



# **An interdisciplinary project on the post-colonial novel *Remembering Babylon***

***ENG-3993***

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Education should be based on the view that all persons are created equal and that human dignity is inviolable. It should confirm the belief that everyone is unique; that each can nourish his own growth and that individual distinctions enrich and enliven our world. Education should foster equality between the sexes and solidarity among groups and across borders. It should portray and prove knowledge as a creative and versatile force, vigorous both for personal development and for humane social relations. (*K-06, Core curriculum, 10*)

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My motivation for choosing an Australian novel for my final thesis dates back to the year of 2006, when I visited Australia for the first time. A memorable two months that would become a great source of inspiration for my choice of education. In the fall of 2011, I took a course called “Colonial –and Post-Colonial discourses” instructed by Professor Gerd Bjørhovde, where I was introduced to the beautiful novel by David Malouf, “Remembering Babylon”; a literary meeting which marks a turning point and serves as an epiphany in my educational career. A number of thoughts and ideas sprang to my head; this novel would form the basis for my thesis! The moving story of the ambiguous character Gemmy, intertwined with the stories of the British settlers, evoked an urge to interrogate the country’s colonial past and its post-colonial identity of the present day. The many different aspects of colonialism are artistically encapsulated through the powerful and vivid use of poetic language throughout the novel. My fascination for the country, its people and its history made me additionally eager to explore the novel in more depth. It is also somehow very symbolic that my educational “journey” ends where it initiated; with my predilection for Australia and its distinctive features.

## Thesis

My objective of this thesis is to do a scrutiny of the post-colonial novel *Remembering Babylon* and investigate in which ways the novel could form the basis of an interdisciplinary project on British colonialism in the two subjects English and History at upper secondary school, VG2. Embedded in the layers of history and emerging as a major theme in *Remembering Babylon* is the sense of *identity*. Central to how we relate and understand the colonial experience of the characters in the novel this theme will be explored in depth and will function as a connective thread throughout my thesis.

## Introduction

*Remembering Babylon* is a highly acclaimed novel written by the Australian author David Malouf and was first published in 1993. The novel was received with much enthusiasm by its audience and critics, both in Australia and overseas. According to the British Council of Literature, the novel was nominated for several prizes, and did also collect some; it was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction and won the first International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 1996, as well as the Commonwealth Writers Prize. The novel takes a view of Australia's colonial past, vividly portrayed through a group of British settlers' first meeting with the vast country and its Aboriginal history. The story revolves around Gemmy, the half British, half Aboriginal boy, who has lived half his life growing up as a street boy in the British Isles and the other half living among an Aboriginal tribe in Australia's outback. Through omniscient narration the story is portrayed through the eyes of the British settlers and the main protagonist Gemmy. In an attempt to reconstruct his white identity Gemmy abandons the tribe as he goes living with the group of British settlers. His life takes a new direction as he finally dares to cross the border that has separated him from the settler community which he for a longer period of time has kept under close supervision. However, Gemmy's vision of himself as still being white is unfortunately not mirrored by the British settlers' view of him and makes him a victim of repression and discrimination in the settlement. Since the reader is invited to investigate the minds of both Gemmy and the settlers the reader is allowed to view the story from several different angles and is therefore also provided with a deeper historical and contextual understanding. In the same way as history never provides us with just one truth, Malouf intentionally chooses to approach the story from different points of view. *Remembering Babylon* primarily addresses issues concerned with the impacts of colonialism and how the different aspects of colonialism affect the human psyche and gradually change one person's or a group of people's sense of belonging. From having a strong sense of identity, shaped by history, environment and a feeling of belonging, central characters in the novel gradually experience a loss of identity, - national, cultural and social. In their meeting with the new and unfamiliar, they gradually lose touch with their old self and unconsciously develop new identities. The uncanny sensation of cultural alienation causes emotional conflicts at the same time as it over time helps them adapt to their new existence. The characters of Malouf's novel all share geographical roots and are culturally jointed, but apart from that they are individuals of different backgrounds, with a distinguished emotional life and who all have had their different reasons for migrating to Australia. If consulting

history books, there is a chance that you might find a generalized description of “the white settler” in where he or she is referred to as a member of a group fostering the same values. This generalization collides with the individual experiences of the settlers which could differ substantially. Through telling these different characters` story, Malouf views the colonization process from several angles, and illuminates the fact that members of a seemingly homogenous group may experience the same situation differently from one another. The strong feeling of being a misfit which characterizes the neither-white-nor-black character Gemmy may be said to mirror the settlers` experience of having lost their sense of self in their meeting with the new, strange country and its alien culture. The overwhelming feeling of not belonging which affects both Gemmy and the settlers runs as a connective thread throughout the story and evokes a string of questions revolving around the ageless theme of *identity*.

*Remembering Babylon* captures my interest in numerous ways, but my real fascination for this novel I would argue lies in its agelessness. The novel is portraying the past but simultaneously it calls forth questions that emerge just as relevantly for the present day and the future as it does for the past: *Who am I? Where is my place in the world?* I believe that the way in which the novel discusses identity formations, - would appeal to many young students. In the transitional stage between young adult and adult, the sense of self changes and issues concerning one`s identity emerge. The novel`s portrayal of the conflict between the two opposing groups, the white settlers and the Aborigines, also sheds light on current issues relating to indigenous groups living in the outskirts of the modernized world, which still today, experience much condemnation. This does to some extent also include the treatment of the Sami population of Norway, and makes *Remembering Babylon* a novel additionally interesting to teach in the Norwegian classroom.

As a future teacher of both English and history, I soon captured interest for incorporating the novel into an interdisciplinary project in VG2. By combining my two areas of academic competence in my thesis I wish to explore in which ways *Remembering Babylon* could work as an inspiring source making my students want to engage in the larger universe of literature. As history often serves as basis for fictional literature I believe that history class could provide a good starting point as to ignite an interest for the novel. When introducing the students to a narrative with a historical framing to it the educational effect proves to stretch far beyond the teaching of language skills. By portraying the historical past of colonial Australia through the experiences of the novel`s characters, Malouf`s literary master piece

*Remembering Babylon* demonstrates how the two fields of literature and history interconnect with one another.

As concerns English as a school subject, one important distinction is made between K-06 and previous educational teaching plans which is worth noticing; its curriculum is separated from that of foreign languages and it now constitutes a separate unit within the common core subjects. However, English is of course still considered a foreign language in the Norwegian school, and in my thesis I will be referring to English as a foreign - and second language.

As stated in K-06 and the national educational plan in Programme for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies, English must be recognized as much more than only a language subject. A central objective of the English subject is also to expand the cultural competence, which to a large extent comprises the field of history:

In addition to learning the English language, this subject will also contribute insight into the way we live and how others live, and their views on life, values and cultures. Learning about the English-speaking world will provide a good basis for understanding the world around us and how English developed into a world language. Literature in English, from nursery rhymes to Shakespeare's sonnets, may instill a lifelong joy of reading and provide a deeper understanding of oneself and others.

Further, K-06 states that English as school subject shall contribute to shape a society in which race biases are less pronounced and a broader tolerance of people of different cultural backgrounds is practiced:

Communicative skills and cultural insight can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between people with different cultural backgrounds. In this way linguistic and cultural competence contributes to the all-round personal development and fosters democratic commitment and a better understanding of responsible citizenship.

Through developing a literary competence in the foreign language classroom, students are allowed to acquaint themselves with new perspectives on life as well as expanding their cultural and historical knowledge. This should all speak for the benefit of the literature's place in the English subject in the Norwegian school. However, according to Elin Vestli's article "Fra sokkel til klasserom – Litteraturens plass i fremmedspråksundervisningen", the situation in Norwegian class rooms proves otherwise. Vestli argues that literature in foreign language classes in the Norwegian school is given less priority than standardized textbooks. (10-11)

Unfortunately, I personally believe that many teachers may underestimate the educational effect of teaching literature. Viewed within in the larger context, literature is a window in which you are made able to investigate the world through. In his book on literary didactics, *Litterær forståelse*, Åsmund Henning argues that from our first literary encounter in early childhood we are provided with cognitive and emotional perspectives on life, serving as a set of tools which make it easier for us to interpret and understand our own world. (*Litterær forståelse*, 38) To underscore his point, Henning refers to the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who stresses the point that humans, similar to the structure of the narrative, have a fundamental need of structuring life through time; with a beginning, a mid and an end. That is why human identity, the way in which we experience and perceive it, is considered a told identity. We humans create an identity, our identity, by mirroring the pattern of literature. The narrative does not only tell one person`s story, but ties together a series of stories, different persons and conflicting attitudes, related to a certain period, or amount of time. Further, Ricoeur argues that the identity of the narrative must be interpreted as an expression of the protagonist`s identity. In this manner, we can relate ourselves to that same process, by which our own identity like the one of the protagonist will be part of an ongoing and unfinished story which keeps changing its character as we encounter new situations through life; episodes occur, actions are taken and decisions are being made. (*Litterær forståelse*, 40) Serving as a gateway to the producing of knowledge of one`s own and of others cultures, the impact of literature should not be trivialized, but recognized, which must be done by devoting it more space in the classroom.

In *K-06*, students are to a larger extent than in the previous national educational plan of *L-97*, encouraged to produce knowledge, and not only reproduce it, which challenges their mindset differently than it used to. Unfortunately, this is not always mirrored by the teacher`s choice of curriculum. Standardized textbooks may serve as a fruitful source in class, but it should not be on the expense of “authentic” literature. Textbooks are providing the students with short texts portraying historical events, articles and poetry, often supplemented by straightforward questions and assignments of a predictable character. In comparison, the classical fictional literature is almost non-existent in the Norwegian foreign language class room. According to Vestli, it seems to be a tendency that teachers who teach foreign languages prefer textbooks to “authentic” fictional literature, simply because it is the easier choice. (*Fra sokkel til klasserom*, 10) Many teachers find it a too demanding task applying whole novels in class. This I would like to challenge. To bridge this gap I am convinced that as a teacher you will

have to pick literature that has something special to it, literature that you know well and which inspires you on a personal level. I would argue that if choosing literatures which have made an impact on you, you will have a much better chance of creating a fascination for literature with your students.

Trying to explain the absence of literature in class, Vestli points to the wide gap between the literature taught in higher education and the literature which teachers at lower educational levels are expected to teach their students; this distance makes it difficult for many teachers to put theory into effect. The literature students are introduced to at university must in my opinion match a higher level of difficulty than most of the literatures the adolescents are exposed to at upper secondary school. Still I find it possible to use much of the literature I have had to explore at the University at a lower educational level, it is only a question of *how*. Having this in mind, my task will be to find suitable ways of making use of my competence within the field of English literature which will improve the literary competence of my students. My target will also be to make them feel passionate about what they read; which I believe is the key to understand and become fond of fictional literature. What I find the hardest about choosing longer novels to read at upper secondary school is that it is supposed to be challenging but at the same time not discouraging. That is a fine line which the teacher needs to take into close consideration when choosing the narrative text: *Remembering Babylon* is approximately 180 pages long, which to some students may seem much, to others manageable. Some would conceive its language as being too demanding at this level of education. The level of difficulty though, - I would argue, necessitates the student to expand his/hers vocabulary and historical knowledge as well as developing his/hers ability of reflection. When reading a novel of this caliber, it requires the teacher to adjust the levels of difficulty depending on each student's skills and learning abilities.

My main aim of teaching history is to make the students understand that the object of history concerns themselves just as much as it concerns others, and does not only belong to the past but also represents continuity. History is source to all the choices we make, on a personal level as well as in questions of international and domestic affairs: We always look to the past to avoid repeating the errors that previously have been made. The intention of the history subject is not that the students should have to learn every little detail of the British colonial history by the heart but rather that they learn to reflect upon issues with which people of a different age were confronted. The reason for interrogating history is not to bore ourselves with the past, but to understand history as evidential of the presence. The scarcely visible

footprints of our ancestors have afflicted our sense of identity in the same manner as ours will mark the identity of future generations. By acknowledging history as an on-going process rather than viewing it in a condensed space of time and place the aim is that the students shall become more conscious of the fact that we are all active participants of history; a vital aspect in the teaching of history captured in the educational plan of history in K-06, highlighted underneath:

The history subject shall contribute to increasing understanding of relations between the past, present and future, and provide insight into the thoughts, lives and actions of people during different time epochs and cultures. Awareness of history provides the basis for reflection on one's own value choices. [...] The history subject can have great impact on how pupils understand and perceive themselves and society, and on how each person creates his or her own identity and belongingness with others. [...] Historical insight can contribute to better understanding of contemporary affairs, and to understanding that each person is part of a historical process and part of creating history. *K-06, History – common core subject in programmes for general studies (1)*

When I was teaching history during my two periods of practical training, I found that many students regarded history dull and something that did not concern them, distant from their reality. I was not very surprised by their negative attitude when discovering the teaching methods their teachers applied in class. They were told to read chapters from a textbook, and asked to answer questions from the same book; questions of a character which I would regard as very little challenging. Both periods of practical training coincided with my year at the practical pedagogical education, and in addition to pedagogy I took two courses that year; English and History didactics. During this year I was introduced to a range of possibilities within the field of teaching and made to explore how to inspire my students by using different methods of teaching, methods that I never had been exposed to myself during my many years of schooling. Being an idealistic student, my ambition was to transform my students' attitude towards the history subject; but I soon realized that the task I had set for myself was unrealistic. I tried to visualize myself in the role of a freshly graduated teacher, and decided that I would have to choose specific areas within the subject that I wanted to concentrate on and in where I could be giving priority to the time-consuming methods, and in other cases allow myself to utilize simpler material for reading and solving questions.

Introducing *Remembering Babylon* as an instrument to understand history serves my intention of challenging the students' fixed way of thinking about history. By inviting the students to involve themselves in some character's lives of a narrative, I believe that their approach to

history may change as they are given different perspectives on history and historical events. Compared to how history more commonly and traditionally has been taught in school, addressing a historical topic through a novel emerges as a more creative way of approaching the subject. Compared to standardized history textbooks, fictional characters of a novel who represent people who might have existed in the past, more easily manage to bring out empathy in the reader. There is a great difference between reading about British settlers in a history book and to actually get involved in their lives, like the students may do in David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*; by knowing their names, visualizing their appearance and involving themselves in the characters' emotional life students may grow an intimate knowledge of the side effects of colonialism. Its narrative form proves very different from the standardized textbooks which have earmarked the history subject for so many years, and as a mean to vary the teaching of history the novel could serve as a didactical tool. I believe that this way of interpreting history, using the English language and the Australian colonial history as points of departures, adds an inspiring dimension to the teaching of both subjects, which would benefit the students in several ways. The competence aims in both English and history which I have chosen for my thesis and which I mainly will be treating in the last chapter all complements each other and reinforces the arguments that I have made this far. The overreaching competence aim, which serves as framework and objective of the didactical approach of my thesis, expects the student to immerse him - or herself in a literary work from an English speaking country: "The student should be able to present a major in-depth project with a topic from English literature and culture and assess the process".

Through engaging in an in-depth analysis of the engrossing novel *Remembering Babylon*, this thesis will serve as an arena in which I aim to explore different methods of teaching the novel. As basis for my analysis, I will start by presenting the author and examine the genre and important key-terms relating to it. An insight into Australia's colonial past proves additionally essential as concerns our understanding of the novel and is on that basis provided a separate chapter of scrutiny and discussion.

## 1.1 Introducing the author: David Malouf

### 1.1.1 Literary background

David Malouf is Australian, but is commonly presented as half Australian and half Lebanese. His mixed background is often pointed to by critics and reviewers, interpreted as one explanation of his novels revolving around questions of identity. However, these are assumptions which I will not be able to develop any further in this thesis. But when scrutinizing the national history of Malouf's mother country, which makes the background material and point of departure in *Remembering Babylon*, - issues relating to the construction of a post-colonial, national identity surface as a central aspect and may explain why the theme of identity proves symptomatic of so many of his novels. Malouf is considered a highly talented writer, - and in addition to be writing novels he also writes short stories, poetry, non-fiction, libretto, fiction and drama. The post-colonial theme of identity is not only evident in *Remembering Babylon* but also defines many of his other novels, like; *Fly Away Peter* (1982) *The Great World* (1990), *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* (1996), *Dream Stuff* (2000) Malouf's authorship must be therefore be viewed in light of the nations over two hundred year-long identity process, which has marked him as an author.

### 1.1.2 Agency: the "Crisis of identity"

When Malouf wrote *Remembering Babylon* in the early 1990's, he introduced a whole string of questions concerning the national, Australian identity stretching generations back in time, but which even in today's Australia, - more than two hundred years after Captain Philip Cook raised Britain's flag at Sydney cove, proves to be an issue of topical interest. Both during and after the period of colonization, Australia has suffered from severe identity issues which have affected the cultural development up till present day. When discussing identity in relation to Australian nationality, there are a many aspects to consider. Firstly, there is the aboriginal population, secondly, the British convicts/settlers, and thirdly, the new wave of Asian immigrants. Situated far from Europe but close to Asia, the progeny of the first settlers who came over from the British Isles who reside in today's Australia express a feeling of uncertainty about the country's future. As Australian politics over the past decades has become friendlier to Asia, Australia has seen an increase in Asian immigrants which frightens

many white Australians who fear that the growing Asian population will have a negative impact on the western-oriented, - Australian culture. By white Australians, the Asian immigrants have been criticized for neglecting the Australian culture, which they seem to have little interest in adapting to. Lately, the absence of a unified, Australian identity has been referred to as the “crisis of identity”. It describes the challenges which Australia is facing as it is rapidly developing into a multicultural nation with a mixed population of Aborigines, white Australians and Asians. The term also refers to the experience of the European settlers who underwent a personal crisis of identity in their meeting with the new continent, as well as the Aborigines who experienced much the same in their meeting with the western culture which was forced upon them.

### 1.1.3 Australia as the “other place”

In an interview with Jennifer Levasseur and Kevin Rabalais, Malouf is questioned about his relation to Australia as the “other place”, which proves a reoccurring topic in his works, also in *Remembering Babylon*: “Australia as an “other” place is a theme in your books. What does writing from and about this “other place” mean to you?” (172)

There`s a sense, even among the Australians, that it has always been the other place – the other place that we`re trying to bring ourselves home to. Australians recognize in my books an attempt to finally settle the place. The physical settling has already happened, of course, but there is another settling that has to take place in an interior way, spiritual and symbolic. Quite frankly, the whole reconciliation process, the way we relate ourselves to indigenous people, which in the last twenty years has become increasingly important to Australians, is part of that process. It`s partly a recognition that the aborigines relate to the land may be helpful to us in finally relating to ourselves. By taking it inside us and inhabiting it imaginatively as well as physically. People make more of the notion of exile in my work than I intended, but there is often a sense among us that Australia is both home and not home. This is common in places where the language is not the language which arose naturally out of the landscape. Language has to be applied to the landscape in a way that doesn`t fit it. This makes us very conscious about language and how it works, but also how we ourselves fit. (“Public Dreaming. An interview with David Malouf, ”172, 173)

As a concluding comment, Malouf points to the Australian past, referring to it as a gaping wound which is no longer inevitable. Malouf also remarks that Australian writing has seen a slowly evolving change over the past fifty years. The literary voice has taken on a new form, by which it is trying to speak for an interior world that people have not always wanted to

speaking openly about. Through works of imaginative re-creations post-colonial literatures endeavor to heal Australia's soul by coming to terms with its dual national identity. ("Public Dreaming. An interview with David Malouf," 173)

## 2 Approaching the novel: through post-colonial theory

In my presentation of the novel I have already stated that David Malouf is a post-colonial writer and that *Remembering Babylon* is a post-colonial novel, but most importantly, how could this be argued? Exactly which features does it possess which makes it post-colonial? These questions require a closer scrutiny of *post-colonial theory* as well as an interpretation of the term, and will be succeeded by an inquiry of the term *post-colonial literature*.

Considering that post-colonial theory is a widely debated field involving a great number of theorists, I have selected a few acclaimed theorists whose arguments will form the basis of this chapter's discussion. My main focus will be to explore the acknowledged Indian critic Homi Bhabha's influential theories in which important key terms of post-colonial literature are presented, and argue their relevance for my interpretation of the novel and their validity in class. In addition to the wide known Australian trio Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* and *Post-colonial studies, The key concepts* I will also employ Childs and Williams' *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* as basis for my discussions. Summing up the larger issues of post-colonial culture, all three works provide guidance of much substance. Through exploring a wide range of post-colonial texts and theories, both works illuminate the main characteristics of post-colonial literary theory and will make the fundament for my discussion.

### 2.1 What is post-colonial theory?

Post-colonial theory works as a collective term and umbrella of different theories developed by a variety of philosophers, writers and anthropologists. Primarily concerned with the cultural legacy of colonial rule, the objective of post-colonial theory is to scrutinize the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. In an attempt to explain why and how post-colonial theory first originated, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point to the increasing need for developing theoretical models which were adequate to discuss the characteristic features of post-colonial literature. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue: "The idea of "post-colonial literary theory" emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing. European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of

“the universal””’. (*The Empire Writes Back*: 11) As the interest of post-colonial literature enhanced different theories addressing the same issues merged into one common theoretical platform; post-colonial theory.

### 2.1.1 Applying post-colonial theory in class

By examining some key ideas which all descend from post-colonial theory I aim to apply the ideas which prove the most pertinent in relation to the novel when conducting a character analysis of *Remembering Babylon* in the fourth chapter. The analysis in turn, will serve as basis for the fifth and final chapter of my thesis, which is devoted to discuss in which ways to employ *Remembering Babylon* in class when approaching the novel from the perspective of post-colonial theory. I will not apply one specific model of post-colonial theory to my analysis, but investigate those key concepts which prove the most valid in relation to *Remembering Babylon*.

When doing an in-depth character analysis of a novel, the angle which the novel is presented from shows crucial and must coincide with the novel's context. By introducing the students to post-colonial theory as a point of departure, the students will be provided with a set of guidelines which the way I perceive it may assist them developing a more profound understanding of the novel. Through using post-colonial theory as a backdrop for the analysis, the students are made able to explore the novel in a more challenging, but also, inspirational way. When applying the element of theory to the analysis, it could make the less structured students perceive the task more feasible; providing them with a concrete framework and a set of lucid directions.

By utilizing post-colonial key-terminology as guidelines when approaching the novel, the students are invited to view the novel from a socio-historical perspective which in my opinion adds a critical dimension to the reading experience. By employing conceptual devices in class I think that the students will engage more profoundly in the text. The key concepts of post-colonial theory, all dealing with the complex issue of the *colonial identity*, adequately intertwine with the competence aims of the history subject, where students are asked to investigate the relationship between conflicting identities which manifested itself during the time of colonization. This implies that possessing knowledge of post-colonial theory is not only advantageous to learners of literature but those of history in just as great degree.

## 2.2 What is post-colonial literature?

Having sorted out the main characteristics of post-colonial theory, the term *post-colonial literature* requires an explication. “What are post-colonial literatures?”, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin ask. If considering only the semantic meaning of the term, the term post-colonial literature could easily be misinterpreted as a restricted label only reserved for the literature which was written in the wake of the colonial power’s withdrawal from the colonies, in the period after independence has been obtained. (*The Empire Writes Back*, 1) Holding such connotations, the term must be regarded as being a somewhat misleading, considering that the field of post-colonial literature embodies literature written both during and after the time of colonization.

Traditionally, world history has been viewed from the perspective of the Eurocentric Western culture. The pre-eminence of the European rendering of history proves evidential also in the field of fictional literature, in where supposedly “authentic” books portray a reality alien from the one that the native people and the new settlers of the colonial country identifies with. When written from a European perspective, history is defined by “us” and not “the other”, which makes us adhere to a biased view of history, an argument also supported by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*: “The map of the world can be seen as a palimpsest on which Europe has written its own dominance through the agencies of history.” (318) The agency of post-colonial literature is to embark on this problem by focusing on the feelings of estrangement viewed from the angle of “the other”, the subdued. As suggested by the title of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin’s *The Empire Writes Back*, a burning need of addressing the nations own colonial experience has arisen in the post-colonial era, in where literature has become their remedy. Written from the perspective of the unprivileged, post-colonial literature seeks to give voice to those people who formerly were silenced by the colonial powers. The post-colonial narrative tells a different story of colonization, in which it allows those whose stories have been omitted from the literary community, to share their colonial experience. Disclosing sides of colonization that previously were put a lid on, post-colonial literature proves to enlighten to our understanding of colonial history. In *Colonial & Postcolonial literature*, Elleke Boehemer defines post-colonial literature in terms of writing which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship: “To give expression to colonized experience, postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization - the myths

of power, the race classifications and the imagery of subordination.” Rather than simply being the writing which “came after” empire, Bohemer argues post-colonial literature to be a complex field dealing with a variety of conflict issues related to experiences of cultural exclusion and division under Empire. (*Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, 3)

Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin`s definition of the post-colonial literature includes all literature affected by the colonial process from the moment of colonization to the present day, and makes the literature of African countries, *Australia*, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka all post-colonial literatures. (*The Empire Writes Back*, 2) The language in which the literature is written proves additionally important to whether it is to be considered as post-colonial literature or not, and has always been a contentious issue in post-colonial studies. *The Empire Writes Back* identifies post-colonial literature as literature written in the colonial language:

*The Empire Writes back* is principally interested in literatures written in “English”, for it seems that these literatures demonstrate most clearly the political and cultural agency achieved by writers who appropriate the dominant language, transform it, and use it to reveal a cultural reality to a world audience. (*The Empire Writes Back*: 203)

### 2.3 Key terminology

As concerns terminology, the various models in which texts and traditions in post-colonial literature are discussed do according to Ashcroft intersect at a number of points comprising a long list of key-concepts; *colonialism*, *identity*, *place*, *displacement*, *hybridity*, *other(-ing)*, *ambivalence*, *language* and *mimicry* only make a few of them, but which all emerge central in post-colonial theory. (*The Empire Writes Back*, 35) The concepts I will be concentrating on are those which prove the most valid and which illuminate the post-colonial theme of identity in *Remembering Babylon* the most relevantly in relation to my analysis of it. Many of the concepts overlap and interweave in one another and are challenging to treat as separate entities when discussing. A feature common to all the post-colonial concepts protocolled above and which I intend to examine in the next section is that they originate from human being`s fundamental need for belonging and its constant search for a true identity. When viewed within the scope of the colonization process, the term identity evokes questions relating to the consequential, psychological aftermaths inflicted on the human mind as a result

of it. As the cardinal theme in post-colonial literature, identity penetrates the most prominent key-concepts pertaining to the field of post-colonial theory. Identity could be argued to be the underlying theme and touchstone in all post-colonial literature embodying a whole string of post-colonial concepts, such as; *place, displacement, otherness, ambivalence, hybridity, language and mimicry*, among numerous others.

### 2.3.1 Colonialism/Imperialism:

First, I find it relevantly to point out the difference between *colonialism* and *imperialism*, two concepts commonly mixed up. As stated by Childs and Williams, a clear distinction must be drawn between imperialism and colonialism as they represent two different methods of exercising power. They describe imperialism as follows; “the extension and expansion of trade and commerce under the protection of political, legal, and military controls”, while colonialism they refer to as the process of “the settling of communities from one country in another, usually in a conquered territory”. (*An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, 227)

### 2.3.2 Identity/Colonial Identity

In Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, the word “identity” is defined as “a person’s name or who they are [...] the qualities and attitudes that a person or a group of people have, that make them different from other people.” Within the context of postcolonial literature, identity requires a more thorough examination. The influential theorist Homi Bhabha’s contribution to the field of post-colonial theory has been target of widespread interest world over and does according to Childs and Williams center around post-colonial key-concepts such as *ambivalence, mimicry* and *hybridity*. Bhabha’s target of interest is mainly how these concepts relate to what he refers to as the *colonial identity*: In opposition to the acclaimed post-colonial theorists and author of *Orientalism*, Said, whose focus is on the differences and disparities between the colonizer and the colonized, Bhabha rather explores the points of similarity between the two groups. Bhabha argues that the manifestation of the stereotypes in which the white is regarded as being the oppressor and the black is being the oppressed leads to colonial subjugation of both the colonizer and the colonized. The crash of cultures affects both parties, and is according to Bhabha a two-way street of which both the

colonizers and the colonized share the misfortune of a having their identity turned into a displaced, *colonial identity*. (*An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, 122) Moreover, Childs and Williams point out that Bhabha argues the colonial identity to provoke a feeling of disturbance, synonymous to a “nervous condition” and the uncanny state of ambivalence; a state of mind that he argues to be the place in where the *hybrid identity* comes into existence. (123)

### 2.3.3 Hybridity

Formerly the word hybridity had a different connotation than what we associate with the word today, and was generally used to describe the crossing of different species of animals. Lately, the word has become closely associated with Homi Bhabha and the cultural sphere, and is more commonly used to describe the phenomenon of two different cultures`mergence into one in-between culture. Regarded as a state of in-between-ness, hybridity is frequently referred to in connection to the post-colonial term colonial identity, which addresses the colonial experience of both the colonized and the colonizers. In an interview with Times Higher Education, Bhabha himself describes hybridity in terms of: “A fraught, anxious and ambivalent condition. It is about how you survive, how you try to produce a sense of agency or identity in situations which you continually have to deal with the symbols of power and authority.” (Wallace, Jennifer “Hybrid Bhabha”) Those who are living in the gaping void between two cultures but who find it problematic and difficult to identify fully with either, become a part of what Bhabha refers to as “a Third Space”, an in-between space of hybridization. The Third Space Bhabha argues, is according to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, the space in where cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities. (*Post-Colonial Studies, The Key Concepts*, 53, 54)

### 2.3.4 Language

The validity of *language* as a key concept in post-colonial theory must be viewed within the scope of identity formations. According to Childs and Williams, Simon During argues language to be an extremely important feature of a person`s identity, revealing much information about a person. If the language embodied in a person`s identity evaporates, a

conflicting sense of identity will reveal itself. By adapting to a foreign language, an argument based on Derrida's discussion, - issues of identity will automatically arise: "In both literature and politics the post-colonial drive towards *identity* centers around *language* ... For the post-colonial to speak or write in the imperial tongues is to call forth a problem of *identity*, to be thrown into *mimicry* and *ambivalence*." (*An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, 193)

### 2.3.5 Ambivalence

Ambivalence is a key stone of Bhabha's theory and is according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's a term commonly used in post-colonial theory to explain the distressed state of mind which occurs when simultaneously attracted toward and repulsed from an object, person or action. It explains the problem which arises in the meeting of two opposing cultures whereas assumptions, habits and values of the superior culture are imposed on the "uncivilized" culture. But instead of conforming to the culture of the "civilized", an unwanted effect displays itself as the "uncivilized" takes on a condition of mimicry, not far from mockery, - which only produces uncanny copies of the colonizers. It is in this troubled relationship between the colonizer and the colonized where the condition of ambivalence is born. (*Post-Colonial Studies, The Key Concepts*, 10)

### 2.3.6 Place/Displacement

The post-colonial concepts of *place* and *displacement* are according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin of considerable importance to all the critical models of post-colonial literatures. (*The Empire Writes Back*, 35)

The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. Beyond their historical and cultural differences, place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity is a feature common to all post-colonial literatures in English. (*The Empire Writes Back*: 9)

The concern with identity has been a reoccurring issue so far in this chapter, and will continue to claim space as I now will be scrutinizing the concepts of place and displacement. It is in the encounter of the unfamiliar place that the feeling of displacement surfaces and from which the

crisis of identity derives its nourishment. In post-colonial theory the term place does not only refer to in the physical sense of the word, but also encompasses the in-between-place of the cultural third space. “It is here that the special *post-colonial crisis of identity* comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place.” (*The Empire Writes Back*, 8) To support the argument made, *The Empire Writes Back* refers to the post-colonial critic D.E.S Maxwell, whose model of post-coloniality has proved very influential within the field and could be applied to Ashcroft’s discussion on the special *post-colonial crisis of identity*. Concentrating on the disjunction between place and language, the model describes the gap between self and the physical environment which emerges when experiencing that the language that one identifies with proves inapplicable to describe the physical environment of the “new world”. The lack of an appropriate vocabulary causes difficulties addressing the unfamiliar surroundings, in which a process of alienation comes into being. In spite of their assumed superiority, British settlers in the colonies might suddenly experience their language as being very limited, causing them double trouble to identify with the new country and themselves. This example shows that there are “victims” on both sides of the colonial borderland. The feeling of alienation which marks the colonized in the meeting with the western “civilized” word, could according to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin be compared to the feeling of displacement which characterizes the colonizer’s encounter with the wilderness of the “uncivilized” world. (*The Empire Writes Back*, 23, 24) According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Maxwell suggests that it is not as simple as the colonizer being the oppressor and the colonized being the oppressed, an argument made account for in the following quotation:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labor. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. (*The Empire Writes Back*: 9)

By dismissing the obsolete view of which colonial relations through history has been regarded in terms of simple binary oppositions, such as black colonized vs. white colonizers and Third world vs. the West, - we are provided different lenses to view colonial history through.

### 2.3.7 Other (-ing):

The creation of the “other” comes from the need to create a distance between oneself and those who deviate from the norm. “The existence of others is crucial in defining what is “normal” and in locating one`s own place in the world.” (*The Post-Colonial Studies, The Key Concepts*, 154) Through addressing native people of the colonies as feeble-minded savages, The Empire established a binary separation of the colonizer and the colonized, whereas the “uncivilized” was marked as “the other”.

### 3 British colonialism in Australia – a review of history

This chapter is devoted to debate different aspects of Australia's colonial history which all relate to the novel and my objective of teaching, starting with the year of colonization: The British colonization of Australia in 1788 marks a major turning point which was to determine the future of the continent. The changes that took place over the next couple of hundred years were of a character the country never before had seen.

During the first decades of colonization, the British primarily used the colony as a place where they could deport convicts and political prisoners who they did not want to house in British prisons. Its geographical location in the Pacific Ocean, cut off from Europe and isolated from the Asian mainland, made Australia ideal for this task. Later, during the 1830s and 1840s, convicts were outnumbered by free immigrants arriving from the British Isles, who initially had been tempted by the United States but who for economic reasons migrated to Australia. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 58, 59) The arrival of free immigrants increased over the next decades; nevertheless, the Australian population never reached the great numbers that was initially hoped for. Australia kept losing immigrants to the more prosperous United States, which emerged as the better option of the two. During wartime in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this slowly rising nation experienced another backdrop when ten thousands of Australian soldiers never returned from their military missions around in Europe. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 180) This dramatically drop in population caused another obstacle to Australia's prospects of population growth.

However, the British were not the first to inhabit this enormous, continuous country, which originally was populated by the aborigines, as far back as 50.000 years ago. The arrival of the British, as Blainly points out, must have seemed very strange indeed to the aborigines who had never seen a deep-sailing ship, a pair of boots or even a person fully clothed. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 31) The first encounter between the British and the Aborigines could have been disastrous, but it was not. According to Blainly, - The British were instructed to treat the Aborigines with care and respect, and if they were to cause them any harm they would themselves be punished. This initially careful approach towards the indigenous people would in time turn more and more hostile, and the clash which eventually took place between the white and the black man was next to impossible to avoid. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 45)

Along with other imported species of animals, European sheep were introduced in the Australian outback, and this was to trigger a conflict between the British and the Aborigines that never ceased. Blainly refers to the Aborigines as the silent victims of the sheep moving further inland. Suddenly they were confronted with these puzzling intruders on the very lands they had inhabited since before the time of Adam and Eva. The Aborigines found themselves in a difficult position as they were being outmaneuvered by the sheep in areas they regarded as theirs, and started to feel threatened by the Europeans and their way of life. This conflict came to influence the relationship between the British and the Aborigines very negatively and resulted in bloody battles and animosity between the two opposing groups of people. There will always be at least two sides to a conflict, and this conflict divided the British and the Aborigines:

From one side the story was plain: Aborigines killed sheep and cattle, stole from the shepherd`s huts, murdered shepherds and hut-keepers, and occasionally ate some of the victims` flesh. On the other side the story was equally clear: White men knowingly occupied black lands, waterholes and springs, and unknowingly let their sheep and cattle trample on sacred ground. Some took Aboriginal women by force, raping them or maltreating them in other ways. A few groups of white men on horseback, some carrying the new double-barreled gun, pursued Aborigines, cornered and shot them. (A *Shorter History of Australia*, 45)

Despite the fact that many settlers regarded the Aborigines as being the lowest of the low, disliked and even feared them, many settlers also praised them for their range of skills. Blainly refers to a Captain George Grey, who in 1840, after spending years of travelling in the Australian outback among the indigenous people, described the Aborigines as people of talent: “They are as apt and intelligent as any other race of men I am acquainted with; they are subject to the same affections, appetites and passions as other men, yet in many points of character they are totally dissimilar to them.” (A *Shorter History of Australia*, 46)

Similar to what happened to indigenous people in many other colonies, the British put much effort into trying to “civilize” the Aborigines, which meant that they expected them to abandon their old ways and adapt to western values. Initially, they would have to learn how to read and write, they would have to wear clothes and they would have to accept Christianity as their religion. In fact, the Aborigines caused an unwanted problem to the British, which they did not know how to solve. Settlers on the frontier did the killing, while those sitting at the official desks, sought humane solutions. The British were split in their view of how to handle the many Aboriginal issues. While some thought they should be kept apart, others argued that

it would be for the best if the Aborigines became an integrated part of the settler community, in which they would manage more easily to adapt to the British lifestyle. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 46, 47)

While the colonial power profited from the migration from the British Islands to Australia, many migrants, on the contrary, suffered a great loss; most of the British settlers had a troublesome time adapting to their new home country. In every way, it differed from what they knew back home, and questions of identity arose. Had their identity got lost in the transition between the two countries? Settlers reacted differently to the new country; while many at first regarded Australia as hostile and strange a minority of the settlers embraced its' distinctive features, eager to explore the vast continent. Blainly claims that the contrast between the way of life on the British Isles and that of the Aborigines was perhaps the most dramatic in the world. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 23) In the light of Blainly's argument, it is no wonder that the British felt it difficult to adjust to the new country and sensed a loss of identity. Even those who felt themselves prepared for what expected them were surprised by the strangeness of Australia. It was not only new migrants who thought of Australia as strange and hostile; Blainly also argues that the majority of native-born Australians growing up in the 1860s 1870s experienced a feeling of displacement. With the constant flow of new migrants, native-born Australians were repeatedly told of their home country's strangeness. Through newspapers, poetry, novels and other books they were constantly reminded of their British legacy. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 111, 112)

Not until the end of the nineteenth century did the British migrants learn to appreciate the Australian landscape in a more open-minded manner. Blainly comments that this change in attitude partly came as a result of the spread of railways in addition to the growth of leisure which he argues to have fostered the bush picnic. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 115) Prior to that, the British were mostly concerned with importing European animals and plants; in an attempt to feel more at home. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 114) "All the time the new land was being observed, digested, inhaled. Decade by decade the unfamiliar became a trifle more familiar as poets chose the symbols and artists found the scenes which to soothe the sensation of strangeness or hostility." (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 115) The Australian climate presented itself challenging in a number of different ways, especially discouraging to many of the migrants whose occupation was farming and who were used to a colder and more stable North European climate. In addition many farmers found that their crops failed as a result of bad soil, and to many this became an annual event which inflicted great misery on the farmer

and his family. (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 97, 98, 99) The more stable climate along the coastal plains of Queensland is very different from the other regions in Australia and by the end of the nineteenth century it had gained status as the future paradise of Australia: “Pale-skinned British families stepped ashore in Brisbane, wiping the sweat from their foreheads, and went by train, horse-drawn coach or bullock dray to the virgin farms they had dreamed of.” (*A Shorter History of Australia*, 99) However, the many cheerful expectations were not always fulfilled when finally arriving at their private patch of earth allotted them by the colonial power. The process of assimilation came to affect many settlers negatively in the way in which their mental health was suffering. This feeling of mental disturbance evolving into a personal crisis of identity is portrayed through the characters of Malouf’s novel, who have come to Queensland from the British Islands, and who are all having trouble identifying with the unknown land, finding themselves on the edge of losing their sense of self.

With the arrival of the British the secure world of the Aborigines, which until that point of history had been shielded from all influence from the outside world, was forever obliterated. From primitive times, this isolated island separated from the Asian mainland had been in the hands of the Aborigines. But only in a short period of time it was turned into a westernized and industrialized nation of white people who represented everything that they did not. Since colonization it has been the topic of a hot debate which one of the two groups can lay claim to the country. As the weak point of their national history, this conflict is deeply embedded in the Australian consciousness, and will most probably be for generations. As Blainly argues, the eclipse and mistreatment of the Aborigines was tragic, but in a longer perspective it would have been impossible to protect Australia from colonizing forces from overseas:

The world’s economy and population were advancing rapidly and by the latest standards and goals the Aborigines had to be judged as poor custodians of their huge resources. They were occupying a huge resource bowl but wasting or under-using it. Today Aboriginal advocates explain that their ancestor were great and responsible custodians of nature. The other side of the coin is that they had monopolized a land that was now capable of feeding, clothing and sheltering a population many times larger. (*A Shorter History of Australia* , 51)

Furthermore, Blainly argues the world have become to be too small to permit a whole people to be set aside in a vast protected anthropological museum at a time when the world’s population kept increasing in numbers. It would deprive millions of people in Australia and other lands of the food and fibers and minerals that could be produced on their land. In the

light of Blainly`s argument, the colonization of Australia must be recognized as a necessary evil, but which never justifies the injustices committed against the Aborigines.

## 4 Analysis: *Remembering Babylon*

### 4.1 Nature: Notions of identity

Throughout the novel Malouf uses nature, in the sense of the physical world, - including landscape, flora and fauna, to describe the changes taking place within the minds of the characters. In an article by Nikos Papastergiadis; *David Malouf and Languages for Landscape: An interview*, Malouf is questioned on the symbolic role of landscape serving as a hallmark of much of his fiction, including *Remembering Babylon*:

Landscape have been shaped either to our practical uses or they`ve been shaped to our recreational uses. Landscapes reflect back and tell us how human we are and how powerful we are and tell us how powerful we are because we have made them. When those early settlers came to confront the Australian landscape, it wasn`t the hostility of extreme drought and rain that was most frightening to them, rather it was the sense that the landscape reflected nothing back at their own humanity. (84, 85)

The many metaphors on nature and descriptions of landscape as it changes which present themselves throughout the novel prove powerful as literary devices as they visualize the character`s changing sense of self. Through the portrayal of landscape central characters in *Remembering Babylon* slowly seem to move towards a new consciousness. Parallel to their gradually acceptance and appreciation of the country`s strangeness, they start to acknowledge with a sort of pleasure, that they are crossbreeds, - in-between identities, no longer marked British but something different too. Through focusing on the different aspects of nature captured in *Remembering Babylon* I will discuss the following terms deriving from post-colonial theory made account for in chapter 3; *identity, hybridity, language, ambivalence, place, displacement and other(-ing)*. As basis for my discussion I will do a character analysis of some of the most central characters, - Gemmy, Mr. Frazer, Jock Mc. Ivor, Mrs. Hutchence and Mr. Abbott, all whose identity processes are mirrored by a gradual change in their perception of landscape. Through investigating Malouf`s vivid descriptions of the Australian landscape, flora and fauna, my aim is to explore the different dimensions of identity processes that take place in the borderland of the two opposing cultures of the British and the Aborigines. I will in particular be focusing on the conflicting issues that emerge as the central characters` sense of self alters into a hybrid identity, - considered as the disturbing sense of “in-between-ness”. The problems which displayed themselves to the settlers do according to

Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin relate to the difficulties of establishing their identity in the new place, where they played a dual role: “At the same time, they act as the agents of that power, and their own identity depends in part, at least initially, on retraining their sense of difference from the “native” population. In this sense they are simultaneously both colonized and colonizer.” (*Post-Colonial Studies, The Key-Concepts*, 194) The feeling of losing one`s identity marks the characters colonial experience and emerge as a central theme in the novel.

## 4.2 Character analysis – the crossing of borders

### 4.2.1 Main protagonist – Gemmy

The day Gemmy crosses the border marks a turning-point in the settlement, and relationships between neighbors, friends and family are put to the ultimate test. Gemmy`s presence threatens the terms of unity and in the wake of his arrival a conflict between the settlers emerges and is going to change and shape the community. As the conflict evolves, central characters experience a gradually shift of consciousness. The episode where Gemmy is being visited by the two aborigines (85) and which in turn leads to the kidnapping and violation of Gemmy, marks the central turning-point of the novel. A flow of rumors, fabricated by Andy McKillopp, a former criminal who among the settlers is known for being less sympathetic, creates a growing resentment against Gemmy. While some of the characters regard Andy`s story doubtful and highly unreasonable and dissociate themselves from the abuse of Gemmy, a larger group turn to violence and give rise to the subjugation of Gemmy. But the settlers fear of what lies outside the boundaries, creates a growing fear of what lies within the boundaries as well, and with the arrival of the “black white man” (10), a menacing uneasiness of what they might learn about their own nature surfaces. Ignorance and the overwhelming fear of the unknown create a growing gap between neighbors and friends, and identity dilemmas arise.

Through the story of Gemmy, which Karin Davaney Askeland in her master thesis “David Malouf`s *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*: Identity Processes in the Postcolonial Borderland”, refers to as a tormented spirit`s story, the reader is invited into the borderline between the Europeans and the Aborigines, the colonizers and the colonized, the perceived civilized and the primitive. (Askeland, 7) The initial scene, when the three children of British descent for the very first time catch sight of Gemmy in the swamp, proves to be highly

symbolic in both the way Gemmy, the unknown creature, is portrayed, and in the way he approaches the settler community.

The stick-like legs, all knobbed at the joints, suggested a wounded water-bird, 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 know, neither one thing nor the other [...] It was a scarecrow that had somehow caught the spark of life, got down from its pole [...] (2-3)

The view of Gemmy as half a bird, half a human, and his own perception of himself as an object, suggest that Gemmy has entered a gap between two worlds, caught in the middle of two cultures. That he is described as “neither one thing nor the other” relates to the in-between-ness that illustrates Gemmy’s position between two cultures. The most obvious implication of Gemmy’s hybrid condition I would argue to be the water-bird who may be considered as a metaphor on Gemmy’s split identity. In the same way as the water-bird belongs to the elements of both water and air, Gemmy’s sense of self lies with both words of the civilized and the uncivilized.

The fence that physically separates the three children from “the land over there that was forbidden for them, [...] the no-man’s land of the swamp [...]” (2), could be interpreted as a metaphor on the colonial borderland which separates the British from the Aborigines, and proves central to how the reader understanding of Gemmy’s identity. The idea of the border is according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin a crucial concept in post-colonial studies, serving as an expression of the constructed boundaries between people, nations and individuals. (*Post-Colonial Studies, The Key Concepts*, 25) Gemmy’s positioning on the fence indicates that he is trapped in the borderline between the primitive and the civilized world and suggests a mixture of identities.

Back at the camp, Gemmy’s arrival causes bewilderment and skepticism with the settlers who cannot sort out his features. “It was a white man, though there was no way you could have known it from his look.” (3) In the crossing of two cultural spheres, Gemmy represents the creation of a third species, rooted in the space of “in-between”, which in postcolonial terminology is referred to as “the third space”. “A crowd had gathered to see this specimen of – of what?” *What was he?*” (4) Never fully accepted by the colonized or the colonizers, mentally he is living in the borderline of two completely different cultures and his identity cannot be said to be one or the other, but rather something in-between. Gemmy’s attempt at

assimilate to the ways of the settlers proves of no avail, and only reinforces their contempt for him; the sense of ambivalence that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as mimicry turns into mockery is illustrated by the feelings of trepidation which Gemmy's appearance and behavior call forth in the settlement:

They felt an urge, when he went into one of his jerking and stammering fits, to look hard at the horizon, and when that yielded not satisfaction, to give grave attention to the dust between their boots. *He was a parody of a white man.* If you gave him a word for a thing, he could after a good deal of huffing and blowing, repeat it, but the next time round you had to teach him it to him all over again. *He was imitation gone wrong,* and the mere sight of it put you wrong too, made the whole business somehow foolish and open to doubt. (35, own emphasis)

Having spent sixteen years of his life living among the indigenous people of Australia, Gemmy wish to re-enter the world of his pre-existence, as he never completely manages to find his place in the aboriginal settlement. "He was accepted by the tribe but guardedly; in the droll, half-apprehensive way that was proper to an in-between creature." (25) He adapts to the life of the Australian outback, but in the eyes of the aborigines he can never truly wash away the white part of himself. Shaped by the aboriginal culture, the settlers view Gemmy as one of the "other". "In taking on, by second nature as it were, this new language of looks and facial gestures, he had lost his white man's appearance, especially for white men who could no longer see what his looks intended, and become in their eyes black." (37) With one foot in each world, his idea of self is given to him from both sides of the borders, and he evolves a disturbed sense of self. Having spent the whole of his life trying to find his place in the world, Gemmy becomes an object of his own identity process, - a sense of self reflected by his first words uttered in his meeting with the British settlers: "Do not shot, it shouted. I am a B-b-british object!" (3) Not only does Gemmy see himself as an object, but Lachlan too, who refers to him by using the neuter "it", and the degrading word creature, which suggests a hybrid, in-between identity. This episode is according to Askeland symbolic for the emerging sense of de-humanization and objectification inflicted by colonialism which effects Gemmy's process of hybridization. (Askeland, 30)

The settlers view Gemmy as a threat, who is challenging their "whiteness" and European nature. As Gemmy becomes a part of their everyday life, they start to question different aspects of their existence, wondering if they truly can lose their identity. It. To them, Gemmy is the representation of the loss of self, drifting along the lines of the dark and the unknown.

Looking at Gemmy, seeing how much he has changed, they start to fear in which way the foreign continent may come to affect *their* sense of self. (Askeland, 36) “Could you lose it? Not just language, but it. *It*. For the fact was, when you looked at him sometimes he was not white. His skin might be but not his features. The whole cast of his face gave him the look of *Them*.” (36) – “The others”. Gemmy becomes the victim of social stigma born out of fear. The settlers do not value the qualities Gemmy has gained through living with the Aborigines, but rather, as Askeland points out, focus on the loss of his *western* features. (Askeland, 36) I would argue that Gemmy never loses his identity, but embody the cultures of the two different worlds into his sense of identity, creating a new sense of self. In the crossing of borders Gemmy develops a double consciousness and hybrid nature. Identity is not something absolute, and as the environmental conditions changes, Gemmy`s identity undergoes changes.

When re-entering the white society, Willett, who represents the shadow of his white past, soon catches up with him. In his first encounter with the British settlers at the beginning of the novel, he is encouraged to share the story of his life, which he has spent the last sixteen years trying to forget. Unpleasant memories surface as he tries to memorize his past. In the wake of this episode, the phantoms of Gemmy`s past are all set free and start to haunt him. All the years that he spent living among the Aborigines have kept the ghosts at a distance, but when rediscovering his white identity, they re-emerge. In his effort of conforming to the white society, its language and its culture, Gemmy enters a condition of hybridization and ambivalent feelings ignite. Treated as an outcast and haunted by his miserable childhood experiences Gemmy reaches a point of no return. Tired of being discriminated and marginalized, Gemmy is destined to gain control back over his life; pinned down in the form of a document, in the hands of Mr. Abbot. The only solution to dispose of his past is to destruct the seven pieces of papers on which the story of his life is written, which Gemmy believes are responsible of having brought the misfortune upon him.

He felt, as he followed the white ribbon that led to the settlement, that he had lost all weight in the world; his feet made so little impression in the dust that it was as if he had not passed [...] He was going to claim back his life; to find the sheets of paper where all that had happened to him had been set down in the black blood that had so much power over his own: The events, things, people too, that sprang to life in them [...] They were drawing him to his death. (160)

The way in which language shapes our perception of the world makes it an instrument of much power. In *Remembering Babylon* language emerges as one optional way of interpreting

the colonial relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Provided some random sample of sheets by the schoolmaster, Gemmy he leaves the school totally unaware of the fact what he actually brings with him is a children`s writing and not the printed story of his life that he so eagerly wishes to have erased. In relation to this episode, Askeland stresses the importance of communication through language, and argues that the language confusion that Gemmy experiences, places him in an ambivalent, marginal state between cultures.

(Askeland, 31) This molestation of Gemmy, who is an illiterate, symbolizes the inferior position of the Aborigines compared to that of the colonial power and could be interpreted as an expression of the power which still remains in the hands of the colonizers, even if Gemmy tries to escape it. (Askeland, 40) Language is a powerful device, and the power language possess can be compared to that of a weapon. If imposing a language on a people it will alter their sense of identity as language may be said to form an extremely important feature of the sense of self. Language creates a border between cultures in which it highlights the hierarchical order of the colonizer and the colonized, represented here by the different positions of Gemmy and Mr. Abbott.

Gemmy has an involuntary influence on the settler`s identity processes. In their meeting with Gemmy, central characters experience that their mentality change, and learn to reflect upon the richness of the land and their personal nature. In this sense, *Remembering Babylon* breaks with the conventional view of the colonizer as the oppressor and the colonized as the oppressed. By making the unknown familiar, characters overcome personal boundaries which able them to connect with the land, and come into contact with the spiritual and full self.

When they realize that Gemmy does not represent a threat, but rather enrich their understanding of life, the overriding fear of losing their western-ness, *it*, is not that overwhelming anymore. As an important part of Gemmy`s identity process, Gemmy experiences a moment of epiphany at the end of the novel. In the same way in which Malouf uses images of landscape to describe Gemmy when reborn into the Aboriginal society earlier in the novel, does Gemmy`s perception of landscape here serve as a symbolical expression of the shedding of his white identity as he is re-entering the Aboriginal society in where he feels a stronger sense of belonging:

He walked swiftly now over the charred earth and was himself crumbling. If he did not find the word soon that would let enter here, there would be nothing left of him but a ghost of heat, a whiff as he passed of fallen ash. A drop of moisture sizzled on his tongue; the word – he had found it. *Water*. Slow dribbles of rain began to fall. He was entering rain country. Soon the sky let down tangled streamers, and he was walking

now in a known landscape; all the names of things, as he met them, even in their ashen form, shone on his breath, sprang up in their real lives about him, succulent green, soft paw and eyeball, muscle tense under fur. (164-165)

#### 4.2.2 The British settlers

The many contrastive characters in this novel represent different human qualities and values. Some of the characters do not approve of the way Gemmy is being treated and distance themselves from the discrimination of Gemmy. From being indifferent and prejudiced against the Australian indigenous people, they gradually undergo a shift in attitude. In order to free themselves from the power of the community, they gradually manage to open their eyes to the beauty of nature and become perceptive of the idea of a fuller self and a more spiritual life. Jock McIvor, Mrs. Hutchence, Mr. Frazier and Mr. Abbott are all examples of characters who in different ways dare to break with cultural tradition and challenge social conventions, while Jim Sweetman, - among the majority of the novel's other characters, rather fit the stereotype of the European colonizer, traditionally viewed as oppressive, violent and fiercely. By learning to accept Gemmy's many qualities and his two natures, the central characters referred to above gradually break through to new knowledge and manage to overcome the boundaries that exist between the self and "the other".

#### 4.2.3 Mr. Frazer

His character is of great significance to the story, and by sharing of the insight he gradually gains throughout the story, crucial aspects of the colonization process are illuminated. After having his moment of revelation later in the novel, Mr. Frazer uses his notebook to express his thoughts on cultural adjustment in which he refers to it as a natural part one person's identity process when approaching a foreign country. The high level of reflection disclosed in his notes in chapter 14 (117) contrasts the narrow-mindedness which characterizes his mindset at the beginning of the novel. When we are first introduced to Mr. Frazer he reveals little apprehension for the Australian nature's spectacles as if blinded by his white Europeanness. He shows much interest and care for Gemmy from the start, and his fondness of Gemmy is growing parallel to his evolving affection for the features of nature. From the beginning Gemmy experiences a sense of easiness in Mr. Frazer's presence, and a special relationship

evolves between the two characters. Gemmy can sense that Mr. Frazer possesses some qualities that the other settlers lack, which allows him to read his mind: “He ought to have been intimidated by Mr. Frazer, the minister – most of the others were; [...] But Gemmy, from that first day at the school house, had contributed to Mr. Frazer a gift of understanding which somehow saw right through to what he wanted to express, and often enough before he himself knew it.” (59) When they go botanizing together the first times, Mr. Frazer’s foreignness is accurately portrayed. Wearing his European blinkers on, Mr. Frazer investigates the landscape shallowly, and the animated landscape which displays itself to Gemmy remains hidden to his (Mr. Frazer’s) senses, but unfolds to him; little by little:

So when he and the minister, half-crouching, pushed in under the overhanging boughs of a gully or trudged up a rocky, sun-scorched slope to where they could see, north and west, all the country he was at home in, he was moving through a world that that was alive for him and dazzling; some of it even in the deepest shade throwing off luminous flares, so that he had to squint and cover his eyes, and all of it crackling and creaking and swelling and bursting with growth; but he cast the light only in patches for Mr. Frazer, leaving the rest unclosed. (61)

Mr. Frazer’s limited understanding of the Australian nature’s peculiarities is additionally emphasized as he passes close to the Aborigines without noticing them. Though Mr. Frazer is a character of much empathy, I interpret this as a symbolical expression of the disregarding behavior which the colonial power exercised in its meeting with the Aborigines, treating them in ways as if they did not exist. In spite of the fact that they inhabited the country a long time before the colonial power did, it was the Aborigines who were treated as “the other”, expected to remain in the background, neither visible nor audible. In this manner Mr. Frazer contrasts Gemmy, who is capable of both seeing them as well as feeling their presence in the surroundings when they are physically absent:

Once or twice on these outings he (Gemmy) saw blacks who were unfamiliar to him standing in the frozen in the bush, every muscle alert. [...] Mr. Frazer saw nothing at all. Even when they were meant to be seen, he did not distinguish them from the surrounding vegetation or the play of light and shadow between the light.” (61)

Gemmy becomes Mr. Frazer’s loyal botanizing companion and notices with satisfaction that Mr. Frazer slowly breaks through to a new, previously hidden knowledge, as if he too now possesses a bit of the physical environments Gemmy himself forms a part of. When breaking free from the power of his books, he finally manages to identify the *spirit* of what Gemmy has

been trying show him. (118) This moment of realization proves to be the turning point of Mr. Frazer`s life, which will come to color his future beings in Brisbane portrayed later in the novel, when indulging in political affairs as concerns the rights of the Aborigines.

He turns back a moment to his notebook, and what he sees is no longer a wild place but orchards in which, arranging themselves in rows, wild plum and fig and apple have moved into the world of cultivation, and in the early morning light, workers with the sun on their backs hang from ladders and reach out to pluck them. (120)

Allowing himself to become affected by the unfamiliar and strange his character represents the pioneers of British settlers who were the first to cross the cultural barrier. He is also missioned to influence his environment with the cultural insight he has gained through personal experience. Mr. Frazer argues that instead of trying to incorporate “the other”, into European values, the settlers have to change their way of thinking. In order to feel home and to gain an intimate understanding of the new continent, they have to embrace Australia and it`s landscape, people and culture. Through poetic and powerful language, Malouf portrays the awakening of the Mr. Frazer. At the beginning of the novel he shows little interest in what he negatively refers to as “the scrub country on the far side of the creek” (59) but during the novel Mr. Frazer learns to pay tribute to every little constituent of the Australian landscape, flora and fauna. Mr. Frazer`s two page-note emerges decisively important as a mean to gain a deeper understanding of the novel, but in shortage of space I will not be able to quote the letter in full length, citing only a short extract of it:

We have been wrong to see this continent as hostile and infelicitous [...] It is habitable already [...] We must rub our eyes and look again, clear our minds of what we are looking for to see what is there. [...] 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? (118, 119)

Through exploring the new continent Mr. Frazer insists that the settlers will all have to begin by exploring their own identities as well as acknowledging Gemmy for having undergone a process of adaption which might take the rest of them generations to do:

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 that 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 [...] (121)

#### 4.2.4 Jock Mc Ivor

Jock McIvor is the head of the Mc. Ivor family, and emerges as a symbolical representation of the settlers awakening and the self-acknowledge which they gain throughout the novel.

Gemmy is first taken in by the McIvor`s, but not all of its members are equally fond of the newly associated member of the family. Jock agrees with his wife and three children to house Gemmy, but only because it suits his own interests, and not for concern of Gemmy. He feels no sympathy for the man who is neither black nor white, but something in-between, and his only concern is to prevent his family from becoming subject of small town-gossiping. “When he had agreed that first afternoon to take the fellow in – (...) he had been acting against his own better judgement. (...) He had done it out of embarrassment; because he did not want exposed before others a difference between him and Ellen and himself that was private, and which he felt to take advantage of.” (63)

It takes as long as five months before Jock gradually begins to accept Gemmy, and like most others, he at first views Gemmy as a creature of inhuman features, whom he cannot bear to come near, and who makes him feel physically ill. His thoughts and feelings make him feel ashamed of himself, but he keeps it from his surroundings. Throughout the first part of the novel Jock is represented as a two-sided character, who on the one side dislikes Gemmy, but on the other side defends him in among his own. “Oh, I wouldna`concern yursel wi`Gemmy. He`s hairless.” (63) As him being a total stranger to the country, the people of the settlement with whom he shares a cultural background become really important to him. Afraid of being ostracized from the settler community,- the one place which still provides him with the security associated with home, Jock Mc. Ivor tries to keep a low profile by not inciting any discussions as regards Gemmy. To cover up his true feelings of shame, embarrassment and the menacing fear of social rejection, he pulls of a string of lies. “So when he put Barney off with an assurance of Gemmy`s harmlessness he was being truthful in one way – there was no physical harm in him – but in a deeper way he was not.” (64)

Gradually, Jock learns to know Gemmy, and he starts to care for him. To his great horror he discloses the irrational nature of his neighbours, and the community he only weeks ago, used to feel a natural part of, turns into an ironic twist of wicked and brutal actions, an argument

also supported by Askeland: “The settlers of *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.” (Askeland, 21) Eventually, Jock finds himself caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, forced to take sides. Unwillingly, he gains an insight in a world he earlier pretended did not exist, and he is no longer able to close his eyes to the injustice that is being committed against Gemmy and the cultural values that he represents. At this turning point of his life, Jock confronts his old self and gets to explore his light, spiritual side, which previously formed a part of his Scottish identity, but which has got lost in the transition between the two different cultures:

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 always in company, even when he was alone; a social self, wrapped always in a communal warmth that protected it from 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)

At the beginning of the novel Jock is portrayed as a prejudiced, narrow-minded European settler, who blinded by the superiority of his skin, views himself as prior to the indigenous people. By allowing himself to explore the hidden sides of his identity, a new sense of self emerges and he proves to be a character of great personal strength. In his meeting with Gemmy, the new world with all its richness finally opens up to him. He questions himself: “Was he changed?” (96) He realizes that he has changed, but that the change has affected him positively. His change in mentality comes to expression through his sudden comprehension for nature as he ventures into a world of buzzing insects and trees in full blossom while listening to the running of water and the gentle flapping of birds` wings. He has started his process of understanding and coming to terms with the, - until now, foreign place:

Wading through waist-high grass, he was surprised to see all the tips beaded with green, as if some new growth had come into the world that till now he had never seen or heard of. 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. (97)

#### 4.2.5 Mr. George Abbott

Mr. George Abbott is a dynamic character who develops much throughout the story. It is not only visible to the reader, but evidential even to himself. In our last meeting with the character he reveals a new understanding of himself as well as of Gemmy and the country. “Since he had begun to love but also to forget himself a little, the world and everything around him appeared in a new light. He regarded Gemmy very differently now from when he had sat at the table here [...]” (162) The period in between his arrival in Northern Queensland and his true moment of realization, he connects just as badly with himself as he does with the country, its nature and its people. He regards the vast continent as an inescapable dungeon, and only the thought of spending his future here suffocates him. Feeling that all his experiences of the new country have been negative, he is repelled by Gemmy. When approaching the latter for the first time, a train of thoughts surfaces and he reveals a sense of fear for the unknown:

Even the natives were of a dingy greyness. Thin-shanked, dusty, undignified, the life they had lived was merely degenerate, so squalid and flea ridden that it inspired nothing that a kind of horror at what human nature might in its beginnings spring from, and in such a place so easily to sink back to. – It was in this light that that he considered the yammering, yowling fellow whose story he had taken down that day in his own classroom. (46)

In his last encounter with Gemmy at the schoolhouse, Mr. Abbott looks back at that day when Gemmy first approached the settler community and relates the agitation he had felt back then to his fear of what would become of himself: “That what they were dealing with, in Gemmy, might be closer to them, *to him*, than he knew.” (163) He did not understand back then the reason for why he had detested the gazing, penetrating look of the white and black boy that intense, but his thoughts on how he now considers Gemmy and himself, reveals that he has improved his level of reflection to a large degree. What seems to have frightened him the most about Gemmy, has been the fear of himself facing the same ghastly faith s Gemmy; Robbed of his identity, the latter stands as the uncanny example of the unsuccessful attempt of bridging the gaping void between the two worlds.

By studying French in his spare time, Mr. Abbott is trying to hold on to his white Europeaness, and describes the literary journey as a way of escaping his own nature, which has turned gradually darker after his arrival on the Australian eastern coast. (74) He was never meant of coming to Australia, but like many other British singles and families he was left with

little choice. They were promised splendid seed-ground but more often the adventure ended in financial ruin. This was exactly what happened to Mr. Abbott, and the bitterness he feels of having been deceived into coming to Australia he reinforces the overwhelming feeling of displacement which he experiences as wholly absorbing. At the beginning Mr. Abbott is very reserved, keeps people at an arm's length and radiates much negativity. He is clearly affected by the deeply implanted hate he feels for the life he is living, which according to him himself bears no meaning to it. "Everything that presented itself to him in this god-forsaken place told him how mean life was, how desolate and without hope. Nobody cared for him." (46)

A turning point in his existence of much acrimony is his encounter with Leona, the older girl living with Mrs. Hutchence. Enthralled by her presence, Mr. Abbott let himself become emotionally affected. Through opening his heart to Leona, he allows himself to gradually open up to the physical surroundings. It starts with him acknowledging his own qualities and soon he starts picturing a possible future with Leona. With Leona he feels, for the first time, a sense of belonging and community, a bond, which also ties him to the physical place. On his way home from Mrs. Hutchence's house, he experiences a moment of epiphany. In all its splendors the world is disclosing itself to Mr. Abbott as scenes of nature unroll in front of him. This moment represents a turning point in his life, as his perception of the new world which he feels has taken so much from him without giving anything in return, suddenly provides hope of love and joy, - even to him:

He was filled with a sense of his own lightness. Some heavier self had been laid asleep in him, and another woken that was all open to the westering glow in which the drab bush trees along his way found a kind of beauty, all their leaves glancing and the earth under them alight along its ridges, and the sky above a show, a carnival, of cloud shapes transforming themselves into forms he could name to others, equally pleasing, that he had no name for, but did not for that reason feel estranged from; he might, he thought, have a name for those later. He had the feeling that there were any things in the world that were still to come to him. (84)

Through his acquaintance with Gemmy, Mr. Abbott has come to a consensus that: "A man may have two natures." (16) Gemmy has been the catalyst of a cultural process of hybridization, and stands to Mr. Abbott as the living proof that cultural adaption is feasible.

#### 4.2.6 Mrs. Hutchence

Mrs. Hutchence is an interesting character, who I for many reasons would like to include in my analysis. She reveals nothing of her past or national origin, neither to the settlers nor the readers. She remains a mystery, by which she and her friend Leona reside separated from the settlement in the only house in the area. She attracts many visitors, and occurs to have a neutralizing effect on the members of the community, as conflicts between them tend to soften up around her table of games. Her ways distinguishes her from the other settlers and they do not quite know how to deal with her. She deviates from the norms of the white society, but captures a different sense of otherness than the Aborigines. Much like the mystery of Mrs. Hutchence's undisclosed identity her furniture causes much talk in the settlement, and also carries some heavy symbolical significance. Those of the settlers who had been to her house had reported a feeling of discomposure when visiting: "The cane furniture gave it an easy look, but worried them. [...] They sat in the chairs, and from that vantage looked around at the tongue-and-groove walls, which were mostly bare, but no answer came to them. Was it the *past* or the *future* they were looking at?" (76) It is not the physical objects themselves, but rather what they represent which evoke these strong feelings of uncertainty. It is the cultural alienation that the furniture connotes which makes them feel uncomfortable. The furnishings of woven cane, originating from China and the china tea cups serve as strong implications of the future in which the two continents Australia and Asia would come to share a closer tie. To the other settlers who are not joined by her table, Mrs. Hutchence occurs as an ambiguous person who is a manifestation of the foreign and unknown at the same time as she represents western values. By taking in her new surroundings and at the same time bringing with her objects and customs foreign to the place Askeland argues Mr. Hutchence to have found her *third space* in where she has managed to transcend her given "nature". ("David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* and *An Imaginary Life*: Identity Processes in the Postcolonial Borderland", 53) Her acceptance of Gemmy and tolerance of culture diversities makes Mrs. Hutchence a symbol of the hybrid, multicultural Australia and her character reflects what about a hundred years later would become a culturally mixed Australia of Aborigines, white Europeans and Asians. On the background of the year the novel was published, which was in the following decade after Australian political forces initiated a closer cooperation with Asia, I would chose to interpret this passage of the novel as a foreshadowing of the upcoming challenges relating to the immigration practice of today's Australia which has split the national interest of the country in three.

The hives which Mrs. Hutchence keeps in her garden, house both the swarms of the little stingless native bees in addition to the ones who are imported to the country by Mrs. Hutchence herself. (127) The blending of bees may serve as a metaphor on Mr. Hutchence hybrid identify; representing a mixture of the European, Asian and Australian. Her affection for all of her bees, not one of the species in particular, may be interpreted as an expression of the freedom of biases reflected by her mentality. The making of crossbreeds serves as a metaphor on the colonization process, suggesting that the Aborigines and the British must find harmonious ways of interacting with one another. In this respect, Mrs. Hutchence serves the role of a unifying force, both for bees and people. What in my opinion separates her from the other characters is her adaptability as she does not fear of her identity to change, but rather regards it as a positive supplement to her character. Through creating a sphere in where she can exist on own terms she has developed an active and spiritual sense of self. She embraces the duality of her nature and therefore becomes a mystery in the eyes of the settlers who struggle to construct a true identity for themselves.

#### 4.2.7 Jim Sweetman

Jim Sweetman is not a central character in the novel; nevertheless, his character is of much significance as he contrasts the main characters in crucial ways. His mindset relates to that of the other settlers of the settlement, who are also considered flat characters of little progress. Throughout the novel, he never indulges in the pleasures or beauties of the Australian nature, its fruitfulness and all the beauty and exciting strangeness the land has to offer. Unlike the central characters that I have discussed earlier in this chapter, Jim Sweetman remains static throughout the novel. Jim Sweetman`s strong-felt rejection of the new world comes to expression through the way he maliciously mistreats Gemmy, and when offered an exotic fruit by Mr. Frazer he fails to recognize the beauty of its authenticity perceived by Mr. Frazer: “Jim Sweetman [...] accepted the hard little fruit he was offered, though not the suggestion that he should bite into it. So he himself did (Mr. Frazer), and showed the man the seeds.” (121) What occurs to Jim Sweetman as seeds of a fruit and nothing more, emerge to Mr. Frazer on the contrary, as symbolical representations filled with meaning. Mr. Frazer, who during his years “down under” has learned to appreciate the richness of the land which he in the early beginning mistook for oddities, contrasts Jim Sweetman`s narrow-mindedness and could be argued to be his counterpart. To Mr. Frazer, the fruitful seeds symbolize them, the

first free settlers, and the great potential of a prosperous future. But for the seeds to grow it must additionally derive nourishment from its environmental surroundings; the Australian flora, fauna and the Aboriginal culture. Revealing no genuine interest for the distinctive features of its nature and culture, capturing the Australian spirit, Jim Sweetman is a character who fails to understand the land and the process of cultural adaptation: “Jim Sweetman did not light up with the vision of orchards.” (121) “The hard little fruit he had been shown meant nothing to him.” (122) Jim Sweetman is a manifestation of the white settler, traditionally stereotyped as ignorant and hostile in their meeting with the foreign culture and the indigenous people of the colony.

### 4.3 A hybrid culture?

First frightened by the unfamiliarity of the land, the central characters of *Remembering Babylon* embark on an emotional and cultural journey enriching them with new perspectives on life. As part of this process they start to reflect upon the meanings of nature and their conception of self which in turn make it easier for them to adapt to their new existence. By time the fact that it is they who are the intruders dawns to them, settling on someone else's ground. When viewed in light of their geographical and cultural background is to some extent fathomable that settlers who had grown up in the British Islands, the world's leading industrial nation at the time, viewed themselves superior to the Aborigines, whose primordial way of life formed an incomprehensible contrast to theirs. On a large scale, the British were undoubtedly superior: As regards development in direction of the modern world as we know it today, the British were light-years ahead the Aborigines. However, when it came down to the knowledge of the country they were settling in, the Aborigines were a thousand times superior to the British. Much different from Britain's recreational areas, a walk in the Australian outback could be hazardous and end fatally without the right knowledge of the land. In their meeting with the new world the settlers in *Remembering Babylon* are all in lack of the essential first-hand knowledge, a tool possessed only by the Aborigines, like Gemmy. As the story develops, they realize that will have to conform to the ways of the Aborigines to manage to relate themselves wholeheartedly to the country. Not by adapting to their culture, but by utilizing the Aboriginal knowledge of the country, - which dates as far as 50.000 years back in time, as a valuable asset in the process of creating a culture in which they can relate themselves as Australians and dispose of their pronounced British-ness.

Superior in the one area, inferior in the other, they no longer recognize themselves as being superior to the Aborigines but realize that they are equally dependent on one another to make the symbiosis of the two cultures work. By making this acknowledgment the characters also accept that the knowledge of the country must be transmitted from the Aborigines to them and not the other way around. It would be they, the British settlers, - those who get easily scorched by the sun and who fear to cross the border that separates them from the Australian outback, who do not fit in and who need to invest in their future by making the cultural adjustment. Filled with prejudices against everything unknown, they are at first not receptive to the thought that the characteristic traits of the Australian nature already signifies meaning to those already who have been inhabiting the country a long time before them, but along as their perception of landscape changes the feeling of displacement becomes less pronounced and a hybrid culture is welcomed. As pioneers of history, Malouf emphasizes how the central characters of *Remembering Babylon* manage to dispose of their ignorance towards the Aboriginal culture, acknowledging it as the authentic culture of Australia:

The indigenous peoples had created a culture which read that landscape and filled it with meaning so that what we saw was a landscape that was that was completely meaningless and we saw people living there who were incapable of placing meaning on the landscape. We have changed our idea of that now; we understand that Australia already had a culture; it didn't need us to come along to bring human culture; it already had one, but it was one we couldn't recognize. ("David Malouf and Languages for Landscape: An interview": 85)

Gemmy, whose story still belongs to the settlers, will remain a prisoner of his white past. As a victim of a massacre executed on an Aboriginal tribe by white settlers, the evil of the white spirits catches up with him for the very last time. The fatal ending to his life serves as a symbolic expression on the clash between cultures and how difficult it is to bridge the two worlds.

## 5 Teaching the novel

### 5.1 Didactics

Didactics is a field within the science of pedagogy which reflects the planning and structuring of the teaching; *What* the teaching are supposed to contain/*how* to practice it in class/*why* the chosen strategy. The three questions constitute the core of didactics, and will serve as the foundation of this chapter`s discussion where I will be giving a presentation of: Firstly, *what* I aim to teach, secondly, *how* I aim to carry out the teaching, thirdly, *why* I aim to teach the particular way chosen in accordance with Gunn Imsen`s discussion of didactics in *Lærerens verden*, 39-40) Literary didactics is one field, foreign language didactics another, but since I will be teaching both literature and English as foreign language together I will have to discuss the two areas of didactics in connection to one another.

To begin with, I would like to point out, as Elin Vestli also does in her article, “Fra sokkel til klasserom”, that contrary to the wide range of literary didactics aimed at the teaching of literature in first language classes, only a sparsely selection of literary didactics addresses the teaching of literature in foreign language classes. As an answer to this problem I have had to consult literary didactics for first language speakers in Norwegian and Åsmund Henning`s *Litterær forståelse*, by which I have adjusted the theory and methods in relation to the teaching of literature in the foreign language classroom. Some of the literature, like Bjørg Olsen Eikrem`s *What the story has to offer*, focuses exclusively on how to work with literature in English classes but is composed to fit the aims and goals of the previous national educational plan, L 97, and is in that respect outdated. However, Eikrem has provided me with many seminal ideas on how to structure the teaching of the novel, and which methods to apply when working with the novel in class. In my approach to history didactics, I have let myself inspire by Eirik Lund`s *Historiedidaktikk, en handbok for studenter og lærere*, in which he presents a wide range of different and challenging teaching methods that I have included in this chapter`s discussion.

## 5.2 An interdisciplinary project

This chapter is devoted to discuss in which way *Remembering Babylon* could form the basis of an interdisciplinary project, viewed in light of didactics, *K-06* and the competence aims of English and History. To begin with, it is important to point out that because history at the educational level of VG2 is a common subject and English an optional course, not all of the students who attend history class will be attending English class. However, since the two subjects will be taught separately, I do not find this an obstacle, but rather conceive it an advantageous combination to my students of English. When introducing fictional literature in class, Hennig argues that it would be wise to pick novels which could be related to a theme which is treated simultaneously in other subjects. (*Litterær forståelse*, 181) A novel revolving around themes which is of current interest to the students seems to generate more enthusiastic readers. To include the novel as part of an interdisciplinary project would therefore, according to Hennig's argument be one way of inspiring the students' encounter with literature in class. The students will be conducting the reading at home, whereas school lessons will be serving as seminars. In opposition to the former national educational plan, *L-97*, which had a fixed curriculum, *K-06* gives the teacher liberty to choose freely which literary work to introduce in class, which allows me to choose *Remembering Babylon* as novel of scrutiny in this project. The way in which the competence aims in history is formulated gives room for the teacher also here to address historical topics of personal interest, as well as made able to choose which geographical area and age to specifically focus on. In the same time as the competence aims of *K-06* are made standardized to fit all Norwegian classrooms, they also leave plenty of room for the teacher's own interpretations, but which leaves the teacher with much responsibility. My main focus will be to investigate the viability of an interdisciplinary project where the disciplines of literature and history are intertwined with one another. Since English is my subject number one, and the novel the main object of my thesis, I will be concentrating in more depth on English didactics, and devote less space discussing history. This means that I will mainly be focusing on as well as elaborating on examples relating to the teaching of English by which more space will be devoted to this field and fewer examples will be presented from history class. However, my intention is to provide an overall image of how these two subjects interconnect, and to manage this I need to treat the two subjects both separately and together. Before introducing *Remembering Babylon* in English class, a thorough introduction of the historical topic is required, by which History class serves the better option as point of departure for the project, justified in the next section.

### 5.3 History class: British colonialism in Australia

Based on my own reflections and Hennig's reference to a survey conducted by Belinda Louie, I believe it would be wise to introduce "British colonization in Australia" as a topic in history class first, before introducing the novel in English class. In that way the historical material would be serving as a useful backdrop when working on the novel afterwards. Louie's experiment, a method which reflects the way in which I intend to teach *Remembering Babylon*, proved that students of an average American high school class developed a higher level of *cognitive* and *historical* empathy when they were provided historical information before embarking on the novel. As a mean to arouse the students' interest for the Chinese novel portraying the extreme conditions under which people lived during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the students were presented some historical key information beforehand. Through applying history in class as starting point, it showed that the students strengthened their understanding of the novel as they more easily managed to relate to the characters. Introducing the historical topic "British Imperialism/colonialism" in history class in advance, - before exploring *Remembering Babylon* in depth in English class would according to this method function as a mean to expand the students' contextual knowledge of the novel which may increase their curiosity for the novel. By applying this method in form of an interdisciplinary project in history and English, the students may more easily be able to reconstruct attitudes, feelings and actions of central characters of the novel, as for example Gemmy, Mr. Frazer and Mr. Abbott, which enhance their level of cognitive and historical empathy. The more genuine form of empathy, - *emotional* empathy, was first traced when the students read and engaged themselves with the novel. (*Litterær forståelse*, 106)

Collected from *K-06* and the national educational plan in history VG2, the three competence aims I have chosen to concentrate on are all compatible with the criteria of evaluation formulated next; When concluding the project, the students are supposed to have broadened their insight as regards issues revolving around the Aborigines and the British settlers and the relationship between the two groups, reasons for the annexation of Australia and the national and social consequences of the colonization process. The students should also be sensitive to the kind of lenses they read history through as it never provides us with just one truth but must be viewed from different angles:

The student should be able to [...] present key features of colonialism and the situation in a non-European area in the 1800s seen from different perspectives [...] elaborate on

why population groups emigrate, and discuss and elaborate on the consequences of their encounters with other cultures [...] explain the driving forces behind European expansion overseas and discuss cultural encounters seen from different perspectives

### 5.3.1 Teaching methods:

Personally, I am a great fan of trying out new methods which ascribe variation to the teaching; in my opinion, it is the spice which makes the whole difference in the relationship between teaching and learning. However, it is a time-consuming occupation, and I respect that many teachers, me included, find it an obstacle to overpower in an already busy everyday life. I still believe that being realistic does not rule out the vision of allowing one self to be idealistic, a quality which in my opinion, all teachers should possess. In a classroom filled with students of different cultural and social backgrounds, there are many considerations to be taken, and as a teacher, you should always try to go the extra mile. If the aim is to make the students participate actively in class, it must be arranged for inspirational learning areas which generate learning in different ways. Having in mind that students acquire knowledge differently, my intention will be to vary the teaching methods. My approach to learning is supported by Howard Gardner`s theory on *multiple intelligences*, focusing on the manifold and inequality of abilities united together in one classroom. Gardner advocates for creating an arena in where the teacher employs a variety of working methods, where students who possess different faculties, all will have a better chance of asserting themselves in class. (*Lærerenes verden*: 205) Gardner claims that human possesses seven different forms of intelligences; Logical-mathematical, linguistic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, musical, bodily-kinesthetic and visual-spatial, and may be viewed in correlation to the Core curriculum of *K-06*, which stresses the importance of *adapted learning*:

The school shall have room for everybody and teachers must therefore have an eye for each individual learner. The mode of teaching must not only be adapted to subject and content, but also to age and maturity, the individual learner and the mixed abilities of the entire class. The pedagogical design must be pliable enough to permit the teacher to meet the pupils` differences in ability and rhythm of development with kindness and ease. Rules of conduct alone are not sufficient to transmit care and consideration. The teacher must make use of the variations in pupils` aptitudes, the diversity in the classroom, as resources for all-round development as well as the development of all. A good school and a good class should provide enough space and enough challenge for everyone to sharpen their wits and grow. (10)

As a starting point for discussion in class I intend to apply a method which I myself was introduced to when taking *history didactics* during my year of practical and pedagogical training. It is a method which allows the students to activate their prior knowledge on the topic and improve their level of reflection. In advance, *British colonialism* will be treated as an isolated topic: As for developing a solid foundation for engaging in the colonial history of Australia an overall presentation of the phenomenon British Imperialism/colonialism would serve as a more sensible approach. By exploring the motivation behind the British expansion overseas, and get a survey over which countries the colonial power annexed, the students shall be able to gain a more profound understanding of Australia`s colonial and post-colonial history.

#### 5.3.1.1 Mystery

The work method is called “Mystery”, and is presented by Erik Lund in *Historiedidaktikk*. (70, 71) This method of introducing a historical topic is claimed to be very popular among the students in the sense that it challenges them in a different manner than the traditional teacher-directed lectures do. When asked to construct a story on the basis of the fragmented pieces of information each group is provided with, they will have to use their creative side. In this way the teacher avoids exposing the students to the overwhelming amount of information they would have spent much time guiding themselves through if asked to do a search for the topic on the internet. Instead they are provided with concrete guidelines which inspire independence. The main aim is to call forth the student`s curiosity and desire to learn which according to this strategy is best done by presenting a modest amount of written material and instead devote much room for the independent thought to flourish. By working together in pairs and groups, the students are made able to practice their oral skills through argumentation and discussion, and experience that there is no correct answer in history, - only different angles of viewing it from. Each group will be supplied with a number of cards which represent one statement/historical fact each which all serve relevant to the historical field of exploration, which in this case is “The colonial history of Australia”. They are supposed to organize the pieces of papers in the order they find the most sensible based on the content of the information they are presented. Whether the students chose to organize the cards in chronological order, or if they chose to categorize the cards otherwise, will be up to the students to decide, as long as they are able to argue the reason for the way in which they are

approaching the task. A possible headline could be: “Puzzle together the story of the British Empire`s colonization of Australia.”

### 5.3.1.2 Blog, Wiki

Digital skills emerge as one out of five categories of educational skills which constitute the Framework of Basic Skills in *K-06*:

What are digital skills? Digital skills involve being able to use digital tools, media and resources efficiently and responsibly, to solve practical tasks, find and process information, design digital products and communicate content. Digital skills also include developing digital judgment by acquiring knowledge and good strategies for the use of the Internet. Digital skills are a prerequisite for further learning and for active participation in working life and a society in constant change. (12)

Over the past decade, the western world has witnessed some radical changes in the use of digital tools. In the digital field, a whole new world has unfolded, whereas new innovations such as smart phones and net boards have seen a boom in popularity. In the same time Wi-Fi has become more accessible to most people, and the time we spend on the internet enhance. This means that the identity of the next generation of students will be solidly rooted in the digital universe already when entering school at the age of six. The technological development keeps increasing in speed, and in the Norwegian school system it is each teacher`s personal responsibility to integrate the digital universe of which these adolescences world`s revolve into the object of teaching. And by saying this I do by no means claim that it is easy to embark on the field, but that it is important for everyone who is working as teachers or who are becoming teachers, to keep updated on the newest technology, - since this is an area that you will have to master to be able to communicate with your students. As a mean to motivate my students I would like them to create a wiki or a blog, concentrating on the topic “The colonial history of Australia”. They are supposed to be working together in smaller groups and resolve on a specific theme or question they would like to explore in more depth which makes the primary objective of their wiki or blog. The content of the website must of course echo a prescribed set of academic criteria, but apart from that, the students are given relatively free reins to utilize their creative skills. Elements that must be included are: A main topic, pictures/paintings, music, interviews, statistics on demography, maps and platforms of

discussions, etc. Underneath I will provide some examples of questions which could serve as topic questions:

How did colonization impact the indigenous population of Australia, and what are the present conditions of the Aborigines like in post-colonial Australia? Which historical aspects may explain The British` motivation for migrating to Australia? How did colonization change the future prospects of Australia`s growth? In which ways may European immigration be argued to have affected the development of the Australian, national culture? How could the wave of Asian immigrants be said to have altered the Australian consciousness? How could it be argued that Australia has evolved into a multicultural nation? What would be considered as the long term effects of Britain`s conquering of Australia back in 1788?

When constructing the wiki or the blog the students will have to cooperate with one another in smaller groups and one optional way of adding structure to this method could be to assign different roles for everyone in the group, as for example; editor, journalist, graphic designer, chairperson, et cetera. However, this does not mean that any of the members will be excused from participating actively in other tasks, but that they all have one specific area of responsibility of which they are supposed to be in control.

As a direct consequence of the technological development it has become commonplace to most students to consult the internet as primary source when conducting research which has led to a more conscious focus on *source criticism* in the Norwegian school. Lund claims that in history, where investigation of sources is a characteristic trait of the subject`s agency, students should have the most desirable grounding for using the internet as learning area, arguing that the same methods used when working on paper-written sources easily could be applied to sources found on the internet. But to conduct an investigation of sources on the internet is as Eirik Lund further points out an extremely demanding and not at least time-consuming task which presupposes that the teacher scours the country for possible online-pitfalls in advance. (*Historiedidaktikk*,132) One way of doing this Lund suggests, is to help the students to navigate their way by demonstrating which internet sites that are appropriate to use. By providing the students with a selection of internet sites which all score high on credibility, I believe that the students` benefit will be substantial compared to if they were abandoned to their self in a jungle of no.`s, com.`s, ac.`s, edu.`s and org.`s. As a suitable place to start, Lund recommends the *English national archive`s* web site. In addition to the net addresses I will be advising my students to visit, I will also supply the students with a shorter abstract of Australia`s colonial and post-colonial history, which mirror the review in chapter

3, - founded on Blainly's *A Shorter History of Australia*. Before they settle on a main topic for their wiki or blog, they will first have to categorize the historical events presented in the abstract by categorizing them in cards of large and small sizes, to render visible the hierarchical order of the events. The cards they will have to make themselves, and through working with this task which Lund has chosen to call "big" and "small" sentences (*Historiedidaktikk*: 209), they are supposed to arrive at a decision on which main area of Australia's colonial history they wish to concentrate their wiki or blog on, and present what they have decided orally in class. To conclude the work, every group will be asked to present their final product in plenum and evaluate the process themselves.

#### 5.4 English class:

In Programme for Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies, English is divided into three separate subjects of specialization; International English, social studies English and English literature and culture. Quite obvious since the focus of my thesis lies with literature viewed from a socio-cultural/historical perspective I have chosen to concentrate on the latter field of specialization. I actually found it a troublesome process to select the competence aims which were the most relevant since most of them seemed to fit my objective of the teaching, but arrived at a decision of reducing the aims to only a few, whereas one aim is taken from each of the two areas of language learning and communication and two aims are taken from the area of culture, society and literature:

Students should be able to: **Language and language learning:** have a command of the terminology needed for analysing works of fiction, films and other aesthetic forms of expression [...] **Communication:** summarize, comment on and discuss differing viewpoints in fictional texts [...] **Culture, society and literature:** interpret literary texts and other cultural expressions from a cultural-historical and social perspective [...] present a major in-depth project with a topic from English literature and culture and assess the process (*K-06, English – programme subject in programmes for specialization in general studies, 5*)

The function of the competence aims is merely that of direction and must be broken down into smaller entities to give meaning to the concrete object of the teaching. Particular criteria for evaluation must be worked out singularly by the teacher and made known to the students in the introductory phase. When they have become acquainted with the grounds on which they

will be assessed, they will know what will be expected of them in the reading process: When concluding the reading of *Remembering Babylon*, the students are expected to be acquainted with the term post-colonial and the literary genre. Additionally, they shall be able to relate central key-concepts of post-colonial theory to their personal understanding of the novel. Through written and oral activity and they shall disclose an insight into the historical and social aspects embedded in the novel by viewing it from the perspective of different characters.

### 5.5 Reading the novel: *Remembering Babylon*

What is reading? Reading means to create meaning from text in the widest sense. Reading gives insight into other people`s experience, opinion and knowledge, independent of time and place. The reading of texts on screen and paper is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and for active participation in civic life. (K-06, Framework for Basic Skills: 10)

Through different activities in history class, the students have now broadened their understanding as concerns topics revolving around British colonialism in Australia; and when *Remembering Babylon* at this stage is introduced in English class, they all have pegs to hang the novel on. Through their recently encounter with colonial history in history class, the students should now be satisfyingly equipped with the contextual knowledge which defines the framework of the novel. Encapsulated in the colonial history of Australia, the characters of *Remembering Babylon* emerge as vivid representations of persons of the past, and on that background I am convinced that the novel manages to evoke a different kind of attitude towards history among the students than the traditional approach does. - The one important thing that separates fiction from standardized history books is exactly the way in which the novel manages to create a different experience of the past, by bringing characters to life that elsewhere in history appear faceless and silently merge into the bigger crowd. Or as Ibsen and Wiland in theirs *Encounters with Literature* express it: “Literature is imitation of life or representation of reality, in condensed form.” Through the literary meeting with the white and black outcast Gemmy, the narrow-minded Jim Sweetman, the bewildered Jock McIvor, the adventurous and open-minded Mr. Frazer, the mysterious Mrs. Hutchence and the obnoxious but also warm hearted Mr. Abbott, the students may dispose of their fixed opinions about British settlers and Aborigines which in all likelihood will influence the way in which they

think and feel about people whose identity is rooted in cultures distinct from ours. In *Remembering Babylon* the students are invited to view the Australian colonial past from the inside and will in a different way be capable of empathizing with the Aborigines and the British migrants, even if they represent peoples of a past age and foreign cultures. On the background of the present situation in Norway today, Norwegian students are to a great extent shielded from the chaotic conditions ravaging in the rest of Europe as well as elsewhere in the world, but as a result of this Norway also faces severe challenges regarding both immigration and assimilation. That the students should develop a tolerance for different cultures is therefore really important and also stressed in “the quality framework” of *K-06*:

To develop the pupils’ cultural competence for participation in a multicultural society the education shall enable them to acquire knowledge on different cultures and experience of a wide range of forms of expression. The education shall promote cultural understanding and develop self-insight and identity, respect and tolerance (3)

## 5.6 Introducing the novel in class: A dialectical approach

When introducing *Remembering Babylon* in class I want to arrange for the students to have the best literary experience possible. To implement this idealistic vision of teaching literature, the students’ involvement with the novel must take precedence over my personal interpretation of the novel. That is because, to many students, especially regarding those with limited experience within the field of literature, working with literature in class may seem intimidating. According to Ibsen and Willand it has long been a tendency that the teacher’s voice has been determining for the way in which the students approach the text, a factor which shows to deteriorate the student’s subjective exploration of the text. The traditional analytical way of approaching literature, based on the tradition of New Criticism where the aim is to decode the “right” message, may according to Ibsen and Willand in *Encounters with Literature* destroy the active role of the reader, and affect the student’s motivation for reading literature in a negative sense: (144)

According to this tradition, you read to find the “the right message” or the author’s intention in the text. The teacher, from his or her literary studies, has the “right” solution, and in class, he or she spends considerable time explaining to the students how they *ought* to experience the text. This teacher’s knowledge is an asset, but it should be shared with the student in the right way. (144)

Challenging the tradition where the students uncritically conform to the teacher's conception of the text, Ibsen and Wiland point to a pedagogical theory referred to as the "dialectical approach"; focusing on the cognitive process that takes place when the students encounter a literary text. When allowed to read the novel through relating it to their own emotions, feelings and personal experiences, the students are provided more room for reflection and pondering and a more vivacious reading experience may emerge. (144) For a student to show interest for a text and to achieve a deeper understanding of it, the way in which the student approaches the text should be on his or her own premises. The participating reader, as argued by Ibsen and Wiland, bases his or hers understanding of the text on past experiences and previous knowledge both about literature and life, and help him or her to determine the process of interpretation: "Inner images already established will influence the way new images are created when experiencing literature." (*Encounters with Literature*, 145) This way of approaching literature in class is mirrored by the Core Curriculum of *K-06*:

Learning occurs when new information is interpreted from the known - the concepts one already comprehends determine what one can fathom and grasp. Knowledge, skills and attitudes develop in the interplay between old notions and new impressions. Education must therefore be tied to the pupil's own observations and experiences. The ability to take action, to seek new experiences and to interpret them, must depart from the conceptual world with which pupils enter school. (21)

If consulting the field of learning theories, the acknowledged theorist Piaget also emphasizes the role of the active student, in terms of what Gunn Imsen refers to as an "active, personal constructional process". (*Elevers verden*, 242) Piaget claims that knowledge is not something we receive, but rather something we gain through personal experiences. The main aim of Piaget's theory is to enlighten people to avoid echoing other people but rather encourage them to create an individual understanding based on personal presumptions. Similar to the dialectical approach Piaget's theory also inspires independence, aiming at the students to evolve their faculty of critical thinking by dissociating themselves from the general opinion of the mainstream. By avoiding to uncritically mirror the teacher's opinion the student becomes instrumental in the shaping of his or hers own literary experience. (*Elevers verden*, 242)

Furthermore, Ibsen and Wiland also argue that by encouraging the students to use their imagination both in speech and on paper, they get to act as co-writers of the text rather than just passive readers, and a two-way process emerges and an interaction between the reader (the student) and the text is established. (*Encounters with Literature*, 146) Through developing

personal responses and interpretations of the novel which are not all influenced and colored by the teacher's approach, the students may have a more affectionate experience with reading literature. By sharing with one another the many different ways of approaching the text, a multitude of voices will form the basis of an engaging discussion on the novel in class. In this process, the teacher's contribution are supposed to be viewed on equal terms as the students'. This may seem an obstacle to students who usually regard the teacher's opinion as the more valid and most likely cause bewilderment with the students when first introduced to the method, but in the longer run it will benefit the development of their cognitive skills and broaden their literary competence. The teacher's role will be that of support, and with a firm hand but without determining the process by incorporating his or hers' own literary absolutes, he or she will be guiding the students towards becoming conscious and skilled readers, -. The role of the teacher as the competent guide is also mirrored by "the quality framework" in K-06:

As positive leaders, teachers and instructors shall create understanding for the objectives of the education and shall be seen as skilled and enthusiastic guides and teachers of knowledge. Their efforts shall help the pupils develop interest in and commitment to working on their subjects. This places clear expectations on effort and participation in the learning activities. (5)

Through approaching literature from this point of view the teacher's exploration of the literature does not come in the way for the one of the student as well as the active role of the student is encouraged. Additionally, it will benefit the teacher who through creating a meeting place in class for different views and opinions to be exchanged, becomes conscious of new ways of interpreting the text. (*Encounters with Literature*, 145) By giving the student liberty to investigate the literature more freely demands much of the teacher's skills to plan, structure, observe and evaluate. As part of the planning, the teacher must show a profound understanding of the literature which is the object of the teaching, and have a clear vision of how to conduct different activities in class: "The teacher, as well as a director, will have to make choices to focus on the important elements in a text. In class, the activities organized and the learning focus taken will influence the way a class experience the text." (*Encounters with Literature*: 146) In the upcoming and final sections of my thesis I will account for a variety of methods and activities which relate to the dialectical approach teaching as they foster reflection and independence.

### 5.6.1 Pre-reading activities

Ibsen and Wiland additionally advocate for activities that stimulates and motivates productivity which contribute to activate the student`s creativity in relation to the text to be introduced at an early stage of the reading process. To In *What the Story has to Offer*, Eikrem argues that depending on where the students are in the reading process, the teacher needs to distinguish between pre, while and post-reading activities. At an early stage of the teaching process, Eikrem suggests that a pre-reading activity should be introduced to arouse the students` curiosity with the text. (61)

Before reading the novel, a suitable place to start could be to introduce pre-reading activities which focus on the literary genre and important key-concepts. By making use of power-point and/or the traditional black board in the introductory phase I wish to inspire fruitful discussions in class. As a pre-reading activity I intend to use a method which I was introduced to at my year at practical pedagogical education, and which I also practiced in class during one of my periods of practical training, - with great success. The concept is as follows: I will challenge the students to acquaint themselves with key-concepts central in post-colonial theory, by dividing them into groups of five. Each member of every group will receive a card with six words which all derive from post-colonial theory. All the six words are written on the one side of the card, and a sensible explanation to one of the words is found on the backside of the card. The students will all have to concentrate on different words and the word which they are asked to focus on will be emphasized in italics, as for instance; identity, hybridization, language, *displacement*, other -(ing) and ambivalence. They will be given a limited amount of time, approximately 10-15 minutes, where they will have to develop an understanding of the word, based on the background information they have been provided with. Through their own conceptualization of the word, the aim is to present the different words to one another within the group. Together they are supposed to explore the essence of the words and elaborate on how they may relate to post-colonial literature. Next, they will be encouraged to discuss the words in plenum. Through conducting this form of activity the students do not only obtain a new insight into the field of post-colonial theory and literature, but they also get to practice their oral skills and develop their ability to reflect.

## 5.6.2 While-reading activities

“The literary conversation” is according to Hennig fundamental to literary didactics. (*Litterær forståelse*, 174) It is a literary approach which provides structure to the way in which literature may be taught orally in class. This method, when executed the right way, does according to Hennig foster motivated students. The reason why the students experience this incentive to digest literature in class is in all likelihood due to the liberty of thought which this method suggests. It encourages the teacher to withdraw a few paces and to leave much of the responsibility with the students alone, - operating almost unnoticeable in the background. As nourishment to this method, writing a log book would serve as a good option as the teacher may expect the students to attend class prepared, as well as they will be given an opportunity to share important observations which they have made while reading. Both oral and written activity melts together as two equally important entities in my objective of teaching *Remembering Babylon* and by using the log book as a source of oral discussion and the literary conversation, the students will activate both their written and oral language.

### 5.6.2.1 Log book

What is writing? Writing involves expressing oneself understandably and appropriately about different topics and communicating with others in the written mode. Writing is also a tool for developing one’s own thoughts in the learning process. Writing comprehensibly and appropriately means developing and coordinating different partial skills. This includes being able to plan, construct, and revise texts relevant to content, purpose and audience. Mastering writing is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and for active and critical participation in civic and social life. (K-06, Framework of Basic skills: 10)

To add expertise to one’s literary competence, it requires close reading and oral involvement in class discussions. Just as important is the written interpretations which serve as representations of the thoughts and reflections which arise in our encounter with literature. The majority of all students will experience that if they wish to develop a thorough understanding of a text, they first needs to write about it. (*Litterær forståelse*, 199) Researches show that students who write exhaustive responses to texts while reading them, build a better memory of what they have read as well as they develop their ability to reflect upon their reading strategies. Additionally, it provides them with a new and different understanding and

evokes personal engagement with the text. Hennig devotes all of chapter thirteen to discuss the symbiotic relationship between the two fields of competence; writing and reading, and I have let myself inspire to elaborate on how to use log book as a tool and while-reading activity in class when working on *Remembering Babylon*.

For the students to obtain involvement with the text, Hennig suggests that the teacher should instruct them to be keeping a log book. Providing much room for own observations and personal thought and reflection, a log book proves a powerful and effective device in literature class; Through giving short written responses to the novel along as they are reading it the students will gradually become more conscious readers. Opposed to just reading the novel from cover to cover, I believe that if keeping a log book while reading, students are more liable to involve themselves in the text genuinely, a factor which might inspire their sense of themselves as active readers. This way of engaging in literature may also contribute, in the way I see it, to promote literature in class. It will of course be the students who execute the writing, but the teacher's role must not be underestimated and will be of much essence in this process. One of the teacher's tasks will be to avoid the students from writing abstracts of the novel when they are supposed to give a personal interpretation of it. Instead the teacher will have to encourage his or hers students to elaborate on elements in the text which the student already seems to take an interest in. (*Litterær forståelse*, 209) Typically, to most students this may seem a demanding task, and I also speak from experience as being a student myself, - but through a competent teacher's guidance, the students will manage to unveil the scarcity of their responses and by approaching it with some new and insightful perspectives improve their understanding.

To amplify the important role of the teacher as pathfinder and guide, I will re-access the field of learning theories, but this time viewed through the lens of Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and "The zone of proximal development". (*Lærerens verden*: 258) The zone of proximal development reflects the capacity of the child in means of what the child is able to perform by her or his self and on the other side, - what he or she needs help and assistance to. The position of the teacher will be that of constantly monitoring each student's learning process through helping the students to develop their range of skills in conformity with their present stage of proximal development, as well as there remain some challenges for the students to stretch for. (*Lærerens verden*: 260, 261) This model which allows the students to accomplish tasks which she or he might otherwise would not have managed without help from the teacher or some other competent adult, is also referred to as the model of scaffolding

and directly relates to Hennig`s conception of how to evaluate the students log books: Hennig recommends that feedback on the log books should be given at regular intervals and that the teacher here mainly should be focusing on praising and encouraging the work and the effort of the students, providing constructive suggestions for improvement and questions for reflection which will help the students to develop their own conception of the novel. (*Litterær forståelse*, 210)

### 5.6.2.2 The literary conversation

What are oral skills? Oral skills relate to creating meaning through listening and speaking. This involves mastering different linguistic and communicative activities and coordinating verbal and other partial skills. It includes being able to listen to others, to respond to others and to be conscious of the interlocutor while speaking. Oral skills are a precondition for exploring interactions in which knowledge is constructed and shared. Oral skills are a precondition for lifelong learning and for active participation in working and civic life. (*K-06, Framework for Basic Skills*, 6)

If the aim is to develop a viable environment for oral activity in class, - the literary, didactic and social competence of the teacher is of decisive character. Though much of the responsibility lies with the students, it is the teacher`s job as instructor to guide the students in direction of becoming skilled conversational partners. Through encouraging the students to indulge in oral activity the teacher`s task is to add nourishment to their personal conceptions of literature. Along this path, the teacher must seek ways of challenging his or hers students, by asking what Henning refers to as “authentic” questions, questions which the teacher has no wrong or right answers to, but which rather dear the students to use their capacity for thinking. (*Litterær forståelse*, 176) Examples of “authentic” questions could be: Which passages in this chapter would you highlight as important, and why? If you could chose a character to concentrate on, - who would it be, and what is it about the person that fascinates you? If you were to view the relationship between Gemmy and the settlers from two sides, how would you argue? Who would you say this novel is about? Who would you argue the novel to be of present interest? To involve in a literary conversation in the presence of the teacher may seem deterrent to many students. If the teacher also manages to express marvel with the text, the role of the teacher will emerge as instructive rather than determinative and may not at all be that intimidating to the students. Henning also suggests that as point of

departure, the teacher should present an overreaching theme which could serve as a connective thread throughout the reading process. (Hennig: 188) *Identity*, the theme which marks and penetrates *Remembering Babylon*, is a topic which bears much relevance to students at this age, - who find themselves in the gaping void of in-between-ness; neither a child, nor a grown-up. Introducing this theme in class, initially as a discussion on their own conception of the term, the text could serve as a remedy for the students to grow a more conscious awareness of their own identity. Through appealing to the student`s sense of self, their relationship to the literary text may alter when realizing that it actually touches a nerve of their own being. As for creating a good basis for oral activity in class, the students should pair up or work together in groups. By creating a working environment where there are few persons involved, my experience is that more of the students are likely to contribute actively with comments and suggestions. As well as it brings the students closer together. Shortly I will be returning to the Vygotsky`s theory of the zone of proximal development, in where he advocates for the importance of collaboration between the students of a class, arguing that the process of learning builds upon social interaction. Through cooperating with one another in class, the students will gain much valuable experience and practice in expressing themselves both orally as well as written. Moreover, Vygotsky claims than only an adult or someone who knows more than the student may be able to assist the student improving hers or his skills, and once again leaves us once again with the teacher and his or hers important role as the student`s scaffolding. (*Lærerens verden*, 258)

By using the log book as point of departure for discussion, my job will be to determine the direction for where the conversation is heading, by asking meaningful questions and providing them with challenging and exciting tasks. At this stage of the reading process, one possible angle could be to ask the students to reflect around the symbolical meaning of the fence which Gemmy sits on top of in the initial scene, which is a very important scene in the novel. I would also like the students to reflect upon the anxiety of the settlers, who express a fear of losing *it*, a scene which also emerge central to our understanding of the theme.

### 5.6.2.3 Tracing characters

When the students have read the novel midway they will by this time have been introduced to all the central characters. This provides a good basis for the students to embark on a

simplified character analysis such as “Tracing characters”, which according to Eikrem is a work method that: “[...] give the students a context in which to gather information about – and discuss – the main characters` personality. It also provides an opportunity for the teacher to find out if the students understand what they are reading and clear up possible misunderstandings.” (*What the Story has to Offer*, 72)

Names:	Gemmy	Mr. Frazer	Jock Mc Ivor	Mr. Abott
Physical characteristics:				
Character:				
Worries:				
Hopes:				
Other information:				

When executing the analysis, I would like the students to be working individually. Otherwise the students may too easily find themselves concerned with how their fellow students approach the task, something which may detain them from interpreting the novel on their own individual terms. In the way I see it, a much better option would be to bring the analysis along when returning to the group, where each of the individual analysis will make the basis of a literary conversation. I would argue this method to harbor a range of opportunities in where the students may get to explore the characters more intimately and sort out their function in the novel.

#### 5.6.2.4 Notes as means

Mr. Frazer`s written note reveals the British` neglect of Australia and its indigenous people, and does the way I see it sum up the entire message of the novel, as well as it serves as the novels most remarkable epiphanic moment. I would consider this passage as a central part of the novel and of that reason it requires a closer reading and discussion in class. To illuminate this part of the novel, I plan to hand out copies of Mr, Frazer`s notes in class which allows the students to make personal comments directly in the text. On the top of the sheet, the students will be equipped with a square filled with jumbled sentences which are originate from Mr. Frazer`s notes. By applying the contextual knowledge they have gained through history class, the students are supposed to read behind the lines and elaborate on what the fragmented sentences means, in a larger sense. My aim of this proceeding is to lay a solid foundation for vigorous discussions in class, and should therefore not exceed more than one page maximum. The sentences underneath reflect what I would argue to be the essence of Mr. Frazer`s message, but are only suggestions to points which could be worth discussing and primarily meant as a tool help the students who have difficulties of approaching the task.

It is habitable already We must rub our eyes Clear our minds We have been wrong  
 We must humble ourselves All this can be done again Changing ourselves rather than it  
 Our poor friend Gemmy is a forerunner Crossed the boundaries of his given nature  
 With their English eyes Yield its fruits to us The great banquet at which we are guests

(*Remembering Babylon*, 117-121)

#### 5.6.2.5 Interview

When the students now have become acquainted with Mr. Frazer, who is a central character in the novel, I would like the students to do a scrutiny of Jim Sweetman, and argue in which ways he contrasts Mr. Frazer. One of the aspects that I find extremely fascinating about *Remembering Babylon* is how the different views and attitudes which prevail the settler community are displayed through narration. Based on the different ways in which they approach their new home country, Jim Sweetman and Mr. Frazer distinguish from one another as they represent two totally different colonial experiences. One of the main aims of this project is to make the students recognize history as a three-dimensional process in which

different views, attitudes and experiences are embedded. To view the situation of the British settler from two sides, these two equivalents, Mr. Frazer and Jim Sweetman serve as great representations. Based on what the students have learned about the two characters through reading the novel, they shall pair up, and prepare an interview. One will play the role as Mr. Frazer while the other as Jim Sweetman, but when conducting the interview they are supposed to be neutral in their approach. This technique, as Eikrem also points out, “open up for the student’s own imagination and trigger of their fantasy.” (*What the Story has to Offer*, 96) Furthermore, Eikrem suggests that the teacher only should prepare a necessity of information beforehand. Underneath, I have adjusted the task to fit *Remembering Babylon*:

Your situation: Imagine that you are a British newspaper reporter who is in the area around Brisbane at the moment, travelling north in Queensland to find a rural settlement of former British, living in the outskirts of the modern world.

Your task: You hear rumors of a minister who bears the name Mr. Frazer, and who is said to have changed his conception of life after migrating from the Great Britain. You are curious to find out what has caused such a change of mentality, and wish to interview him for your paper.

Your task: You seek to find a person who struggles to identify with the new country, and when talking to the settlers about the name Jim Sweetman all naturally pops up. You decide to pay him a visit and interview him for your newspaper.

### 5.6.3 Post-reading activities:

#### 5.6.3.1 Process oriented writing

Through investigating Hennig’s approach to literary analysis I will in this final section of my thesis be introducing process oriented writing. In contrast to the way in which literature traditionally has been taught in class, the process oriented method emerges as a working method allowing the students to explore and ponder. One way of encouraging the students to write about a text is by dividing it up in two or more parts. The first part could be an outline based on the student’s own interpretation of the text. At this stage the student should exclusively focus on his or her personal encounter with the text and restrain from using tools

like for instance the web to make research on the author and interpretations of the text. (*Litterær forståelse*, 216) The next stage would be to pair up in smaller groups and present the outline to one another within the group. In this part of the process, they will be asked to give feedback on each other`s texts and discuss it from different perspectives. On the background of the responses from the group, the students will be given the opportunity to redraft their texts. This way of working with literature in class, Hennig argues, reflects the process of writing literature in real life. Much like an author who would be consulting people within her or his special field when writing a novel or a shorts story et cetera, the students get to utilize the diversity of expertise found within the boundaries of the classroom to improve their product. When writing the final text, the students will benefit from having written a log book where they have collected theirs thoughts on the novel while reading it. Through the process of reading the novel, they will have been introduced to work methods which signify a high degree of independence and personal reflection. A personal interpretation of the novel themselves shall mirror their final textual product. The character`s identity processes, mirrored by the vivid descriptions of nature, serves as a connective thread throughout the novel, and is an important element that the students also should include in their discussion when doing an in depth analysis. As a final product I will ask the students as a starting point, to view aspects of nature in relation one of the characters. As part of their analysis they shall also prove that they have developed a understanding of the post-colonial key-concepts, *identity, hybridity, language, place/displacement, ambivalence and other(-ing)* by incorporating them into their analysis.

## 6 Conclusion

Wrapped up in the western culture, and mentally rooted in the country of their forbears, an unpleasant sensation of displacement manifest itself as the characters of David Malouf's novel *Remembering Babylon* encounter the strange and unrecognizable. Intrigued by what they see in Gemmy, the pariah, who in their eyes emerge as a vortex of grief and suffering, the fear of the unfamiliar gets even more pronounced. The changes that gradually are taking place within their minds are expressed through images of nature and the evolving landscape. Slowly breaking through to a deeper understanding of, life, love and acceptance, - they enter "the third space", the borderland of the two cultures, in where their dual identity merge into one, hybrid identity. *Remembering Babylon* is an intriguing novel that offers a variety of ways of teaching English at VG2 in upper secondary school, as part of an interdisciplinary project on British colonialism in the two subjects English and history. Through applying post-colonial terminology and colonial history to my interpretation of the novel, a different and more nuanced understanding of the novel and central aspects of the colonization process can be taught to the students. Post-colonial theory provides different lenses to view literature and history through which could serve beneficial to apply in class. Considering that *Remembering Babylon* could be a challenging novel for young people to read at this level of education, the integration of David Malouf's novel into an interdisciplinary project in which colonial history could serve as frame would increase their interest for the novel and its historical context. My interests within the field of Australian history and literature will hopefully vitalize my teaching in ways I hope and think will be profitable to my students. By introducing my students to Australian literature through different aspects of the country's history, I will also be given the opportunity to indulge in a field of great personal interest to me, which I believe will add a positive dimension to the teaching of both subjects.

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