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An Annotated Bibliography:  
David Malouf’s *An Imaginary Life* and *Remembering Babylon*

**Introduction**

David George Joseph Malouf (1934-) is an Australian author of more than 30 works. Although he has won several awards such as Neustadt International Prize, International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, Commonwealth Writers Prize, and Australian Literature Society Gold Medal, his works didn’t attract much interest in (international) literary criticism initially. Moreover, there are a decent number of criticisms written outside Australia today, but his name is not yet familiar to people from other countries. The main purpose of this project is to help the researchers by illustrating the critical history of two representative works by David Malouf, but at the same time hopefully this will draw academic attention to Malouf. This project will focus on two major works of his, *An Imaginary Life* (1978) and *Remembering*
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*Babylon* (1993). These works are hereafter cited as *IL* and *RB* in this bibliography.

As the very first annotated bibliography of them, all the refereed criticisms and books written in English from 1978 to 2017, from the publication year of the earlier novel *IL* to the present, are included. Exceptions are interviews, commercial reviews, and articles which mention but do not mainly deal with *IL* or *RB* or which have little significance (e.g. those only summarize the plot(s)). The following keywords are searched to complete this bibliography through online databases such as *Academic Search Premier, AustLit, Book Review Digest, Humanities Abstracts, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts, JSTOR, MLA International Bibliography, Project MUSE* and *ProQuest*: “*An Imaginary Life,*” “David Malouf,” “postcolonial(ism),” and “*Remembering Babylon.*” In order to secure the reliability of this bibliography, it is decided to include only refereed academic articles and books with credibility. In the process of this project, papers written by anonymous writers and articles on non-academic websites which had not been printed were found, but these materials are not included for the same reason.

The following are the summary of *IL* and *RB* and a brief outline of the studies on them. Malouf’s second novel *An Imaginary Life*, published in 1978, is about a possible story of Roman poet Ovid’s last days. The narrative begins with Ovid’s recollection of childhood and “the Child,” an imaginary friend he used to communicate. In present, Ovid is exiled by Augustus to Tomis and shows self-pity for being
relegated to this unknown world due to some reason untold to readers. However, his mind gradually starts to find beauty in this land which he has no word in Latin to describe. When he accompanies the tribesmen for a hunting, he finds a wild boy in a forest, who he believes is the Child, and tries to educate him. At the end, however, the teacher-student relationship is reversed, and Ovid eventually loses his self and finds the harmony with nature, with the Child to lead him.

Since its publication, *IL* has been strongly considered as an allegory of Australia although the story is about a Roman poet in exile. Malouf has been described as a post-colonialist author throughout his career, and many critics consider *IL* too tells about Australia’s colonial experience and the (attempted) reconciliation between white Australians and the continent, with the Child very close to nature and an outsider who at first tries to teach him his own language and conventions. This tendency becomes dominative especially after Griffiths and Heseltine’s works in 1989. On the other hand, there are also a few criticisms which adopt psychological theories to the plot—Names such as “Heidegger” and “Lacan” can be seen quite often.

After the publication of *Remembering Babylon* in 1993, however, the view that *IL* shows the failed attempt to communicate with nature, mainly Australian nature, is established, with *RB* as the completion of it. *RB* depicts a white settlement in Queensland, Australia in the mid-nineteenth century to which a white man Gemmy “returns” after spending half his life with Aborigines. His arrival brings turmoil to the settlers and causes rifts among them. Gemmy slowly learns to live with
them, but the settlers never truly accept him. He eventually returns to the wild nature, leaving the main characters with a lingering memory of him and a question what he has given to them.

This obvious reference to Australia’s colonial past strengthens Malouf’s image as a post-colonial author and leads to such readings on *IL* as well. As the first critic to review the two works together, Bill Ashcroft, also using Lacanian concept, argues the Child in *IL* returns as Gemmy in *RB*. However, there are a small number of criticisms which focus on the failure of Malouf or the two works. Peter Otto argues Malouf for revising the colonial history. Several other critics regard Malouf as a revisionist and *RB* as a convenient story for white.

Other than Ashcroft, Don Randall and Lamia Tayeb are the chief critics in this field. Randall publishes an overall work on Malouf, and Tayeb mainly focuses on the white people’s attempt to make Australia home and themselves Australians. In this sense, the peak of the study of *IL* and *RB* is late 2000s. This bibliography contains materials published in several countries other than Australia: Belgium, Canada, France, India, Netherland, Sweden, South Africa, United Kingdom, and United States. It seems Malouf’s works are receiving more attention worldwide, but the number of materials published in 2010s is only 13 and Malouf study looks stagnant for now.

There are 98 materials in this annotated bibliography: 91 articles and 8 books including a collection of reviews on Malouf’s works. 7 of them are unavailable so not annotated. Items are listed chronologically without separating books and articles so that readers can follow the
history of Malouf studies. To notify which novel a criticism deals with, 
RB (Remembering Babylon), IL (An Imaginary Life), or BW (Both 
Works) follows the number of each entry. This very first annotated 
bibliography of IL and RB will guide the researcher of both/either of the 
works and contribute to the development of Malouf studies.

List of Abbreviation

ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature

BW: Both Works

IL: An Imaginary Life

RB: Remembering Babylon
Bibliography

-1978-
No data

-1979-
No data

-1980-


Argues IL sides with the forces towards tyranny and that Ovid’s surrender to the nature, which seems a victory, is in fact a defeat since he moves towards silence and the negation of language. Brady defines the environment in IL as an antagonist which works to destroy the civilization.
Divides *IL* into four phases from a psychological point of view through which Ovid and the Child search for new roots: awakening of his depth imagination, becoming free from the psychological domination by his family, accepting of the land of exile, and going on a further journey with the Child. The psychological meaning of the journey is getting out of the rule of the Father and arriving at the Mother land.
Analyzes an interplay and reconciliation between the childhood and a deprived present are realized through transcending the uncongenial place and times (and Ovid himself), and that Ovid and his world are a vehicle of imagination which is the key of the transcendence. Hergenhan argues *IL* depicts the possibility of the human imagination for transforming the perceiver’s world.

-1985-


Not available as of 13 Feb. 2017

-1986-


Not available as of 13 Feb. 2017


Analyzes Malouf’s transposition of exile and colonialism examining Ovid’s transformation from Caliban to Ariel in Shakespeare’s Tempest, from the exiled and dispossessed to the liberated. Jolly claims a timeless world and a northern setting conversely provides the novel a universal perspective on Australia’s colonial experience free from cultural cliché.


Argues Malouf converts two traditions and blends them: the history of Ovid and that of speculation on a feral child. Dommergues remarks that the plot follows Jean Iterd’s survey on Victor of Aveyron, but that reversed teacher-pupil relation of Ovid and the Child illustrates genuine communication at non-verbal level.

Not available as of 13 Feb. 2017


Examines previous readings of IL as a reconciliation to the exile and past, then gives a further reading that Ovid’s true exile from unity with the natural world began when he parted with his childhood innocence and family. McDonald shows Ovid’s reconciliation to the true exile manifests an ideal relationship between humanity and nature.

1989


Associates the final scene of IL and Australian landscape and
regards it as a postcolonial work in which the protagonist abandons Eurocentric thought. Griffiths insists that main themes of this work such as the linguistic displacement and the cross-culturality gives it the postcolonial nature, although it’s not about colonial place or experience.


Shows *IL’s* links with both the contemporary circumstance and traditions of Australian literature and its reaction against modern Australian matrix from the vantage point of the late 1980s. Heseltine argues that the setting denies nationalism which regards a culture is composed exclusively of what happens within the nation.

-1990-


Not available as of 13 Feb. 2017
Suggests the unification Ovid achieves is merely self-deception by mentioning two bases of the narrative’s unreliability: the inherent limitation of first person narration and the gap between signifier and signified. Stephens argues Ovid’s story is even more doubtful since it’s a translated version of his Latin writing which is actually written in English by Malouf.

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Defines *IL* as a story of finding the true identity with examples of the interrelation with the animal/natural world, dissolve of the temporal and spatial borders, and loss and abandonment of the language. Hansson argues Ovid’s true identity comes from the metamorphosis into a part of wholeness which he achieves by understanding he is within the eternal continuity of creation.

Defines Ovid’s exile as a return to the beginning applying Lacanian concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic and Oedipus complex. Taylor observes that Ovid’s journey from the Imaginary to the Symbolic began as he learning Latin, a synecdoche of all languages, which divides and defines things to recognize them, and when journey back to the Imaginary is accomplished, Ovid as subject ceases to exist.

[1993]


Proposes the Child in IL returns as Gemmy in RB but whose purposes are different: one questions the primacy of language in our understanding of the world and the other authentic indigeneity. Ashcroft uses Lacanian concept of the Symbolic to describe the cultural norms offered by the two novels. IL illustrates the
Imaginary with the Child, and it breaks into our Symbolic world in *RB* with Gemmy to show the possibility of human adaptation to Australia, of a transformation into a postcolonial life.


Examines the similarities and differences between the description in Ovid’s last works and the character of Malouf’s Ovid. Colakis insists that if one regards *IL* as a *Metamorphoses* without frivolity, the descriptions in exile poems are untrue and Malouf’s Ovid is his true nature.


Criticizes that Malouf lacks the knowledge of the colonial history and indigenous culture, and that Eurocentric narrative of *RB* revises indigenous people’s colonial experience into the story of white people, the illustration of the fears and desires of the white settlers.

Argues that without using any overt settings the novel refuses to incorporate the perception of the postcolonial world into “exotica” and successfully indicates the possibility of a text open to the complexity of postcolonial societies. Griffiths insists *IL* is a new form of Australian writing which appropriates the classic text of the dominant society to illuminate postcolonial perspective.


Illustrates the homosexual desire and masculine relationship which *Johnno* suggests but neglects which can be seen in *IL* as well. Indyk argues that while *IL* admits the privilege women have to the primitive world, it shows the relationship between father and child is purer and more creative than that of mother and child.

[21IL] Laigle, Geneviève. “‘Entering the Dimensions of my Self’: Malouf’s *An Imaginary Life*.” *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*,

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Follows the spiritual journey in which Ovid finds the message that life and death, like past and present, are the same thing. Through the encounter with the Child, Ovid finds the way back to his childhood and also to human divinity.


Criticizes RB for trying to find a “national type” by forgetting the sites of violence and dispossession. Otto argues that Malouf translates matters of history and politics into those of creativity and aesthetics, but that only by this forgetting Malouf can transform the violent history into an anticipation of the unity.


Demonstrates that the exile in IL is a positive experience in
which Ovid’s dual response to otherness, his rejection and acceptance of the alien place, eventually bridges two different worlds, languages and cultures.


Points out that the narrative shows the settlers’ claustrophobic state, but tied with remote Crown, they cannot go beyond the frontier. As seen in Janet’s story, only by learning the language of the land, Australia can be free from the colonial past.


Contends that some of metaphors, terms, and ideas in Malouf’s writing are similar to Heidegger’s, but that at the same time his works intimates an understanding of the world through its network
of interrelations independent of human word.


Compares *IL* with Indian author Dwivedy’s *Banabhattaki Atmakatha* and shows the urge to escape the aggressive masculinity of Latin culture and to surrender the human self to a larger totality. Pati argues, however, this urge is illustrated only to project a postromantic transcendence of Western materialism and reductionism.


Criticizes Gemmy as “happy hybrid” and hybridity as an easy answer to the settlers’ identity crisis which disregards the complexity. Perera argues that hybridity reproduces colonial constructs of Aboriginality without negotiating it, and that such a narrative substitutes the colonizer for colonized.

Examines the revisionist attempt to liberate Australia from the burden of history through the transformations which the main characters experience. Pierce argues that RB modulates into a satire of colonialism, but that with an open ending, a nostalgia for historical moments takes place of it as the main topic.

-1995-


Shows that the final scene of RB is symbolic of the way human approaches knowledge which lies in communion with all creatures on the earth, but that one never really attains it without the dissolution of the self into the whole.

Discusses space and colonialism in *RB*. Citing Levi-Strauss, Spinks suggests that the act of writing conceals the effect of slavery within its emancipatory gestures, and that *RB* is an allegory which implies the act of writing for domination and exclusion.

-1996-


Focuses on the role of four forms of non-verbal communication to realize wholeness and unity in Malouf’s fiction: gestures, silence, sensory communication, and animal communication system. In this process of unification, verbal language and non-verbal communication are intertwined and interdependent rather than opposite.

Argues Gemmy reminds the settlers of their state of “being home without being at home,” and that the antithetical functions of the settlement as a promised land and a prison destabilizes the notion of home itself. In contrast to the settlers’ ontological homefulness, homeless Gemmy finds a homeful position by appreciating the new country as a possibility.


Analyzes RB as a story of reconciliation and argues that it foreshadows a hopeful future of Australia through main characters’ initiation into maturity which is experienced under the influence of love of person to person.
Explores Australianness showed in RB as hybridity by nullifying the cultural stereotype and putting this specificity into a universal context free from Australia’s historical contingency. The indestructibility of cultural limits shows the necessity of understanding the Other.


Argues that memory constitutes a doubled ground of potential hindrance and incentive for new perceptions of home. Egerer points out the unhomeliness of home and the homefulness of exile in *IL*, which lead to the conclusion that the concept of home/exile is linked to a state of mind rather than a place, and that the main
characters perpetually undo the dichotomy by never being fully at home or in exile.

Egerer’s previous work on RB is contained. About RB, see [32RB].

[36RB] Lindsay, Elaine, and John Murray. “‘Whether This is Jerusalem or Babylon We Know Not’: National Self-Discovery in Remembering Babylon.” Southerly: A Review of Australian Literature, vol. 57 no. 4, 1997, pp. 94-102.

Understands RB in the white process of establishing a connection with the continent through depiction of landscape and contact with its indigenous people. However, Lindsay and Murray show it is more like the process of national self-discovery which can be achieved by accepting the darkness of the past the white settlers caused.


Points out that Aboriginal people and Gemmy are excluded from
the narrative and the list of Janet’s prayer at the end of the story, and that this fact outlines the opportunities, which the settlers failed to create, to develop an equitable relationship with the Aboriginal people and to avoid ecological disasters as a result of colonization.

-1998-


Considers a shift from the relation of a self with its own place to that with the place of the other as a translation from topology to geometry. Concilio argues that the recognition of the other represents a way out from the logocentric topography of the self. Ovid in *IL* and Gemmy in *RB*, having been translated into a new landscape, acknowledge their own otherness, and they both escape from history into geography.

[39RB] Thieme, John. “‘Gossip Grown Old’: Mythopoeic Practice in Robert Drewe’s *Our Sunshine* and David Malouf’s *Remembering*
Proposes RB’s revisionist historiography aspect of Australian mythography which has been exploring a plurality of Australianness. RB demonstrates how nineteenth-century gossip rapidly becomes a myth and reworks it with Gemmy, who challenges the late Victorian mythologies about race, place, and culture and provides monistic state of Australian society.

-1999-


Examines the magic realism aspect of Malouf’s language. Concilio argues that Ovid experiences many forms of translation, and he abandons the idea of totality represented by the borders and accepts the infinity of space, an endless exile. Gemmy reveals the coexistence of reality and magic to two children of the settlement which is bound by the words they depend on to name the reality.

Argues that unspeakability of Gemmy and the absence of Aboriginal Australians are viable source of postcolonial understanding, although critics have insisted Malouf’s romanticism disregards political problems.


Tackles an unsolved question raised by Heseltine: how much is Malouf’s Ovid the representation of the historical figure? Morton indicates that Malouf remains IL half fictional and half historical, and doing so Malouf opens up an imaginative space to fill with the opposition of what can be known and what must be imagined.

Studies the tendency to understand Malouf’s works in chronological view and see as a series of representations of Australian history. Taylor points out the urge to explore and challenge the notions of boundary and of language in *IL* and *RB* in the course of Malouf’s eight works.

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Illustrates Ovid’s adventure as “returning,” not “wandering.” Anghel explains that through the Child’s understanding of the world, Ovid finally starts to exist without being in relationship to the society, and that this passage from “being” to “existence” subverts the meaning of home and exile.

Argues Malouf uses myths to explore and explode the limit of human nature, defining myths as human creations to discover and exercise human capacities. Adopting Cassirer’s concept of myth, Bliss reads IL as a myth about demystifying myths with Ovid’s act of mythmaking which eventually leads him to a world without any artificial languages, and RB as a myth which lulls readers into a belief that reconciliation in postcolonial Australia is realized.


Argues that RB shows the powerful influence of Western myths of the wild man and Judeo-Christian concept of wilderness, on which the settlers’ conception of the Australian landscape and its indigenous people has been constructed. Daly also remarks by juxtaposing the opposite mythologies of nature by European and Aborigine, RB shows the reconciliation between them.

Considers, in relation to Blake, that Malouf as a postcolonial author dramatizes a connection with Aboriginal culture as the source of the restoration of the society as a whole in *RB*. Gemmy represents the Blakean acknowledgement of the liberating force of indigenous peoples which whites ignored at their peril.


Examines Malouf’s refusal to choose one world is a transgression of polarity by which he eludes the politics of polarity. In *RB*, the key of the connection between two worlds is the power of imagination, and it is stressed that the choice between two worlds is an impoverishment.
Not available as of 13 Feb. 2017

Examines Gemmy’s hybridity further than the previous studies and argues it represents the encounter with a new Australianness, not Aboriginal differences. Ingram says RB illustrates the process in which the settlers become indigenous, white-raced, visible, yet still strong, and that this desire to differentiate whiteness is a balancing act without respecting and reconciling with others.

Explores the failed act of naming in RB comparing it to the historical fact that the naming and recording played an important role to connect the people to the remote England in the time of settling. Brittan argues that Gemmy, who is unable to name and becomes a mere uncertain story at the end, indicates their failure.


Focuses on Malouf’s alchemical (altering) use of the othering process illustrated by Irish identity as convicts and its projection of the postcolonial sensibility in RB. Transforming the literature theme of picaresque migration into alchemical arrival of the other, Malouf subverts the notion of center/ periphery and dissolves the empire.


Not available as of 13 Feb. 2017


Argues RB interrogates the superiority of the European, the white’s mission to enlighten savage peoples, and that it’s white community, not black one, that needs a salvation. Gemmy and the government are on the opposite ends of a spectrum, and some of the settlers move toward Gemmy’s end.

Explores the relationship between history, autobiography and fiction in IL. Herrero argues that the oscillation between historical/temporal and personal/timeless suggests the need to explore and defy the conventional binarism and the very concept of fringe and center, difference, and boundaries.


Points out Malouf introduces the idea that landscapes are human construct through Ovid’s garden in the wilderness. Shaw argues the representation of the interconnected worlds of human and of nature in IL shows the importance of the imagination in resolving the tension between consciousness and environment.


Examines literacy in Malouf’s writings and regards his fiction as being founded on a philosophy of human expression and communication through the comparison of three works of his. Unlike the previous ones, this study focuses on the written discourse. Malouf uses literary language to show what lies outside the domain of literacy and confront its limit.

2004


Argues an autobiography is caught between now and then, selfhood and otherness, and that while autobiographical subject desires to transcend this division and gain the wholeness, it simultaneously desires to experience it consciously. Thus, Ovid in IL can only realize it through his death, and IL shows the desire of an “autography” written by another to bypass “writing I” and “written I” and to let the subject live through death.

Insists Gemmy’s re-crossing of cultural border shows, rather than a process of acculturation, his desire to keep moving and crossing, a notion similar to Deleuzian perception of “becoming.” Mikkonen argues that his transformations are always incomplete, but thus he can be a figure of alliance, and that through Gemmy, *RB* visualizes the coherence which makes a community a cultural entity.


Explores Malouf’s preoccupation, in evidence in *RB* and *IL*, to find a perfect language in harmony with reality, in which the
confusing gap between words and things is removed. Although Malouf denies that words and things can be completely reconciled, the conventional nature of language gives itself the flexibility and adaptability to the world.


Traces and summarizes the history of the controversial study of RB first, such as Greer ([18RB]) and Craven ([4IL]), then examines Gemmy’s role as to raise, not to solve, questions of identity and difference; he problematizes the understanding of hybridization as a resolution of cultural difference and its antagonism as well. Randall suggests the act of reading RB differently itself is its ingenuity.


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Adds the aspect of language of reconciliation to the preceding studies and claims that Ovid’s use of language changes reflecting the change of his attitude to the nature. Rodda examines the lexicogrammar in *IL* which displays Ovid’s integration with the nature and with himself.

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Argues that Malouf repeatedly links Gemmy’s transgressive and unpredictable identity with the former and present linguistic limits, and that this linkage questions the notion of being as self-consciousness, referring to mainly Heidegger, Derrida, and Levinas. Thus, the incomprehensible self and other cannot be bridged, and as Lachlan does in the end, one has to cope with the dichotomy.

[64IL] Smith, Yvonne. “In the Beginning: David Malouf’s *An Imaginary*
Compares different versions of the memorable scene of the scarlet poppy in the published typescript and several drafts, and, citing Malouf’s comments, concludes that IL tends to represent Ovid’s interior perceptions and consciousness as external realities.


Focuses on the three dimensions of shame in RB: the settlers’ shame of being “white-but-not-quite,” being far from the imperial center, which turns into the violence on Aborigines; white social shaming used to construct the boundary between whiteness and Aboriginality; the way the shame becomes a tool of erasing the history of the other.

Focuses on many-sided analogies in *RB*, which let Ovid access to a reality beyond the customary definition of realism and help him recover mental health. Columbus points out that these analogies are nonliterate, pagan, and foreign to Western thought, which invokes imagistic fluidity (of time), not cultural stability.


Reads *RB* as an examination of the colonial project by a descendant of the original colonizers. Dutta argues that colonizers are also colonized by the old continent in the trial to apply the old standard of judgement and explain the new land, and that Mr Frazer represents a new idea that applies the standard of the old world to accommodate new experiences and develops new distinct identity.
Suggests that although it tries to create the other who escapes from the binary of self/other, IL shows a subversion of Rousseauistic concept of nature in which human beings find spiritual redemption, and a conventional notion of frontier which asserts narratives of conquest and exploration. In doing so, IL stages the language and figurative power of imperial textuality.

Nikro also argues that RB is a rewriting of IL which succeeds in an escape from this imperial narrative terrain by negotiating the fracturing force of self- and other- understanding, which IL only implies.


Argues Malouf’s writing style is under a transformation and his characters are hybrid and synergetic, thus this text itself is the
process to communicate the other. Another process illustrated in IL is identification through imagination and dreams. Randall remarks that Malouf explores an apprehension of the other, although which is not possible, by his grammar and figurative patterns.


Examines the way Malouf connects postcolonial themes with postmodern aesthetics and deals with politics. Tayeb analyzes individual identity formation in relation to the idea of home and the other and communal resistance to imperial hegemony. These arguments are developed under three categories: “man-in-time,” “man-in-consciousness,” and “man-in-language.”

-2007-

Studies the metamorphosis of language from culture to nature, from one to divide to one to share. This paper’s focus is on the meta-linguistic aspect of the novel—the language refers to itself—and the metamorphosis the narrative undergoes towards a holistic communication, and it argues that the difference between the narrator, narration, and addressee eventually disappears.


Explores the nature of human identity in IL that one finds him/herself through the process of becoming other existence. Loughlin argues that Malouf shows this by connecting Ovid’s last days with a tale of werewolf and illustrating Ovid’s and the Child’s transformation.

Explains that the Western act of recording in RB, a totem erected on the foreign land to indicate their territorial claim of it and conceal its illegality, is ironically to show their failure. However, while admitting this failure, RB re-visits the scene to ascribe sacredness to the idealistic impulse in the defeat.


Focuses on the idea of “otherness.” The other is the indispensable agent of our changes, linking IL to Johnno, the preceding novel. Although Ovid opposed imperial culture before, he experiences himself as a displaced piece of empire during his exile.


Argues the purpose of crossing borders in IL is, as the same as
many people do today, to escape from modern life of the sophisticated civilization and find a peaceful and pure existence on the peripheral. The tension between opposing worlds makes the protagonists’ movement through the boundary, and this act reveals the isolation and loneliness common in modern life.


Studies Ovid’s psychic and linguistic evolution in relation to Lacanian conception of ego, and reads IL as Malouf’s critique of imperial legacies in Australia and suggestion of alternative vision. Tayeb argues IL suggests a postcolonial rediscovery of individual and national selfhood through reconciliation with Australian landscape and indigenous people.

-2008-


Insists *IL* is an autobiographical stage of Malouf at which he deconstructs both the metaphoric and lived spaces of the heteronormative/homophobic closet he’s lived in as a homosexual. Abblitt examines the journey of Ovid and the Child as one from the restricted space to the freedom and Ovid’s death as the death of that old world.


Considers self-other relation in *IL* and *RB* under three categories: “the animal and the human,” “an I and a You,” and “the human and divinity.” Byron argues that, through the self-other relation which these two works explore, readers can get out of Ovid’s consciousness and associate the story with their own world or gain an insight of indigenous people which is only glimpsed in the novel.

[79RB] Dunlop, Nicholas. “‘All That Belongs to Absolute Dark’:

Concludes that although *RB* demonstrates the possibility of the conflation between the colonial and indigenous discourses by showing overlapped knowledges, rather than exclusive of each other, it admits that colonialism fails to enter the ideological space where various readings of the land are possible because it essentially tries to suppress all other perspectives to be the only one.


Argues what white settlers did was only to cover the antipodean land with their own view, and that the antipodes (and the ethnic chasm between them) still exist yet invisible to them. Malouf draws the traditional European view of the antipodes and criticize it to
show white responsibility to acknowledge this past and deal with it.


Not available as of 13 Feb. 2017


Argues RB demolishes the opposite images constructed in colonialist discourse, of Europe as the ideal order and harmony and non-European world as dark and savage place to be civilized. Edward Said already explored the misunderstanding of Others by Europe, but RB analyzes the misunderstanding of Europe itself which has not been yet.

Explores the ambivalence of the liberal humanist discourse in *RB*, liberalism sympathetic to the indigenous and the limitation of it, by analyzing the concept of “shared suffering” seen in non-indigenous trauma. Jones argues *RB* criticizes the too-easy reconciliation of universalists and suggests the ideological change will be realized through shared understandings and empathy.


Interprets *RB* as an examination of the politics of postcolonial reconciliation, a critique of the settler project of occupation disguised as the discourse of peaceful coexistence. McGonegal argues *RB* illustrates the foreclosure of reconciliation because the
thought of reconciliation itself constitutes a project of reinforcing white ownership and occupation.


Argues RB stresses the heaviness of the “ghosts of history,” the origin as a penal colony and convict system’s atrocities towards its own people and impact on the indigenous people. Besides the necessity of reconciliation, it also suggests a long and tough way towards it.


Explores two attempts in settling nonindigenous Australians into the land in Furphy’s Such Is Life and IL. Brady sees the former novel as a tension between the self and nature and the latter as
dreams which enables the settlers to live in tune with the universe. *IL* shows the way how to “dwell” in the land, not “build” on it.


Redresses the issue of Scottish identity by focusing on the desire to maintain the duality of their identity as Scots and Australian. Cowan argues that cultural borders can be crossed imaginatively with understanding, and that the possibility of being both Scots and Australian enables the settlers to lead their new life.


Examines the function of animals (especially insects) and
speciesism of settlers in RB referring to several animal studies. Murphy argues it’s Gemmy’s nakedness and animal-like smell, which is associated with aboriginality in white perception, that disturbs the settlers, and that colonialism, race studies, and animal studies “in(ter)sect” in RB.


Argues Ovid’s trial to acquire an ultimate language of silence in IL, an attempt to fill the gap between word and world, is an example of Walter Benjamin’s idea of Ursprache. Sestigiani says IL proposes a state of grace only to deny it, and a new consciousness brought at the end is also negated by Ovid’s death.

Accepts Havelock’s argument that the invention of writing increased the possibility of objective thought and adds that at the same time the binaries which would be the basis of colonialist ideology is also created. *RB* shows this role of writing through Gemmy’s comprehension of written words.


Suggests that the political reading of *IL* to connect the story with Australia’s predicament and mythical reading of it to imagine Ovid’s last days are not contradictory but complementary to each other, and that this gap between two events enables the third reading about a universal human potential for transformation of the self and other, about a foundation undisturbed by history.


Explores the depiction in RB of the attempt to construct “home” in Australia on the principle of communication. The perception of some settlers of Gemmy transforms from a white man gone native to an ideal state of oneness with the landscape, and they, with Gemmy’s influence, eventually develop a non-linguistic perception of the land.

-2012-


Among other works, Tilley examines the white-vanishing trope in RB, stories about white Australians who become lost or disappear into the landscape, which keeps the white Australians locked in the colonial past. Tilley argues, reinforcing Otto’s argument, RB is a text of white presence realized through black displacement.

[94IL] Ziogas, Ioannis. “The Myth is Out There: Reality and Fiction at Tomis (David Malouf’s An Imaginary Life).” Two Thousand Years

Focusing on the death and silence that Ovid feels in IL, Zoigas argues that Malouf likens IL to Ovid’s Metamorphoses and transforms a Roman poet into a postcolonial discourse by writing him as a poet and a character in his own poem at the same time.

-2013-


Focuses on one of the epigraphs by Blake and explores its function in RB to invert “the holy Jerusalem and the wanton Babylon.” The terms of Jerusalem and Babylon are the wrong way around for the settlers and Gemmy, but at the end of the novel, Janet represents the coming New Jerusalem.

Denies some criticisms of *RB* as idealization of the natural world which neglects the historical violence, and suggests that it redresses the exploitative and idealistic views of human relationships with the natural world. *RB* parodies the notion that nature is a tool of human through its figurative and literal foregrounding of the nonhuman animal.


Reads *RB* among other settler literature as the interface of Black and White and focuses on the function of the represented presence
of the Aborigine. Leane argues that RB probes into the settler mind and consciousness while it represents Aboriginal people, and that the narrative poses a question whether being indigenous is a matter of blood or it can be acquired through respect to the original inhabitants.


Argues the discomfort associated with the filth, defilement, and horror of Gemmy is transformed into an episteme which reveals the savagery of white ideology of the extermination to criticize their lack of morals. Gemmy’s death makes him a martyr and glorifies his subversive act and the possibility of transcendence of social difference.
-2016-
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-2017-
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