DAVID MALOUF'S LANGUAGE OF RECONCILIATION: STYLISTIC PATTERNS IN *AN IMAGINARY LIFE*

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1. Introduction

Midway through David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*, Ovid, the narrator and main character of the novel, begins to long for a "language whose every syllable is a gesture of reconciliation".[1] This urge towards reconciliation has been inspired by contact with the wild boy whom he is taking care of and educating. The boy causes Ovid to engage with problems stretching back to his own childhood, problems that led to the abandonment of his father and his family background, his neglect of the natural world and an associated avoidance of the primitive within himself. Ovid senses that he must be reconciled with these things in order to find happiness. And in keeping with his belief in linguistic determinism and his literary vocation, such a profound reconciliation needs a language in which to express it.

Those who study the novel tend to find that, at the end, Ovid does achieve reconciliation with himself, his past, other people and the natural world—a more holistic, integrated world view, though not necessarily one that is easily accessible or credible for the reader.[2] What is consistently missed, though, and is one of the most impressive features of the novel, is that Ovid also achieves his language of reconciliation. Stylistic analysis of an excerpt from the end of the novel reveals an abundance of connection on and across different linguistic levels in the language that Ovid uses. This could be dismissed as coincidental if it were not for a similar passage from the beginning of the novel that relates the same episode but does not display

anywhere near the same level of connection. Thus, Malouf is not only telling us that Ovid moves towards reconciliation, but, in the way he has Ovid use language, he is also showing us this reconciliation. This symbolisation of the theme in the patterning of the lexico-grammar adds greatly to the power of the novel.

Given such motivated change in the use of language over the course of the novel, a stylistic comparison of the beginning and end helps to identify the changes the narrator undergoes, illuminate the theme and clear up some of the problems raised by other critics. That Ovid relates the same episode from his childhood twice—once at the beginning and again at the end of the novel—greatly facilitates such a comparison. Although very similar in terms of subject matter, these accounts of the episode differ significantly in their linguistic features. A comparison of the two seems not to have been explored before. The reason why its benefits have been previously overlooked might lie in the conventional neglect of lexico-grammar in literary criticism. While many of the movements in literary criticism in the past century—New Criticism, for example—have stressed the need for close attention to language in texts, this attention has rarely been informed by knowledge of an advanced linguistic model, nor is the attention applied systematically to the text. Given the similarities in Ovid's two accounts of the episode, approaches that focus on subject matter would probably find little value in comparing them, as the differences discovered would be of minimal value in analysing the text. In this case, it is only through close and systematic attention to the linguistic form that potentially significant differences can be found.

The concept of *foregrounding*, developed by linguists of the Prague School, is important for my analysis of each account of the episode. Jan Mukarovsky sees it as "the esthetically intentional distortion of the linguistic components".[3] With foregrounding, the way the language is used attracts attention to itself, in contrast to automatisation, which is the conventional and expected use of language.[4] Mukarovsky seems to consider linguistic features to be foregrounded if they contrast with the norms of ordinary language use or the norms of literature. For Mukarovsky, foregrounding in literature is characterised by its consistency and systematicity, and it takes on more significance than in ordinary language because it ultimately creates the unity of the work.[5]

Ruqaiya Hasan's ideas about foregrounding are based on Mukarovsky's, though there is a significant difference. For Hasan, foregrounding occurs when a linguistic feature in a text contrasts

with the norms of that text. For example, in her analysis of Les Murray's poem "Widower in the Country", she finds that, because there are only 5 and 4 clauses respectively with present and past tense, and 23 with future tense, present and past tense are foregrounded. However, Hasan also believes that "by being itself highlighted, foregrounding also brings to attention that against which it is highlighted",[6] so that in Murray's poem future tense would also attract attention, making time in general a significant part of the poem.

It is the consistency of semantic direction and textual location that make foregrounding significant in literary texts. Hasan shows that in the Anne Sexton poem "Old", the consistency of the semantic direction of foregrounding can be seen in the way that several foregrounded features can all be related to the idea that life and death are a single entity, that living is dying. Furthermore, these foregrounded features are also consistent in their textual location, with each coming at the end of a section of the poem as demarcated by selections in verb tense. So, although the poem never mentions anything like "life and death are one", this theme is conveyed by patterns in the grammar, of which readers are not necessarily conscious, but do sense.[7]

Hasan posits that literature thus contains two levels of semiosis. The first of these is simply the way meaning is expressed in ordinary language use; the second is the meaning that is expressed by consistent foregrounding—patterns in the pattern that is language—which is unique to literature. This second-order semiosis conveys the most significant meaning of the text: its theme. Hasan calls this process, by which patterns in the language express the theme of a literary text, "symbolic articulation".[8]

The linguistic model used here for analysis is M.A.K. Halliday's systemic functional grammar: SFG. SFG is often used by linguists for textual analysis. Part of the value of SFG lies in its 'functional' orientation. In a first sense, this means that everything in the grammar is based on how language is actually used. Unlike generative grammars, it is not concerned with an idealised conception of language, but rather with describing the grammar that people use in authentic situations. This makes it more appropriate for use in analysis of literature texts, which are of course examples of authentic language. Secondly, SFG is functional in that it conceives of grammar as a representation of the two overriding purposes of language: to represent reality and to serve as a means of interaction between

people. Thirdly, each part of the language is interpreted as having a function in relation to the whole system. Another reason why SFG makes it "possible to say sensible and useful things about any text" is that it gives prominence to meaning rather than form—"grammatical categories explained as the realisation of semantic patterns".[9] Textual analysis using this grammar therefore proceeds relatively easily from the identification of forms to the interpretation of meaning.

SFG is divided into three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational meta-function reflects the use of language to represent reality; the interpersonal meta-function reflects the use of language as a means of interaction between people; and the textual meta-function reflects our organisation of language as a message. Although the different meta-functions are separated for analysis, this is an artificial gesture: all three meta-functions occur together in every clause, illustrating the fact that grammar allows us to do several things simultaneously with language. The division of the grammar into three meta-functions allows analysts to be more detailed in their description of the way language is used in a text, and allows for comparison of features (and their semantic consequences) across different meta-functions.

Excerpts covering each of Ovid's recollections of the episode from his childhood are analysed here. The first excerpt—Excerpt 1—is from page 9 of *An Imaginary Life* and the second—Excerpt 2—is from page 151.

2. Excerpt 1
Excerpt 1 is from the very beginning of the novel. Table 2.1 shows the excerpt as it appears in the original text and the division of the excerpt into clauses.

2.1 Textual Meta-function
The textual meta-function gives a text its cohesion and is mainly based on the information at the beginning of each clause—the 'theme' of the clause. An analysis of the themes in Excerpt 1 shows that many clauses use new information as their departure point, which is unusual because themes generally emerge from information that has occurred previously in the text. This irregular thematic progression in the excerpt, combined with the lack of structural themes (such as *and*, *so*, or *after*) and the lack of ellipsis, results in diminished cohesion in the text: it is a fragmented representation of

Table 2.1 (Excerpt 1)
[[...]] Embedded clause
// Embedded clause boundary

Original text	Clause by Clause
When I first saw the child I cannot say. I see myself—I might be three or four years old—playing under the olives at the edge of our farm, just within call of the goatherd, and I am talking to the child, whether for the first time or not I cannot tell at this distance. The goatherd is dozing against an olive bole, his head rolled back to show the dark line of his jaw and the sinews of his scraggy neck, the black mouth gaping. Bees shift amongst the herbs. The air glitters. It must be late summer. There are windblown poppies in the grass. A black he-goat is up on his hind legs reaching for vineshoots. The child is there. I am three or four years old. It is late summer. It is spring. I am six. I am eight. The child is always the same age.	1 When I first saw the child 2 I cannot say. 3 I see [[myself—I might be three or four years old—// playing under the olives at the edge of our farm,// just within call of the goatherd// and I am talking to the child// whether for the first time or not// I cannot tell at this distance.]] 4 The goatherd is dozing against an olive bole, 5 his head rolled back 6 to show the dark line of his jaw and the sinews of his scraggy neck, 7 the black mouth gaping. 8 Bees shift amongst the herbs. 9 The air glitters. 10 It must be late summer. 11 There are windblown poppies in the grass. 12 A black he-goat is up on his hind legs 13 reaching for vineshoots. 14 The child is there. 15 I am three or four years old. 16 It is late summer. 17 It is spring. 18 I am six. 19 I am eight. 20 The child is always the same age.

experience. The only exception to this trend is the embedded clause complex of clause 3. As an embedded clause complex, it functions at a lower level of significance than the clauses.

Clause 1 is consistently foregrounded as a marked theme of a clause complex, by its structural theme and by its position as first clause in the novel. The foregrounding draws attention primarily to the notion of time, with "When" as theme. The importance of time in the excerpt is further shown by three themes related to season (that is, "It") and the prominence of the 'time' lexical chain, which has 11 items in this excerpt, equal highest with the 'Ovid' lexical chain.

2.2 Interpersonal Meta-function
Here again, clause 1 is foregrounded for reasons related to time—in this case its simple past tense—in an excerpt that is otherwise present tense, or more precisely, narrative present. That most clauses are finite—grammatically grounded in time—further supports the view that time is important in this excerpt.

The habitual present and modality ("always") of clause 20 draw attention to the unchanging nature of the child. However, "always" here is ambiguous because of the omission of an adjunct. With this omission, it is not clear whether the child is unchanging in relation to Ovid or to time. Another possibility is that the ambiguity is intentional and the narrator means both that the child is timeless and that he is the same as Ovid.

2.3 Ideational Meta-function
A feature of Excerpt 1 is the relative lack of complex clauses, which means the various quanta of experience are not often brought together in the excerpt. This is particularly true of clauses 14-20, where consecutive relational clauses—those using forms of *be*—are baldly presented almost in the fashion of a list, but it is also apparent in clauses 8-11. There might be implicit connections here—for example, a causal connection between clauses 8 and 9—but that these connections remain, at best, implicit is indicative of the fragmented style. That is to say, even where clauses could easily be connected, they are represented by the narrator in the lexico-grammar as unrelated.

The parallelism of clauses 14-20 is perhaps the most distinctive linguistic feature of the excerpt. The most obvious thing that can be said about this series of relational clauses is that it draws attention to being and, via the attributes, the changing nature of existence.

Note, however, that the change is represented as lacking continuity. The seasons progress from late summer to spring; Ovid's age progresses from three or four to six to eight. The only constant in this series is the child.

Interestingly, the ideational analysis shows that the lexico-grammar consistently associates clauses 7 and 13. Three features unite these clauses: material processes (that is, verbs of action); animate participants; and the epithet "black" (the participant and accompanying epithet are carried over to clause 13 from its dominant clause 12). Clauses 7 and 13 are the only instances here of these three features occurring together in the same clause. Bringing all of the elements of the association together, we have the basic notions of animal nature (the goat), human physicality (mouth and jaw), darkness (the epithet "black") and action (active material processes). Given the darkness and connections with animate existence, mortality is one binding concept that comes to mind, but the inclusion of action in the association contradicts this interpretation. John Stephens interprets the darkness as ignorance, but this too seems at odds with action.[10] A more satisfying interpretation of the binding concept is wildness. The notions of animal nature, human physicality and action accord with wildness fairly obviously. The connection with darkness is less clear, but wildness is often referred to as "the dark side" of human nature, and in Jungian dream analysis a dark, indistinct figure known as "the shadow" is said to represent the most primitive and wildest part of the psyche.[11] When the association is looked at in this way, the goat becomes a satyr-like figure: half-goat, half-human ("up on his hind legs"), male and indulging in grapes. The satyrs of Roman mythology were notorious for lasciviousness and violence, and were said to represent the wild, even sinister, side of human nature. Note, however, that we cannot associate the goatherd directly with the goat-satyr. The goatherd as a whole person (as opposed to his physicality) is not associated with the goat in the lexico-grammar: he is in a clause with a behavioural process (i.e. a verb expressing behaviour rather than action), and is not modified by "black" or anything like it.

2.4 Discussion of Excerpt 1

The most consistent finding in my interpretation of the lexico-grammar analysis of Excerpt 1 has been a representation of the episode in terms of disparate entities: acting or existing in ways largely unconnected to each other—a fragmented worldview. The narrator does not tend to see experience in this recollected episode

as a connected whole. This is especially evident in the thematic structure, but also appears in the relative lack of complex clauses and the parallel clauses 14-20.

In keeping with this fragmented worldview, time is consistently presented as somehow awry. It is discontinuous, as shown by the juxtaposition of late summer and spring or four and six; or it is indeterminate, as shown by the repetition in clauses 3 and 15 of "I might be / am three or four years old"; or it is ambiguous—is the child always the same age as Ovid or always the same age as when they first met?

The excerpt makes strong connections between the child and Ovid without actually referring directly to such a connection. They are united by the parallelism of clause 14-20, by inclusion in the marked and foregrounded clause 1 (the only two animate participants that appear in the same clause in Excerpt 1) and by the consistent proximity of the child as theme to Ovid as theme. Thus the lexico-grammar prefigures what is hinted at shortly after the end of this excerpt—that the child is the young Ovid's imaginary friend.

The excerpt presents the goat as a satyric figure, symbolic of the wildness of human nature, and consistently extends this wildness to the goatherd's physicality. Ovid is textually and grammatically distant from the wildness, as if he fears its threat and is reluctant to make contact with it. That the goatherd as a whole is not directly associated with this wildness suggests a dualistic view of humanity, in which a lack of consciousness (that is, when "dozing") gives rein to wild and threatening forces within us, but which also implies a consciousness, a higher state of being, that can subdue these forces. The non-finiteness of clauses 7 and 13 adds two significant features to the threat that the wildness presents in Excerpt 1. Being non-finite, the clauses have a timeless character, suggesting that the threat transcends time. Their non-finiteness also means that there is no way of refuting the assertions of the clauses, as it is the finite that gives a clause its arguability.[12] This lack of arguability and the timelessness may exacerbate the threat posed by the wildness for Ovid.

3. Excerpt 2

Excerpt 2 is taken from the second last page of the novel. Here the narrator, Ovid, again recalls the episode from his childhood that was the subject of Exerpt 1. Note, however, that here the Child (with an uppercase "C") is an actual boy and different (at least in one sense)

Table 3.1 (Excerpt 2)

* [[...]] Embedded clause
  << ... >> Enclosed clause

Original text	Clause by Clause
They shine in my head, all those steps. I can, in my mind, follow them back, feeling myself with each step restored, diminished, till I come to the ground of my earliest memories again, and am standing in the checkered light of olives at the very edge of our farm, with wings glittering beyond the low stone wall and a goatherd dozing against one of the olives, his rough head tilted back and all the throat exposed, as if he had been dozing like that, just as I last remember him, for nearly sixty years. One of the goats, which is black, has just jerked up on to its hind legs to munch at a vine shoot. It is spring. It is summer. I am three years old. I am sixty. The Child is there.	1 They shine in my head, all those steps. 2 I can, in my mind, follow them back, 3 feeling myself with each step [[restored]], 4 [[diminished]], 5 till I come to the ground of my earliest memories again, 6 and am standing in the checkered light of olives at the very edge of our farm, 7 with wings glittering beyond the low stone wall 8 and a goatherd dozing against one of the olives, 9 his rough head tilted back 10 and all the throat exposed, 11 as if he had been dozing like that, <<12>> for nearly sixty years. 12 just as I last remember him, 13 One of the goats <<14>> has just jerked up on to its hind legs 14 which is black, 15 to munch at a vine shoot. 16 It is spring. 17 It is summer. 18 I am three years old. 19 I am sixty. 20 The Child is there.

from the child in Excerpt 1, who seems to be an imaginary friend. The steps referred to in the first clause are explained in the previous sentence in the novel as those that lead Ovid from his childhood to his present. Table 3.1 shows the excerpt as it appears in the original text and the division of the excerpt into clauses.

3.1 Textual Meta-function

The thematic progression is more regular here, with themes tending to emerge from information in nearby previous clauses. In addition, there are far more structural themes in Excerpt 2, for example "and" in clauses 6, 8 and 10 and "with" in clause 7. Both of these features lead to greater cohesion in this account of the episode.

The foregrounded themes here are "They" in clause 1 and "which" in clause 14. With a postposed subject, clause 1 has a kind of circular structure, where the end comes back to the beginning, which reflects the way Ovid here, at the end of his life, is connected through this memory to his early childhood. As the subject is postposed, the process achieves more prominence in the clause, that is, here in "They shine in my head, all those steps", "shine" draws more attention than it would in the unmarked "All those steps shine in my head". The other foregrounded theme, in clause 14, is also related, via its attribute, to the light-dark concept. Clause 7 is also related to light-dark, and its theme too might almost be called foregrounded, as it or any closely related term does not appear anywhere else in the excerpt or in Excerpt 1. All of this shows that the thematic structure is drawing attention to light and dark. The 'light-dark' lexical chain is actually slightly more prominent in Excerpt 2, and has shifted from predominantly dark in Excerpt 1 to predominantly light here. Here there is also a lexical item that integrates both light and dark— "checkered" in clause 6. Such integration was not evident in Excerpt 1.

3.2 Interpersonal Meta-function

Clause 13 is foregrounded twice, with its present perfect tense and rare (for this excerpt) use of modality. This clause relates to the goat, which was found to be very significant in Excerpt 1. Here it is the narrator's sense of time and modality in relation to the movement of the goat that is highlighted. As there is ambiguity with "just", it could be that the narrator views this movement as momentary or as inconsequential. A third possibility, which was also discussed in relation to "always"

in Excerpt 1, is that both of these meanings are intended. In any case, whichever of these we accept, the representation of the action is less threatening than that in clause 12 of Excerpt 1, with its satyric intimations.

Although foregrounded, with regard to the interpersonal meta-function, only for tense, clause 11 is very unusual in relation to either excerpt. Being at the end of a run of ten present tense clauses, its past perfect continuous tense is strongly foregrounded. The effect of this shift is that the narrator's perspective moves from the here-and-now of the episode being recalled to the here-and-now of Ovid at the end of his life, while repeating the participant and process of an earlier present tense clause. Ovid thus gives us two perspectives of the same quantum of experience, and in doing so connects his present with the past of his childhood.

3.3 Ideational Meta-function

In contrast to Excerpt 1, Excerpt 2 is dominated by clause complexing, with 14 out of 20 clauses appearing in clause complexes. One of these, consisting of clauses 2-12, is by far the longest in the two excerpts and is the most striking linguistic feature of Excerpt 2. Through the expansion of this clause complex, Ovid connects a great variety of experience.

The association that appeared in Excerpt 1 between the goat and the goatherd's physicality is not evident in the transitivity of Excerpt 2. Two of the elements that made up association—epithets of darkness and active material processes—do not appear in relation to parts of the goatherd's body, so that the threatening wildness that characterised the association is not attributed to the goatherd in Excerpt 2. In a sense, though, the wildness is still there, as there are references to the goatherd's physicality, and these are involved in material processes. The physicality however is represented differently, with "sinews of his scraggy neck" replaced by the more vulnerable "all the throat", and "show" replaced by "exposed", which also has connotations of vulnerability. Furthermore, the physicality is the goal of passive material processes, a less dynamic role. The overall effect of all these changes is that the sinister side of the wildness disappears. The wildness is diminished and controlled. Even the goat is represented as less threatening. That its blackness is only presented in a non-defining clause shows that the threat it represents

is no longer essential to Ovid's view of the animal. And the change from a relational process to a material one to describe the goat's action—along with the effect of the modality commented on in the previous section—excludes the possibility that its human-like form ("up on its hind legs") is permanent, thereby diminishing the satyric association.

Regarding circumstantial groups (i.e., prepositional phrases and adverbial groups), there is more concentration on spatial location than was the case in Excerpt 1. It is not a simple notion of space, however, as it incorporates both concrete and abstract space (abstract space was referred to only once in Excerpt 1, in the embedded clause complex). This treatment of space as both concrete and abstract is an example of the excerpt's meshing of the inner self and the outer world, which is also seen in the way material processes are used here in mental domains; for example, "I can, in my mind, follow them back" (clause 2). The way these material processes are used is a symbolic reiteration of the belief, expressed by Ovid several times in the novel, that the mind is a powerful means of change: "what you are reader, is what we have wished. Are you gods already? Have you found wings?" (p. 64).

The treatment of space also provides a clue as to how we should interpret clause 20 ("The Child is there"), which is foregrounded as one of two clauses repeated from Excerpt 1, as the only clause with the Child as theme, and through its status as a single clause paragraph. The importance of this clause is increased by its similarity to the last clause of the novel, "I am there" (p. 152). While the demonstrative reference of "there" in clause 20 of Excerpt 2 is fairly straightforward, in one sense at least, "there" becomes somewhat obscure in the last clause of the novel, as Stephens points out.[13] One hint to the meaning of the latter comes from earlier in the novel, when the similar clause, "I am there again" (p. 82), appears. This time, "there" refers to the scene of Ovid's childhood but also, it seems, to "some timeless place in my self" (p. 82). Returning to clause 20, the nature of the Child is revealed a little more by taking note of two points. Firstly, ambiguity has often appeared in both excerpts, in each case not necessarily as an oversight but possibly—indeed, given its consistency, probably—as a way of meaning two or more things with the one signifier. Hence the ambiguity is put to use to enrich the text. Secondly, both concrete and abstract notions of space are used

in Excerpt 2. Bringing all of this together, it seems that "there" in clause 20 is also ambiguous, meaning the Child is at the place where the episode of memory takes place, at the place where Ovid is recalling the episode, which are both notions of concrete space, and also at an abstract spatial location—that "timeless place in my self". In this way, the Child too becomes ambiguous: both an actual person and a part of Ovid's self.

In keeping with the move to a timeless state, in Excerpt 2 Ovid is less concerned with time and less perplexed by it than in Excerpt 1. As in Excerpt 1, parallelism of the latter clauses draws attention to being and time. However, the sequencing of spring (clause 16) and summer (clause 17) is more natural. And the other part of the series, clauses 18 and 19, referring to Ovid's ages, seems not so much to show a discontinuous view of time, as in Excerpt 1, but, through the extreme differences placed side by side, to obliterate the meaningfulness of time. By being simultaneously three and sixty years old, Ovid has transcended time. The proximity of the two clauses also connects the beginning and the end of Ovid's life.

3.4 *Discussion of Excerpt 2*

It is clear that this excerpt presents a considerably different view of the episode from Ovid's childhood, a different worldview, to that presented in Excerpt 1. With the greater use of structural themes, the more regular thematic progression and the more extensive clause complexes, experience in Ex 2 is represented as more continuous than it was in Excerpt 1.

The light-dark concept is important in Excerpt 2, as it was in Excerpt 1. Here, though, the consistently foregrounded clause 1, and the lexical chain, give light more prominence. Ovid has come to recollect the episode more in terms of light than the darkness of Excerpt 1. Darkness was associated, via patterns in the lexico-grammar, with a threatening wildness in human nature in Excerpt 1. Although there is less conclusive proof in the excerpts, light represents the opposite of this wildness: that is, a higher level of consciousness. This interpretation is supported by evidence from other parts of the novel. Earlier, Ovid speaks of "gods walking ... in their bodies' light" (p. 29) and at the very end (p. 152) he sees the Child ascend to the sky from out of the light of the water. This spiritual interpretation is reinforced by the appearance of "wings"—

with its celestial connotations—as a new theme in clause 7, where it is the actor of the process "glittering" and thus linked to lightness. Wings are associated more explicitly with spirituality earlier in the novel—"Are you gods already? Have you found wings?" (p. 64). Viewing the memory in a way in which light is dominant suggests that Ovid has reached a higher level of consciousness, a greater spiritual awareness.

But there is more to it than this. Excerpt 2 highlights the integration of the spiritual, the mental and the physical. Although the threat of wildness—associated with physicality—has been controlled, the physical is still present. In Ovid's case, it is associated with the mental via the parallelism in adjacent clauses of the circumstantial groups "in my head" (physical) and "in my mind" (mental). In the case of the goatherd, his head was not closely associated with the physical in Excerpt 1, as, unlike other physical features mentioned, it was not modified by an epithet of darkness and was the goal of an agentless passive clause. Here, however, the goatherd's head and a reference to another part of his physicality (the throat) are more closely linked, as both goals of agentless passive clauses, by the lack of an epithet of darkness modifying his throat—in contrast to Excerpt 1—and by the addition of the epithet "rough" to modify his head, thus drawing attention to its physical nature. So representations of both Ovid and the goatherd in Excerpt 2 suggest an integration of the mental and the physical, a link between the two that was not evident in Excerpt 1. Making use of the spiritual associations of light, the consistently foregrounded clause 1 provides a succinct link between the spiritual ("shine"), mental ("head") and physical ("head", and, more tenuously, "all those steps"). The link between the spiritual and the physical is again evident in clause 7, where "wings" is related to both lexical chains. Also on the lexical level, "checkered light" provides another example of the connection between the spiritual, associated with light, and the physical, associated with darkness in Excerpt 1. Lexical items like "wings" and "checkered" that relate to both the spiritual and the physical did not appear in Excerpt 1. All these lexico-grammatical features constitute a repeated connection of the spiritual, mental and physical. In effect, this is an integration of the more advanced parts of human nature with the most primitive— the wildness that was a prominent feature of Excerpt 1 and was associated in several ways with physicality. Although spirituality seems to have most significance in the excerpt, it is not the case that

it has conquered the primitive part of human nature, as there is no sense of conflict here.

This integration is not just observed by Ovid in his recollection. The fact that he is directly related to it—as circumstance in clause 1 and as behaver of clause 6 ("(I) am standing in the checkered light...")—suggests that he himself experiences the integration of the spiritual and the primitive. The Child is obviously associated with primitive wildness in the novel, but the lexico-grammar of both excerpts strongly associate him with Ovid as well, even suggesting that the boy is a part of him. The thematic structure of Ex 1 hints that the child acts as a bridge between Ovid and the wildness represented by the goat, though given the threatening nature of wildness in Excerpt 1, perhaps 'mediator' is a better term. This interpretation of a connection between the Child (i.e., the actual boy) and the goat is strengthened by Ovid's reference to him as a "wolf boy, godling, satyr" (p. 69). It is Ovid's relationship with the Child that eventually brings him to integrate the wild, primitive part of his own nature into his self. It might be for this reason that the Child is less prominent in Excerpt 2 and why he moves away at the end of the novel—having guided Ovid to a profound level of integration, he is free to leave.

This interpretation accords with the less threatening representation of wildness in Excerpt 2. Ovid does not view the goat as satyric, and the goatherd's physical nature is no longer associated with threatening wildness, because Ovid has incorporated that wildness into himself, as though by accepting it he has diminished its threat to him. At the same time, he has reached a higher level of consciousness. His acceptance of the most primitive part of himself has brought about greater spiritual awareness, so that the darkness and fear of Excerpt 1 has become the light and harmony of Excerpt 2.

Ovid's integration of the spiritual, physical and mental is only one aspect of the dominant trend towards unity in this excerpt. Through the abundance of connection in the excerpt, Malouf has Ovid come perhaps as close as he could to achieving his aim of speaking "a language whose every syllable is a gesture of reconciliation." Foregrounding across the excerpt consistently draws attention to several kinds of connection. A connection between inner self and the outer world emerges in features of the ideational analysis. There are also strong connections between Ovid at the end and beginning of his life. And there is more evidence of connection with the goatherd. The extraordinary clause complex of clauses 2-12 contributes greatly

to the holistic worldview represented here, and in doing so brings together all of the connections referred to above and reinforces them. If each clause is looked at as one quantum of experience, this clause complex alone can be seen to connect a vast array of experience, flowing as it does from Ovid's consciousness to the outside world; from his present to his childhood; from Ovid to another human; and from the apparently spiritual (clause 7) to the clearly physical (clauses 9 and 10) and mental (clause 12). There is also some evidence of connection on the clause level, with the possibility that clauses 8 and 9 of Excerpt 1, which were linked only by the vaguest of implicit connections there, have been joined together into one clause here (clause 7). On the lexical level, too, there is evidence of connection in the use of terms like "checkered", and in the ambiguity that has appeared several times, which by signifying two or more meanings simultaneously with the one signifier functions as a connection between otherwise separate meanings. With this abundant connection on the levels of excerpt, clause complex, clause and lexis, Malouf goes one better than telling us Ovid has achieved his language of reconciliation—he shows us he has.

It is interesting that the consistently foregrounded embedded clause complex in Excerpt 1 is grammatically much more similar to Ex 2 than the rest of Excerpt 1 is. The worldview represented in the embedded clause complex, remote and underdeveloped at the start of the novel, has come to fruition by the end. The process of growth that Ovid has undergone in the novel develops this embryonic world view into one that pervades his entire self.

4. Conclusion

The interpretation of the text that I have offered here accords with some of what literary critics have written about the novel. Philip Neilsen's assertion that the Child is both a reflection of Ovid's self and an agent of change corresponds closely to what I have found in my analysis of the lexico-grammar of the two excerpts.[14] Neilsen also claims that the Child helps Ovid to integrate with the natural world, which can be seen by Ovid's integration of wildness that emerges here. Nielsen's claim that Ovid is reconciled with his family is more difficult to support with my findings. While there is clear evidence that Ovid becomes reconciled with his childhood, there is nothing explicit about his family in these two excerpts. It is not a great leap, though, to see the goatherd as a father figure, as a goatherd is supposed

to nurture and protect and is an adult male figure on the family farm. Looked at in this way, the greater connection in the lexico-grammar between Ovid and the goatherd and the less threatening representation of his physicality in Excerpt 2 point to a reconciliation of Ovid with his father. Of course, the term "reconciliation" in Australia in recent years has been used mostly to refer to better relations between Aborigines and the wider Australian community. Malouf has written directly about this topic in *Remembering Babylon*, but *An Imaginary Life* could also be broadly read along those lines, particularly Ovid's acceptance of nature and wildness, the merging of himself and the Child and possibly again the acceptance of the goatherd, who in Excerpt 1 was associated, albeit indirectly, with nature and modified with epithets of darkness. Griffiths claims that space is accorded more significance at the end of the novel "as a form of negative discrimination against the dominance of the category of time (history) in Eurocentric formulations",[15] and that Ovid has moved closer to pre-European conceptions of space and time, such as those of Aborigines.[16] My findings give some support to those claims, as there is concentration on space at the expense of time in the lexico-grammar of Excerpt 2 and the notion of time seems to have become circular or transcendent.

Stephens raises several criticisms of the novel, in particular claiming that the treatment of time and space and the treatment of light at the end of the novel fail because of indeterminacy of meaning. Admittedly, the treatments of these things here are difficult to understand. However, the difficulty is not insurmountable, as I believe this study has shown, and it does not amount to the failure of signification that Stephens claims it does.[17] In making this claim, he is particularly critical of the novel's last clause—"I am there"— claiming that "there" has no referent. In the immediate context, it may not. However, study of the way spatial locatives are used in Excerpt 2 and reference to the use of "there" earlier in the novel (p. 82), as well as an understanding of the role of the Child, work to resolve the difficulty. That is, of course, asking a lot of readers, but it is possible to sense the referent of "I am there" without necessarily being conscious of all the meaning the text has invested in the clause.

All that has emerged from this study of the lexico-grammar of the two excerpts shows Malouf's brilliance in crafting language to convey the theme of the novel. A comparison of the excerpts shows clearly that Ovid's language changes over the course of the novel, reflecting

the changes he experiences. At the end of the novel, by connecting
on multiple levels in a complex yet precise way, the lexico-grammar
displays profound integration of Ovid with others, with the natural
world and within himself—a masterful language of reconciliation.

Notes

1   David Malouf, *An Imaginary Life* (Sydney: Pan Books, 1978), p. 98.
2   Cf. Philip Neilsen, *Imagined Lives: A Study of David Malouf* (Brisbane:
    University of Queensland Press, 1990) and John Stephens, "Beyond the
    Limits of our Speech: David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*" in *Commonwealth
    Novel in English*, vol 3, no 2 (1990), pp. 160-169.
3   Jan Mukarovsky, "Standard Language and Poetic Language" in P. Garvin
    (ed.), *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure and Style*
    (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1964) p. 18.
4   Bohuslav Havranek, "The Functional Differentiation of the Standard
    Language" in P. Garvin (ed.) *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary
    Structure and Style* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1964), p. 11.
5   Mukarovsky, "Standard Language", p. 61.
6   Ruqaiya Hasan, *Linguistics, Language and Verbal Art* (Victoria: Deakin
    University Press, 1985), p. 95.
7   Ruqaiya Hasan, "The analysis of one poem: theoretical issues in practice" in
    D. Birch and M. O'Toole (eds), *Functions of Style* (London: Pinter, 1988), p. 46.
8   Hasan, *Linguistics*, p. 98.
9   M. A. K. Halliday, *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Edward
    Arnold, 1994), p. xvii.
10 Stephens, "Beyond the Limits", p. 167.
11 Jolande Jacobi, "Symbols in an individual analysis" in C. Jung (ed.), *Man
    and His Symbols* (London: Aldus Books, 1964), p. 294.
12 Halliday, *Introduction*, p. 75.
13 Stephens, "Beyond the Limits", p. 167.
14 Neilsen, *Imagined Lives*.
15 Gareth Griffiths, "Being there, being There: Kosinsky and Malouf" in I.
    Adam and H. Tiffin (eds), *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and
    Post-Modernism* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 159.
16 Griffiths, "Being there", p. 16.
17 Stephens, "Beyond the Limits", p. 168.