Griffith University

Hasti Abbasi and Stephanie Green

Writing and Romantic Exile

Abstract:

This paper will investigate creative dislocation and the idea of the writer as exiled self through reflections on the traction and slippages between ideas of place, dislocation and writing. For a writer, producing creative work through the experience of dislocation, whether voluntary or enforced, can be isolating and difficult, but it can also bring new perspectives and opportunities for creative capacity and expression. The creative resonances of writing in exile will be explored here with reference to David Malouf's celebrated novella *An Imaginary Life* (1978) in which he depicts exile as a necessary journey of becoming, a 'dynamic marginality' as Braidotti observes (2002: 129), which offers creative possibility rather than closure and loss. For the writer Ovid, dislocation is phenomenological prerequisite for self-transformation. His discovery is that the writer must always be at the edge of things, noticing differently, available to possibility, able to embody and to channel being as metamorphoses through creative expression.

Biographical Note:

Hasti Abbasi holds a BA and an MA in English Literature whose doctoral studies investigate dislocation and remaking identity in Australian and Persian fiction. Her academic and creative work appears in *Antipodes*, *Verity La*, *Southerly*, and *Bareknuckle Poet Journal of Letters*, amongst others.

Dr Stephanie Green teaches writing and literature in the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science at Griffith University. She is a widely published, writer and academic with recent work published in *Continuum, TEXT, Griffith Review* and *Axon*.

TEXT Special Issue 41: Romanticism and Contemporary Writing: Legacies and Resistances
eds Stephanie Green and Paul Hetherington, October 2017

1

Creative writers have long pursued the idea of romantic exile, embracing distance from the familiar through travel or remote dwelling, in an attempt to find ways to locate and express new imaginative viewpoints. Writers working in this tradition frequently conceive the authorial self as transcendent and reflexive, encompassing a multiplicity of imperfect selves, which may be revisited from different standpoints based on new experiences and perceptions (Aboulafia 2010: 74). The post-romantic writer, however, occupies a more interestingly ambivalent position – an issue we discuss below. This sense of ambivalence may be heightened in mixed or hybrid cultural contexts where writing emerges from the experience of a removal, whether deliberate or involuntary, from familiar surroundings.

Through reflections on place, transformation and writing, this paper will investigate creative dislocation and the idea of the writer as exiled self. The creative resonances of dislocation will be explored with reference to David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life* (1978), which we read as an imagined example of exile as a form of creative practice. In this work the writer Ovid is forcibly exiled from his familiar urban milieu of Rome to a place where the landscape and language are at first unrecognisable to him. Initially resistant to his surroundings, Ovid's dislocation becomes a phenomenological prerequisite for self-transformation. We consider the implications of his discovery that the writer must always be at the edge of things – noticing differently, available to possibility, able to embody and to channel being as metamorphoses through creative expression.

Whether the rupture from place of origin is chosen or inflicted, established ideas of self are easily disrupted when individuals are dislocated either physically and/or emotionally from their culture of origin and lose the sense of a familiar personal identity within a well-known social context. Because words are vital to a writer, being cut off from his or her original language of expression in a foreign milieu can prove a double estrangement. Meanings which were once easily captured and expressed in his or her original language are now unrecognised. If the writer's original language is profoundly different from that spoken in his or her new context, the possibilities for creative literary communication become deeply fraught with limitation and uncertainty. At the same time, encounters with the new language also allow the freedom to perceive the world, and its relationship with the self in new ways, and to discover and create fresh ways of expressing these perceptions.

Whether sought voluntarily or imposed by necessity, the desire for the writer to find voice in exile, and perhaps a new way of writing, emerges from the transformative struggle between the loss of a familiar world and a heightened attention to questions of place, language and culture. Whatever the writer's origins, the adjustment to the conditions of dislocation and the evolving self-concept that this entails are far from coherent or predictable. Kaminsky observes that, regardless of how dislocation or exile is experienced, it is inherently unstable, 'a process rather than a singular state' (1999: xvii). For a writer, as we suggest, the experience of dislocation is also an ongoing condition of becoming other, as the search for a new voice and a new way of writing emerges from the transformative struggle between the loss of a familiar world, cultural adjustment, and an emerging new identity.

The term exile has generated a considerable debate, particularly in relation to the way in which writers accrue identity, particularly in response to authoritarian regimes (McLennan 2004, 52). The exiled writer is, broadly speaking, one who has been uprooted from his or her homeland and who makes sense of the experience of

TEXT Special Issue 41: Romanticism and Contemporary Writing: Legacies and Resistances
eds Stephanie Green and Paul Hetherington, October 2017

2

crossing boundaries through writing. Expatriation necessarily intensifies the writer's sense of alienation in terms of both identity and creative work since writing itself entails a form of authoritative claim to perception and self-expression, which can be contested or uncomfortably called into question in new contexts. The politics of exile cannot be ignored in terms of how a writer's work is positioned: whether as that of an unattached traveller through time and place, or a person displaced by war and oppression seeking a new homeland.

The writer can, however, attempt to use writing as a way of repositioning herself in terms of new creative engagements with place and identity. Whether speaking to or from a troubled context, the writer's story thus becomes a means of reframing narratives of belonging. This constitutes, in part, a personal journey towards self-understanding and, above all, working with dislocation and exile can become a creative practice, a way of making new meanings from the ruptures and fissures created by altered perceptions and experiences. The complex feelings of estrangement that this entails have the potential to be overwhelming, but feelings of estrangement can also be productive, offering a space where a mobile and dynamic approach to identity may be articulated.

Braidotti expresses the idea of the transformative self, with reference to the theory of nomadology, as a way of interrogating the politics of identity: the self thus becomes a work-in-progress, mobile, transitional, and contingent, the 'undoing of the formerly dominant model of subjectivity' (Braidotti 2002: 116). The writer in this position does not merely impose his or her fixed perspective on the world but engages in a process of shifting engagements, authoritative and vulnerable, with social and cultural contexts. Notably, Braidotti identifies a distinction between the migrant, the exile, and the nomad (2011: 59). The migrant has fixed aims: 'a clear destination and set paths; she goes from one point in space to another for a very clear purpose' (2011: 57). The exilic condition, on the other hand, initially produces a 'hostile perception of the host country' and is based on a sense of loss, 'a lost horizon from the home country' (2011: 59). By contrast, Braidotti suggests, the nomad is one who has 'critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour' involving 'transitions and passages without predetermined destinations or lost homelands' (2011: 60).

Linguistically and socio-politically, a writer who occupies the nomadic stance encounters a shift from allegiance to the homeland identity towards a new and more ambivalent sense of self in which authenticity may at any moment be called into question (Vatulescu 2010: 185). Whether the writer is mobile or settled in place, recognition of the world beyond the familiar self brings an awareness of complexity, difference and the constancy of change. As will be discussed with reference to Malouf's novella, *An Imaginary Life*, attainment of this mobile apperception is necessary before any fixed or separated notion of self and other can be released and the writerly practice of creative exile can begin.

Of course, producing artistic work in an unfamiliar socio-cultural setting, writing in a foreign host language, while negotiating the personal adjustments to change that dislocation brings, is a personally and creatively demanding enterprise in practical terms. Reflecting upon the experience of exile as a writer, Brodsky observes that:

> the condition we call exile is, first of all, a linguistic event: an exiled writer is thrust, or retreats, into his mother tongue. From being his, so to speak, sword, it turns into his shield, into his capsule. What started as a private, intimate affair with the

TEXT Special Issue 41: Romanticism and Contemporary Writing: Legacies and Resistances
eds Stephanie Green and Paul Hetherington, October 2017

3

language, in exile becomes fate – even before it becomes an obsession or a duty (1990: 108).

The loss of home can create a yearning for the past, and a tenderness for recreating and celebrating the memories of a lost time and place in a familiar language. Learning to write in a new language reshapes the exiled writer's identity as it also unites her or him with new readers. This is necessarily a partial re-identification in which longing for the past may inflect the present with a sense of unease. The romantic evocation of homeland is, however, potentially fraught with limitation, lacking immediacy and context (Brodsky 1990: 102), nostalgia that leads the writer only backwards, to the past. At the same time, it may be this very awareness of uncertainty, the lack of authorial or professional identity and the need to establish a sense of purpose and significance in the new country which impel the exiled writer to reclaim a sense of creative literary purpose (Brodsky 1990: 103). Simply put, although wrought with obstacles, for a writer dislocation also offers the promise of fresh creative terrain to explore.

Writing and Exile in *An Imaginary Life*

This idea of dislocation as a condition for a creative practice which entails a remaking of self is a central theme of David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*. Here Malouf emphasises the power of imagination to forge romantic connection and disconnection with linguistic and geographical exile. *An Imaginary Life* is an epistolary novella which gives an account of the Roman poet Ovid's exile to Tomis. Written in the first person it is told in five chronological sections with flashbacks to Ovid's previous life, addressed to an unknown audience. Tomis, this landscape previously unknown to Ovid, reduces him to pre-verbal simplicity and casts him onto the same level as its seemingly barbaric residents: an outsider: 'transformed ... into one of the lower species' (Malouf 1978: 13). Feeling a loss of individual dignity and urban identity, Ovid describes himself as 'comic old man, grotesque, tearful, who understands nothing, can say nothing, and whose ways, so it must seem to these dour people, are absurdly out of keeping with the facts of our daily existence' (Malouf 1978: 9).

Ovid eventually turns towards imagination in an attempt to convert his disempowering experience of exile into a narrative of significant necessity and consistency. Malouf's work portrays Ovid's transformative existential experience, from an initial sense of isolation and fragmentation towards a recognition of unity and belonging as demonstrated through the act of writing and his relationship with his surroundings. For Ovid, it is the imaginative correspondence between the material place of exile and the memory of Rome that can heal the emotional and physical sense of dislocation. He writes about his perceptions of the natural beauty of his surroundings, documenting his observations, and focusing on his inner passions and struggles, gradually shifting his fierce allegiance to the memory Rome.

The idea of the writer's inner work evokes themes central to Romanticist values of individual self-expression: 'Ovid serves as the classic example of the connection between exile and poetic creation' (Berg 1996: 5). Initially resistant to his new circumstances, the means by which Ovid interprets and interacts with the world slowly comes to be constituted in reflection on his own imaginative thinking. His changing stance towards the place of exile gives rise to a new self-definition both as a person and as a writer and his sense of his relationship to the world is thus no longer conceived as static and oppositional. Rather, as he begins to see himself as implicated

in the place to which he has been forced to come, he recognises that his exile began long ago when he left his childhood behind to become 'more than other men' (Malouf 1978: 77) – an intellectual and sophisticated poet in metropolitan Rome. Only in exile does Ovid learn to regard the differences and strangenesses of his immediate environs as meaningful and potentially inspirational rather than threatening, but only after he accepts what he cannot change: his physical and literal separation from Rome.

At first Ovid describes the place as 'centuries from the notion of an orchard or a garden made simply to please' (Malouf 1978: 7), and as 'unmade earth' where the wildest seeds grow 'together in their stunted clumps or blowing about at random on the breeze' (23). However, it is the alterity of the desolate landscape of Tomis which allows Ovid's imaginative and physical metamorphosis, and brings him to the poignant observation of his own changing features of mind and physique in response to the new environment: the experience of the writerly self as linked with the journey of becoming. He thus experiences the spiritual state of 'wordless being-in-the-world and being the world itself' (MacDonald 1988: 51) through surrendering to the languages of others: from birdsong to the language of the Getae.

Malouf has been described as a post-Romantic writer (Archer-Lean 2014: 2-3), particularly for the ways in which his writings reflect a belief in the active power of the imagination and the development of a symbiotic and changing relationship with the natural environment and others. The natural realm in *An Imaginary Life* is represented as a site of 'escape from the constraining etiquette and corrupt influences of society ... it acts as a borderline, as the ground of transition between one circumstance and another' (Nikro, 2006). The traces of an idealism that has inflections of nineteenth century Romanticism are expressed (if also problematised) in *An Imaginary Life* in relation to Ovid's embrace of nature and the expression of transformative self-hood, most noticeably realised through his encounters with animals and his account of the strange wild Child – a part of himself perhaps, that is unleashed by his new way of seeing. In one part, he says: 'I lie for a moment looking up at the stars, which seem very close, and they fade into me, through me' (Malouf 1978: 52-53). This recognition enables Ovid to gain enlightenment and develop inner resources that he had not been able to experience or develop in Rome: 'I have become braver in my old age, ready at last for all the changes we must undergo' (134). The landscape described in the final page further reflects a promising moment in which the Child, Ovid, and Nature are united: 'It is spring. It is summer. I am three years old. I am sixty. The Child is there ... I am there' (152).

Ovid's revaluation and rediscovery of the place reflects ideas which Rigby associates with Romanticism's 'reconceptualization of nature as a dynamic, self-generative unity-in-diversity, of which humans are integrally a part' (2004: 53). The Romanticist themes explored in this rendering of Ovid can also be linked to Malouf's use of landscape to reflect the various phases of self-understanding through imagination as a creative force for harmony and synthesis in which place, language, and nature form 'a dynamic, living, self-transforming whole' (Rigby 2004: 24). The idea of the transformative self promises intelligent awakening into heightened imaginative consciousness, yet the imagination is necessarily born into a condition of unknowing. In his interrogation of Romanticism, Paul de Man observes that Shelley's account of Rousseau, given in his unfinished *Triumph of Life*, regards the self as 'not merely the seat of the affective emotions, but the primary centre of cognition' (de Man 2013: 102). Shelley's poem, however, foregrounds the self as a conundrum, since its final loss seems inevitable: 'the self that comes into being at the moment of reflection' (de

TEXT Special Issue 41: Romanticism and Contemporary Writing: Legacies and Resistances
eds Stephanie Green and Paul Hetherington, October 2017

5

Man 2013: 109) takes shape in the mind's eye as an illusory reflection. Thus, for Shelley, a key Romanticist writer, 'self as other' is an idea that is dissolved by the very condition of being in the world, reflexive but never fixed in place or time. In *An Imaginary Life* Ovid's final realisation is that he cannot separate himself from others or from the world around him. He must, rather, forget himself in order to become himself as a writer.

Ovid's early feeling of physical and cultural marginality, of being dislocated from the centre of things, and his desire for a fullness of identity, suggests an impulse towards 'Romantic' connection with nature, but ultimately this is not presented in idealising terms. Nettelbeck observes the symbolic function of Romanticism in Malouf's work through which Ovid suffers 'a nostalgic desire for a fullness of identity' (1994: 103–4). Malouf employs the aesthetics of Romanticism; he cultivates and exploits elements from the natural world, and becomes thoroughly entwined in language and imagination. However it is the immediacy of place and community that reshapes Ovid's ability to perceive the meaning of the unfamiliar. In his journey away from the civilized Rome, Ovid is said to realise that 'the facts of history, whether meagre or plentiful, require a work of synthetic imagination' (Randall 2007: 42).

Hartman suggests that if the state of exile can be said to represent the self-consciousness of the Romantic artist/writer, which is 'the product of a division in the self', accordingly, the artist seeks to overturn this division through a return to the 'Unity of Being' associated with childhood, imagination and experience (2004: 183). In *An Imaginary Life* the imagination is far from being a totalising force, however. It is instead the story of an open engagement with becoming other. As he develops this idea, Malouf signifies a state of fundamental liminality between an alienated past and an imposed, displaced present. He focuses on the in-between situation of being in exile, and the writer's conscious construction of 'an enabling fiction' (Seidel 1986: xii). For the character Ovid the creation of a new imaginative world allows him, however provisionally, to re-establish a sense of a home and place of unity. For the reader, this allows a recognition of the work as post-Romantic, as it foregrounds the theme of overcoming alienation. Malouf brings 'mental and imaginative capacities beyond the ordinary' (Collini 2007: 54) to the public conversation about how to 'to live a new life' (Malouf, 2011: 87). As Ovid reflects, 'We are free to transcend ourselves. If we have the imagination for it' (62).

Ashcroft states that 'Ovid sees the evolution of man as a process of inhabiting the imagination that goes out ahead of the progress of life. This is in part a process of creating the place that will contain our transformed selves' (2014: 3). Exile forms a foundation of reflective imagination through which Malouf's Ovid's newly learned language extends the influence of dislocation yet provides a place of imaginary belonging:

> We have some power in us that knows its own ends. It is that that drives us on to what we must finally become … This is the real metamorphosis … We have only to find the spring … Such changes are slow beyond imagination. They take generations (Malouf 1978: 64).

In exile, the writer has no childhood memories of the place of arrival and, at the same time, she or he is forced into a child-like state in which the world must be discovered as if for the first time – and often in a language which is as yet barely known. The process of apperception must therefore be one of conscious change and, at the same

time, one which entails a sense of absence or loss, as the writer inhabits the nomadic condition of becoming.

For the writer Ovid, self-expression becomes problematic in a country where a foreign language is spoken and his daily encounters with incomprehension necessarily challenge his established identity. The familiar terms of the act of creative writing and the habituated expressions of his authorial self can therefore no longer be exercised in direct relation to his new surroundings. At the heart of Ovid's inner journey, therefore, is his eventual acceptance of a new way of relating to his surroundings within the region inhabited by the Getae. Beyond language, it is his recognition of unfamiliar meanings – of place, custom and nature – which leads him to a previously undiscovered capacity for 'bearing witness', including to the imaginative possibilities of exile. And, ultimately, it is the acceptance of new 'languages' that enables writerly expression of a multifaceted human connection with the human and non-human worlds.

An Imaginary Life arguably depicts separation from the familiar as a necessity for creative expression and for a writer's self-transformation, one that may entail geographical, cultural and/or linguistic exile. In this light, Peter Bishop argues,

> once the legal, literal, physical, exile has been accepted, a qualitatively different, psychological journey can be attempted. Exile can then be explored as a new place in its own right. New roots and the formulation of a new centre of reference can occur' (1982: 420).

For Ovid, movements through the life process of individuation and across borders are specific emblematic descriptions of psychological processes providing personal development as well as development as a writer. Ashcroft suggests that Malouf's novels 'while finding the words for "the grandeur and terror of things" also explore the ways in which art and literature continually push the boundaries of our understanding, the limits of our ability to imagine a different world, whether it is a world of the future, a world that might be possible, or the same world magically revealed—our other history' (2014: 2). This explains Ovid's careful attention to the creative connection between language and nature and the means in which in this novel landscape may be understood to reflect the various phases of self-understanding.

In *An Imaginary Life*, Ovid's story represents a move out of a fixed urban consciousness into the mystery of 'what we have not yet become' (Malouf 1978: 134) by interweaving Ovid's imagined representations of his place of exile with the depiction of relationships that help him reconsider his pre-established conceptions of a meaningful life. As he draws closer to the natural world with its unfamiliar and 'brutal' practices and rural cultivation, Ovid gains awareness that being a writer does not rely upon a single stable idea of self.. Rather his outsider status is a necessary part of the transformative understanding of becoming. As Braidotti observes, 'the space of becoming is a dynamic marginality' (2002: 129). Ovid's discovery is that the condition of exile and the experience of difference can enable a creative rupture which heightens the writer's process of apperception in ways that are crucial for the emergence of new kinds of writing and being.

Malouf discusses the relationship of individuals with their environment once they are separated from the usual structures of their language:

> What interested me first in the Ovid figure was that problem of the poet who's exiled not just to a wild place, but beyond the bounds of the language he can use ... the peculiar punishment was of language: that was the whole point (Davidson 1980: 331).

TEXT Special Issue 41: Romanticism and Contemporary Writing: Legacies and Resistances
eds Stephanie Green and Paul Hetherington, October 2017

7

Although Ovid's exile signifies the imperial power of language generating a sense of belonging, he realises the restrictions of this language when situated at the 'edge of nothing'. He enters an entirely new world of possibilities; a world of apparent silence, from which the writer gradually begins to 'hear' and then 'interpret' new meaning. As Ashcroft suggests, 'The ambivalence of poetic language lies in its constant negotiation with silence, with presence' (2014: 6). The potency of silence, as a metaphor for the ability to move beyond established limits of individualised subjectivity, is clearly indicated when Ovid writes: 'All my life till now has been wasted. I had to enter the silence to find a password that would release me from my own life' (Malouf 1978: 26). This idea is further signified by Ovid's happiness upon discovering a poppy and feeling a sense of familiar connection with his new surroundings. Even ordinary daily tasks become significant as, for example, when Ovid recognises the poetry residing in the work of net making (p.64). As the narrative proceeds, Ovid realises that to experience reconciliation and unity with the other, he does not necessarily need to speak the language of the Getae. He even considers silent speech as 'true language' (97); a form of speech 'whose every syllable is a gesture of reconciliation' (98). In this, he recognises the crucial task for the writer: that imagination is above all a means of connecting to the world of the other.

The mutuality of language learning and teaching in this novel connects the world of the other, 'particularly when language use is applied to the construction of complex, autotelic patterns – as in text-making or poesis' (Randall 2007: 51). *An Imaginary Life* represents the overcoming of a frustrating gap between words and reality. The lack of a shared language in exile forces Ovid to express his experience of existence in an internalised and lyrical monologue – and there is a particular amalgamation of lyrical and theoretical elements throughout *An Imaginary Life*. Malouf's sense of the detachability of words from objects and of the unavoidability of verbal communication coincides with a deep belief in the capacity of language to invoke external reality. 'The word implies frameworks constructed by human understanding – metaphors and tropes, imaginative maps and terms of reference – that go beyond physical topology' (McWilliams 2009: 25). Arguably, this becomes a deflected dialogue about the practice of creative writing. As Indyk demonstrates, Malouf shifts so easily between poetry and theory in his fiction that they seem to be characteristics of the same dialogue, 'one which scans its own imaginative constructs as they are created, reinforcing the poetic flights of fancy with a rational or intellectual underpinning' (2001: 27).

The moment at which Ovid develops a realisation of his surroundings is expressed through a word image: the 'little puff of scarlet' of a poppy (31). Malouf signifies the importance of names when Ovid discovers a familiar flower and keeps repeating its name, 'poppy', over and over to himself. For Ovid, it is as if the word-object relation has the power to acknowledge his real self: 'as if the word, like the colour, had escaped me till now, and just saying it would keep the little windblown flower in sight. Poppy. The magic of saying the word made my skin prickle ... I am Flora. I am Persephone' (31). Gradually, in *An Imaginary Life,* Malouf represents the influence of Otherness in achieving a more authentic sense of self through acceptance of transformative identity as a condition of being. Ovid experiences the spiritual state of 'wordless being-in-the-world and being the world itself' (51) by surrendering to the language of birds and animals, Latin, and Geltic. In this respect, Nettelbeck contends that Malouf uses Romanticism symbolically to 'move beyond a culture of division and to gesture towards tolerance and reconciliation' (1994: 103-104). This

consideration of the power and function of language symbolically discloses what may be understood as a politics of peripheral identity at play in Ovid's newly imagined world. He discovers the other language that 'speaks an apparent senselessness, that speaks the potential of an unanticipated otherness defined only by the indeterminate silence it incessantly speaks, an otherness that somehow requires no sense of division or distinction by which to define itself' through the Child (Nikro 2006). Having obtained language and later transcending it, Ovid unites with the Child and the landscape. In the final stages of his journey, Ovid describes the Child as 'walking on the water's light. And as I watch, he takes the first step off it, moving slowly away now into the deepest distance, above the earth, above the water, on air' (Malouf 1978: 152).

Through the story of the Ovidian exile, Malouf explores the relationship between writing and landscape and foregrounds the experience of Otherness as essential to creative expression. Whether or not we read *An Imaginary Life*, as a parable of hope for intercultural creative reconciliation in the context of cultural and social rupture, the novella is nevertheless a highly nuanced expression of the possibilities of transformation and imagination that can form an ongoing dialogue between otherness and exile as a sustained condition of becoming. As Bhabha remarks, it is 'in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated' (Bhabha 1994: 2). Thus, Ovid's death is not the end of his journey; it is accompanied by an inner realisation of an 'endless process of creation and survival and death' (Malouf 1978: 147).

Ovid dies being absorbed and merged in nature without being 'lost'. He writes: 'The earth, now that I am about to leave it, seems so close at last' (146). Through his death, Ovid reconciles with his past, and experiences a sense of immeasurable happiness, away from a lifelong exile caught within the boundaries of culture, language, and adulthood. Ovid's journey of self-discovery ends at the shore where the river and the land come together within an everlasting unity in a timeless space:

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

Ovid dies crossing geographical, national, cultural, and linguistic borders; 'the passage out of life and the lived experience of personal identity, the collapse of the border between self and alterity' (Randall 2007: 54). Ovid here realises his authorial and literary metamorphosis, to connect with the strange world around him, and completes his journey.

The experience of geographical, cultural and linguistic dislocation may necessarily provoke a reconsideration of personal or cultural identity. As Said remarks, exile can open the way to a potentially radical form of creative and intellectual enlightenment, fostering 'self-awareness' and even a 'scrupulous … subjectivity' in which creative attention to a new language also becomes a re-creation of self (2000: 184). In this sense, the rhetoric of exilic discourse arguably reaches past the Romantic aspiration for transcendent self-expression and freedom from constraint in a way that provides insight into the relationships between place, personal identity and culture, beyond the limits of difference. The adoption of exile as a creative practice can, therefore, move the writer beyond an individualistic perception of exilic identity as a fixed state of

being towards a more mobile and plural condition, from which the writer can speak both to and beyond time and place. In this space, a writer is able to recruit her sense of dislocation to create the characters who, like herself, must live restlessly in-between ignorance and knowledge in their journey of becoming.

Works Cited

Aboulafia, M 2010 *Transcendence: On Self Determination and Cosmopolitanism,* Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Archer-Lean, C 2014 'David Malouf's Remembering Babylon as a Reconsideration of Pastoral Idealisation', *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature* 14(2): http://openjournals.library.usyd.edu.au/index.php/JASAL/article/view/9892.

Ashcroft, B 2014 'David Malouf and the Poetics of Possibility', *JASAL: Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, 14(2): 1-11.

Berg, N E 1996 *Exile from Exile: Israeli Writers from Iraq*, State University of New York Press, Albany.

Bhabha, H 1994 *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London & New York.

Bishop, P 1982 'David Malouf and the Language of Exile', *Australian Literary Studies*, 10(4): 419-428.

Blyth, I & Sellers, S 2004 *Hélène Cixous: Live Theory*, Continuum, New York.

Braidotti, R 2002 *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Wiley, West Sussex.

Braidotti, R 2011 *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Brodsky, J 1990 'The Condition We Call 'Exile' in J Glad (ed.) *Literature in Exile*, Duke University Press, Durham: 100-130.

Collini, S 2007 *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Davidson, Jim 1980 'Interview: David Malouf', *Meanjin* 39(3): 331.

de Man, Paul 2013 *The Rhetoric of Romanticism,* Columbia University Press, New York.

Gurr, A 1981 *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature*, Harvester Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J.

Hall, S 1996 'Who Needs 'Identity'?' in Stuart Hall & Paul du Gay (eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Sage, London: 1-17.

Hartman, G 2004 'Romanticism and Anti-Self-Consciousness' in G. Hartman & D. T. O'Hara (eds) *The Geoffrey Hartman Reader*, Fordham University Press, New York.

Ilie, P 1980 *Literature and Inner Exile: Authoritarian Spain 1939-1975*, The John Hopkins Press UP, Baltimore.

Kaminsky, A 1999 *After Exile: Writing the Latin American Diaspora*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Kramer, L S 1988 *Threshold of a New World: Intellectuals and the Exile Experience in Paris, 1830-1848*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London.

Leer, M 1985 'At the Edge: Geography and the Imagination in the Work of David Malouf', *Australian Literary Studies* 12(1): 3-21.

MacRobert, M 2013 'Modelling the Creative Writing Process' in G Harper & J Kroll (eds) *Research Methods in Creative Writing*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke.

Malouf, David 1978/1999 *An Imaginary Life*, Vintage Books, New York.

Malouf, D 2011 *Quarterly Essay 41 The Happy Life: The Search for Contentment in the Modern World*, Black Inc, Melbourne.

TEXT Special Issue 41: Romanticism and Contemporary Writing: Legacies and Resistances
eds Stephanie Green and Paul Hetherington, October 2017

10

McClennen, S A. 2004 *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literature*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette.

McDonald, A G 1988 'Beyond Language: David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 19(1): 45-54.

McWilliams, A 2009 *Our Lands, Our Selves: The Postcolonial Literary Landscape of Maurice Gee and David Malouf*, The University of Auckland, Auckland.

Nabokov, V 1973 *Strong Opinions*, Vintage Books, New York.

Nettlebeck, A 1994 'Rewriting an Explorer Mythology: The Narration of Space in David Malouf's Work', *Provisional Maps: Critical Essays On David Malouf*. A. Nettlebeck (ed.), University of Western Australia Press, Perth: 101-115.

Nikro, S 2006 'David Malouf: Exploring Imperial Textuality', *Postcolonial Text* 2(2). http://postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/viewArticle/371/811

Randall, D 2007 *David Malouf*, Manchester University Press, Manchester & New York.

Redfield, M 2003 *The Politics of Aesthetics: Nationalism, Gender, Romanticism,* Stanford University Press, Redwood City.

Rigby, K 2004 *Topographies of the Sacred: The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism*, University of Virgin Press, Charlottesville and London.

Said, E 2000 *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Seidel, M 1986 *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Spinks, L 2010 'An Imaginative Life: David Malouf Interviewed by Lee Spinks', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 44(5): 5-14.

Vatulescu, C 2010 *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times*, Stanford University Press, Redwood City.