between "east" and

“west,” or self and other. Juxtaposing dark knowledge and orientalism is fitting because they both deal with the oscillation between the alien and familiar and at the same time link power and knowledge. Both terms operate with the idea of an antithesis, but what separates them is the effect of this inaccurate knowledge. The knowledge that is created through Orientalism shapes the west more, if possible, then it shapes the orient. Arjun Sethi concludes his essay by stating that: “By inventing and applying such categories of thinking and interpretation, the orientalist way of thinking has ingrained itself into Western thought in an almost inextricable manner.” Merely because it has ingrained itself in the western thought does not mean it is ingrained in the “eastern.” Dark knowledge on the other hand is internalized by the “wilderness,” not merely the west, thereby shaping, not only the colonizers’, but also the colonized’s perceptions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> As a slight addition aside to this discussion I want to add an example from *The Zanzibar Chest* written by Aiden Hartley. This book clearly illustrates the oscillation and internalization that occurs in the negotiation of dark knowledge. When Hartley is explaining the situation he and his journalist-colleagues find themselves in during the war in Somalia in 1991, Hartley quite explicitly gives an example of how their western perception is formed by the obscure darkness that meets them in Somalia and how they create the term warlords to classify this obscurity. The term “warlord” is not taken up by the natives themselves, but they on the other hand use gangster names, such as “the Plunderer.” (191) Even though the natives do not accept the term “warlords”, they do in many ways internalize the associations that “warlord” inflicts on them through their own naming of each other and their behavior:

Onto this stage walked a new breed of men who presumed to be the legitimate leaders of a nation. But war, not peace was all they could offer. Peace was their worst nightmare. Correspondents of our generation had grown up in the Cold War. Nothing like Somalia had ever happened before and first we had no idea what to call the frightening new strongmen. After discussing revolutionary China, Jonathan and I decided to christen the Somali militia leaders ‘warlords’ and the name was taken up by everybody in the news business. They were ruthless murders and their terrifying reputation was only enforced by the childish gangster names they gave themselves. (190-191)

It is seen here that the labeling of the Somali militia leaders was taken up by the news business and this shows the power the Europeans hold in this situation. The western description is broadcasted and becomes part of the global knowledge that people world wide is familiar with regarding Somalia, as with orientalism. This obscure knowledge started in the darkness of Somalia and was then formed and classified by the journalists, before it in some ways was internalized by the Somalis themselves. They made it a part of their identity, clearly exemplifying dark knowledge. Next step in the oscillation is to show the world how the natives have internalized this western view of themselves and because of this makes the dark knowledge even stronger through this: “‘I am not a *warlord*,’ Aydiid whined in his cleft-plate voice. My use of the term incensed him so much that later he had his lieutenants say they’d kill me if I persisted in using it” (194). Even though Aydiid, one of the leaders of the Somali militia, refuse to accept the term “warlords” he nevertheless internalizes the meaning of the concept. He shows it by giving this kind of order to his lieutenants thereby making the dark knowledge even more powerful, and consequently, making it more difficult to remove the shadows that now have been found in both

Another dimension that separates Orientalism and dark knowledge is the inherent darkness that lies within dark knowledge. Where Orientalism is a representation of the knowledge concerning the “wilderness,” dark knowledge is a dialectic shadow game, playing on the obscure and suspicious aspects of the unknown. Ovid illustrates this well. When he is discussing the unknown people beyond the village, he labels them as “savages” without really knowing anything about them. Ovid is here, with his imagination, coloring and creating some of the unknown as dark and it can therefore be appropriate to label this as dark knowledge.

The oscillation of self and other that can be found in Ovid’s imagination and accordingly his creation of dark knowledge is also seen in the fear of the dark. He reflects on the darkness that exists in Tomis, and the fear is encouraged by the villagers. Ovid fears for instance the dark aspect that can be seen in the relationship between the headman and the headman’s mother: “Behind his male prerogative, established in law, lies the darker power of the women. The old woman his mother, especially, has a strange ascendancy over him” (97). Through the impression that the village gives Ovid he forms a dark knowledge that constitutes its objects. The “objects” in turn internalize this “darkness” and refract it, as Fanon and his colonial “negro” that is caught in between. The internalization of this knowledge can be seen during the old man’s wake at the end of the narrative when Ovid realizes that he and the Child now must leave:

In the midst of all this it comes to me clearly what I must do. With Ryzak dead, and in such a manner, we have no protection here, I and the Child. For the moment they have forgotten us. The rituals of death, and the preoccupation with the waiting demons, have allowed us to slip quietly away. It is only later, when the last rite has been

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*Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*, shadows that clearly are affecting the characters identity processes.

completed, that someone – the old woman perhaps – will think of vengeance, and remember that it is the Child who has wrought all this, with me as his witting or unwitting familiar. (132)

The darkness is here represented through the belief in demons and the surroundings of Ryzak's death. The negotiation of the obscure darkness that is portrayed here makes dark knowledge even more powerful and now becomes a part of both Ovid's and the villagers' identity process. Some dimensions of dark knowledge, and orientalism, are formed through such oscillations and crossings of knowledge. The dark knowledge that Ovid is presented with is part of the dynamic process of creation, change and erasure that takes place in the borderland that they exist in. Their perception of the world, including dark knowledge, as well as their identity is in constant process.

Loomba looks at these crossings as negotiations in the process of producing colonial knowledge: "Colonialist knowledge involved a constant negotiation with or an incorporation of indigenous ideas" (61). In order to gain access to their new land the colonizers required the help of the natives and such negotiations do not always have a negative result. We saw this in the relationship between Mr. Frazer and Gemmy, but also between Ovid and the Child:

He also assumes, on our walks, the role of the teacher, pointing out to me tracks in the grass and explaining with signs or gestures of his body, or with imitation sounds, which bird or beast it is that has made them. Or finding under the mold of a log a grub of chrysalis, he explains with his hands how it will be a moth, acting out in a kind of dance its transformation. All this world is alive for him. It is his sphere of knowledge, a kind of library of forms that he has observed and committed to memory, another

language whose hieroglyphs he can interpret and read. It is his consciousness that he leads me through on our walks. (89)

This quotation also illustrates the connection the Child feels towards the nature around him and how he tries to let Ovid be a part of it. His connection is even more prominent when Ovid characterizes nature as the Child's own consciousness. The Child is inviting Ovid into his sphere of knowledge, the same way as Ovid is trying to let the Child into his by teaching him to speak. The word "hieroglyph" indicates how the Child is part of a secret incomprehensible world that Ovid would not be able to see without his help. The Child as a hieroglyph can also be seen as "a stylized picture of an object representing a word, syllable, or sound, as found in ancient Egyptian and certain other writing systems," possibly symbolizing how the Child is representing a part of a larger system (OED). The unity of a writing system is essential and if one word, syllable or sound is removed it will not be complete and function as it should. In this scene the Child is a part of something bigger than himself, he is a part of the whole.

The process of negotiation here displayed can be described as a process that is moving towards the construction of hybrid knowledge. Because knowledge is not absolute and determined in a borderland the identity process will be affected by this. This kind of negotiation when constructing knowledge is different than a knowledge that is only formed by the imperial power. Many of those colonized never had any contact with the colonizers but still lived by their "rules:" "We also need to remember that in many parts of the world most colonized subjects had little direct "contact" with their foreign oppressors, even though their lives were materially and ideologically shaped by the latter" (Loomba, 62). There was, on the other hand, as we have seen, occasions when knowledge was constructed through negotiations.

During the colonial era the Orient was defined by the Occident, but there was some sort of negotiation between them. Also today it is possible to witness a dynamic between “the others” and Europeans. The “others” may be defined on the basis of the west and their “dark knowledge,” but the west has also become what it is today because of the contrasting image, the antithesis, that was created of the “others.” A crossing of interpretations and knowledge has created these contrasts, which can be seen as a shadow of the dark knowledge because of the divisions it still creates between countries and races.

A final aspect of dark knowledge is seen when Ovid is not able to connect with nature in the same way as the Child. The knowledge and explanations that have been embedded in Ovid from he was a child are holding him back from completely becoming a part of nature. I have chosen to cite this quotation in full because it illustrates very nicely the Child’s connection to nature and the process that Ovid is going through in relation to removing the boundaries of old knowledge:

I try to precipitate myself into his consciousness of the world, his consciousness of me, but fail. My mind cannot contain him. I try to imagine the sky with all its constellations, the Dog, the Bear, the Dragon and so on, as an extension of myself, as part of my further being. But my knowing that it is the sky, that the stars have names and a history, prevents my being the sky. It rains and I say, *it rains*. It thunders and I say, *it thunders*. The Child is otherwise. I try to think as he must: *I am raining, I am thundering*, and am immediately struck with panic as if, losing hold of my separate and individual soul, in shaking the last of it off from the tip of my little finger, I might find myself lost out there in the multiplicity of things, and never get back.

But I now know that this is the way. Slowly I begin the final metamorphosis. I must drive out my old self and let the universe in. The creatures will come creeping back –

not as gods transmogrified, but as themselves. Beaked, furred, fanged, tusked, clawed, hooved, snouted, they will settle in us, re-entering their old lives deep in our consciousness. And after them, the plants, also themselves. Then we shall begin to take back into ourselves the lakes, the rivers, the oceans of the earth, its plains, its forested crags with their leaps of snow. Then little by little, the firmament. The spirit of things will migrate back into us. We shall be whole. (92-93)

In the process of connecting to the nature around him, the plants, lakes, rivers, oceans and plains, Ovid is crossing the boundaries of his own self, trying to move into the Child's consciousness to transcend his own self: "For the child leads Ovid finally into a state beyond language..." (Aschroft: 1993, 51) Language is important in Ovid's transcendence and, as Aschroft suggests, he reaches a state beyond language, a state beyond civilization and the boundaries created by it. This, I would argue, is Ovid's third space. Ovid is driving out his old self and letting the whole universe, not only the space around him, in. The Child does not share the perceptions that Ovid has acquired through his life in civilization, and "not knowing" is what makes the Child free of borders (84). Even though not knowing can here be seen as something positive Ovid is consistently trying to inflict knowledge and "humanity" on the Child. Because of the reason and civilization that Ovid represents he feels the need, at least in the beginning, to make the Child understand and come to an awareness of what he is (74). Eventually Ovid realizes that his reason is not necessarily what is best and speaks of his identity process as a metamorphosis which indicates a transformation from an immature to an adult form.

In *An Imaginary Life* the reader is introduced to the difficulties of crossing the boundaries that exist in one's own mind. The dark knowledge of perception is difficult to look beyond and it is clear that colonialism has set its mark. Once again I will bring to bear Mr.



Frazer's indication of the need to "rub one's eyes," and look at how this does not only concern the Europeans, but also those who have been colonized and affected by dark knowledge. In this quotation Ovid wants the boy in the house to look at the Child that is living with them: "I dragged the boy in this evening and made him look at the Child and tell me what he saw. But he was too terrified to look properly, and though he has seen what there is to see, I know he is not convinced. What he imagines is so much more powerful than the facts" (69). It is not possible for the boy to look beyond his own superstition and cross this border, illustrating the power that can be contained by dark knowledge. Because of the power that lies within dark knowledge, crossing borders, and ultimately achieving some sort of reconciliation, becomes more and more difficult.

A question that then arises is whether it is possible to remove the divisions of dark knowledge which has become so ingrained in our thought. Even if reconciliation is possible, would it be enough? Central in both *Remembering Babylon* and even more so in *An Imaginary Life* is the idea of reconciling binaries, through identity processes. These processes are, as seen, essential in the negotiation of the borderland and I wish to stay with Malouf and his aesthetics to illustrate, even further, border poetics. To do this I will include Martin Buber and his text *I and Thou*, juxtaposing it with Malouf and his idea that being able to see, to be illuminated, comes through the joining and overcoming of binaries, such as self and other.



## Border Poetics

*Wind tugging at my sleeve  
feet sinking into the sand  
I stand at the edge where earth touches ocean  
where the two overlap  
a gentle coming together  
at other times and places a violent clash.<sup>11</sup>*

### **Buber and Malouf:**

The most prevalent question that has arisen from my reading of the two novels is Malouf's emphasis on an overcoming otherness of self and other, and how border crossings in relation to one's identity process is a way of being able to see beyond these binaries. Another writer who deals with the meeting of self and other is Martin Buber in his work *I and Thou*. Martin Buber was from 1939 to 1951 a philosophy teacher at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He studied both philosophy and art, and is highly religious and concerned with both Zionism and Hasidism. Even though Buber and Malouf write within rather different areas, philosophy and fiction, respectively, I nevertheless believe that by reading Martin Buber's *I and Thou* alongside Malouf's two novels will add a new depth to the idea of reconciliation across borders. I do not propose that it is possible to link Buber's entire work and line of thought according to Malouf, but there are certain aspects that I believe fit well. They both use their writing to stress the idea of illumination, and the transcendence of binaries or divisions. The idea of linking illumination and the joining of divisions is vital for both.

Even though there are many different parts in *I and Thou* that would fit into this discussion, I have chosen parts of the passage "I consider a tree" to illustrate the force of unity that both Buber and Malouf are concerned with:

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<sup>11</sup> Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999:23.

...In all this the tree remains my object, occupies space and time, and has its nature and constitution.

It can, however, also come about, if I have both will and grace, that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it. The tree is now no longer *It*. I have been seized by the power of exclusiveness.

To effect this is not necessary for me to give up any of the ways in which I consider the tree. There is nothing from which I would have to turn my eyes away in order to see, and no knowledge that I would have to forget. Rather is everything, picture and movement, species and type, law and number, indivisibly united in this event.

Everything belonging to the tree is in this: its form and structure, its colours and chemical composition, its intercourse with the elements and with the stars, are all present in a single whole. (14)

Buber in general deals with how humans communicate with their surroundings and argues that we have two different manners of doing this: *I – Thou* (subject to subject) and *I- It* (subject to object): “The primary word *I – Thou* establishes the world of relation” (Buber, 13). *I–Thou* represents a way of perceiving the world and one’s relations as a whole being, while *I – It* views one’s surroundings as isolated and separate beings, but part of the same world. In this quotation above the connection between the subject and the object is displayed and how when an object is analyzed, or considered, it can become a subject. The relationship between *I* and *Thou* is constituted through the meditation *I* have initially in relation to the object. The tree is no longer a separate being, but has become a part of the overarching unity: “The tree is now no longer *It*. *I* have been seized by the power of exclusiveness.”

On the other hand it is not possible to make *Thou* a part of a single whole if one's whole self is not present. Helen Wodehouse in her article "Martin Buber's 'I and Thou'" explains this: "Buber's recurrent expression [ ] is: '*I- Thou* can only be spoken with the whole being.' I suppose this is to mean the same kind of thing as when we say 'with my whole heart'" (19). By exemplifying this wholeness with something more earthly *I and Thou* becomes more comprehensible. It is not possible to make the other, object, part of the self, subject, if the whole heart is not there, for instance if one is not able to see.

Discussed earlier in the thesis is the settlers use of "it" when referring to Gemmy's identity. I then argued that this was a difficult classification, because it made identity something absolute. Buber's use of *It* in his relationships complicates this discussion. However, where many, such as the settlers, wish to view identity as something static and invariable, Buber's *It* represents something that is changing from within. The identity process is to a certain extent experienced from *It's* standpoint, unless the objectification is internalized and *It* merely becomes a mirror of what is seen. Without being open-minded the *I – Thou* relationship cannot exist. Perhaps identity can, for some, be experienced as something static, since they are not open-minded it becomes impossible for them to move into the *I-Thou* relationship, and consequently evolve. Again stressing the importance of illumination.

To enlighten the larger implications of Buber's work and explain his *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships I will make a distinction between an external otherness and an internal otherness. This is a suitable division and can be explained by looking at Malouf's novels. In *Remembering Babylon* the otherness displayed here is for the most part an external otherness, revolving around the fear of the unknown, and resulting in the creation of dark knowledge. In *An Imaginary Life* Ovid is struggling more with an internal otherness, consequently dealing with emotions, knowledge, notions and memories. His process is of a more spiritual kind and hints at a form of healing process through meditation. Both novels negotiate some sort of

discourse of reconciliation that echo Buber's categories of *I-Thou* and *I-It*. Wodehouse argues that: "Under the *It* connection we may deal from the surface of ourselves with the surface of things, but here [the *Thou* connection] the speaking and the answer alike come from the depths" (21). Where *Remembering Babylon* negotiates processes on the surface of its characters and their meetings, exemplifying the *I-It* connection, *An Imaginary Life* concentrates on the depth of Ovid's meditations, hinting at the depth of the *I-Thou* relationship.

We could even say that the characters in both novels illustrate this mode. Through their identity processes they strive to embrace their sense of otherness, their object, into a part of themselves: they move from Buber's *I-It* to *I-Thou*. This introduces an additional reading of Gemmy's cry in the beginning of *Remembering Babylon*: "I am a B-b-british object" (3). He is no longer familiar with the British part of his identity and therefore views that part of himself as an object, an *It*. Through the novel the reader follows Gemmy in his negotiations, trying to contemplate this otherness as co-existing within him together with his new Aboriginal side. Because of the different challenges he encounters it becomes a process that is too difficult and he leaves the British community.

Malouf's representation of the characters and their re-crossings brings out the striving to overcome the division between subject and object, to regain the *I-Thou* relationship. In the above passage from *I and Thou* Buber begins by showing how his relation to the tree changes according to how he considers it. By including will and grace Buber is able to see beyond the shape of the tree and he relates to it in a completely different manner. By being able to connect both subjects, Buber states that "the tree is now no longer *It*" and through this process the sense of otherness is being removed. This was also seen earlier in the thesis with both Ovid and some of the characters in *Remembering Babylon*, for instance Janet, Jock and Mr. Abbot. The readers are allowed to follow these characters and their process of crossings and

re-crossings, trying to find a unity within themselves, among other things through their connection and communication to nature and their surroundings. The best example is perhaps Ovid, who no longer sees the world as an *It*, but sees it as a part of himself, a part of a whole, after much consideration.

In addition to this link between Buber and Malouf, Wodehouse addresses an essential aspect in Buber's book that can be seen as an echo of what clearly can be found in Malouf's novels as well: "Worlds interlock, and one is richer than the rest. But the passage as I understand it conforms to the spirit which I seem to find in the book as a whole – claiming all three worlds, of Nature, of Thought, and of Man, as potential fields for the Thou" (19). The dialectic in the meetings between nature, meditation and man, seen in various examples through the thesis, is what creates the characters identity processes and their ability to transcend division and enter into the *I* and *Thou*.

In order to achieve this unifying "event," one does not have to forget parts of ones history or knowledge, and the way one "considers the tree" does not have to change, but rather it is essential to achieve some sort of reconciliation. It is not possible to make the object a part of oneself if one does not understand and accept the object or even the subject completely. As seen with Ovid it is not until he has reconciled himself with his past that he is able to achieve this unity. He also has to acknowledge how differently he and the Child deals with nature, because of the different knowledges they inhabit. Through this illumination Ovid is able to move across borders that are vital in the process of unifying the subject and object, thereby removing, to use Bhabha's words, "the other of his self." At the end of *Remembering Babylon* the readers are told the story of how Lachlan never managed to find peace before he knew what had happened to Gemmy and the journey he embarked on in order to find out. Even though Lachlan is not completely sure if he did find the "solution," in this story we meet

an adult Lachlan desperately trying to reconcile himself with his past with Gemmy, in order to cross a difficult border in his life.

The last words in Buber's quoted passage above, are "all present in a single whole," and this is important. Buber argues how everything belonging to the tree is able to function within a single whole, all its form and structure, its colors and chemical composition, all the elements and all the stars. Similarly, Malouf deals with this single whole as a way of removing the sense of otherness that exists in the postcolonial borderland where his novels take place. Seen both with Ovid when he achieves his final transcendence, and with Mrs. Hutchence in how she mixes all her history and influences in a undetermined space, they both complete some sort of unity and remove the divisions that exist for so many of the other characters in Malouf's two novels. What we find in Buber's treatise on *I and Thou* is, in my view, what Malouf represents in fiction: the cultural negotiation and the diversity that exist, but also the possibility of unity. I will suggest that this negotiation and idea of reconciliation in the postcolonial space that are reflected in these two novels represents a kind of border poetics.

Border poetics can be described as a set of strategies for dealing with different borders and has been developed by, among others, Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe. The representation of borders that they explore speaks to the postcolonial approach to David Malouf's novel in this thesis:

Some would prefer to exclude symbolic or conceptual "borders" from the field of border studies all together, since they must more properly be called *differences* or (in some spaces) polarities. Some would also exclude the idea of the border as a space (rather than a line) from that same field, since such dividing or joining spaces should more properly be called *distances*. But in both these cases of possible exclusions, we



suggest that one must remain aware of the potentials for increased insight in the application of the category “border” to phenomena which are often empirically present as versions of the linear border. (Schimanski and Wolfe, 13)

By not only looking at the artificial, geographical borders that form post-colonial literature, but rather the space of the postcolonial borderland, a more nuanced and complex discussion can be provided. The term borderland is much more than just a line and artificial colonial border, it is also a metaphor for mental boundaries.

As a way of illustrating this I will consider again the endings of both *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*. Both novels end at the shore, with the meeting of the water and land. Ovid’s last reflection shows how finally he is experiencing nature as united and a timeless space:

He is walking on the water’s light, and as I watch, he takes the first step off it, moving slowly away now into the deepest distance, above the earth, above the water, on air. It is summer. It is spring. I am immeasurably, unbearably happy. I am three years old. I am sixty. I am six. I am there. (153)

Ovid and the child are finding themselves at the shores of the river Ister, which is described as the final boundary of Ovid’s life: “*I am the border beyond which you must go if you are to find your true life, your true death at last*” (135). Beyond this is where unity lies, illustrated in the unity of time, space and all elements, and found in Ovid and his dissolution. He is no longer controlled by the earth, water or air and he has moved beyond the space of time, being all ages at once. He is moving into a timeless sphere and also by not being controlled by the water he has moved beyond the borderland challenges. The same sense of unity can be seen regarding Janet and the shore where she is standing:

It glows in the fullness till the tide is high and the light almost, but not quite, unbearable, as the moon plucks at our world and all the waters of the earth ache towards it, and the light, running in fast now, reaches the edges of the shores, just so far in its order, and all the muddy margin of the bay is alive, and in a line of running fire all the outline of the vast continent appears, in touch now with its other life. (182)

The unity of water, land and light illustrates the process that is needed when crossing borders and removing division. Through this process we are able to touch one's own "other life;" through identity processes we are meeting one another in the same way as the water and sand meet one another, blend together or even finding reconciliation. The uniting of sand and water symbolizes the uniting of humans.

Reading Malouf in relation to border poetics and to Buber's *I-Thou* emphasises the idea of reconciliation in *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*. Through the characters' crossings and re-crossings they experience identity processes that constantly desire some sort of unity of self, preserving a hybrid development. Buber's consideration of a tree is a meditation on the relation between self and other, and one could read the characters' processes in both *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life* as some sort of meditation. Their process is a healing process, as seen with Ovid when reconciling with his past, both time and space are collapsed into a unity.

### **Border Poetics and Hybridity**

The consideration of border poetics and postcolonial theory in relation to Malouf's works can be seen in connection with the ongoing discussions regarding borders and boundaries, and whether hybridization in fact contributes to the fluidity one could hope for. Néstor García Canclini argues in *Hybrid Cultures* that: "The hybridizations described throughout this book

brings us to the conclusion that today all cultures are border cultures” (261). Canclini believes that through hybridization all cultures become border cultures.

In his essay “Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*” Bakhtin discusses the meeting of two cultures and his statement can help understand the difficulties seen for instance in Gemmy: “Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and *open* totality, but they are mutually enriched” (7). To “retain one’s own unity” can be interpreted as a hybrid reading in a border poetics, but such a representation will inevitably function differently in postcolonial theory because of the hierarchy that exists in an imperialistic cultural encounter. The idea of being “mutually enriched” can be related to the idea of the borderland as transformative and an in between space where it is possible to form one’s own codes in a third space. By creating a third space with one’s own codes one can choose what to bring into the culture and thereby becoming enriched because of the cultural meeting, in contrast to cultural meetings based on imperial force. Without the possibility to choose what to include, cultures will never be an “own unity and open totality.”

One critic who voices a more skeptic perspective is, for instance, Katherine Pratt Ewing, who argues that:

Although the metaphor of borders is useful as one model for thinking about how people negotiate multiple identities, I wonder whether it actually forces us into a single discourse that does not adequately represent the processes by which individuals and communities think about and negotiate difference, ironically creating a modernist sameness in the midst of a celebration of postmodern border crossing and fluidity in the “borderlands.” (263)

Pratt Ewing here doubts the analytic model of border poetics and how it should not be used as set form when dealing with identity negotiations. Other critics, such as Rodriguez, voice similar concerns when negotiating between different discourses in order to bring more justice to the negotiations and experiences of identity processes.

In his book *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* he deals with diversity that emerges from a too big melting pot, because when there suddenly are no borders this becomes a difficult challenge as well. I have quoted parts of this passage earlier, but because of the important aspect this quotation brings to the discussion I have chosen to use the entire passage again:

*Remember where you came from. Such is not your way. Who can say that anymore in America? As lives meet, chafe, there will be a tendency to retreat. When the line between us is unenforced or seems to disappear, someone will surely be troubled and nostalgic for straight lines and will demand that the future give him the fundamental assurance of a border. (227)*

When too many borders are crossed and communities become too fluid, people will move towards a more structured way of life. An element that follows from this and further complicates the idea of a “borderless future” is, as Eviatar Zerubavel puts it, the desire to withdraw:

It is especially during periods of great instability, therefore, that groups tend to hang on to rigid structures. As they go through a major identity crisis, for example, groups, just like individuals, become much more protective of their boundaries. (55)

The word instability here plays on the undetermined space of the borderland. In *Remembering Babylon* the protection of boundaries becomes important to many of the settlers because they have already been through a massive change just by leaving their home country, and their old country is often romanticized from their new point of view. An example of this is how the mother and daughter in the McIvor family on several occasions think about Scotland: “She was in love with this other life her parents had lived...” (49).

Many of the settlers try to keep their old identities and somewhat shy away from things that are new and different, resulting in complexities in relation to hybrid identities and cultures, and also the beating of Gemmy. In some ways one can argue that Gemmy is forced to cross the boundaries of his given nature in order to survive. It is stated in relation to Gemmy that his behavior when living with the Aborigines was based on mimicry (23), but if you wear a mask for a longer period of time, in Gemmy’s case 16 years, will it not then become a part of you? Consequently, in the settlement the fear of losing their rigid structures creates an overwhelming fear, resulting in the beating of Gemmy while others embrace of the cultural variety Gemmy brings. Gemmy’s “given nature” is early in the novel labeled as an “It,” when the settlers are contemplating on their fear of losing their identity. Instead of being a part of their whole, the settlers’ given nature becomes rigid structures, something to protect them. This brings an interesting reversal, or perhaps even complication and elaboration to the nature of “it.” Relating this to the world in Buber’s *I-It* relationship is safer and easier for the settlers than having to open up to the *I- Thou* connection. Because of their fear they are not able to be a whole, not regarding their “given nature” and certainly not regarding their potential nature.

There exists a need to cross the borders and boundaries in our consciousness in order to not be determined and closed in by our given nature. The concept “given nature” on the other hand is a problematic category: because who or what is it given or defined by? It is not

only the hybrid subjects who need to cross the boundaries that exist in order to achieve an inclusive identity, but also those who want to view this complexity without prejudice have to cross these borders, as Mr. Frazer indicates, “in order to see.” By achieving an open-mindedness one will be able to create a third space with one’s own codes and consequently is able to move outside the boundaries of language and culture set by society.

Bakhtin’s statement above hints at a positive, but perhaps not possible future. A question that can be raised here is if it is too late to remove the boundaries, binaries and dark knowledge that have been created in the colonial area and that are represented in literature from in between spaces. Franco Moretti argues in *The Way of The World* that: “The next step being not to ‘solve’ the contradiction, but rather to learn to live with it, and even transform it into a tool for survival” (10).

The most significant contributions that Malouf makes in his two novels are the meeting and fictional transcendence of self and other, and also his emphasis on hybridization. As we have seen in relation to border poetics there are aspects of the hybrid process that have proved to be difficult, and Malouf illustrates this negotiation. The characters encounter difficulties concerning the hybrid process, such as space and dark knowledge, and deal with them through border crossings. In some ways Malouf is portraying a possible reconciliation to the challenges of “lives chafing.”

By way of conclusion I wish to draw on my own experience when I in the beginning of the year visited Tanzania and met a man named Kefa. He was raised in the nomadic, ironically indicating borderless, Masaai culture, but he is now, as a guide, experiencing a cultural conflict, when mixing his childhood culture with the urban Tanzanian culture where he now lives and the western culture that he meets through working with tourists. He was very clear on the fact that this was a difficult mixture and when I asked him which culture he would have chosen if he could only have one, he answered without hesitation: “Masaai.

Original is always best.” His statement is not only drawing doubt regarding hybridity, but also raises the question if even original is possible, after many years of crossings. Are the borders becoming more visual or more undetectable when we are dealing with them on a day to day basis? If original and pure are in fact best, we will always be forced to live with the binaries of “right” and “wrong,” resulting in a constant continuation of expressing one’s distinctive culture, and consequently, creating borders and an increasing sense of otherness.





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