

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DIPLOMA THESIS

2015

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CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Department of English Language and Literature

DIPLOMA THESIS

**Writing Australia: The Motif of Journey through the
Prism of Cultural Anthropology**

Literární tvorba Austrálie: Motiv cesty pohledem kulturní
antropologie

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Field of Study: N AJ-ZSV

2015

Declaration

I hereby declare that this diploma thesis, titled “Writing Australia: The Motif of Journey through the Prism of Cultural Anthropology”, is the result of my own work and that I used only the cited sources. I declare herewith that I have not used this diploma thesis to gain any other degree.

Prague, April 9th 2015

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Acknowledgement

I would hereby like to thank PhDr. Tereza Topolovská for being an immense source of inspiration and motivation to me. She helped greatly and with endless patience and enthusiasm. Without her valuable advice and fruitful discussions, this work would not have been completed.

Furthermore, I would like to thank those who have supported me throughout entire process of writing for their useful comments, remarks and engagement.

Also, I like to thank my Australian informant, adviser and friend, Bridget Roth, who has kindly provided me with photographs used in the thesis.

Abstract

This MA thesis is focused on discovering the literary motif of journey in selected works defined by Australia. These works also share the interest in shaping Australian identity. A socio-historical background of colonisation and the first settlement in Australia is provided and the key terms of cultural anthropology are further elaborated on. The thesis depicts traditional Aboriginal culture and focuses especially on its earthbound philosophy. Special attention is paid to the differences among various literary approaches towards the subject matter, to the application of cultural anthropology findings, to the depiction of clashes between different cultures and possibilities of their reconciliation. Furthermore, the works of selected authors are closely characterised from the point of view of their degree of authenticity and the genre specifics. Various treatments of the literary motif of journey are compared and critically analysed.

Key words

Aboriginal culture, Australia, cultural relativism, ethnocentrism, identity, journey, pilgrimage, songlines

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce si klade za cíl odhalit motivy cesty ve vybraných dílech, která se zabývají Austrálií, přičemž společným bodem zájmu těchto děl je vytváření australské identity. Práce poskytuje společensko-historické pozadí období kolonizace a prvního osidlování Austrálie a hlouběji rozpracovává některé klíčové pojmy kulturní antropologie. Dále je charakterizována tradiční aboridžinská kultura, přičemž objektem zájmu jsou především její životní postoje založené na spjatosti s přírodou. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována rozdílnosti literárních přístupů k tomuto tématu, dále aplikaci poznatků kulturní antropologie, střetům rozdílných kultur a možnosti jejich smíření. Díla vybraných autorů jsou blíže specifikována, a to z úhlu pohledu míry autenticity a žánrových určení. Různá pojetí literárního motivu cesty jsou porovnávána a kriticky zhodnocena.

Klíčová slova

Aboridžinská kultura, Austrálie, cesta, cesty písní, ethnocentrismus, identita, kulturní relativismus, pout'

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
THEORETICAL PART	3
1 COLONISATION AND THE FIRST SETTLEMENT	4
2 KEY TERMS	8
2.1 Cultural relativism versus ethnocentrism	8
2.2 Field study and participant observation	9
2.3 Cultural shock	10
2.4 Nomads.....	12
2.5 Pilgrimage and identity search	16
3 ASPECTS OF TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL CULTURE.....	19
3.1 Aborigines	19
3.2 Dreaming, Dreamtime	23
3.3 Songlines and Dreaming-tracks	26
3.4 Walkabout	28
4 LIFE AND WORK OF SELECTED AUTHORS	30
4.1 Bruce Chatwin.....	30
4.2 David Malouf	31
4.3 Marlo Morgan	33
5 GENRE(S) OF SELECTED WORKS	34
5.1 A cross-genre travel memoir, <i>The Songlines</i>	34
5.2 A neo-historical novella, <i>Remembering Babylon</i>	36
5.3 A fictitious non-fiction, <i>Mutant Message Down Under</i>	37
PRACTICAL PART	38
6 <i>THE SONGLINES</i>	39
6.1 Exploring Aboriginal Australia via following the songlines	39
6.2 Nature of human restlessness	44
7 <i>REMEMBERING BABYLON</i>	46
7.1 Cultural shock and clash of cultures	46
7.2 Gemmy's life journey and identity search	53
8 <i>MUTANT MESSAGE DOWN UNDER</i>	59
8.1 A controversial walkabout	60
CONCLUSION.....	68
WORKS CITED.....	70
PRIMARY SOURCES	70
SECONDARY SOURCES	70
ONLINE SOURCES.....	71
ADDITIONAL LITERATURE	72
PHOTOGRAPHY	72

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the motif of journey, travelling, wandering and being in motion in general. It aims to discover and elaborate further on various approaches and specific treatments of the motif in selected works set in the Australian context. Special attention is paid to the traditional Aboriginal culture, particularly to the concepts of Songlines, Dreamtime, Walkabout and nomadic way of life.

The key moment in the process of decision making about the theme of the thesis arose after having read *Mutant Message Down Under*, a world-wide popular piece of work by an American author, Marlo Morgan. Her adventurous narration is described as a personal walkabout throughout Australian Outback. For her, this demanding wandering meant a spiritual enlightenment and helped her to get back to the natural way of life and at the end of the work, Morgan encourages other people to set off for a similar journey themselves and discover the unity of self and the universe. At that time, I found the work inspirational, as well as many readers all over the world, possibly I had a limited knowledge about traditional Aboriginal culture. Nevertheless, some of the descriptions and proclamations in Morgan's work have caused confusion and raised questions about the authenticity of the work. This led to a further research on the subject matter and study of the core of the Aboriginal earthbound philosophy.

For the purpose of further research and to enable comparison, two more primary sources were chosen, namely a cross-genre travel memoir *The Songlines* by Bruce Chatwin and a neo-historical novella *Remembering Babylon* by David Malouf. Compared to the description of traditional Aboriginal culture in *The Songlines* and *Remembering Babylon* and the findings of cultural anthropology, *Mutant Message Down Under* reveals to be a highly controversial work. The thesis aims to reveal possible controversial moments of Morgan's description of the journey depicted in her fictional spiritual travel, interconnects it with Western and Aboriginal worldview and compares it to the other two primary sources.

David Malouf, being Australian, presents his opinions in a different manner than Bruce Chatwin who reflected his rich travelling experience stemming from his nomadic existence, and definitely differently than Marlo Morgan who was rather an American tourist in Australia. The diverse cultural backgrounds of the authors are also reflected in differences in perception and interpretation of foreign reality and its secrets, markedly dissimilar sets of values, beliefs and traditions.

To start with Bruce Chatwin, it is important to highlight that his work is based on the motif of journey and reflects author's personal experience with wandering and discovering otherness. Being a great nomad and traveller himself, Chatwin has much to say about the concepts of nomadism and wandering. His research among Australian Aborigines is based on a field study and suggests that the relevance of presented facts and the degree of authenticity will be high.

Malouf's fictional work depicts the process of construction of both the personal as well as national identity. However, Malouf's work proves that the identity issue is still acute in current Australian socio-political reality and that it is worth being discussed. His concept of travelling is tightly connected with discovering self, especially when encountering the other. This novella establishes the past as well as the present image of the country and its inhabitants and therefore may be perceived as an attempt to write Australia.

All the three works depict the encounters of two distinctive cultures and point to the differences in perception of self and the other which naturally springs from such contact. The motif of 'us' and 'them' is the main focus of attention of cultural anthropology, therefore, it is necessary to clarify some of the basic anthropological terms when dealing with otherness. It is important to be aware of the concept of ethnocentrism on one hand and of the theory of cultural relativism on the other to be able to learn about a different culture objectively and prejudice-free.

Having been interested in traditional Aboriginal culture myself, I find it interesting to reveal and compare various approaches towards dealing with it. Furthermore, discovering otherness and finding one's own place in the world is not exclusively the issue of Australia, but can be understood in a broader context as well. Learning from the others is an inevitable part of the identity search and can be genuinely undertaken only if a person is aware of the concept of cultural relativism and if they are willing to accept otherness of a different culture, its values and life attitudes. The way the writers reflect on the Australian experience shows the importance of the reconciliation of the two cultures, the Aboriginal and the European one, and the apprehension of their equality.

Theoretical Part

1 Colonisation and the first settlement

The native inhabitants consider Australia to be their homeland since the beginning of time, however, the oldest artefacts found in Australia suggest that they have lived in Australia for 40 or 60 thousand years. They had lived in harmony with nature without being anyhow disturbed until the beginning of 17th century when the first Europeans came and began to explore the continent. The first Caucasian foot laid on the continent belonged to Dutch explorers. Willem Janszoon spotted the shores of Australia in 1606 and Abel Tasman discovered a southern island, later on named after him Tasmania, in 1642. The Dutch explores did not express any desires to inhabit the new land or establish colonies, they rather concentrated on exploring and mapping north and west areas which they called New Holland. Well-elaborated Dutch maps served to the British greatly when heading for Australia. In 1770, James Cook, with the blessings and instructions from King George III, sailed alongside the east coast and named the newly discovered areas New South Wales. Cook's expedition found the place good for a settlement and reported it back to England.

The British deemed the land uninhabited because the natives did not formally possess the land nor did they cultivate it and were, therefore, considered uncivilized. Pleading the concept of 'terra nullius', meaning dealing with land without law and legislature, it was possible to officially usurp such land. Native Aboriginal population became suddenly landless, exiled from their land. In the work *Postcolonialism – A Very Short Introduction*, Robert Young explains that "landless means land loss, land lost. 'Becoming' landless depends on your relation to the land. Nomadic people were never in possession of the land in a European sense, which is how colonists were able, following the 17th-century English philosopher John Locke, to declare the land empty, 'terra nulla' " (Young 51).

With the first colonisers who arrived at Botany Bay between 18th and 20th January 1788, the isolation of the Aboriginal people in Australia had finished. Instead, European Australia was established on 26 January 1788 when the first fleet lead by Capitan Arthur Phillip landed in Port Jackson. Australia was settled through penal transportation since the first newcomers were (predominantly British and Irish) convicts, guards and civil officers. As Cathy Dunn and Marion McCreadie point out, "between 1788 and 1850 the English sent over 162,000 convicts to Australia in 806 ships. The first eleven of these ships are today known as the First Fleet and contained the convicts and marines that are now acknowledged as the Founders of Australia" (Dunn and McCreadie). New colonies were not only prison camps, but also self-governing Crown Colonies with settlers who came of their own free will. In South Australia and Swan River (later re-named to West Australia) the settlers believed to begin new, better life and start farming and cultivating the land.

Nevertheless, from the very beginning, the colonisers had to face various problems. They lacked drinkable water and food supplies and in the first decades of inhabiting Australia they were dependent on supplies imported from Europe. Not

only insufficient food supplies but also hostile environment and absence of shelter made colonisers' lives unbearable. Escape from overcrowded Europe which offered only hunger, unemployment and poverty to the unknown land full of promises turned to be a bitter disappointment. Only a few settlers knew how to farm and even if they did, the soil was poor and not in favour of European plants. "Instead of Cook's lush pastures, well watered and fertile ground, suitable for growing all types of foods and providing grazing for cattle, they found a hot, dry, infertile country unsuitable for the small farming necessary to make the settlement self-sufficient" (Dunn and McCreadie). There was a long journey towards prosperity, regular shipping and improvements in living standards.



Figure 1. Semi-desert areas in Mt Isa, Queensland, 2015. (Photograph by Bridget Roth)

During the colonisation, the settlers could not avoid contacts with the native inhabitants. Instead of peaceful negotiations, there were many clashes caused by mutual misunderstandings. In their territory, the Aborigines occasionally killed a white trespasser or took settlers' animals without asking. As a response, the settlers chased and killed whole groups or clans of the natives and destroyed their sacred places. In a few decades Aboriginal population decreased immensely. The number was reduced due to slaughtering, but also due to infective diseases which had been unknown to the Aborigines before the Europeans came. In Tasmania, the indigenous population was wiped out completely.

In the era of colonialism, indigenous cultures were viewed as less developed, less important and were transformed into subordinate ones. Modern culture, represented by European values, challenged the traditional ones and forced them to accommodate to the majority. In his work *Mýtus, jazyk a kulturní antropologie*, Ivo Budil mentions that the justification of the invasion was based on the premises of Social Darwinism and evolutionism which suggested that "human races can be treated according to their level of development. Underdeveloped forms of social organisation were supposed to be replaced by more developed and civilised ones"

(Budil 40, as translated by Barbora Pavlíčková). Colonial rule, legitimized by these anthropological theories, portrayed inhabitants of the colonized world as “inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves (despite having done so perfectly well for millennia) and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interests” (Young 2). According to ethos of that time, western nations were superordinate to the non-western, underdeveloped ones and they had to guide those less evolved into a more civilised state of social organisation. The assumptions concerning superiority of light over dark were rooted in Christian religious tradition in which black was associated with sin and the devil and white with goodness and purity. European’s duty was to lead the primitive nations out of darkness and savagery. Many called it the white men’s burden. In 1899, Rudyard Kipling used this expression in a poem *The White Men’s Burden* in which he depicted the spirit of Eurocentric racist theory of superiority and dominance during the colonisation period. To be precise, he says:

Take up the White Man's burden -
Send forth the best ye breed -
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered folk and wild -
Your new-caught sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.
(...)

Take up the White Man's burden -
Ye dare not stoop to less -
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloak your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent sullen peoples
Shall weigh your Gods and you. (Rudyard Kipling)

Speaking about division between the west and the rest, Young points out that the western dominance reached its top in the 19th century. The expansion of the European empires practically meant that “nine-tenths of the entire land surface of the globe was controlled by European, or European-derived, powers” (Young 2). White culture was regarded to be legitimately superior on the anthropological basis of having a developed system of “government, law, economics, science, language, music, art, literature - in a word, civilization” (Young 2).

When colonising the Australian land, the settlers had to colonise its inhabitants as well. The uneducated, illiterate and therefore uncivilised savage Aborigines, as they were seen, had to be taught proper manners, beliefs and obedience. Colonisers aimed not only to take over the land, but also to colonise minds of the native inhabitants. The best way how to achieve that was to impose coloniser's language on the indigenous population so they could adopt and internalise western logic, world-view and way of thinking. Language became a medium of oppression, through which the world was being newly expressed and re-shaped and through which the acts of colonisation could be justified.

The superiority of 'the white man' lasted approximately till the beginning or the middle of the 20th century when a conscious and active resistance against the colonisers and dominant political powers started to take place. "Out of a long history of dependence and subordination, paternalism and protection, maltreatment and neglect, and even worse – out of all that and more, has arisen a resentment which has become increasingly pronounced" (Berndt and Berndt, *World* 527). In the post-colonial period, paradigm slowly changed and a crucial shift from the dominant, western world view and its voice could be observed. It was no more necessary to (dis)use anthropology and literature for justification of interventions and for explanation of superiority, on the contrary, the often traumatic relationships have influenced the field of cultural studies, including anthropology, as well as the literary field. An essential task was to experience different standpoints and also to re-evaluate attitudes towards the one who is dominant and in power and towards the marginal, underprivileged one. Australia, modern and postcolonial, had to rediscover and restore elements which were before excluded. Young says that "postcolonial theory involves a conceptual reorientation towards the perspectives of knowledges, as well as needs, developed outside the west" (Young 6). Concretely speaking, native Aboriginal culture with its specifics started to be once again appreciated as unique and worth being discovered, studied and understood.

In addition, postcolonial period with its reorientation towards 'the other' is tightly connected with the search for own identity. Ronald and Catherine Berndt, in their work *The World of the First Australians* (which is based on their life-long anthropologic research in the field of Australian Aboriginal Studies), state that "if other Australians have re-discovered the Aborigines, people of Aboriginal descent are now engaged in the process of re-discovering themselves – in fact, it could be said that many *have* discovered themselves" (Berndt and Berndt, *World* 527). The search for own identity plays a key role in constituting not only one's personality, but also a nation.

2 Key Terms

Since this thesis is concerned with not only literary but also socio-cultural approaches towards the motif of journey in selected literary works, it is seen as necessary to clarify some of the key concepts discussed and further elaborated later on. All of the selected works are dealing with certain anthropological aspects and basic methods which play an important literary role. A solid anthropological background evokes authenticity and reliability of the works. Moreover, “an anthropological and social scientific approach to the understanding of problems facing persons of Aboriginal descent is essential to help them in the aim of achieving their ultimate well-being” (Berndt and Berndt, *World* 527).

2.1 Cultural relativism versus ethnocentrism

Opinions and ways of perceiving reality differ in time and space and depend mainly on the cultural background of the observer (or the author) so that they are inevitably culturally conditioned. Cultural and social anthropology aims to study various ways of life shared by the members of certain community; it strives to inform about vast number of those ways of life and reveals the beauty of being different. Nevertheless, under the pressure of modernisation and globalisation, the original plurality and diversity keeps disappearing and at the same time homogenisation of the world’s culture takes place. But on the other hand, we can see a contradictory tendency: the awareness of such fact and certain efforts against the massive unification. It is nowadays again slowly becoming a common practice to keep, or at least to try to keep both national identity and cultural plurality alive. Modern society tries to maintain and develop various alternative ways of life, aiming to find trans-cultural understanding. Because “understanding the ways of people is essential but this does not mean that you have to give up your own” (Oberg 143). As it will be shown later, Bruce Chatwin is aware of that and when describing another culture in *The Songlines*, he plays a role of an observer and searches for universally human cultural similarities, he aims to study culture to embrace it, to gain better knowledge about it. An opposite tendency can be seen in Marlo Morgan’s *Mutant Message Down Under*, where she contrasts different cultures to a great extent and appeals on the (Western) reader to replace their corrupted culture by a pure, unspoiled one.

Talking about culture, it is important to bear in mind the concept of cultural relativism and deal with a different culture accordingly. Every culture is considered to be a unique entity and therefore cannot be objectively evaluated or judged by cultural standards of another society. There is no higher and lower, better or worse culture, there is only a different one. It is important and crucial to view unfamiliar beliefs, values, traditions and norms of a certain culture within the specific context in which they had been created. Judging through the prism of cultural relativism, the

expression 'primitive cultures' known from the history, therefore, cannot occur in current theories. The term is not used anymore because it implies inferiority and inequality and since contemporary world and modern politics are well aware of principles of uniqueness, individualistic approach and cultural relativism, it is necessary to treat all people equally in accordance with that.

In opposition to cultural relativism stands the concept of ethnocentrism. It can be characterised as a natural human tendency to look at and understand the world from the perspective of one's own culture and its values and beliefs. This is a tendency all human beings share; ethnocentrism is considered to be a cultural universal. Yet it is important to be aware of this tendency and at least try to keep mind open to unknown and unfamiliar and avoid being prejudiced and stuck in an irrational bubble of stereotypes and uninformed preconceptions.

Ethnocentrism in European geographical and cultural space is called Eurocentrism and can be described as understanding and interpreting the world from the European point of view. In an extreme version, European standards and morals are believed to be the only correct, indisputable and valuable ones. Such narrow-minded attitudes can be clearly observed in Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* when he depicts the colonisation and way of thinking of some of the Scottish settlers. Similarly, Bruce Chatwin also encounters on his journey across Australia some Caucasian people who claim to be superordinate over others based on the racial premises and geographical origin.

2.2 Field study and participant observation

To understand another culture is a long-distance run and most likely can be never accomplished in its absolute fullness. Nonetheless, one may come to knowledge thanks to the personal experience and close contact with the target culture. The basic principle, according to the anthropologists, is a field study method which is based on a long-term research within the target community with the aim to reveal the way of thinking, living and behaving of the studied society and find valuable trans-cultural understanding. Simultaneously, by understanding of 'the others' we learn to understand ourselves; we define our own culture via the comparisons and contrasts with the others. Such understanding serves as a constitution of a certain critique for ourselves. People use different cultural patterns to self-critically reflect on their own ways of thinking and sets of assumptions that are often unrealized or taken for granted and indisputable.

Regrettably, to become a member of the target community is by no means an easy process. If a stranger enters a community, he or she might become a prospective burden to the natives, a potential threat. The stranger shares nothing with the tribe and cannot rely either on collective history or adhere to the ideas of the tribe. To an anthropologist (or any person entering a new community) it takes some time until

they gain trust of the natives and manage to build particular social role within the group and new environment. As soon as such person successfully becomes a member of the target community, often with the assistance of an informant, they may put so called participant observation into practice; that enables the person to do what the community does, eat what they eat, live how they live. “At times it is helpful to be a participant observer by joining the activities of the people, to try to share in their responses” (Oberg 145). Being a participant observant means being an accepted part of the community, being a regular member.

At least at the beginning, the anthropologist, or generally the observant, needs a professional help, an assistance from a native who helps to explain and generalise their own culture and therefore help the observer to comprehend their world. Work with the informant is an essential part of the observer’s task. An informant character can be found in all primary sources of this thesis. To begin with *Remembering Babylon*, there can be traced informants revealing the world of the white settlers to a semi-Aborigine. The kids play an important social role of the translators: they interconnect Gemmy’s gesticulations and semi-words with appropriate words in English. They mediate the communication between the world of a semi-Aboriginal Gemmy and the world of white settlers. Later on, the roles switch and Gemmy plays the role of an introducer; he initiates Mr. Fraser into the Aboriginal world. Nevertheless, he filters information which he presents to the priest and points out to an inseparable problem connected with the informant; the observer can be never sure whether they obtain correct information or are rendered with half-truths and incompleteness.

In Chatwin’s *Songlines*, the main character, Bruce (the author himself), is guided by Arkady, an Australian man. Arkady also arranges many meetings with the Aborigines who serve Bruce as an immense source of inspiration. And in Morgan’s *Mutant Message Down Under*, an American woman is dependent on the help of a translator. He opens the Aboriginal world for her; but once again, he selects carefully what to tell.

2.3 Cultural shock

An issue tightly connected with discovering a different (often exotic) cultural reality is the experience of cultural shock. Travelling with the aim to discover the unknown, or ‘the other’, is very often accompanied by that; furthermore, the greater the difference between two cultures is, the more probable it is to undergo the shock. And consequently, cultural shock cannot occur without undertaking a journey, it is a ‘condicio sine qua non’, a condition without which it cannot happen. Without journeying, there is no way to discover otherness; by wandering people discover different landscapes, cultures, lifestyles, ways of thinking, traditions, otherness, but

also themselves. Only from abroad one may appreciate home and its values that may had been taken for granted before.

Culture shock springs from the confrontation with an absolutely new world of ideas and norms in which the old and well known standards are not valid anymore. Kalervo Oberg, a world-renowned anthropologist of the 20th century, paid attention especially to this issue in his anthropological study *Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments* devoted exclusively to the aspect of acquaintance with different culture, he remarks that “culture shock tends to be an occupational disease of people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad” (Oberg 142). He compares cultural shock to an ailment and further explains that like other maladies, it has its own causes, apparent symptoms and a cure. “Many missionaries have suffered from it. Some never recovered, and left their field. Some live in a constant state of such shock. Many recover beautifully” (Oberg 142).

Of course, not only missionaries suffered from it. As Malouf shows in *Remembering Babylon*, the European settlers found it extremely difficult to deal with an absolutely new and unfamiliar, seemingly hostile environment of Australia. Furthermore, the settlers were confronted with the culture of the native inhabitants which they did not understand. And reciprocally, the Aborigines suffered from losing stable and unchangeable realities after the contact with the colonisers. As Oberg says, the anxieties on both sides resulted from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. “These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life (...). Now when an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed” (Oberg 142).

According to many anthropologists, Kalervo Oberg including, there are three basic stages of the adjustment to new cultural environments to be distinguished. Oberg calls the stages a honeymoon stage, regression and adjustment. The first encounter with a different culture, the honeymoon stage, is characterized mainly positively. A visitor to a new country spends their first days or weeks in euphoria and fascination by the new. If such a person returns home, they share their enthusiasm with others and speak about pleasant experience abroad. This would be the case of James Cook, Oberg points out; after a short period of time in Australia, Cook sailed back and under the influence of the first impressions, he reported that the newly discovered land was suitable for settlement. The first period does not normally last if the foreign visitor remains abroad and has to seriously cope with real conditions of life.

The second phase of the cultural shock is called regression and reflects the frustration of people who experience discomfort of the new environment. Suddenly, a tremendous importance is being ascribed to the home environment. “All the difficulties and problems are forgotten and only the good things back home are remembered” (Oberg 142). The home country is glorified, while the host country is treated with a hostile and aggressive attitude. People transplanted into the new environment, such as Malouf’s settlers, become aware, for instance, of language

barrier or experience housing problems, while the native inhabitants of the host country seem to be indifferent to all these troubles. This leads to general tendencies to gather with the fellow countrymen and take refuge in their colony, and to adopt negative attitudes towards the natives, often going hand in hand with physical fear of contact with the native culture. “Foreigners often join together to complain about the host culture and strengthen their mutual belief that it is evil and responsible for their problems” (Oberg 143). Criticism of the host country is often accompanied with the criticism of its people and their ways of life, mostly based on subjective emotionally charged labels and stereotypes.

The third stage of adjustment to new cultural environment is characterised as a recovery from the formal cultural shock. The adjustment to the new environment is based on the openness to the other, on an individual will to understand and accept, possibly even enjoy what the other culture offers. There are no more feelings of anxiety and hostility; different customs are accepted and treated as just another way of living. Certain degree of language acquisition also takes place and the common language serves as a means of communication, interchange of information and learning, not as an insuperable barrier anymore. Nevertheless, this would be only the ideal case; but there are many shades and degrees of adjustment. Some may adopt the attitude which Oberg describes as “this is my cross and I have to bear it” (Oberg 143). From this point of view, the acceptance of the other is connected with the white-man’s-burden-attitude described earlier in chapter 1. To illustrate such attitude, there is an example of Gemmy about whom the settlers say: “Poor bugger, he had got lost, and as just a bairn too. It was a duty they owed to what they were, or claimed to be, to bring him back, if it is feasible, to being a white man” (*RB* 35).

The issue of cultural shock, tightly connected with the clash of cultures and efforts to distinguish the self from the other, will be further elaborated using the example of Malouf’s settlers in the practical part.

2.4 Nomads

Cultural anthropology differentiates between two major styles of life: between the settled and the migratory one. Nomadic lifestyle involves the practice of borderless movement across territories and is often characterized as an example of “the most productive forms of cultural identity, emphasizing the creative performativity of identity, as opposed to an identity derived from the physical affiliations of family and place” (Young 53). The traditional Aborigines are considered to lead such migratory lifestyle, they are bound to the Earth as such, not to a certain spot surrounded by a fence or official boundary.

Bruce Chatwin elaborates on the etymological origin of the word nomad and discovers its meanings as follows:

Nomos is Greek for ‘pasture’, and ‘the Nomad’ is a chief or clan elder who presides over the allocation of pastures. *Nomos* thus came to mean ‘law’, ‘fair distribution’, ‘that which is allotted by custom’ – and so the basis of all Western law. The verb *nemein* – to ‘graze’, ‘to pasture’, ‘to range’ or ‘to spread’ has a second sense as early as Homer: ‘to deal’, ‘to apportion’ or ‘to dispense’ – especially of land, honour, meat or drink. (*The Songlines* 184)

Nomads are groups of people who have no settled home and who permanently move from place to place, from pasture to pasture. Their lifestyle is considered to be nondomestic, unsettled or roving but simultaneously tightly connected with the land. The relationship with the land is rather intimate and sacred than the one based on ownership or possession. In accordance with this paradigm, there are also no solid houses to be built; most of the nomads live in portable tents and shelters which are easy to set up and pack repeatedly.

The concept of nomadism is universal and worldwide; it is bound neither to a particular place nor period of time. Nomads traditionally travelled on foot or by animals, nevertheless, nowadays some of them travel by motor vehicles too. Usually, they travel in groups of families based on kinship bonds or formal agreements of mutual collaboration. Young characterizes nomadism as an example of a form “emphasizing the creative performativity of identity, as opposed to an identity derived from the physical affiliations of family and place” (Young 53). The concept of nomadism involves the practice of movement across territories and exceeding boundaries and encourages productive forming of cultural identity.

Nomads travel as the natural conditions change; they move according to the season of the year in search for food and water. Some nomadic tribes of northern Africa, for instance, move to find new grazing for their livestock (goats, sheep, cattle, camels or horses). Other reasons for being permanently in motion can be the effort to avoid enemies or the interest to trade various goods and craftworks in a large area: because any large area simply provides a large number of customers.

The Aborigines, being traditionally hunter-gatherers, move with the aim to gather plants and hunt game. In Australian mainland, they have to travel long distances on foot to supply themselves with food and drink necessary for survival in hot and otherwise difficult conditions. A nomadic way of life seems to be a logical consequence of the adaptation to such harsh natural conditions. In desert and semi-desert areas where food and drink is rare but absolutely crucial, it is necessary to move from place to place and use precious resources carefully and with sensitive consideration. The Aborigines have been well aware of the fact that destroying those valuable resources would have devastating impact: if they killed all animals, took away all plants or exhaust a water source of a certain place, there would be nothing else left for the next time. Therefore they have to travel, hunt and gather in different places to make sure they maintain life on places they had visited.

Being constantly in motion, the Aboriginal nomadic tribes do not need to possess much. “Traditional semi-nomadic life on the Australian mainland requires very little in terms of dwellings or permanent purpose-built structures. Material possessions consist mostly of tools, weapons and implements for hunting and gathering” (Fryer-Smith 2:4).

The current situation is not much in favour of the traditional nomads anywhere in the world and their wandering lifestyle is becoming rare. The reasons are mainly economic; governments claim to have difficulties controlling nomadic movements and fail to collect taxes because the nomads, being in a permanent state of migration, effectively resist the controlling institutions of the state. Furthermore, many pastures have disappeared; they became private properties and turned into farms or croplands. Many nomads were forced to stop travelling and become settled because there was no more free land to roam about. Many traditional hunter-gatherers became farmers and derive their lives from place-bound agriculture.



Figure 2. Warwick Farm Land, 2015. (Photograph by Bridget Roth)

But not only a decreasing tendency can be seen. A new term ‘global nomad’ is being introduced and used on regular bases. It describes both lifestyle and philosophy of a perpetual traveller who is living a mobile life without permanent home or job. These perpetual tourists are tied with their home country only loosely which allows them to travel freely all over the world and be independent. Such modern wanderers usually devote themselves into writing, education or handicraft, in other words into something what is not location-dependent.

In *The Songlines*, Chatwin, a self-confessed nomad, is trying to discover the nature of human restlessness and wonders what makes people so desirous of leaving one place for another, what makes them so passionate about living in different places. He comes with several conclusions, one of them being that everything springs from human condition of being mortal when nothing can console us, only alleviate our despair. One of the possible alleviations would be distraction, a certain mania for

the new, a kind of an instinctive migratory urge. In this place he quotes Pascal who was of the opinion that “all our misery stemmed from a single cause: our inability to remain quietly in a room” (*The Songlines* 161). Man is migratory specie, Chatwin goes on, and as a general rule of biology, migratory species are less ‘aggressive’ than sedentary ones. As an obvious reason why this is so he states that the migration itself, like the pilgrimage, is a hard journey on which only the ‘fittest’ can survive (*The Songlines* 273). By being constantly in motion, people re-discover the original harmony which once existed between man and the universe; by travelling they learn to know the value of men.

Two significant theorists and philosophers of the 20th century, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, have much to say about the concept of nomadism as well. Their work *A Thousand Plateaus* introduces important terms – smooth and striated space, where the first one is connected with nomad space, the second one with sedentary. The authors comment on distinctive features of both of these places and relate them to the life movement. Simultaneously, these two types of spaces exist only in mixture since “smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space” (Deleuze and Guattari 474).

Nomadic way of life is comparable to the smooth space-time in which “one occupies without counting, whereas in a striated space-time one counts in order to occupy” (Deleuze and Guattari 477). In both the smooth and the striated space, there can be found stops and trajectories, the authors go on. The difference between these two spaces is as follows: in the striated space, one goes from one point to another. In other words, the trajectories tend to be subordinated to points. On the contrary, in the smooth space the points are subordinated to the trajectory. The case of nomads shows that “the dwelling is subordinated to the journey; inside space conforms to outside space: tent, igloo, boat” (Deleuze and Guattari 478). To think is to voyage, Deleuze and Guattari say. But what “distinguishes the two kinds of voyages is neither a measurable quantity of movement, nor something that would be only in the mind, but the mode of spatialization, the manner of being in space, of being for space” (Deleuze and Guattari 482). Voyaging smoothly is predominantly a becoming, often difficult and uncertain.

The settled way of life has always been influenced by the unsettled, nomadic one, and vice versa. Deleuze and Guattari conclude that “what interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces” (Deleuze and Guattari 500). These two ways of life coexist together and sway each other inevitably.

2.5 Pilgrimage and identity search

Speaking about being in motion, the motif of pilgrimage should be also mentioned. This specific type of journey shares many similar features with the Aboriginal concept of a Walkabout (discussed later in chapter 3.4) and points out that being in motion and undertake spiritual travels is something universally shared by people everywhere in the world, regardless time, region, religion, skin colour or cultural background.

The word pilgrimage originates in Middle English where the verb ‘pelegrine’ meant wandering. Simultaneously, Latin used the word ‘peregrines’ to indicate a foreigner. Nowadays, the term is explained traditionally: as a religious journey to a sacred place connected with personal belief and faith, but it is also understood in a modern and extended way: as a visit of any place which is somehow meaningfully associated with some event or as a journey into own beliefs. In both traditional and metaphorical sense, the journey is of immense significance to an individual and carries, to some individually varied degree, sacred, moral and spiritual importance. For any pilgrim, the journey means a spiritual awakening and benefits him greatly. Pilgrims search for connections with the divine powers and by physical manifestation of their faith they confirm their beliefs. What matters is personal connection with self while being on a journey, realisation why the journey is actually done, and also the connection with divinity while wandering and when finally reaching the destination.

The idea of pilgrimage can be traced to the beginnings of tribal societies when the people needed to be in touch with their local deities. If a member of a tribe needed divine help, they had to set off for a journey to certain sacred place to be able to come closer to the deities. Sacred places with indisputable importance could be found in where the gods or heroes were born, where they lived or died. Simply speaking, if such place had been once localised, it could be later on followed. Pilgrims follow paths, but also create many others themselves. The roads, paths, songlines and dreaming-tracks criss-cross the world, tell their stories and encourage pilgrims of all kinds to follow them and become closer to divinity. Each pilgrim who undertook a journey became part of that road or path or track and the account of his travels serves other pilgrims as a source of information and inspiration, as a kind of a guidebook.

The custom to set off for a journey to search for the answers for internal inquiries arises spontaneously from person’s heart and can be found in all religions. For instance, Christians have travelled and visited places connected with life, deeds and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, furthermore, there have been many pilgrimages taken to Rome, to the seat of Catholic Church and the Pope. Christian pilgrims have also travelled to sites connected with the saints, martyrs and Virgin Mary all over the world. Muslims’ spiritual journey to Mecca, the place of birth of the prophet Muhammad, is called Hajj. Every adult, physically and financially capable Muslim is obliged to undertake the journey to Mecca; it is his religious duty which must be

done at least once in a lifetime. The example of the journey to Mecca shows also a shift from the individual travelling towards a collective, systematic and organised one. Young Aborigines also set off for spiritual journeys; they go on walkabouts to become wise and connected with the land and the Ancestors. This rite of passage aims to teach an Aborigine all skills necessary for survival, it transmits traditions and cultural values and helps to find spirituality and oneness of the person and the world. As it has been illustrated, names may differ, yet the core remains the same. Apparently, the urge to connect self with spirituality and divinity is a cultural universal. By journeying and by loving, the pilgrims draw nigh to god(s).

In *Remembering Babylon*, David Malouf provides a biblical reference to the ancient city of Babylon. Don Randall, a professor of English language and literature at Bilkent University in Ankara, has spotted this allusion and elaborated on it in his study published under the name *Contemporary World Writers: David Malouf*. Randall asks here many questions: “Who is it then that worries about being remembered? Who is in danger of being forgotten? Should Australians or, more broadly, the various communities of the modern, increasingly globalised world – should we remember the colonial past, and how should we remember it?” (Randall 126). Malouf’s reference indirectly suggests that it is Babylon what must be remembered, not Jerusalem (as Psalm 137 suggests). It is not the country the pilgrims came from, but oppositely, the land into which they were coming, that land had to be recognised and accepted.

The country of pilgrims origin, in *Remembering Babylon* represented by England and Scotland, is contrasted with Australia, new and still unsettled continent which is far away from homeland, it is the Aboriginal land, alienate and exile. Coming into this new world resembles a rite of passage into maturity, both for people and the country. For Janet or Lachlan, Gemmy’s story influences the rites of passage into their Australian maturity and identity search. Janet also symbolises Christian love to accept even the other. At the end, she becomes a nun. For Australia, the settlement means a rite of passage as well. All the old memories of Europe and homeland seem to be far away whilst a new memory awaits the settlers in Australia. The new one may transform their existence if they free from the old stereotypes and open to receive this new memory. Australia shall not be seen as a place of current exile, but as a place for new beginning and hope. In *Remembering Babylon*, Malouf marries Christian elements and motifs with Aboriginal culture to demonstrate that reconciliation is possible, that the hope for better tomorrows is justifiable. He stresses out the contact and coexistence of the two cultures, both of them being inseparable part of Australian identity.

Malouf’s dialogues with otherness are irreplaceable parts of his works. He builds up on binary oppositions, therefore, encounters of fundamentally different cultures are depicted rather violently: as clashes, misunderstandings and rejecting attitudes. European settlement in Australia meant deprivation of traditional way of

life to the native inhabitants who had to suffer at the edge of so called civilised and therefore dominant society of Europeans. The role of communication in human relations and interactions is crucial, yet it requires effort on both sides. Only understanding leads to reconciliation, Malouf emphasizes. He also uses the example of Gemmy as a complete failure of communication. Gemmy's disturbingly different language was brought into the settlers' world and caused mutual mistrust and many misunderstandings. It was more Aboriginal, therefore, more threatening. Gemmy came out of nowhere, and the other Aborigines, viewed as frightening demons coming out of the hostile wilderness, could come too. Gemmy set tongue against tongue and by doing so he created Babel.

Chatwin also tries to capture the essence of other cultures in *The Songlines*; he does not judge, nor moralise. He is simply a traveller, curious observer and restless mind. His encounters with otherness serve as a great source of wisdom through which Chatwin discovers and accentuates the connections and similarities shared by people all over the world in any period of time. He does not glorify nor condemn any culture, its values, religious beliefs or language specifics and he barely comments on that. His character is an observer. On the contrary, Morgan's glorification and adoration of the other puts strong emphasis on this otherness, moreover, the picture of Aboriginal culture is rather distorted, and therefore inauthentic. The Aborigines are still seen from the American ethnocentric point of view. By contrasting the two cultures, Morgan points to the self-awareness of being part of corrupted western world, furthermore, she urges the readers to reassess their values and re-orient towards the pure and non-corrupted earthbound philosophy.

3 Aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture

Traditional Aboriginal culture has been for a long time rather mysterious to the white men. As it was explained earlier, not until the shift of paradigm in the middle of 20th century the native cultures were not of the main focus of anthropologists. In the colonial era, the indigenous tribes were called primitive and the approach towards them was rather comparative and ethnologist. But later on in the post-colonial period, a newly established cultural anthropology showed the interest in otherness which went hand in hand with enthusiasm to discover uniqueness of different cultures and with the effort to let those cultures speak and express themselves.

3.1 Aborigines

Native inhabitants of Australia are known as Aborigines. The term is, nonetheless, of European origin, more precisely from Latin ‘ab origine’, meaning from the beginning. European settlers in the period of colonising Australia called themselves Australians, and therefore needed some other expression for the native inhabitants as well as their descendants. The indigenous inhabitants called themselves simply ‘the people’ or used various expressions and tribal names in native languages.

The history of the first Australian inhabitants is estimated to have spanned 40,000 to 60,000 years back. The Aborigines might be the oldest living population in the world. According to a recent DNA study, they could be even older. “Aboriginal Australians are descendents of the first people to leave Africa up to 75,000 years ago, a genetic study has found, confirming they may have the oldest continuous culture on the planet” (Australian Geographic). No matter what modern studies say, the Aborigines themselves assert that they have lived in Australia since ever, closely tied with the land.

This traditional earthbound philosophy is a thoroughly complex system that interconnects the land with spirituality and ancestors, social and personal life and care for the nature. “The central tenet of traditional Aboriginal society is belief in the oneness of the spiritual, human and natural world” (Fryer-Smith, 2:4). Chatwin describes Aboriginal earthbound philosophy in a following manner: “The earth gave life to a man; gave him his food, language and intelligence; and the earth took him back when he died” (*The Songlines* 11). Aborigines are simply inseparable from the land; all in all they have always been. Aborigines themselves even claim that if somebody took the land away from them, then the reason for existence would be irretrievably lost as well. If they were removed from the land, they would be removed from themselves.

People and land, in the traditional Aboriginal understanding of the world, have always been in a relationship of mutual dependence; they have allowed each other

further lasting. The Aborigines see nature as a part of themselves and they live in harmony with it. They do not feel the need to take more than necessary and what they take, they give back. Kulhánková contrasts European and Aboriginal treatment of the nature as follows: “The white men took the land and started to ‘cultivate it’; they cut forests to be able to plant European plants and breed European animals. By doing so, they were destroying sacred sites of the indigenous population; they were destroying not only the nature but all the people as well” (Kulhánková 32, as translated by Barbora Pavlíčková). Therefore, European ill-treatment of the nature during the settlement period was in sharp contrast with Aboriginal natural concept.

Let me present some of the statements of the members of Australian indigenous population, quoted from the Aboriginal Art website:

We don't own the land, the land owns us.

The land is our food, our culture, our spirit and identity.

Land is the starting point to where it all began. It is like picking up a piece of dirt and saying this is where I started and this is where I will go. (Aboriginal Art)

Before European invasion, there were approximately 300 000 Aborigines in about 600 different Aboriginal nations. Not a very high population in number, one may point out, but if considered natural conditions, land characteristics and specific lifestyle which the Aborigines led, it appears to be a reasonable estimate. Most of the nations belonged into different language groups or had a distinct dialect. The variety of languages was incredibly rich, regrettably, nowadays many of the original languages do not exist anymore; many disappeared and died with the last member of the clan or became forgotten due to not being used any more – they gave in to English. More than a half of the indigenous population lives in New South Wales and Queensland, mainly in rural and remote areas (approximately one third of them) or in urban centres (also about one third). The Aboriginal population nowadays numbers about 500 000 people, it is about 2,5% of the whole Australian population, says Budil.

Nowadays, there are about 100 Aboriginal languages used in everyday practice, but only a few of them are strong enough to have large communities of speakers. There are approximately 20 languages which children learn as their first language. Put together, there are about 50 000 people who speak an Australian indigenous language as their first language, says Aboriginal Art Online. “Examples of ‘strong’ languages are: Yolngu (north eastern Arnhem Land) with around 6000 speakers; the Arrernte group southern and central Northern Territory (around 3000); and Warlpiri also in the centre (also around 3000 speakers)” (Aboriginal Art Online). These days, Aborigines speak mainly English, as their first or second language, or a mixture of Standard English and Aboriginal dialect. The current situation among traditionally-oriented Aborigines is that they are provided with opportunities to

sustain significant areas of their own culture; many of them are also taught in and through their own vernacular languages, unfortunately, often without any clear idea about the content that this could entail. The future of native languages is by no means flattering. The number of native speakers declines with every member of a clan who dies, and in many cases only the elders are able to use the language. “There is a tremendous loss of cultural pride and sense of identity for communities that lose their language - one of the saddest and most moving experiences is to talk to an old person who is the last surviving speaker of their language” (Aboriginal Art Online).

It is hard to say who is presently actually an Aborigine. After more than a century of intercultural marriages, many physiological features have disappeared as well as the sense of belonging into an original community. Many Australian inhabitants have lost connection with the nature and incline towards western society rather than towards the native earthbound philosophy. “Many (about one fifth) do not know their roots anymore. Many face the problem of not knowing where they belong; they have to face the identity problem” (Budil 40, as translated by Barbora Pavlíčková). The declining number of the indigenous population and loss of the roots are not the only problems which the Aborigines have to face nowadays. The traditional culture may be kept alive in certain communities, but knowledge of its purpose is fading. The kind of culture which had existed before the settlement started was markedly different from the one which is being practised nowadays. Berndt and Berndt are concerned that it is important to take into account the fact that “what will survive will be radically different from what it was in the purely Aboriginal situation – and what there was before cannot be artificially resuscitated” (Berndt and Berndt, *World* 527). Consequently, how much of that culture can actually survive and for what reasons would be a matter for further investigations.

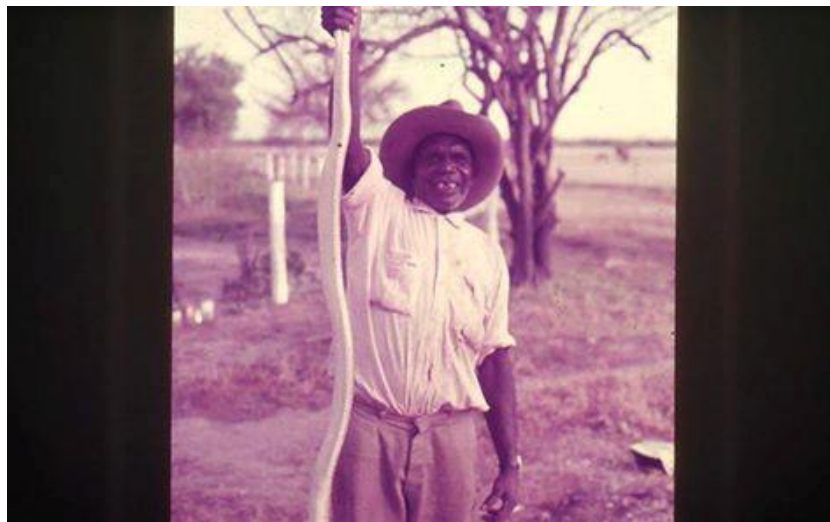


Figure 3. Dick Armstrong, Western Queensland, 1965. (Photograph by Bridget Roth)

As far as Budil is concerned, current political issues “are concerned with reconciliation with the original inhabitants, with decolonisation and with anti-

assimilative efforts. The Aboriginal cultural tradition and set of beliefs is being re-discovered and appreciated once again” (Budil 40, as translated by Barbora Pavlíčková). There have even been various efforts to establish a new definition which would sufficiently and sensitively describe the new Aboriginal reality and cultural identity. Since a simple contrast between Black and White is becoming increasingly irrelevant and obsolete, there is an urge to re-consider and re-define the understanding of what does it mean to be an Aborigine. “Such catchwords point to supposed physical characteristics and say little about mental ability and cultural attainments. Further, they point to political discrimination and to prejudice from either side or both sides of an ethnic fence” (Berndt and Berndt, *World* 529). Therefore, the new understanding refers not to the physical characteristics of a person, but refers generally to all people who are of Aboriginal descent or to those who identify themselves with Aboriginal culture and heritage. Furthermore, these ‘new’ Aborigines, as they are called by Berndt and Berndt, must also “be fitted into a particular ethos, into a particular framework of ideas which could be defined as Aboriginal” (Berndt and Berndt, *World* 529).



Figure 4. Wondoola cattle station, 1955. (Photograph by Bridget Roth)

Berndt and Berndt comment on current situation which deals with identity problem and stress out that the importance of being aware of the process of identity search being is in progress. They insist on learning more about the society in which we live and becoming better informed about the various mechanisms that are at work within it. A ‘commonsense’ approach based on personal experience is not enough, they say, since “it can lead to more blundering and more inept decisions based on guess-work or manipulative interest or emotional convictions, used blindly, through goodwill or otherwise” (Berndt and Berndt, *World* 527). To sum up, the starting point for mutual understanding and reconciliation is the will to learn from each other and the awareness of the process of identity forming.

3.2 Dreaming, Dreamtime

During the thousands of years of inhabiting the earth, the Aborigines have developed complex systems of beliefs that tightly bound people with the land. Alpha and omega of Aboriginal philosophy has been the concept of Dreamtime. This spiritual worldview pervades every aspect of traditional Aboriginal life. The Dreaming is immensely important since it reveals the whole Aboriginal knowledge about the world and its understanding; this is how Aborigines explain life and nature and from where their beliefs, values, customs and laws originate.

In indigenous languages, there are many expressions for Dreamtime depending on the particular language group. “The Pitjantjatjara tribe which lives in the Northwest of Central Australia speaks of *Tjukurpa*, the Ngarinyin tribe from West Australia calls it *Ungud*, the Central Australian tribe Aranda uses the term *Aldjerinya* and the Yolngu tribe from the Arnhem Land believes in *Wongar*” (Kulhánková 113, as translated by Barbora Pavlíčková).

The Dreamtime refers to the period of creation when ancestral spiritual beings emerged from their hideaways, from earth and from the sky, and walked across the world singing everything into existence. “Many of them ‘made themselves’ or ‘turned themselves’ into an aspect of the physical environment and thus imbued it with social relevance” (Berndt and Berndt, *Speaking* 6). Before the Ancestors emerged, the world had been a featureless emptiness. “The Earth was a flat surface, in darkness. A dead, silent world. Unknown forms of life were asleep, below the surface of the land. Then the supernatural Ancestor Beings broke through the crust of the earth from below, with tumultuous force” (Aboriginal Art). The world we know today had not existed before being sung and travelled throughout. The paths that the Ancestors walked are known as the songlines and the songs which must be sung down the generations keep the land and its spirits alive.

When the Ancestors moved across the country, they took various forms and shapes – human, animal, plant, water, wind and many others and left signs of their presence behind. The signs can be read by those who open their mind and are willing to see and understand because the land is speaking. Kulhánková points out that the Caucasian and Aboriginal perception of reality differs and she compares it in a following manner: “When a white man sees a mountain, he perceives it as a mass of rock, a non-living part of the nature, an abiotic component of the environment. On the other hand, the Aborigines perceive the mountain as a spiritual being, as a trace of the Ancestors’ creative powers” (Kulhánková 27, as translated by Barbora Pavlíčková). Since everything has been established in the Dreamtime, the speaking land is full of evidence of ancestral creative powers and to those who observe it reveals itself. “The whole land is full of signs: a land humanised so that it could be used and read by Aborigines who were/are intimately familiar with it, and read as clearly as if it were bristling with notice-boards” (Berndt and Berndt, *Speaking* 6).

While walking, the Ancestors were naming everything and when it was named it could come into existence. They named natural elements, places, flora and fauna: they named the Honey-Ant, Wallaby, Lizard, Spinifex, Bottlebrush, Honeysuckle and Ghost-gum Tree, they named Water, Fire, the Sun and the Moon. Moreover, the Ancestors created not only all living things and nature but also established the sacred laws, rules and customs for people to live by. When everything was created, they sank back into where they come from, they returned to their spirit homes. Some of them merged with what they had created: they changed into trees, grass, animals, mountains, water, stars and many other objects.



Figure 5. Bottlebrush Flowers, 2015. (Photograph by Bridget Roth)

It is important to realize that the Ancestors did not disappear completely at the end of their creating powers but remained in sacred sites. Therefore, the Dreaming is never-ending because it interconnects the past with the present and the people with the land. Aboriginal perception of time differs greatly from the Western concept. Aboriginal time is not linear, and therefore the Dreamtime is not a certain event located in the past. On the contrary, the Dreamtime is an endless flow with no beginning and no end which interconnects past, present and future and will endure forever. Dreaming has never ended. It is constantly present everywhere around.

The world being shaped, the Ancestors passed it onto human beings to take care of it, to respect it and to keep singing it. The heritage of the Ancestors is preserved in songs, dances, drawings, rituals, ceremonies, stories and immeasurable amount of myths. The Dreaming stories describe the travels and deeds of the Ancestors, their journeys across the earth, their singing and dancing, food obtaining, love making, fighting and simply everything they went through while wandering. Yet, the Dreaming stories across Australia are by no means the same. Every nation and every language group tells the Dreaming stories a bit differently. There are regional variations bound tightly to the land where they are being told; they reflect local specifics, such as landscape particularities or animal and plant species.

However, certain similar features are shared by all the stories and the core remains unchanged for centuries.

On Aboriginal Art website, an elaborated graphical scheme of the Dreamtime concept can be found. It shows that everything is dependent and mutually linked; that the Dreamtime interconnects all aspect of traditional Aboriginal life with the physical and sacred world.

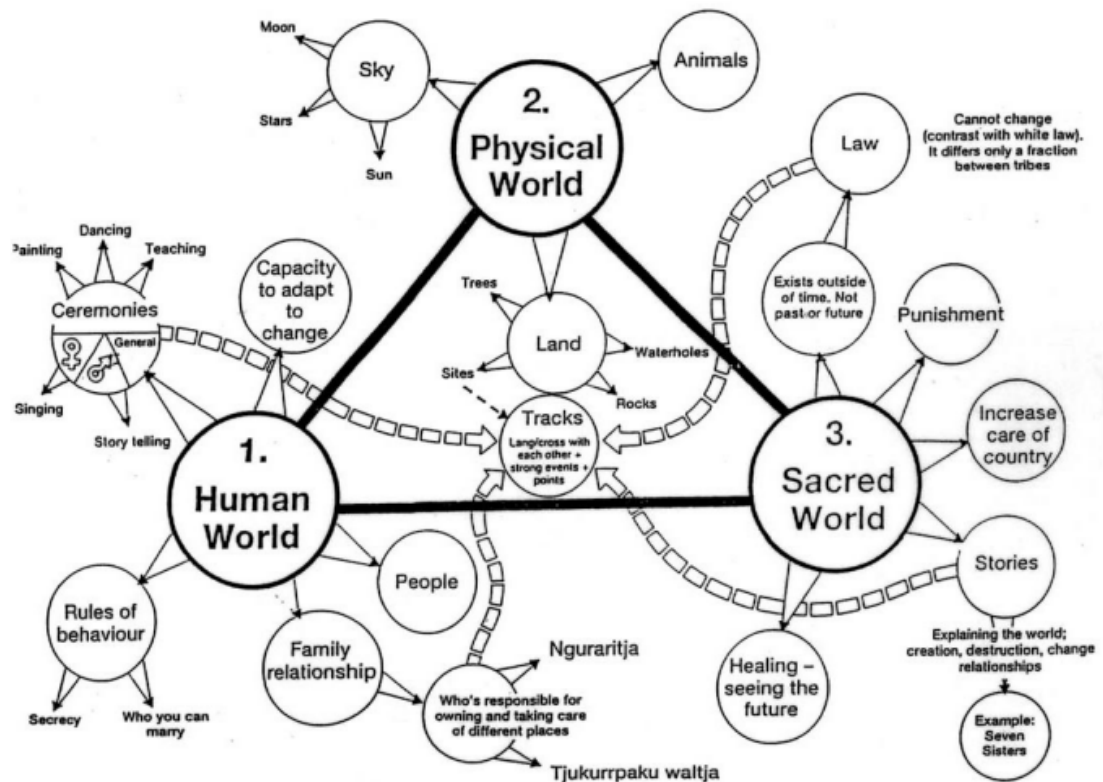


Figure 6. Dreamtime chart. (Aboriginal Art)

On the same website, the Aborigines summarize their world views, life attitudes and culturally significant facts in a following manner:

We have been here since time began.

We have kept the earth as it was on the first day.

Our culture is focused on recording the origins of life.

We have come directly out of the Dreamtime of our creative ancestors.

We refer to forces and powers that created the world as creative ancestors.

Our beautiful world has been created only in accordance with the power, wisdom and intentions of our ancestral beings. (Aboriginal Art)

3.3 Songlines and Dreaming-tracks

Songlines are highly developed systems of invisible pathways, a kind of a labyrinth, which criss-crosses whole Australia. Aborigines speak about Footprints of the Ancestors or the Way of the Law, while Europeans name such paths as Dreaming-tracks or Songlines. In the Dreamtime, the ancestral beings travelled across the country and sang everything to life: the land, animals and humans too. Nothing had existed before it was sung. “Whole Australia could be read as a musical store. There was hardly a rock or creek in the country that could not or had not been sung” (*The Songlines* 13). Consequently, the songs are certain recordings of the landscape and their cycles, songlines, are detailed maps and tools of orientation. Chatwin says that a song “was both map and direction-finder. Providing you knew the song, you could always find your way across country” (*The Songlines* 2). Songlines comprise specific physiographic sites and places with rich history which have much to say and by knowing them, from the songs and stories, Aborigines can always find their way through the land. A dreaming-track might go all across the country, from west to east, from north to south and may include many languages; still it remains the same song. Songlines find their ways all around Australia, regardless language barriers, tribes and their territories or any other kinds of boundaries. Chatwin claims that a song is recognised by its ‘taste’ or ‘smell’ or ‘tune’, how he calls it, and the tune always stays the same, no matter if the words change.

Songlines express tight connections between the land and its people. A song is an endless accumulation of details and helps a person to find moral universe since everything in the world is interconnected. The songs have been sung for generations and have helped to keep the land and its spirits alive. In brief, the song and the land are one. Young says that “even if you will never read these words, they are written for you” (Young 13). But it is necessary to keep mind open and let the words of the universe enter; only those who free their mind and learn to see and hear will truly understand.

For Aborigines, a songline has been a universal phenomenon. It stood not only for a direction-provider but also for friendship and co-operation since for the Aboriginal the principal object of trade was a song. Chatwin explains that “what whites used to call the ‘Walkabout’ was, in practice, a kind of bush-telegraph-cum-stock-exchange, spreading messages between people who never saw each other, who might be unaware of the other’s existence” (*The Songlines* 57). A songline was the trade route and consequently songs, not things, were the principal medium of exchange. “Trading in ‘things’ is the secondary consequence of trading in song” (*The Songlines* 57). So before the whites came, no one in Australia was landless, says Chatwin, because everyone inherited from his Ancestors a stretch of a song, and therefore a stretch of country over the territory, as his or her private property. This specific stretch of song could be lent to others. Similarly, an Aborigine could borrow

other verses in return. The only thing which was impossible to do was to sell or get rid of the inherited song.

Aboriginals, in general, had the idea that all ‘goods’ were potentially malign and would work against their possessors unless they were forever in motion. The ‘goods’ did not have to be edible, or useful. People liked nothing better than to barter useless things – or things they could supply for themselves: feathers, sacred objects, belts of human hair. (...) ‘Goods’ were tokens of intent: to trade again, meet again, fix frontiers, intermarry, sing, dance, share resources and share ideas. (*The Songlines* 57)

Furthermore, songlines helped man to mark his territory and organise social life. To be able to establish tribal boundaries, members of the clan had to examine the local mythology and connect specific places, sacred sites and all physiographic features in general with various totemic beings that were believed to have created those places. “Tradition dictates who must look after these, and around which of them rites are to be performed and songs are to be sung. When all this is a living reality, the local people can usually draw careful charts of their own and adjacent territories” (Berndt and Berndt, *World* 33). Only thanks to the songs, tribes knew where their territory ended and where a different one began.

A young Aboriginal man on a walkabout also travels down one of the songlines. A song stretches on the ground in an unbroken chain of couplets which are formed from the names sung into life while walking. In the old days, he used to travel on foot, nowadays it is done by train or car. In a traditional sense, an Aborigine on his journey was obliged to stay on a particular track; he had to follow a songline of people who shared his Dreaming, who were connected with him spiritually and from whom he could expect hospitality. If a person sang to the end of his verses, there laid the boundary. If he strayed from his songline he became a trespasser and might get speared for it. Similarly, if he sang a verse in a wrong manner, he would commit a crime – he would un-create the Creation, dishonest and debase the original song as it had been sung by the Ancestors. Many Aborigines become at the end the country, in that place, the Ancestors. When they spent whole life walking and singing their Ancestor’s Songline, they themselves eventually became the path, the Ancestor and the song.

Sadly, many songlines have been damaged due to the railways and roads which cut and scarred the country. But still, it is possible to now and then catch an echo of a Song in the present days if one listens carefully.

3.4 Walkabout

A walkabout is a specific type of spiritual journey used commonly in Australian context. In a traditional sense, it refers to a rite of passage during which (usually) a male Australian Aborigine at the age of approximately eleven or twelve years undertake a journey into the wilderness. This ritual is about psychological and physical initiation and about learning to be independent, says Budil. “The young members of the clan were taught how to survive in the nature, to behave in the community and to respect wisdom of the elders” (Budil 40, as translated by Barbora Pavlíčková). The place and the length of the journey are not closer specified, but such journey usually lasts several months and the distance exceeds hundreds of miles. The aim of such journey is to be taught the important cultural values and various skills. According to traditional Aboriginal viewpoint, a walkabout is not an aimless wandering in a bush; on the contrary, it is a deliberate journey which provides a young Aborigine time for reflection and helps him to find connections with the traditions, land, spirituality, ancestors, universe and oneness of themselves and the world.

When being on a walkabout, a young Aborigine traces the Ancestor’s paths, he follows the songlines. He learns from everything what is surrounding him. The nature, the elders, other members of the clan; everything around is a great source of wisdom. In that sense, being on a walkabout may be considered as a great learning process in Aboriginal culture. This is an enormous difference between the Aboriginal and Western understanding of learning and becoming wise. Whilst the Aborigines discover wisdom in nature and land, the Western societies search for it in books and libraries. As Young puts it, everyone in some way receives informal education, and the boundary between the formal and the informal is rather variable. “The knowledge that you need is the knowledge you learn informally. From your own family and environment. The knowledge you learn formally is someone else’s knowledge” (Young 14). People learn not only formally, but also informally – from everything they see, observe and unconsciously pick up from the environment, other people and the world around. It is impossible, illusive and hypocritical to claim that for a person it is enough to borrow knowledge from someone else. One must take the journey themselves to become truly wise. One must set off for their personal kind of walkabout.

Young Aborigines used to set off for this journey because they wanted to honour their Ancestors on one hand and survive by themselves alone in a bush without any help on the other. To be able to manage such demanding task, they needed (though were not strictly obliged) to develop survival skills and get ready for any possible danger they may come across while walking down the songline. Firstly, members of the family or a tutor chosen for this occasion would help a young Aborigine to create survival and self-defence skills in order to protect themselves in

case of being threaten by the weather, hunger or an animal. As soon as the aspirant was trained, skilled and ready to go, he informed the clan and could set off.

A pragmatic reason for going on a walkabout could be as well a desire to find a wife. By walking so far, an Aborigine could make sure to find fresh blood and as a consequence protect his clan and family from incest taboo. Chatwin provides a concrete example in which practical application of the incest taboo plays the key role. In around 1900, he says, an Arnhemlander walked across the continent in search of a wife. “He married on the south coast and walked the bride back home with his new-found brother-in-law. The brother-in-law then married an Arnhemland girl, and marched her off down south” (*The Songlines* 59).

The original Aboriginal concept of a walkabout serves nowadays (not only) to modern Australians as an inspiration to discover something magical and restore sense of wonder in human life. Going walkabout, a person can free of pressure of everyday life and focus on what is truly important to them. For the majority, going walkabout means nowadays rather taking a holiday, escape from the usual and often stressful reality and get back in touch with themselves.

Nowadays, the concept of walkabouts reaches a new dimension. It is no more about a long-distance journey through bush in a complete solitude. It is rather about re-discovering person’s inner spirituality, enriching one’s spirit, escaping from everyday life and finding long-lost bounds with the nature. Most of the walkabouts are done no more by walking but comfortable by driving a car or riding a horse. Often there are even already-made, instant walkabouts for tourists – secure, guided, paid for. Such Australian arranged experience is provided by Aboriginal tourist guides and offers a wide range of tracks to choose from; one may undergo walks into national parks, sleep under the stars in the desert, visit sacred sites or take an urban tour.



Figure 7. Queen Mary Falls, a popular starting point for many touristic bush walks, 2015.
(Photograph by Bridget Roth)

4 Life and Work of Selected Authors

The thesis is based on works of three authors, namely Bruce Chatwin, David Malouf and Marlo Morgan. The authors come from different cultural backgrounds – Chatwin was British, Malouf is Australian and Morgan is American, and their narrative styles and ways of dealing with reality differ as well, but what they share is the interest in Australia, its native culture and the theme of wandering and identity search.

4.1 Bruce Chatwin

Charles Bruce Chatwin was born in May 13, 1940 in Sheffield, Yorkshire, England and died of AIDS in January 18, 1989 in France. He was a British writer famous especially for dexterously written books which reflected his experience with nomadic life. He was a novelist, journalist, professional traveller and wanderer and he spent the majority of his life on the road; on various journeys and pilgrimages to exotic destinations, such as Africa, Afghanistan, South America or Australia.

After studies of archaeology at the University of Edinburgh he became a travelling correspondent for *The Sunday Times* for a short period of time. He quit and began a voyage through Patagonia; the book *In Patagonia* (1977) based on his travels could be released afterwards and could establish his reputation. It was awarded the Hawthornden Prize in 1977 and the E. M. Forster Award in 1979. The novel, as well as the others which followed later on, became popular and appreciated especially for Chatwin's natural storytelling abilities. Nevertheless, Chatwin is often criticized for presenting personal inventions as facts, or, in other words, for fictionalizing people, places and events he writes about.

Apart from *In Patagonia*, Chatwin authored four other novels. *The Viceroy of Quidah*, set into African context, was published in 1980 and two years later was followed by the work *On the Black Hills* which won for Chatwin the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Whitbread Literary Award. In 1987, Chatwin released his probably the most successful work, *The Songlines*, which was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize a year later. The last piece of work published during Chatwin's life was *Utz* (1988), a novel set in Prague and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. A collection of essays and travel stories, *What Am I Doing Here?* (1989), was already published posthumously. Chatwin's name can be connected with the works *Photographs and Notebooks* (1993), *Anatomy of Restlessness* (1997) and *Winding Paths* (1998), all also published after his death. Some of the Chatwin's novels (*The Viceroy of Quidah*, *Utz* and *On the Black Hills*) were also filmed.

A biography portraying life of this brilliant British author came into existence in 1999. Its author, Nicolas Shakespeare, also published a collection of Chatwin's letters called *Under the Sun* in 2010.

The Songlines is a piece of work on the borderline of the genre of novel, travelogue, scientific anthropological essay and philosophical contemplation. In a highly sophisticated though entertaining way, Bruce Chatwin reveals the sources of people's urge to travel, to wander around the world; he speaks of the need to be permanently in motion. He tries to penetrate the mysteries of the culture of nomads, more specifically of Australian nomads, and discovers that the journey is not only the destination, but also the meaning of life.

This journal unravels the concept of Aboriginal sacred song-lines transferred from generation to generation for centuries, more probably even for millenniums. Chatwin finds out that the roots can be traced to the very beginning of the Dreamtime, to the Creation Myth, when the Ancestors were singing the land into existence. He discovers and learns to understand the Aboriginal earthbound philosophy and finds deep connections of the humans with nature which are nowadays often lost or forgotten. All facts considered, the basic concept would be that life in its essence is a journey and therefore has to be walked. Man's real home is not a material house and his innate nature is not based on dwelling on the same place, on the contrary, home is found on the road and essence of being in a life-long journey.

Chatwin himself explains what motivated him to come to Australia and study the songlines as follows: "My reason for coming to Australia was to try to learn for myself, and not from other men's books, what a Songline was - and how it worked. Obviously, I was not going to get to the heart of the matter, nor would I want to" (*The Songlines* 12).

In Australia, he was searching for an expert, for someone who could help and expound the notion of a songline. He found Arkady, an informed source and guide through Australia so their adventurous journey towards knowledge could begin.

4.2 David Malouf

One of Australia's best-known contemporary authors, David George Joseph Malouf, was born on 20 March 1934 in Brisbane, Australia into a Lebanese-English family. Shortly after his graduation from Queensland University he moved to London where he lived for ten years. At the age of thirty four he moved back to his homeland and was lecturing English in Australian universities. After 1977 he became a full-time writer, living initially in Tuscany and later on in Sydney where he is living now. He is devoted to writing and prefers working without exaggerated publicity.

Malouf is the author of eight novellas, namely *Johnno* (1975), *An Imaginary Life* (1978), *Child's Play* (1982), *Fly Away Peter* (1982), *Harland's Half Acre* (1985), *The Great World* (1990), *The Conversation at Curlow Creek* (1996) and *Remembering Babylon* (1993), four volumes of short fiction, these are *Antipodes*

(1985), *Untold Tales* (1999), *Dream Stuff* (2000) and *Every Move You Make* (2006), furthermore he published a book of autobiographical essays called *12 Edmondstone Street* in 1985. He is also an appreciated poet and author of several opera libretti.

In his life he has been awarded many international prizes, for example Australian Literature Society Gold Medal in 1974, in 1991 and in 1994 the Commonwealth Writers Prize, the first one for *The Great World*, the second one for *Remembering Babylon*. The secondly mentioned outstanding piece of work helped him to gain Miles Franklin Award and Prix Fémina Etranger, both in 1994, the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 1996 and a short-listing for the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1994. The Neustadt International Prize for Literature was awarded in 2000, the inaugural Australia-Asia Literary Award followed in 2008 and in 2011 Malouf was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize.

Remembering Babylon, a novella written in 1993, is often claimed to be his most significant and best known piece of work and has been appreciated worldwide not only by the readers but also by many international awards. Malouf's prose fiction features condensed, philosophical, lyrical language and reveals him as a crafty metaphor maker. His work is rather serious, seldom ironic and deals sensitively a specific period of time of shaping Australia.

This novella depicts a story of a young boy Gemmy Fairley whose life is a never ending story of identity search. Set in 19th century Australia, life journeys of the main protagonist echo colonising Australia and portray the cultural clash between the European and Aboriginal culture. Gemmy, as an in-between figure, is trapped between the two cultures he both knows but cannot be fully accepted in neither of them. He is both an insider and outsider and suffers greatly by the absence of belonging somewhere.

The motif of shaping identity is closely connected with the motif of language and its importance in one's life. Malouf describes not only the verbal communication which often appears to fail but he stresses out its counterpart – the language of silence often accompanied with the language of the body. There are conversations that need no tongue, that are based on the exchange of perceptions. Furthermore, through language we understand the world; therefore seeing the world through another language means understand the world differently. This is precisely the core of many misunderstandings between the Scottish settlers and native inhabitants of the continent. Fear and lack of will to understand the others are deeply rooted in settlers' ethnocentric views and unable them to perceive Australia with its inhabitants as a pleasant place to live.

Malouf also shows the Aboriginal earthbound philosophy in which unity of the physical and natural world is possible, in which human and natural worlds can merge, and compares it with the European superior way of thinking based on the premises that the white man can change the countryside and rule over the uncivilised to humanise them.

4.3 Marlo Morgan

Marlo Morgan is a highly controversial American author. She was born on 29 September 1937 in Iowa, United States. By original profession, she is a health-care worker, nevertheless, she is best known for her fictional works *Mutant Message Down Under* (1990) and *Message from Forever* (1998), both based on Aboriginal themes. Nowadays she is retired and lives in Missouri.

Her initially self-published book, *Mutant Message Down Under*, is a description of author's own four-month-long walkabout across the Australian Outback which she took with an unknown tribe of Aborigines called the Real People. With these nomads she learns to live in harmony with nature, to survive in harsh conditions of the desert and to become a spiritual being.

The author claims the book to be “written after the fact and inspired by actual experience” (*Mutant Message Down Under* 5), however, many critics and Aborigines themselves accuse Morgan of presenting misleading and thorough mendacious fiction as ingenuous facts. Her book and lectures lack credibility, the critics say, are racist and give a false picture of Aboriginal traditional culture. To defend herself, Morgan offers the reader in the preface the option to take the work as pure entertainment, to extract personal messages close to each individual reader. She also stresses out that she speaks for a small group of Aborigines and by no means for the whole population.

The truth is that some facts are obviously incorrect, impossible to occur in Australian environment and some resemble customs of Native Americans rather than those of Native Australians. But an informed reader can avoid nit-picking, get over some of the author's naive statements and search for message which is hidden in the text. Morgan believes that every person can take such walkabout, and it can be anywhere in the world for any period of time, and while such journey come closer to the essence of being, identity finding and personal transformation.

Despite many devastating critical reviews, *Mutant Message Down Under* is an immensely popular book by the readers all over the world. This bestseller has been translated into more than twenty languages and is widely read everywhere but in Australia.

5 Genre(s) of selected works

There are various approaches towards the depiction of journey in Australian environment. While Chatwin's experience with travelling is faithfully captured in his work on the borderline of travelogue and scientific study, Morgan prefers fictionalised narration and adventurous description of her own journey. Malouf's neo-historical novella focuses on the reconciliation between the native and European culture as well as on finding one's own identity. Although the story is a work of fiction, the issue of discovering Australian identity is real and even nowadays very thorny.

5.1 A cross-genre travel memoir, *The Songlines*

The Songlines is a text which eludes simple categorisation. It is often characterized as a cross-genre travel memoir; as a piece of work on the borderline of the genre of novel, travelogue, anthropological essay and philosophical contemplation. Chatwin himself eluded detailed classification and labelled *The Songlines* simply as a work of fiction.

Chatwin here not only approaches the Aboriginal concept of the Dreaming Tracks but also elaborates on the nature of human restlessness which is in his opinion the question of all questions. He explores the Dreaming Tracks to see what they can say about nomads. In the work *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, Debbie Lisle explains that the Dreaming Tracks allow Chatwin to "discuss how the figure of the nomad disrupts our modern understanding of identity and location" (Lisle 61). *The Songlines* elaborates on the concept of nomadism and develops a thesis that migratory instincts are not apparent in nomadic societies exclusively, but on the contrary, they are shared by all humans all over the world. Lisle adds that "*The Songlines* insert a discussion about nomadology, movement and restlessness into the conventional structure of the travelogue" (Lisle 63).

Chatwin's work can be subdivided into two genre parts: the first one being of the form of travelogue, the second one having the form of notebook. To start with the first part which covers approximately two-thirds of the whole work, the reader deals with a straightforward travel narrative, although the form is markedly different from standard travelogues. Lisle explains that Chatwin's narrative is not built upon a home-away-home structure; Chatwin does not explicitly comment on his homeland, neither compares or contrasts it with different cultures. It is not said where either home or away are for Chatwin; he simply appears somewhere and then disappears again.

In the travelogue part, Chatwin is accompanied by a Russian emigrant, Arkady, who helps him to reveal the essence of the songlines. Arkady is considered to be an expert on the subject matter since he was living and working with Aboriginal

communities. He is a guide to Chatwin when exploring traditional Aboriginal culture, particularly the songlines, and he gets him acquainted with Aborigines.

The last third takes the form of notebook. This sudden change from travelogue to notebook effects also a change of content: the text shifts from exploring Australia to exploring generally the nature of human restlessness. Lisle says that “Chatwin’s journey to Australia gives way to his countless other journeys around the world in search of an answer to the question that haunts him” (Lisle 62). A vast number of Chatwin’s other journeys is captured in *The Songlines*. He speaks about Australian Aborigines on one hand and about Tuaregs – the nomads of Sahara, and Bedouins – the nomads of Arabian and Syrian deserts, on the other. All in all, in the third part, “Chatwin’s own migrations and thoughts on travel push against our usually static relationships to land, home, history and self” (Lisle 61). Furthermore, Chatwin’s notes sketch a songline of his own, Lisle claims.

The notebook section appears to be a “pseudo-academic document in which Chatwin calls upon the natural and social sciences to legitimate his broader argument that the natural state for humans is the movement rather than stasis” (Lisle 63). This part is a collection of notes, ideas, thoughts, quotations, aphorisms and encounters which he found somehow important or interesting. It also contains various tales and stories, all recorded in Chatwin’s own moleskin notebooks. He claimed to have kept those notebooks to preserve memories from his travelling phase of life in case he eventually settled down. The notebooks contained, in Chatwin’s opinion, valuable observations that were made by many important thinkers of all times, from all parts of the world. He cites Charles Darwin, Max Weber, anthropologists (such as Theodor Strehlow), philosophers (for example Martin Heidegger), philologists, economists, archaeologists and poets (like William Blake and William Wordsworth) and demonstrates that the concept of nomadism has been a universal phenomenon, geographically, historically and practically, discussed and commented on for centuries. Lisle observed that in this section of *The Songlines*, Chatwin does not play the role of author but he rather steps back and lets the voices of other authorities speak for themselves.

Thorough *The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin has proved to be a great nomad himself. Furthermore, he made himself a marvellous character: “intrepid and practical traveller, humble sage, sharp-witted inquisitor” (Lisle 67). He was both clever and charming author who skilfully managed to merge fact and fiction and who has become “the modern iconic hero for global travellers – the epitome of the sophisticated, cosmopolitan nomad” (Lisle 67). Chatwin’s work has become a certain kind of a guidebook for any restless-minded person who is keen to set off for a journey.

5.2 A neo-historical novella, *Remembering Babylon*

Remembering Babylon is a novella written by David Malouf in 1994. In its postscript, Malouf comments on the authenticity of the text when he states that the seed of this fiction, the words Gemmy shouts at the very beginning of the story, is inspired by the true story of Gemmy Morrill or Morrel, otherwise the work is not based on facts.

The work is often characterised as a historical fiction, nevertheless such characterisation appears not to be too accurate. Although the story takes place in a remote Australian history, it cannot be marked simply as a traditional historical novel. Firstly, Malouf did not do any broad research in archives, nor did he examine various historical sources. He stresses that out in the postscript, as it has been already mentioned. Secondly, Malouf did not aim to reconstruct or reveal the truth about a certain period of time. He does not concentrate on precise dates and particular facts as such, he rather observes how they are grasped and treated.

This rather neo-historical attitude takes as a starting point current Australian situation and contemporary state of Australian society. Malouf concentrates on forming national identity; he deals with an acute issue: who is actually an Australian. Malouf's treatment of the history is understood as a process of creating own identity, both individual and national. In *Remembering Babylon*, he depicts constitutive moments of Australian history as a crucial starting point for the construction of national identity, these periods being namely colonisation and also, in the last chapter, the beginnings of the First World War.

Malouf problemizes and challenges the traditional world view, he asks questions whether the Eurocentric perception of history is the only one and the only correct one. According to Malouf, history is not what actually happened, but on the contrary, what is being told – the stories, and what has been written and preserved. We are connected with history through language because we live in language. Thanks to language we comprehend the world around us; the language connects us with the past and present. And since the language varies according to cultural and geographical determinateness, the perception of the world and history differs greatly as well. The newcomers to Queensland in the 1840s, Malouf shows, lacked cultural and language knowledge, for that reason they were incapable to capture different experience they gained in the new continent. Malouf emphasizes strong and complex connections between the land or landscape with identity and with history. The discovery of these connections is inseparable part of reconciliation of the newcomers with the natives.

Malouf himself claims that *Remembering Babylon* is not strictly a post-colonial text, even though he allows those whose voices have not been heard to share their colonial experience. The work is rather an examination of the colonial project by a descendant of the former settlers. Malouf is aware of many missed opportunities which a meeting of the two disparate cultures, the European and Aboriginal, could

provide for humanity. Nonetheless, Malouf is not only pessimistic. Many of his characters (such as Janet or Mr Fraser) prove that there is a hopeful prospect of better future, that the reconciliation is attainable.

5.3 A fictitious non-fiction, *Mutant Message Down Under*

Marlo Morgan wrote and self-published a contemporary spiritual travel *Mutant Message Down Under* in 1994, its genre being a non-fiction. She claimed and insisted on the work to be written after the fact and inspired by her actual experience in Australian Outback, even though many studies have proved the work to be fictitious. Later on, after a massive wave of criticism, the label was changed to fiction and the book has kept this specification up till now.

The work describes in a traditional narrative form Morgan's personal walkabout which lasted, as she puts it, four months and criss-crossed whole Australia. The aim of this powerful tale is to convey an important message to all people: people should find way back into harmony with the nature and work on personal transformation.

Morgan in a conventional way depicts various adventures which she experienced with a remote nomadic tribe, all done chronologically and systematically. Apart from a few retrospectives, a traditional linear way of storytelling is not disrupted. Morgan describes not only the journey, but also the ancient Aboriginal wisdom and cultural specifics, which she glorifies and puts on a pedestal. After the months of isolation and wandering through Australian deserts, the author returns to civilisation and struggles to fulfil her mission when she tries to pass the message further and enrich other people. She gives lectures and teaches the old wisdom to the people of the new world. She appreciates the faith placed in her by the tribe and is aware of responsibility she has. She concludes her narrative by promising to spread the sacred message faithfully.

Practical Part

6 *The Songlines*

Bruce Chatwin, a brilliant author, global traveller and cosmopolitan nomad, discovers in *The Songlines* many traditional Aboriginal concepts which he interconnects with a human tendency to be perpetually in motion, to live an unsettled life. This literary work is based on Chatwin's own travelling experience and reflects a multidisciplinary approach to the subject matter, including the findings of cultural anthropology, philosophy, etc. He discovers the Aboriginal concept of the Songlines, retells some of the Dreaming stories and gives references to the Ancestors. He also elaborates on the nature of human restlessness and migratory instincts that are not natural exclusively for Australian Aborigines, but that can be observed as a general human inclination shared by people all over the world, Chatwin points out.

6.1 Exploring Aboriginal Australia via following the songlines

The first part of *The Songlines* is designed as a travelogue. Chatwin here describes his enthusiastic journey towards discovering another culture and its values, and consequently a journey towards discovering himself; he undertakes a personal walkabout and sketches a songline of his own. The journey, both physical and spiritual, reflects a desire to discover and to satisfy Chatwin's own curiosity. His narration focuses on the motif of wandering itself, there is no notion of (his) home or homeland, roots and remembering the past back in home (unlike in Malouf's and Morgan's depiction). For Chatwin, one's own country is the place "in which I do not have to ask"¹, it is the place filled with familiarity, with habits and values in which a person is well able to orient, yet to feel at home there means to be able to leave it. But still, it is hard to say where home is for Chatwin since his life is nomadic and unsettled. In addition, he does not contrast the home environment and its culture with the culture he is currently discovering; he rather concentrates on finding similarities: cross-cultural, cross-racial and cross-geographical. The notion of interculturality corresponds tightly with Chatwin's own personality. The author of *The Songlines*, and the main character at the same time, is always in motion, constantly wandering and discovering otherness, he is opened to the new perceptions and keen to gain knowledge about the world. It is not difficult for him to free himself from the obstacle imposed by ethnocentrism and see a different culture without prejudices, furthermore, he does not have to suffer from any cultural shock.

An indispensable part of Chatwin's journey is the company of Arkady, an Australian man with Russian roots who is claimed to be an expert in the field of Aboriginal studies. Arkady's experience with the native culture is based on his life and work within the Aboriginal community. He is a guide to Chatwin and a

¹ Chatwin, Bruce. *The Songlines*. London: Picador, 1988. 56. [Subsequent page references preceded with *TS* are given in the parentheses in the text.]

knowledgeable informant who accompanies him when exploring the essence of traditional Aboriginal culture, particularly the Songlines, Dreamtime and the heritage of the Ancestors. Arkady shares his knowledge with Chatwin, but also arranges many meetings with the natives, particularly within the tribal area of the Central Aranda. Chatwin, therefore, has the unique chance to undergo a participant observation and gain first-hand information from the target community. Unlike many fellow Australians, Arkady does not consider the natives to be uneducated savages, on the contrary, he portrays them as a nation of rich cultural heritage from whom many could learn.

He liked the Aboriginals. He liked their grit and tenacity, and their artful ways of dealing with the white man. He had learnt, or half-learnt, a couple of their languages and had come away astonished by their intellectual vigour, their feats of memory and their capacity and will to survive. They were not, he insisted, a dying race – although they did need help, now and then, to get the government and mining companies off their backs. (*TS 2*)

The basis of the earthbound philosophy reveals the tight connection between the land and the people and suggests that the land should be left untouched, as it was in the Dreamtime. The less the Aborigines take from the land, the less they have to give back in return. One of the problems when colonizing Australia was that the colonizers were unaware of the concept of the songlines and since they cut and scarred the country with roads, mines and railways, they damaged the songlines. The earth was scarred and suffered and the Aborigines were harmed too; all due to the close bounds they had with the land. As Chatwin says, “the song and the land are one” (*TS 28*). He also explains that to wound the earth “is to wound yourself, and if others wound the earth, they are wounding you” (*TS 11*).

Even in the present time, Chatwin encounters on his journey representatives of the white Australians who still, even after a long time of reconciliation efforts, cannot get rid of their ethnocentric worldviews and fail to come closer towards the awareness of cultural relativism and acceptance of otherness. The haughty manners of the white man represents, for example, a randomly met man in a pub who overheard that Chatwin was surveying the sacred sites:

‘Know the best thing to do with a sacred site?’ He drawled.

‘What?’

‘Dynamite!’ (...) ‘If all what them says was sacred sites, there’d be three hundred bloody billion sacred sites in Australia.’

‘Not far wrong, mate!’ called the thin Aboriginal. (*TS 122*)

Such a narrow-minded attitude which the radical man represents sounds completely insane in the context of the unity between the land and the people which

was outlined earlier. The greatest difficulty lies in the outlook: whereas the Aborigines have been trying to preserve the land as it had been in the time of the Creation, being aware of the connections people have with the land, the Caucasians do not seem to care neither about the land nor its history; they concentrate on changing the world to fit their visions of future. There is no way of co-existing in Australia unless being aware of both viewpoints, capable of evaluating them relevantly and making compromises.

A similar, also negative attitude towards the natives is adopted by a policeman whom Chatwin meets on his journey:

‘They’re like children. They’ve got a childish mentality.’

‘What makes you think so?’

‘They’re incapable of progress,’ he said. ‘And that’s what’s wrong with you Land Right people. You’re standing in the way of progress. You’re helping them destroy white Australia’. (*TS* 123)

This man builds his opinions of Caucasian superiority on racial grounds (especially on frontal lobes differences) and his speech reflects lack of interest in reconciliation of the two cultures. According to the policeman, Australia is a ‘white’ continent in which the native inhabitants represent a burden to the government and to the ‘proper’ Australians. But Chatwin goes further; he provides not only the extreme European perspective, but also the Aboriginal one, an extreme from the other side of the spectrum. He encounters an Aborigine who is convinced that the whites had stolen his country and “their presence in Australia was illegal. His people had never ceded one square inch of territory. They had never signed a treaty. All Europeans should go back where they come from” (*TS* 31). Apparently, both men reject the fact, nowadays broadly accepted, that the Australian identity cannot be seen as purely black or exclusively white. Current Australia has many shades, it is a mixture of identities which have mingled and influenced each other throughout a long period of time of identity formation. Therefore, ‘white Australia’ cannot be destroyed since nothing of that kind actually exists, and similarly, the whites cannot leave Australia since they have become attached to the country as well. The notion of shared history of European and Aboriginal cultures is inevitably connected with Australian identity and excludes all one-sided, black-and-white viewpoints. This idea is represented not only by Bruce Chatwin in *The Songlines*, but also in David Malouf’s *Remembering Babylon*.

Chatwin’s wandering and songlines surveying lasts for a considerable amount of time since Chatwin and his companion are dependent on a wide range of arranged meetings that take place in various remote parts of the country. They have to undergo long-distance transfers to meet the right people who would be willing to share their knowledge and reveal genuinely and faithfully the secrets of their cultural heritage.

During this long-lasting wandering in Arkady's company, Chatwin discovers and learns to understand the concept of the Songlines.

In Aboriginal understanding of the world, there are no borders marking the territories, or "blocks of land hammed in by frontiers" (*TS* 56). The Aborigines, being perpetual wanderers, see the country rather as an interlocking network of countless mysteriously connected paths, of lines or ways through, Chatwin explains. And consequently, all words for 'country' are the same as the words for 'lines'. The songlines, the sacred paths, originate in the Dreamtime and meander all over Australia. When walking down a songline, the walker can find moral universe which reveals that everything in the world, as the man and the nature, is interconnected. Chatwin is capable of that cognition; by following the songlines, he discovers moral universals shared by people all over the world.

Chatwin elaborates further on the songlines and states that the songs consist of certain phrases and combinations of musical notes that describe various action and movements of the Ancestors. An expert song-man, by listening to their order of succession, would be able to describe in detail the journey which is being sung in the particular song. According to Chatwin, a song (or music) is a "memory bank for finding one's way about the world" (*TS* 108). The songs are unique and must be sung and delivered only in person. This is why Chatwin has to undertake the journey himself; there is no other way how to learn and spiritually grow. There is no other way how to discover and understand the songlines but following them in person. Chatwin had known a lot about the Aboriginal earthbound philosophy and about the concept of songlines even before coming to Australia, but all the pieces of knowledge started to make sense and created a complex unity only after he had walked the songlines himself.

Chatwin's spiritual journey, his personal walkabout, brings him not only knowledge about the world, but provides him also with time for reflection. While wandering, he discovers similarities between the Aboriginal and Christian world, between the creative powers of God and of the Ancestors, between the concept of a walkabout and a pilgrimage. If compared to Aboriginal belief, the Christian concept does not differ as much as it could be expected. In both cultures, there was some kind of a creative power at the beginning of everything: in Genesis, God at first created the natural world, then all the living things and at the end he fashioned Adam from clay and let him stay in eternal Eden. In Australia, the Ancestors firstly "created themselves from clay, hundreds and thousands of them, one for each totemic species" (*TS* 12). Then they moved all across the country and sang everything into life, all living and non-living things and also the humans. They arose from mud and called out "I am – Snake ... Cockatoo ... Honey-ant (...) and this first 'I am!', first naming became the most secret and sacred couplet of Ancestor's song" (*TS* 72). Everything what they named came into existence and became part of a complex web of songs. When the world was created, they sank back into their 'Eternal Homes'. In

this place, Chatwin compares the 'Footprints of the Ancestors' with the Lord's saying 'I am the Way' (*TS* 65).

Both worldviews try to come closer to divine powers; both desire to discover and follow the way shown by the spiritual, transcendental being. Furthermore, both the Dreamtime and the Christian Eden point to eternity; both suggest that the journey undertaken on earth is not the only one, nor the last one. Therefore, the common opinion that the Aborigines had been cut off from the mainstream of humanity for thousands of years and could not have felt Great Awakening is irrelevant and arrogant. Many efforts of the missionaries to replace Aboriginal so-called primitive magic with the word of Christ neglected the fact that the Aborigines have already been familiar with the concepts of divinity, eternity and all-embracing love. The essence of both concepts is, and has always been, the same, even though the words which described it differ according to distinctive languages.

Chatwin also thinks through and compares the concepts of a walkabout and a pilgrimage. In his points of view, both journeys represent a specific kind of travel characterized as a 'bodily or mental labour', 'toil, especially of a painful or oppressive nature', 'exertion', 'hardship' and 'suffering' (*TS* 194). For migratory species, such as nomads, wanderers and pilgrims, this means that they have to cope with the fact that their hard journey might be a "leveller on which the 'fit' survive and stragglers fall by the wayside" (*TS* 273). This is also the case why young Aborigines undergo a careful training and preparations before they set off for a walkabout. Only those who are physically strong and mentally ready can set off for a spiritual journey. This is valid not only in the Aboriginal viewpoint, but also universally since every pilgrim and traveller gets ready for their journey; they gather strength and organize thoughts, they come to understanding why precisely the journey is important for them. If either of these conditions is neglected, their journey fails or does not fulfil its purpose.

The motif of journey is connected with Christian pilgrimage as well as with the colonisation of Australia. The early Christian Church distinguishes two types of pilgrimage:

'to wander for God' (*ambulare pro deo*) in imitation of Christ or of Father Abraham who quit the city of Ur and went to live in a tent. The second was the 'penitential pilgrimage': in which criminals guilty of 'enormous crimes' (*peccata enormia*) were required in accordance with a fixed set of tariffs, to assume the role of travelling beggar – with hat, purse, baton and badge – and work out their salvation on the road. (*TS* 180)

Australian settlement experience seems to mirror both of these reasons. There were travellers who wandered voluntarily to find better life in a promised land, as well as those who were forced to leave their homeland as a punishment for committed crimes. The penal transportation meant that Australia was settled also by

those who had to wander to dissolve their crimes of violence. Not all of the first European inhabitants of Australia survived harsh conditions of the voyage and of the new continent. As a general rule of biology, only those survived who were both physically and mentally well prepared and those who managed to adapt the best.

6.2 Nature of human restlessness

In the second part of *The Songlines*, which takes the form of notebook, Chatwin explores the nature of human restlessness. He moves away from exploring Australia and Aboriginal culture and concentrates on the issue of nomadism, unsettled way of life and general human tendency to leave one place for another. In this part, Chatwin compares a vast number of his other journeys, undertaken in many corners of the world, and searches for similarities among various cultures. He discovers that it is natural for humans to be in motion, to journey rather than dwell in one place and keep a static relationship to land and home. To support his opinion, he refers to various scientific data and often gives voice to credible authorities who can thus confirm his assumptions; thanks to that, Chatwin's arguments are convincing, persuasive and trustworthy. The notebook part is based on Chatwin's collection of notes, his and those of other people, and supports greatly the argument that the humans are migratory species.

The notion of movement is tightly connected with human life from its very beginning. Chatwin uses the example of mothers holding their babies in the arms: they walk and rock the baby to silence its cry (*TS* 229). It appears to be that the baby instinctively demands to be walked, that it can come back to peace when feeling the movement again. This feeling of contentment gained from the early moving experience is deeply rooted in people and even later in the adulthood, many search for contentment via walking.

The nature of human restlessness resides in an instinctive migratory urge and in an inability to remain calmly in a room; these are the reasons which force people to set off and discover different places. A Moorish proverb says that "who does not travel does not know the value of men" (*TS* 164). While walking, many thoughts come to a person since there is enough time provided for reflection about self and about the world. Walking frees humans, physically and spiritually, it liberates the spirit and lets the thoughts to diverge and reach new dimensions. Sedentary species are more likely to become feeling ill, but those whose desire to walk prevails walk themselves into a state of well-being; in other words, everything is solved by walking (*TS* 171).

Being in motion without much possession is valued more than collecting things since wandering "re-establishes the original harmony which once existed between man and the universe" (*TS* 178). The wanderers, pilgrims, Aborigines on a Walkabout, they all possess a little in terms of material provisions but they are

extremely rich in terms of spirituality. Their journey towards divine powers means enlightenment; they do not only follow the path, but by walking and reflecting they become the path itself. Simultaneously, being spiritually oriented, there is less space provided for sinning. Chatwin uses the words of Ib'n Khaldūn and points out that the wanderers are "closer to being good than settled peoples because they are closer to the First State and are more removed from all the evil habits that have infected the hearts of settlers (*TS* 196). Continuous wandering means relying less on a certain place; on the contrary, it enables the nomads to profit from many places without exhausting them. In this context, the meaning of progress is connected with a seasonal journey or a circuit round the pastures rather than with material forms of progress. The sedentary species appreciate the settlement arrangement since they can rely on materialistic security of already gained possessions, furthermore, they can mark their presence on earth, leave something visible behind for the future and, therefore, ensure remembering. But the mobile species prefer to disencumber from material burden; by walking they become part of the land, the path, the ancestors; part of the spiritual world. The Bushmen, who walk immense distances across Kalahari, say: "When we die, we die. The wind blows away our foot prints, and that is the end of us" (*TS* 230). They return back to the land from which they originated. And similarly, the Aborigines believe that after a whole life singing the songs of the Ancestors, they themselves become the song, the path and the Ancestors.

As Chatwin shows, both on the example of his work and his own personality, human restlessness is deeply rooted and hardly resistible and the urge to travel, to set off and discover, is a natural and universally human phenomenon. Movement seems to be connected with well-being, health, happiness, open-mindedness, reflectivity, curiosity and desire to come closer to divinity.

All facts and thoughts summarized, there are two kinds of people in the world: those who prefer to stay at home and those who cannot do that. There are those, Deleuze and Guattari say, who occupy without counting and those who count in order to occupy. Those who prefer to settle superordinate dwelling to the journey and vice versa, the nomads and migratory species value the journey over the dwelling. It can be observed on the example of Australia where the two distinctive cultures, the settled Europeans and the nomadic Aborigines, inevitably co-exist together and influence each other. Despite many clashes between the two cultures through the history of shaping Australia, it is possible to reconcile, to coexist in peace and learn from each other since there are many similarities to be found between the two cultures, Chatwin illustrates in *The Songlines*. Furthermore, this regional case of Australian experience is universally valid and applicable in a broad context as well.

7 *Remembering Babylon*

David Malouf's work depicts a specific period of shaping Australian identity. The story is happening in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the "settlement in Queensland had advanced little more than halfway up the coast"². It is a fictional account inspired by real historical events. In *Remembering Babylon*, two types of journey can be observed: a physical one (such as a voyage and walking into the bush) and a spiritual one (transformation of either personality or the whole nation, a quest to find true identity). Furthermore, there is depicted a never-ending (and never resolved) wandering of Gemmy on one hand and various journeys of the settlers on the other (for instance a journey from alienation to reconciliation). Malouf's description of the meeting and the clash of two diverse cultural systems suggests an acknowledgement of shared history and appeals on a sensitive dealing with otherness. Alienation, identity search and reconciliation play key roles in Malouf's work.

7.1 Cultural shock and clash of cultures

As it was suggested earlier in the theoretical part, travelling or journeying is often accompanied by the experience of the cultural shock. Meeting a different and absolutely unfamiliar cultural reality may cause unpleasant, repulsive feelings or even aversion towards the new and strange culture. In *Remembering Babylon*, Malouf deals with the theme of cultural shock and integrates it into the colonising experience of the European settlers who are forced to deal with an absolutely new environment of Australian continent. Malouf depicts not only the ostensible hostility of the land, but also the confrontations and clashes of cultures: the culture of the native inhabitants, the original Australians, and the other one of European settlers, at that time the new Australians. Both cultures face many mutual misunderstandings and suffer from losing former stable and invariable clues necessary for orientation in life situations.

The first phase of the adjustment to new cultural environments, the honeymoon stage, is in *Remembering Babylon* depicted as a rather positive period of time, connected with enthusiasm, excitement and especially before-journey preparations. Possible lack of information and/or experience is substituted by promising expectations and vital energy to discover everything new. In this context, Australia is depicted as a dreamland, country of new opportunities and hopes, as a place perfect for a new beginning. Because of these reasons, many Europeans come to Australia in the era of colonisation voluntarily and keenly. Malouf portrays some of his characters, such as the McIvors or George Abbot, as those who are initially

² Malouf, David. *Remembering Babylon*. London: Vintage, 1994. 1. [Subsequent page references preceded with RB are given in the parentheses in the text.]

enthusiastic explorers with hope for better life chances. Unfortunately, their dreams do not come true and they gradually have to face a bitter disappointment. Jock McIvor had originally wanted to take his family from Scotland to Canada, but at last he resolved to voyage to Australia. He described the Promised Land to his wife as follows: “Australia seemed the larger choice. There was land there and sunlight (she could not wait) and spaces, he told her, they could barely conceive” (*RB* 67). The voyage to Australia would mean a better life for them; the dreamland full of promises on the other side of the world is worth undertaking such journey.

Similarly, the character of George Abbot, a local teacher, is fascinated with an exotic, dreamy land. Mr. Abbot originally longs for going to Africa; being inspired by many school stories, he wishes to become an explorer. From the bottom of his soul, he is convinced that his real life is connected with the Dark Continent since only in there he can prove his strength and preparation for any hardships and tests. “Africa, he believed, would have tempered his soul to hardness and discover the man in him” (*RB* 46). His wish to travel to an idealised continent is conditioned by the desire to build his own character, to become a proper man. The journey abroad would mean a certain rite of passage into maturity as well. He is convinced that to become a man, he has to journey specifically to Africa; that no other place would provide him with so many possibilities. His opinion is based on the stories he has heard, on the experience of the others who have already been to Africa and reported back. But unlike Africa, there are not many news from the newly discovered continent; Australia is still to a certain extent an unknown and undiscovered part of the world. Undertaking a journey to Australia is rather risky; there is no certainty that he could become a real man in there, that his transformation would be successful. Nevertheless, George Abbot is sent to Australia, to a continent he knows only a little about and he has to put up with broken dreams on one hand and hard conditions of the new continent on the other. For Abbot, Australia seems to be an overwhelming frustration. He describes his misfortune bitterly:

Everything that presented itself to his gaze in this godforsaken place told him how mean his life was, how desolate and without hope. Nobody cared for him. He had never heard an intelligent word from one day to the next. (...) The place worked its defeats in a low way. It was on every side oppressive (...). Even the natives were of a dingy greyness. Thin-shanked, dusty, squalid and flea-ridden that it inspired nothing but a kind of horror at what human nature might in its beginnings spring from, and in such a place so easily sink back to. (*RB* 46)

The disillusionment of many settlers, who had originally wished to start a new life in Australia, reflects the frustration caused by the new environment: the reality they have to accommodate to differs enormously from everything they had ever expected and their disappointment is, therefore, huge. Many of them attach themselves tightly to the home environment; they glorify it and compare it to the host

country which is treated with hostility and detachment. The settlers stick closely to each other and carefully protect their community from any intruders which might occur. They fear the natives and adopt negative attitudes towards them. Both the fear and the criticism are irrational, based on stereotypes and arrogant thoughts of dominance. Such haughty manners lead by no means to genuine understanding, neither of the host country, nor its people, as Malouf brilliantly points out in his work.

The irrational and hyperbolic fear can be seen in the situation when Gemmy is given a stone from his tribe. The stone is scary because the settlers know nothing about it and assign special, harmful powers to it. Such unreasonable fear is based on no solid foundation; it springs only from the lack of knowledge, rooted stereotypes and blind prejudices. Both cultures value different things; but especially from the settlers' perspective, what is different is disturbing and potentially dangerous. The Aborigines represent 'absolute dark'; they are outsiders burdened with stereotypes. Jock McIvor becomes aware of the irrationality of the fear and tries to point out the absurdity of the stone-situation: "We're no'scared o' stones. Ah thought that was the difference between us and them. What's it supposed to, aenaway, this *stone*? Soor the coos' milk? Set haystacks on fire?" (RB 96). But not many people share Jock's attitude. The journey towards mutual understanding and reconciliation is long.

Negative stance towards the new and seemingly hostile environment is adopted for instance by Ned Corcoran, a radical settler from Malouf's story, who suggests that the only way of dealing with the natives is the violent one. He insists that the settlers ought to go and "get rid of 'em, once and for all" (RB 56). This way is the quickest and probably kindest, many settlers agree with Corcoran. Another supercilious point of view, even though much milder, is represented by many other settlers who would rather try a softer policy: they do not wish to spill blood. They want to find a home in a civilised town; in this establishment, the natives could serve them, some in the households, some on the fields or plantations, as it was probably observed in America and its slavery practice. The vision of superiority is apparent: the blacks should serve them and call them Sir. To sum up, general approach towards the natives springs from a mixture of fear, lack of knowledge, ethnocentrism and distrust. All these negative standpoints are further intensified by the fact that no formal boundaries exist between the two worlds so far only symbolically on a legal document in a distant office.

And all around, before and behind, worse than weather and the deepest night, were natives, tribes of wandering myalls who, in their traipsing this way and that all over the map, were forever encroaching on boundaries that could be insisted on by daylight – a good shotgun saw to that – but in the dark hours, when you no longer stood there (...) with all the glow of white man's authority like any other, and have no indication that six hundred miles away, in the Lands Office in Brisbane, this bit of country had a name set against it on a

numbered document, and a line drawn that was empowered with all the authority of the Law. (RB 8)

The Aborigines are not familiar with the abstract concepts such as ‘formal boundaries’ and ‘legal document’. Moreover, the notion of official borders is purely a European construct and means nothing to them; it is simply irrelevant to their understanding of the law. Aboriginal law is a heritage of the Creative Ancestors, originates in the Dreamtime and has been verified by thousands of years of being in practice. In addition, the Aborigines are used to wander freely all across the land, they respect only the Songlines, imaginary lines stretching the country and marking various tribal territories. They do observe boundaries, but of a completely different kind; boundaries unknown or neglected by the settlers. Clashes between the two cultures are often based on the unpermitted trespassing: the Aborigines do not comprehend, or possibly are not even willing to observe, the official borders marked by the settlers, as well as the settlers do not comprehend nor respect the Songlines.

The settlers in Australia have to deal with an unknown Aboriginal language as well. There are no similarities in the two languages, nothing to grasp and nothing to base the communication on. The Aboriginal words, which Gemmy occasionally utters, symbolize another culture which is so different and alienated that the settlers feel intimidated, powerless and offended. They are afraid of Gemmy because they do not understand him and because they know he had lived more than a half of his life with the natives. He is the representation of the alienation and difference: he speaks in “some whining blackfeller’s lingo” (RB 3) which reminds his connection to the natives; but the settlers’ language, that he forgot, and that is disturbing. When Lachlan Beattie, meets Gemmy for the first time, he is strongly irritated by his language. “The idea of language he did not know scared him. He thought that if he allowed the man to go on using it, he would see how weak they were and get the advantage of them” (RB 3). The English language, therefore, has to be heard more than the Aboriginal one; English here represents the familiarity and belonging into a community, whereas Gemmy’s language represents all the strangeness and alienation of this wild continent.

In *Remembering Babylon*, the inexperienced settlers have to cope with the clash of dreams and expectations with reality. When they arrived, they were suddenly surrounded by dirt, mud and swelter and had to live in huts instead of houses. Malouf describes Ellen McIvor’s broken dreams in a following manner: “The drunkenness they met in the streets had a desperation to it that made her wander what there might be in the place, given so much space, that could madden the men and made the women so pinched and colourless. It was not what they expected” (RB 68). The settlers had to deal not only with the new land, but they also had to find their new identity. Both, the land and its new inhabitants had to discover their identities. “A different kind of balance was established between them in the first days

in the colony, as if, in coming halfway round the world, they had arrived not so much at a new place as a new accommodation with their new natures” (RB 68).

All Malouf’s Australian settlers agree on that the conditions of their life now are much harder than they have ever imagined because they are so different. When Ellen McIvor compares her before-journey expectations and current every-day situation, she admits that the openness she had longed for became suddenly a frightening thing. “There had been a comfort in crowdedness and old age grime and clutter that she only appreciated when it was gone. If it was easy here to lose yourself in the immensities of the land, under a sky that opened too far in the direction of infinity, you could also do it in a space no longer than five paces from wall to wall” (RB 100). Once again, the notion of home, familiar but long lost, becomes of tremendous importance.

What scares Ellen McIvor is also the fact that they are not only the first people living in Australia, but also the first ones to die there. Knowledge that the members of their community will be the first dead people in the colony “made death that much lonelier, and life lonelier, too” (RB 100). Lack of shared history and no bonds attached to the land make living in Australia alienated and unbearable. “Till they arrived no other lives had been lived here. It made the air that much thinner, harder to breath” (RB 100). Ellen is missing signs of the presence of the ancestors. Apparently, she is not aware of the Aboriginal Ancestors who left signs all across the continent and filled the land with life and meaning. Ellen is missing comprehensible signs of European meanings, culture and heritage. Apart from the ‘thresholds worn with coming and going feet’ and the ‘hedges between fields that went back a thousand years’, she misses the ‘names on the headstones’ (RB 100). These names were “once *their* names, under which lay the bones that had made their bones and given them breath” (RB 100). But in this country, there is nothing of that kind everything is new and done for the first time. The Aboriginal heritage is neglected since for the European settlers, it has no graspable value or deeper meaning. The Aboriginal history belongs to the Aborigines and has nothing to do with the settlers, they often think.

Malouf portrays the first settlers as they were: extremely hardworking, yet poor. The settlers live in humble conditions and lack money, they become gloomy, disappointed and dour since there is no sign of the land they had been promised. The settlers often leave one place for another, hoping that the next place would provide them with better conditions and life standards. This motif of changing places in search for better life seems to be repetitively used in Malouf’s prose, it appears also, for example, in a short story *Blacksoil Country* published in *Dream Stuff*. In *Remembering Babylon*, the motif of the settlers’ wandering is quite prominent. The McIvors are forced to leave, to set off for journey to find better life. At first, they journey from Scotland, their homeland, to Australia, into a country of hope and new opportunities. They travel because they want to settle, they want to start a new life and build a new home in a better place. But the place they choose for the new start

turns to be a bitter disillusionment; the land seems to be hostile and unsuitable for a new home-establishment, furthermore, there is nobody who would help them to do so. As a result, they are forced to move away again, this time they travel within Australia. "At last, when it was clear that they could expect nothing of others and must act for themselves, they left Brisbane for the Darling Downs, he to work as a general hand on a big holding, she as a housemaid" (*RB* 68). But no matter where they wander, they cannot find an appropriate new home and settle satisfactorily. They become bitterly disappointed and opposed to this nomadic way of life. When the nomads travel, they do so freely, without being attached to a particular place. When they make a sufficient use of a certain place, they move away to new places which would provide them once again with all necessary supplies. The nomads live in harmony with the nature and its gifts. But the European settlers are, apparently, incapable of that. To them, constant journeying is tiring, uncertain and most of the time disappointing. They travel in search for certainties but they fail to find them.

Not many settlers in Malouf's work reach the final stage of the adjustment to the new cultural environment, open themselves to the other and come closer towards the acceptance and reconciliation. Both Jock McIvor and George Abbot are those who do succeed and move from the narrow view based on the adherence to the past, to the enjoying the present time and gifts of current life. They recover from the cultural shock very well; they manage to live in the presence, not from the past. George Abbot succeeds to move to discovery that "there were many things in the world that were still to come to him" (*RB* 92). The Australian experience does not mean disillusionment anymore, it starts to mean, as it was at the beginning, a place for a new start. Furthermore, by discovering the land they discover themselves. Jock McIvor realises that they see so little since they do not even try to look carefully. They focus on rationality and forget about intuition and spirituality. Jock says that "a grown man of forty with work to do shall not be standing dreamily stilled" (*RB* 96). But he realizes soon that being always rational simply does not fit into this new world. He slowly becomes aware of things he had never paid attention to before. The new perceptions are hard to describe; Jock lacks words and discovers that there might be knowledge outside words. This knowledge is new for him, but for the Aborigines and for Gemmy, it is a natural and inseparable part of life. Gemmy describes this tight connection with the land, which Jock step by step discovers, in this manner:

There was no way of existing in this land (...) unless you took it into yourself, discovered on your breath, the sounds that liked up all the various parts of it and made them one. Without that you were blind, you were deaf, as he had been, at first, in their world. You blundered about seeing holes where in fact strong spirits were at work that had to be placated, and if you knew how to call them up, could be helpful. Half of what ought to have been bright and full of breath of life to you was shrouded in mist. (*RB* 58)

Mr. Frazer represents the greatest shift from the narrow Eurocentric superiority towards the awareness of cultural relativism and openness to many opportunities which the new land provides. On his walks and expeditions into the nature, most of the time being accompanied by Gemmy, he discovers the beauty of the land and learns from it enormously. Gemmy is a guide to him, an informant and mediator between the world of the white men and the Aboriginal world and its knowledge.

The example of Mr. Fraser shows that reconciliation is possible, but requires effort, patience and will to learn from the other. He is also aware of blindness which the Europeans had brought with them into the new country. The Eurocentric point of view should be suppressed and the settlers should open their eyes and learn from the natives who have proved that living in harmony with the land is possible. Mr. Fraser says: "We must rub our eyes and look again, clear our minds of what we are looking for to see what is there" (*RB* 118). Furthermore, he suggests a step towards cultural relativism and says about Aborigines that "we must humble ourselves and learn from them" (*RB* 119). Even though these thoughts seem to be so simple and self-evident, it is impossible for many settlers to adopt them; they keep insisting on the colonial depiction of the land being hostile, infelicitous, apparently alien and cruel and the natives being uncivilised savages who must be kept in distance.

English eyes cannot see, Mr. Fraser states, moreover, they are used to seeing and appreciating different things. He introduces a rhetorical question: "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?" (*RB* 119). But he is optimistic and believes that one day they will see how rich Australian land is and will live from its gifts. He believes that some day in the future people will recognize that everything is God's work, that God created all humans in his garden – "he is a gardener and everything he makes is a garden" (*RB* 119). And people's task is to watch and learn from what God has given to them. From this Christian perspective, he sees also the character of Gemmy. Frazer speculates whether Gemmy is an object of God's plans, whether he has been introduced to the settlers to show them the right way. In Frazer's view, Gemmy is a forerunner. He is a proof that Australia can become a new home, that it is possible to cross cultural and other boundaries and open oneself toward otherness.

He is no longer a white man, or a European, whatever his birth, but a true child of the place (...). He is part of His intention: that the exemplum should be of the simplest and most obvious sort, deeply moving 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. (*RB* 121)

Mr. Fraser is of the opinion that the settlers have been wrong to see Australia in a negative way; "so that only by the fiercest stoicism, a supreme resolution and force of will, and by felling, clearing, sowing with the seeds we have brought with us

and by importing sheep, cattle, (...) can it be shaped and made habitable. It is habitable already” (*RB* 118). Australia shall be seen as a land of plenty and the settlers must allow themselves to see it; they must change their attitude, not the land. In this case, David Malouf (using the character of Mr. Fraser) stresses out the importance of self-overcoming and shift from self towards the other.

Throughout the whole *Remembering Babylon*, Malouf shows that the only way to reconcile the two cultures is crossing the borders: geographical, racial, cultural, language, interpersonal. Don Randall suggests that Malouf’s work “insistently involves the testing and questioning the borders, boundaries, and boundedness” (Randall 128). Furthermore, the key moment is the quest to find the perspective of the other and, at the same time, to see the self from the other’s perspective. But “Malouf recognises that the border that presents the possibility of contact and exchange is also, at least potentially, a barrier” (Randall 145). The border or the margin is a site of contact and can serve as a great source for learning, but at the same time, there is something potentially threatening or possibly wounding. Many Malouf’s settlers are too afraid of what they could encounter on the other side of the border that they never become courageous enough to cross this boundary. Surrounded by fences, they feel relatively safe and protected, but behind the line of familiar and known, there lies a sphere of scary unknown. Due to overwhelming fear, the potential of another culture remains undiscovered for a long time.

7.2 Gemmy’s life journey and identity search

Gemmy Fairley’s life journey has been full of struggles and misfortunes and can be understood as a process of permanent identity search, even though not much successful. Gemmy is rather overwhelmed by various situations and dragged by circumstances he can neither understand nor control. He tries to acculturate in various social interactions: firstly in his homeland, in England, then in Aboriginal cultural background and later on in the environment of European settlers who call themselves Australians. Nevertheless, he remains detached in all cultural contexts and seems to be unable to comprehend the mysteries of it.

Gemmy’s childhood in Britain can be characterised as miserable, unhappy and regrettable and full of violence and mal-treatment. When he eventually leaves his house, he at the same time leaves, as it becomes apparent, also England. He begins this physical part of his journey without any particular reasons and has he no idea of its consequences. The decision to run away is sudden and spontaneous and by any means a deliberate attempt to set off for a journey. When Gemmy suddenly appears on a ship, his confusion and astonishment is great since he has never wished to voyage anywhere. But since there is no other option what to do, he is forced by the circumstances to adapt to a new situation and wander wherever the boat sails. He does not control his life and is a victim of unfortunate coincidences. This physical

journey Gemmy undertakes on a ship is not elaborated much in *Remembering Babylon* but corresponds enormously with the rest of Gemmy's life – it is unsettled, confused and out of his control.

One day, Gemmy is suddenly cast overboard and appears in Australia, in a place he has no idea about, moreover, he is left completely alone. When an Aboriginal tribe appears, Gemmy finds himself on a crossroad of his life. He can opt between joining the group and follow their lead or set out for his own journey, be free and go wherever he would wish to. He decides to follow them; simply because his chances to survive would be otherwise minimal. His decision is conditioned by a natural human instinct to survive; he does not think through all the possibilities, nor does he wish to become a member of a different community and discover a distinctive culture. He simply accommodates to a sudden situation as he had done many times before. He does so rather instinctively than pragmatically or out of curiosity. He decides to follow, or more precisely to be lead since this is the only way of dealing with unusual situations he has ever experienced. The journey always chooses Gemmy, not the other way round.

He spends sixteen years with the native Australians, lives how they do and learns from them greatly. He undertakes a process of cultural assimilation under the Aboriginal influence and thus (unconsciously) begins a journey of his spiritual development: he is taught not to only exist in, but co-exist with the land and nature, be fully connected with it and benefit from its gifts. He learns Aboriginal customs, duties and habits and discovers powers seemingly hidden in the land; powers that are revealed only for those who watch carefully. He is keen to watch, learn and remember, on one hand because he is still a child and it is easy for him to take things in and to adapt, on the other because the faster he adapts, the more probably he could become a member of the community. He swiftly learns the language of the tribe which helps him to see the world differently; due to a different language he is able to name objects and realities which he could not name before, simply because there were no corresponding words for it.

Gemmy is taught to survive in the bush and guided to find connections with the land, traditions and spirituality; the Aborigines have offered him to see the world differently. His stay in the Aboriginal community can be viewed as a certain rite of passage for him. From an English boy he became a young Aborigine man; this transformation included the change of physiological features (he grew older, his skin darkened etc.), but also linguistic (language acquisition) and social (he adopted customs, habits, values and also way of thinking), nevertheless, he is not fully capable to transform intellectually, he still remains childlike and immature, possibly because of the overwhelming amount of traumatic experience.

Even though he enculturates quite well, he cannot fully succeed in becoming an absolutely equal member of the community. His identity is mysterious – both for him and for the natives. His desire is to discover what is unknown to him; so when the rumours about white-faced creatures emerge, Gemmy, being pushed forward by

irresistible restlessness of his mind, sets off for a journey. Malouf explains that Gemmy has something inside him what wants to spring out of him, but he does not know how to do that; that is the reason to set out. "He did not want to be taken back. What he wanted was to be recognized. (...) He had no notion of abandoning the tribe, even less of breaking from one world to another. It was a question of covering the space between them" (*RB* 29). There are two parts of Gemmy, two of his identities, and the connection between them is disturbingly vague, if there is any at all. There is something missing in him and this lack of connections between the two worlds Gemmy carries inside himself causes confusion, desperation and restlessness.

In case of entering the settlers' colony, Gemmy seems to fail utterly at efforts to become an equal and respected member of the target community. When he enters the colony for the first time, he is considered to be disturbingly different: he "manifests all the ambiguity of the abject object" (Randall 131). The settlers assign to him various labels: a 'scarecrow', a 'creature', 'it', a 'half-naked savage', an 'odd, misshapen fellow', a 'black white man', and many others, by no means flattering, names (*RB* 3-8). Gemmy is viewed as a liminal character, as an in-between, a creature belonging neither to the Aboriginal world, nor the European one, as if he was forever trapped balancing on the fence. Randall comments on that: "He is perched on a fence, awkwardly and uneasily between worlds, and although he is birdlike he cannot quite manage to take flight; he is an unending failure to achieve transcendence" (Randall 131).

To the settlers, Gemmy is a mixture of a monstrous strangeness and an unwelcome likeness, Malouf says. They are afraid of him because in any moment he can show either of his faces. "It was a white man, though there was no way you could have known from his look. He had the mangy, half-starved look of a black" (*RB* 3). They wonder whether it is possible to lose so much of oneself: Englishness, whiteness, language, culture, habits, identity... in a word, '*it*' (*RB* 36). And if Gemmy did lose it, are they also in danger of losing a certain part of themselves; something so important, yet hard to describe? Due to such fears and insecurities, the settlers immediately adopt an exclusionary attitude towards otherness. Therefore, Gemmy's life within the settlers' community is far from pleasant. Even though he has no Aboriginal bloodline but has only received Aboriginal cultivation, he is understood as an unfitting and disturbing figure. Nonetheless, his presence in the community has also a positive effect: he stimulates some of the settlers (such as the McIvors and Mr. Fraser), makes them change their attitudes and re-evaluate their beliefs.

Malouf also depicts Gemmy as a personification of eclectic powers of human mind. Gemmy wants to remember only something, he desires to eliminate his fears and bad memories, mainly connected with his childhood in Europe. This example of a selective individual can be also understood in a broader perspective; what from history (and not necessarily only colonial) shall the Australians remember and what shall be forgotten. In *Remembering Babylon*, Malouf draws attention to the acknowledgement of the shared history and highlights the themes of remembering

and self-overcoming which are so essential for finding and shaping Australian identity. His treatment of other themes such as exile, alienation, and cultural and spiritual differences can be viewed as an issue tightly connected with Australian cultural and identity search. Malouf uses the character of Gemmy to raise questions about the current issue of identity and difference; he draws attention to such issues rather than resolves them or provides clear and definite answers.

Malouf also shows that language is an inseparable part of constitution of both individual and national identity. And not only these; language is also a crucial part of reconstruction social, cultural and historical identities since via identification with the language people identify themselves with the country and its cultural identity. Therefore, language helps to realize own cultural belonging and has a social function since it helps to establish a social status. Consequently, if the language is lost (as in Gemmy's case), identity disappears as well. Gemmy is unable to fit into the settlers' community also because of his language barrier. In his stammering speech, he is unable to put into words what he wants to say even if he tries very hard. His mother tongue is almost lost; the influence of the Aboriginal culture has been strong and the linguistic exposure permanent, moreover, his mother tongue is connected with unpleasant and unwelcomed memories of the past which Gemmy tries to suppress and eliminate.

Soon after Gemmy's arrival, the minister and the teacher try to write down his personal history and capture his life journey. They create a certain colonial fairytale based on pieces of information provided by Gemmy, partly on their (wrong) guesses, presuppositions and even vivid imagination. Gemmy considers these notes to be somehow magic; his whole life is revealed in there and now they know who he really is. But at the same time, his life is suddenly trapped in those papers. He "seems to intuit that the writing seeks to isolate and expropriate the portion of Aboriginality in him" (Randall 138). The ink on the papers is "the smell of his life, his spirit, the black blood they had drained out of him" (RB 18). Gemmy also understands that the writings represent a certain ritual of power. He sees the domination of the person who is writing; this person is in charge, not the one who is being the subject of writing. For him, the writing is an attempt to write him into and also out of the history. Young comments on the problem of translation in terms of identity:

To translate a text from one language to another is to transform its material identity. (...) With colonialism, the transformation of an indigenous culture into the subordinated culture of a colonial regime, or the superimposition of the colonial apparatus into which all aspects of the original culture have to be reconstructed, operate as processes of translational dematerialization. At the same time, though, certain aspects of the indigenous culture may remain untranslatable. (Young 139)

What remains untranslatable is the essence of otherness which cannot be easily described by words of a different language, furthermore, it seems to be utterly impossible to transfer it into a written form. The way of thinking differs in both cultures, the European and the Aboriginal, and many of the concepts of one culture do not exist in the other one, therefore, the translators cannot genuinely capture what Gemmy is trying to convey. They judge what he says from their Eurocentric point of view and change it to fit structures they are familiar with.

After about a month spent with the settlers, Gemmy finds himself being in a poor condition. All the bad memories are coming back to him because they are recorded and live in the documents Mr. Frazer made. Gemmy suffers because all his past is encapsulated within the papers and he needs to break free from that. He is caught in a hostile social environment and sees himself as “unfocused pieces that would not fit” (*RB* 108). Even though he had journeyed such a long way to discover what was missing in him, he came to no conclusion. Even worse, he feels estranged and lost even more than he had been before, as if he were in a dead end, unable to move. He thinks of what the Aborigines have taught him: about the earthbound relationship, about land and people being one, about the Dreamtime and about being its part. He says that the land “belonged to him as he did to it; not by birth but by second birth, by gift, and not just for his lifetime either but for the whole of time since it was for the whole of time that it existed, as he did too so long he was one with it” (*RB* 107). At the end, when Gemmy manages to get back the documents, or at least what he considers to be that, he can leave the community and set his spirit free again. “Gemmy paused a moment, the papers safely in his pocket, and as he looked around him, he felt for the first time that he could go any way he pleased; he did not have to go back down the ribbon of road” (*RB* 164).



Figure 8. Kingaroy, 2013. (Photograph by Bridget Roth)

Even though Gemmy has not solved his own identity problem, his character has helped some of the settlers to open their eyes and problematise what they had taken for granted. Some have come closer towards the concept of people and land being one and have started to see the land and its inhabitants differently, not hostilely

anymore. It is not explicitly said what happens with Gemmy after his leaving the settlers but still, there is the notion of him being an inspiration, a forerunner who shows that the acceptance of Australia as a new home is possible.

Malouf is preoccupied not only with the quest for identity, but he also emphasises the motifs of the ruling ones and those who are ruled over and the confrontation of the Old with the New World. His work thus can be read as not only a local, but also a global and universal allegory on the relationship between two cultures and as an appeal to keep working on mutual understanding.

8 *Mutant Message Down Under*

Morgan's narrative style is designed as to reflect a real-life journey. First person narration suggests that Morgan retells the story according to facts, as she claims that the narrative is based on her own experience. Despite many attempts to sound authentic, *Mutant Message Down Under* is a work of fiction, moreover, a very controversial one. The core of all disputes lies the most probably at the very beginning of the literary work: Morgan presents it as an objective, almost scientific narrative, nevertheless, while reading carefully, her narration reveals many inaccuracies, mystifications and wilful inventions on the side of the author. Concurrently, if the author is deliberately untruthful from the beginning, the work as a whole cannot be taken seriously, and cannot be trusted, many Morgan's opponents say.

During the 1990s, not long after the book had been published and became a bestseller, an enormous wave of interest in Aborigines arose. Millions of readers around the world believed that the Australian native inhabitants deliberately chose to die and that their culture lives on in their mediator, Marlo Morgan, who was assigned the task to deliver their message. People from all corners of the world came to Australia and asked about Morgan's tribe. Yet nobody could provide satisfactory answers; nobody has ever heard of the tribe described in the book. To prove or refute the rumours, many studies have been conducted, nevertheless, the results have remained rather unconvincing. Morgan keeps insisting on being a guardian of true Aboriginal culture while her adversaries accuse her of deception, spiritual and identity theft with the aim to make profit. Disputes have never ended or come into a clear conclusion.

The most prominent and often quoted Morgan's critic is Chris Sitka, an Australian woman who has worked and lived with Aborigines in Central Australia for a significant part of her life. Her critical article, *Morgan's Mutant Fantasy - A critique of Marlo Morgan's book Mutant Message Downunder*, published in 1997, became very popular and has drawn nearly as much attention as the novel itself. Sitka is of the opinion that only people who have never set foot on Australia and are unfamiliar with the country and its culture can possibly believe that presented fantasy corresponds with a real-life situation.

Nevertheless, Morgan's enthusiastic fans and supporters do not seem to care much whether she has been telling the truth or not. What matters, they basically agree on, is the message to go 'ad fontes', to get back to one's roots which helps to remember who one really is. Marlo suggests that such spiritual journey can be undertaken anywhere in the world; even though this proclamation is to some extent confusing since her own experience is place-conditioned and can be done only with a specific group of knowledgeable Aborigines who are willing to transmit their knowledge to a stranger and who are willing to show her the way back into the true

state of being. The sympathisers prefer to interpret the book from a personalised perspective which excludes any interpretations lead by the reason. *Mutant Message Down Under* serves as a source of inspiration that body can be interconnected with mind and spirituality. But what everybody agrees on, no matter if a defender or an objector, is the fact that Morgan has proved herself to be a very good story teller.

8.1 A controversial walkabout

The story takes place in Australia and even though Morgan focuses mainly on the description of Aboriginal culture, she cannot avoid comparing it to the Western world, especially to the United States, her home-country. Marlo, the author and the main character, comes to Australia to work there; she holds a project based on social integration of young Aborigines. The job is time-limited and she understands the journey to Australia as a short-term experience abroad, she does not wish to settle in there. She considers this journey to be a dream-come-true opportunity and claims that she has always been excited about the land Down Under. Despite such fascination with the new, she searches for similarities between her home-country and the host-country; that is, from the anthropological point of view, a typical behavior of a person who is being transplanted into a new environment.

In Australia, Marlo lives and works within a community of white Australians and from them she learns about the Aborigines. Not precisely about those who still follow a traditional nomadic way of life in the bush, but rather about those who lost connections with the cultural heritage of their ancestors and now live in the suburbs of big cities and suffer at the edge of the society. Her work is oriented towards Aborigines who live in the city, but she has only a little idea about those who still live traditionally in Australian Outback. She also quite often encounters a stereotypical and superior attitude of white Australians who see the Aborigines as primitive, uneducable and illiterate people who have nothing to give or share with the Western culture. Such standpoint is taken, for example, by a certain (unnamed) Caucasian Australian, as it can be seen in the following extract:

You don't understand the Abos. They are primitive, wild, bush people. (...) It is true they are a dying race. Their population is declining by their own free will. They are hopelessly illiterate people with no ambition or drive for success. After two hundred years they still don't fit in. What's more, they don't try. In business they are unreliable and undependable – act like they can't tell time. Believe me, there is nothing you can do to inspire them.³

³ Marlo Morgan, *Mutant Message Down Under*. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1994. 20. [Subsequent page references preceded with *MMDU* are given in the parentheses in the text.]

Morgan does not fully identify with such an extreme attitude. She is aware of many problems Aborigines have to face nowadays: unemployment, various addictions and social exclusion, yet she believes that it is possible to inspire them and integrate into majority; she believes that the social status of the Aborigines can be improved. From her point of view, it is possible to re-educate the natives and enable them becoming a part of modern Australia; her efforts are rather transformation-based than reconciliation-oriented. Apparently, Morgan is not familiar with the concept of cultural relativism and does not take into consideration that distinctive cultures value different things. From her ethnocentric point of view, and probably also under the influence of distorted information she receives, she takes for granted that the western culture has reached higher level of cultural development than the Aboriginal one and is, therefore, superior to it. She feels important to be one of those who can help, as if she identified herself with the duty to help the underprivileged, as if she took the white man's burden.

After some time of her stay in Australia, she is offered to meet a native desert tribe, however, she does not expect much from such meeting. She believes to receive some kind of an award for the deeds towards the social development of the Aborigines she has done. Marlo is curious about meeting the new culture, although she is not willing to admit that different does not automatically imply inferior. She acts rather conceited and feels self-important when expecting an arranged show that would celebrate her and her accomplishments. Instead of an award-ceremony, she is driven somewhere (the place is not specified) into the desert and gets unpleasantly surprised when the tribe sets off for a journey, heading to the arid land and carrying nothing with. This is the beginning of what she calls a 'personal walkabout': a sudden, unexpected, unwilling and unpleasant event which is about to change her life completely. At this point, she does not understand the concept of a walkabout as a spiritual journey towards discovery what is sacred in the world and towards discovering oneself, on the contrary, she perceives the situation as a decision imposed on her by the others.

Oota, a member of the tribe and Marlo's guide, translator and intermediary, explains to her that this future adventure is an extreme honor for her, that it is necessary to set off for the journey, live the experience and discover the 'Divine Oneness' (*MMDU* 12). Apparently, this walkabout is the most important thing in Marlo's life; it is something she was born to do. Despite that, she insists that the journey is some kind of a show, an arranged performance, something unreal and faked. She considers Oota's proclamation that the journey is her destiny to be a joke, as she has never desired to suffer while exploring the Outback.

In this introductory part to Marlo's journey, the concept of a walkabout differs significantly from the traditional Aboriginal one. If an Aborigine undertakes a walkabout, it is done after a wise preparation, survival training and most importantly out of free will; nobody can force another person to set off until such person feels ready. Since a walkabout is a personal rite of passage, it cannot be done under the

guidance of a whole group of other people. By walking, Aborigines come closer to divinity and connection with self and the Ancestors, they are provided with enough time for reflection. Since Marlo is forced to set off, it is disputable whether it is still legitimate to call her journey (at least in this stage) a walkabout.

The reasons why Marlo refuses to follow the tribe are rational, materialistic and law-abiding: on one hand she considers herself to be unprepared to undertake such a demanding journey across the desert, and on the other she feels deprived of freedom to decide according to her own will. The vast desert scares her with its hostility and infiniteness. She also considers the consequences of a possible withdrawal from the civilization: she is bound by an employment contract, has not made any arrangements in advance and is restricted by her social life. She argues that “today is just not a good day for me to leave. I have responsibilities, obligations, rent, utility bills. I have made no preparations. (...) I will tell them they must return me before checkout time tomorrow. I’m not going to pay for an extra day just to satisfy these silly uneducated folks” (*MMDU* 12). She is also aware of a language barrier, she does not speak the Aboriginal language and nobody but a tribal translator is able to speak English. She says: “I did not want to go. They were asking me to put my life in their hands. These were people I had just met, and with whom I couldn’t even talk” (*MMDU* 12). Her arguments against leaving correspond with western reasoning; the security which the settled way of life provides is valued more than the uncertainty of space-independent wandering unlimited in time which nomadism represents.

In her decision-making process she also compares a walkabout to an exotic excursion; nevertheless, she does not seem to reflect on the difference between these two concepts. The exotic trip would mean a pure entertainment which lasts for a short period of time, is care-free and pleasantly adventurous. But the concept of a walkabout is nothing of that kind; it is a long-term spiritual journey, unguided, often dangerous and challenging person’s abilities and survival skills. Marlo remembers how many times she had wished to win an ‘exotic all-expenses-paid trip’ (*MMDU* 14), but when it eventually comes, she is not pleased at all and adopts a rejecting attitude. In this point, Marlo represent those who tend to dream about travelling since they can idealize the journey and never leave their homes. But when they are given the choice to leave their settled way of life and set off for a journey, they feel deprived of most of the certainties and comforts they treasure. The hardest part of the journey seems to be making the decision to set out; actually breaking free from stability and security which the home environment provides.

The position in which Marlo suddenly finds herself forces her to choose between going into the desert against her will, and being left alone in the middle of nowhere without help or chance to survive. She does not remember the way back into civilization across the desert; she would not be able to walk back and without help she would die. Her situation is similar to the one of Gemmy depicted in *Remembering Babylon*: after being cast overboard, he appears in an unknown land,

alone and completely unprepared, and has to decide whether to follow the tribe of the natives or whether to take a risk and find his own way across the land. Marlo stands on a crossroad too: she has to choose between joining the group and staying on her own. Both Gemmy and Marlo choose to join the tribe since the company of others brings security and increases survival chances. Another similarity can be observed on the example of these two characters: both do not comprehend what such journey would mean to them. In this initial phase of the walkabout, they cannot see that the journey will mean a physical, attitudinal and spiritual transformation, a process of discovering otherness and self.

Even though Morgan is initially forced to go on a walkabout, she soon learns to discover connections between people and land and reflects on that while walking. Although she does reflect to a certain extent upon that, she still feels incapable to fully understand and accept otherness of the Aboriginal culture. The divergence between the two markedly unlike worlds seems to be insuperable. While walking across the desert, she slowly learns from the Aborigines about the “true relationship of humans to the world we live in, the world beyond, the dimension from which we came, and the dimension where we shall all return” (*MMDU* 24). She discovers the core of earthbound philosophy, the connection between the nature, people and universe. At the same time, she becomes aware of the exposure to the understanding of her own ‘beingness’ (*MMDU* 24), as she calls the state of understanding oneself. She discovers that life and living according to the tribe is of nomadic character: it is in movement, advancement, and change.

Since the tribe had accepted Marlo as its member and since she stays with them permanently, she becomes a perfect example of a participant observant who shares life with a target community and gains from this first-hand experience. She lives the way they live, eats what they eat and follows their rhythm of the day. By staying with the tribe, she discovers another culture and its world-view and learns to live in accordance with nature and universe as they do; she learns not only to watch, but also to see. She learns to appreciate the nomadic way of life with its freedom and simplicity, as she sees it. The Aborigines do not dwell in one place, they do not plant crops nor breed animals, they do not carry provisions. Day by day, they “receive bountiful blessings of the universe” (*MMDU* 27). They live in harmony with the nature, appreciate its gifts and take only as much as they necessarily need.

Despite the fact that the walkabout is done rather randomly, having neither direction nor destination, Morgan mentions the concept of songlines and invisible paths. Throughout the whole book, there are only a few remarks about the songlines, even though the tribe shall follow some when being on a walkabout. The tribe Marlo journeys with does not seem to follow any of the songlines, but she at least refers to this crucial concept of traditional Aboriginal culture. In her story, the tribal people are aware of what they call songs or unvoiced sounds of the soil. To be precise, Marlo says that “they can sense input from the environment, do something unique in decoding it, and then consciously act, almost as if they had developed some tiny

celestial receiver that universal messages came through” (*MMDU* 28). She also learns that the Aborigines measure distance by singing songs in very specific details and rhythms. “Some songs might have one hundred verses. Every word and every pause must be exact. There could be no ad-lib or lapse in memory because it is literally a measuring stick. They actually sang us from one location to another” (*MMDU* 28). Marlo also observes that the tribal people are able to point out sacred places in the landscape and that they also see invisible lines that mark the home territory of former tribes. Surprisingly enough, even though the tribe is aware of these borders, the members cross the lines and walk wherever they wish to. This act of trespassing has no consequences whatsoever; apparently, in Marlo’s Outback, there are no other tribes who would protect their territory and songs. This is a weak point of the story: if the journey lasted as long as Morgan claims and led through places she describes, she and her tribe would have encounter other clans; they would have to enter other territories so they would need special permissions from other tribes. Since where the verses of a songline of one clan end, there it is necessary to trade with another clan to exchange verses or at least to borrow them. Aborigines cannot travel randomly, they always follow a certain songline and they have always a song of their Ancestors to be sung. Sitka points out that “no family group would have travelled thousands of miles from their own country, meeting no-one and thereby transgressing traditional law and neglecting ritual obligations to their own land” (Sitka).

Later on, Marlo concentrates on the songs not as the indicators of orientation, but as a medium which preserves the history. On that account she adds that these nomadic people have refused a written language because to them that gives away the power of memory. Since they have no written language, “knowledge is passed from generation to generation in song and dance. Each historical event can be depicted by drawings on the sand or in music and drama. They have music every day because it is necessary to keep facts fresh in the memory” (*MMDU* 49). Despite this statement, there is no evidence of everyday singing, dancing and drawing in the book. Morgan mentions that everyday singing is of great importance to the Aborigines, but she provides no evidence about that when describing her stay with the tribe. This contradiction found in the book once again undermines reliability of the narration. Even though Morgan occasionally points to the songlines, she does not further elaborate on them, does not explain its importance nor interconnects them with the essence of the Aboriginal worldview. She understands the indigenous culture rather superficially when she concentrates more on the tribal natural lifestyle and food obtaining than on following the songlines and singing the world into existence.

Another extremely important feature of Aboriginal culture is mentioned in *Mutant Message Down Under*, namely the dreamtime (Morgan uses small letter), even though only a vague, brief and sketchy depiction is provided. What is more, the concept is transformed almost beyond recognition: there are no myths and dreamtime stories told and no rituals regularly held, the tribe does not refer to nor celebrate its

totemic Ancestors or the land at all. The dreamtime, even though peripherally mentioned, does not seem to be part of their everyday life. Morgan provides only a description of the concept but does not further elaborate on it or integrate it in everyday practice. She explains that the dreamtime has three parts: it is the time before time, then the time of the creational powers of the Ancestors, and finally the present time which proves that the dreaming is still in progress. But she does not concentrate on further explanations, she rather compares the concept of never-ending dream-time with the western understanding of time. She praises the Aboriginal concept over the western one, since the western civilizations have only “limited understanding because they measure time in terms of themselves. They fail to recognize any time except today and so destroy without regard for tomorrow” (*MMDU* 66). According to Morgan, it is fear that bounds people and that is obstructive in their access to knowledge, freedom and spirituality. It is apparently the same fear she felt at the beginning of her journey, the fear of the unknown connected with loss of certainties.

Influenced by the concept of never-ending dreamtime, she suggests that the western societies shall divert their world perception from here and now orientation towards broader, distant future oriented perspectives, and head, ideally, towards eternity. This can be done through a deep reflection about self and about the world. To support these statements, she, immodestly and proudly, uses the example of herself: she is the proof that human transformation is possible since the greater distance she walked, the greater her conversion was. Her walkabout experience proves that she managed to leave behind the materialism of the western world and now accepts and appreciates the Aboriginal earthbound philosophy and cares for eternity. For such a progress, she is given a new name, Mutant. It is rather symbolic and mirrors two sides of her personality: the old one tainted by western society and the new, natural one which is being slowly discovered. The task of the tribe and of the main protagonist is to reveal the true value of both sides of Marlo’s personality and choose the better one which would help her to reach the state of spiritual unity with self and the universe. The name refers to her western origin and initially distorted understanding of the world, but also reflects the fact that she has ‘decided’ to go on a walkabout and learn from a different culture.

A remark shall be done in this place: in the introductory part, Morgan describes her discomfort of being forced to set off; she considers the decision to participate on the journey to be imposed on her against her free will. But later on, during the period of enlightenment while wandering, she refers to the moment of decision making as to something done voluntarily with the aim to learn from otherness. This contradictory presentation of facts undermines narrator’s credibility and causes a slight confusion; it leads to questioning the truth value of the statements that are presented as facts but reveal themselves as fiction.

There is also a peculiarity connected with the name Mutant: it is improbable to occur in Aboriginal cultural environment. Sitka argues that “the concept of a

mutation, a Western scientific term, is non-existent in Aboriginal culture” (Sitka). It resembles the western, not the Aboriginal way of thinking and naming. Therefore, the name Mutant can be perceived as a manifestation of Americanisation. Similar tendency can be observed when Morgan ascribes names to the members of the clan. She names them for example ‘Story Teller’, ‘Tool Maker’, ‘Secret Keeper’, ‘Sewing Master’ or ‘Big Music’ (*MMDU* 24), although this kind of naming is not typical for the Aborigines, it rather resembles the names of the Native Americans. The Aboriginal names are untranslatable in this manner and rather refer to a kin or family name; the name represents belonging into a community, not individual abilities or personal characteristics. Aborigine’s kinship is far more important than their individuality because it shows the connection not only with the community, but also with the Ancestors. The customs found in the story remind rather of those of Native Americans and it can be assumed that such cultural inversion was implemented to better suit American audience.

Throughout the journey, Morgan’s standpoints and attitudes change radically. She re-evaluates her former way of life and inclines towards the Aboriginal worldview rather than towards her original, western one. She gradually condemns any material attachments and western way of learning. For her, learning is done through discovering the nature in which “we can enrich our own lives, give to ourselves, and be as creative and happy as we will allow ourselves to be” (*MMDU* 50). Apparently, this four-month long walkabout helped Marlo to get in touch with her inner self and spirituality, even though in a markedly exaggerated way. At the beginning of her story, she esteems the Western values over the Aboriginal ones, but at the end of the journey, her worldview is completely reversed and she prizes the Aboriginal way of life over the Western one. She is still trapped in a black and white understanding of the world, but once she appreciates only the white, later on exclusively the black. There is no progress towards equal access to both cultures, no effort for reconciliation and finding mutual understanding. The message Morgan conveys is clear: Western societies, careless and detached from the original spirituality, should re-evaluate their attitudes, reflect on the burdening materialism they are surrounded by and exchange their worldview for the Aboriginal one: earthbound, caring and spiritual.

Morgan finishes her walkabout with a sense of leaving, ending and closure. When she reaches the required state of spirituality and is taught everything she needs to know, she is brought back to civilization and released. Her task now is to treasure and preserve knowledge and legacy of the tribe and spread their important message further among people. The Aborigines cannot do it themselves because they voluntarily decided to end their existence on earth. “We, the tribe of Divine Oneness Real People, are leaving planet Earth. (...) We are having no more children. When our youngest member is gone, that will be the last of the pure human race” (*MMDU* 64). Morgan depicts the tribe as an unspoilt nation, probably the last one so

pure to be found. She feels extremely honoured and important to be chosen to convey their message and spread the legacy.

The tribe decides to leave because the living is too far from the original Oneness. They choose Marlo to become a messenger; they explain that this was the aim of her stay with them. As it can be seen, the walkabout is beneficial for both sides – Marlo becomes enlighten and the tribe creates a trustworthy messenger. “We have chosen this Mutant, and we release her as a bird from the edge of a nest, to fly away, far and high, and to screech like the kookaburra, telling the listeners that we are leaving” (*MMDU* 76). These vague statements describing the decision to gradually die out since the world is far away from its original state, has arisen many critical remarks. Morgan’s opponents mark this as one of the most controversial moments of the work. Many Aborigines accused Morgan of being a racist: there are no Aborigines who wish to willingly extinct and definitely do not need any Americans to convey their messages and carry legacies, they say. If Morgan claims so, she employs Western superiority and arrogance once again. In this point, Sitka is being highly critical when saying that “such untrue genocidal projections are a criminal assault against an ancient race struggling valiantly to survive under the dominance of a hostile white society which continues to find many ways to try to wipe them out” (Sitka).

Morgan though insists on those statements. She goes even further and explains that the decision to leave this world means undertaking another journey, this time a straight path in Oneness. In there, Morgan continues, there is no difference between people and races since all life is one life. By saying that, she suggests that such life is not possible on Earth; to eliminate cultural and racial differences, people need to leave this world and enter the eternal one; only there the reconciliation is possible. In this moment, her beliefs contradict greatly those of Bruce Chatwin and David Malouf who are convinced that reconciliation is possible even now, that the two cultures have much to say and can beneficially influence each other, that the meeting of the two cultures provides a possibility to learn and reflect on that mutual (not one-sided) learning. The meeting is not an opportunity to prize one and reject the other culture, but can serve for finding similarities and establishing one’s place in the world.



Figure 9. Australian Landscape in Warwick. (Photograph by Bridget Roth)

Conclusion

A detailed study of the selected works has revealed that there are numerous ways how to grasp the motif of journey in terms of literature. It is not only a physical movement from one place to another, but it often entails a spiritual journey towards discovering the world and learning to understand oneself. All the three authors: Bruce Chatwin, David Malouf and Marlo Morgan, illustrate different concepts of journeying in their works. They share the motif itself, but differ in its literary depiction and degree of authenticity.

Firstly, *The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin's work on the borderline of novel, travelogue and scientific study discovers the concept of Songlines, reveals mysteries of the Dreamtime and searches for possible answers to the question why people are urged to set off for journeys and live unsettled, nomadic way of live. His narration is free of culturally rooted stereotypes and prejudices towards otherness. He avoids shallow descriptions and snap judgements; on the contrary, he interprets carefully and sensitively the knowledge gained from the encounters with the native Australians and elaborates in detail on the crucial aspects of their earthbound philosophy. Chatwin presents his discovering of Aboriginal Australia and the nature of human restlessness in a modest, open-minded, objective manner, and aims to inform the reader about another culture and its ethos. He searches for universal similarities among various cultures and aims to find links among them. He shares this attitude with David Malouf who also sees the meeting of two different cultures as a valuable source of exchange and the basis for identity shaping.

Malouf's famous novella, *Remembering Babylon*, introduces Gemmy, an in-between captured between two worlds: the world of the white Europeans from which he originally came from, and the world of the Australian native inhabitants with whom he spent a considerable part of his life. Gemmy's life is full of struggling, both with misunderstanding and misjudgements of the settlers' community and inability to understand himself. His life journey is similar to the concept of walkabout: it is more about wandering without a fixed aim; there is no specific destination which must be reached since it is the journey itself what matters the most. Such type of journey should end when the person is spiritually strong and finds its place in the world. From this perspective, Gemmy's walkabout remains unfinished because his identity search has never ended.

Harsh conditions of the newly discovered continent are also mentioned in the work. On the example of the settlers, Malouf shows various stages of the adjustment to the new natural and cultural environment. He faithfully portrays the phase of pre-journey excitement followed by the stage of cultural shock and depicts also the first efforts towards the adjustment and reconciliation. *Remembering Babylon* develops the universally applicable metaphor of the borders between individual cultures which should serve not as obstructions but as thresholds for discovering the other. Malouf believes that reconciliation between the Aboriginal and the European cultural

tradition is possible, that it is worth working on mutual understanding. The major task towards discovering the other is to overcome oneself and start seeing the world from the perspective of the others, not from the ethnocentric point of view anymore. The greatest obstacle in the process of learning is the fear of the unknown, the fear of losing certainties.

Marlo Morgan, an American writer who describes her personal walkabout in her narration, was chosen as the third author who deals with traditional Aboriginal culture. Nevertheless, the research has revealed that the truth and fiction blend immensely in *Mutant Message Down Under*, moreover, some of the presented 'facts' are wilful, misleading inventions on the side of the author. Whether her experience is authentic or fictionalised has become the main cause of controversy and a subject matter of many disputes between her fans and critics. Morgan's narration concentrates on her own spiritual accomplishments when journeying across Australian Outback, done in an exaggerated, often vague and controversial way. Her work is designed to suit predominantly the Western audience, even more likely the American one; therefore, she changes and twists some of the traditional Aboriginal concepts to serve the purpose better. She glorifies pure Aboriginal values and forces the (Western) reader to change their worldview, and what is more, to replace it with the Aboriginal, natural one. Unlike Malouf's and Chatwin's work, Morgan's account lacks credibility and due to many mystifications it causes confusion on the side of the reader.

The major difference between the approaches towards the motif of journey is the depth of elaboration. While Morgan sticks to the black and white understanding of the world and describes a different cultural reality rather superficially and shallowly, praising one over the other, Malouf and Chatwin show a detailed and plausible acquaintance with the Aboriginal culture and sensitively deal with the issue of identity search, emphasizing equality and possibility of mutual enrichment.

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