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Dreaming the Clouds:

Transculturation, Hybridity and *Novum* in Archie Weller's

Land of the Golden Clouds

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1. Introduction

When a reader approaches a literary text, there are always numerous implications as to what sort of preparation and knowledge the implied reader needs to have prior to close-reading of the text. Be it through sheer reading experience or through meticulous research into a given subject, the problem of defining specificities of the text require not only a well-prepared reader, but also a cooperative author who presents such specificities to his or her target audience. Such is the case of author Archie Weller, whose novel *Land of the Golden Clouds*is meant for the reader versed in several different areas.The focus of this paper is hence to examine the novel as simultaneously belonging to the corpus of postcolonial literature on the one hand, and SF, on the other. As Weller's novel includes seven different spaces, a considerable number of satellite events and over one hundred characters, many of which are important for the kernel story-line, the analysis shall be limited only to two "types" of characters which are important for voicing the topic of transculturalism and hybridity since this underscores the main ideas behind the work.

The first part of the paper, therefore, provides historical and structural analysis of postcolonial literature and SF, in order to provide a nexus between the two which may be used to constitute postcolonial SF as a distinctive subgenre of SF. The main critic referred to here is DarkoSuvin and his definition of SF as a genre. Additional analysis is provided as to show how a postcolonial SF text is supposed to model and interpret two SF tropes – *novum* and *cognitive estrangement* – in order to establish Weller's novel as a text that truly belongs to the sphere of postcolonial SF. The second part of the paper defines *Land of the Golden Clouds* as an Aboriginal text, pinpointing exact prerequisites the implied model reader shouldfulfil prior to his or her close-reading of the text. The last part of the paper discusses two particular groups of characters, namely the Keepers of the Trees and Prince Michael of the Ants, through which the concepts of hybridity and transculturation are defined. By observing these characters and analyzing them in detail, this paper provides a very specific argument as to how a postcolonial SF author models the *novum*in the text.

2. Definition of Science Fiction and the Postcolonial Literature

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears... in... rain. Time… to die."

Roy Batty in*Blade Runner*, 1982

In order to provide a working definition of postcolonial science fiction, it is necessary to define distinctiveness of SF as a genre, and then to cover the topics postcolonial literature on the one hand, and SF on the other, share. The contact points between the two are logical since SF developed from utopian writing, which, more often than not, implied colonizing an unknown space.

2.1. Definitions and Positions of Science Fiction

Science fiction is defined by DarkoSuvin in his work *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* as "*a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of* estrangement *and* cognition*, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment."*(7-8, emphasis mine) The term *cognitive estrangement* is the key element explored by other critics of SF theory, such as IstvanCsicsery-Ronay, Patrick Parrinder and Frederick Jameson. In addition, Suvin introduces *novum* as an SF-specific trope. According to Suvin, SF is "distinguished by the narrative dominance or hegemony of a fictional 'novum' (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic" (63). The *cognitive estrangement* and *novum* are relevant in terms of defining SF as a literary genre, since prior to having a groundwork such as the *Metamorphoses*, SF was not discussed as a relevant literary genre whose world formation is governed by specific narrative rules, but as a commentary and satire on the reality of the world. Referring to the definition of SF by famous SF writer Robert Silverberg, Edward James maintained in 1968 that "Silverberg leapt on that word 'function', and said that was the heart of his complaint: all three [DarkoSuvin, Isaac Asimov and Frederik Pohl] had spoken about the *function* of SF, including Suvin, when speaking of Soviet SF as political commentary, and none had talked about the literary specificity of the genre." (32, emphasis in the original).Suvin decided to write *Metamorphoses* as the ground text fordefining SF as a literary genre, the idea he initially

explored in his 1971 article "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre", influenced by Viktor Shklovsky, Bertold Brecht and StanisławLem.

Alternatively, Frederick Jameson offers a different perspective of SF claiming that SF is "used to de-familiarize and restructure our experience of our own present, and to do so in specific ways distinct from all other forms of *defamiliarization*." (286, emphasis mine) Jameson intentionally uses a different term in order to extrapolate the way in which *cognitive estrangement* is perceived. The reason behind this is that Jameson is primarily concerned with utopia and utopian within the context of SF. Jameson's *defamiliarization* is not just an Americanized version of *estrangement*: it also has a strong ideological potential.He is more concerned with an ideological approach rather than a formalistic-aesthetic one when it comes to defining the utopian aspect of SF. Accordingly, Jameson maintains that

> [t]otality is then precisely this combination of closure and system, in the name of autonomy and self-sufficiency and which is ultimately the source of that otherness or radical, even alien, […]. Yet it is precisely this category of totality that presides over the forms of Utopian realization: the Utopian city, the Utopian revolution, the Utopian commune or village, and of course the Utopian text itself, in all its radical and unacceptable *difference from the more lawful and aesthetically satisfying literary genres.*" (5, emphasis mine)

In other words, the "Utopian text" defamiliarizes the existing world of the author by creating a utopian setting that serves as a revolutionary praxis, while in SF *cognitive estrangement*is reflected in the *novum* which is more strictly extrapolated from the author's empirical world. The emphasized *difference* from other genres is primarily concerned with the manner in which SF, in comparison to utopian narrative or the narrative of fantasy, perceives the ideological world. Later on, Jameson states that "if SF is the exploration of all the constraints thrown up by history itself [...] then fantasy is the other side of the coin and a celebration of human creative power and freedom which becomes idealistic only by virtue of the omission of precisely those material and historical constraints." (66). This statement affirms Suvin's claim that SF is a genre that, rather than inventing a new world, re-imagines the future. As Jameson argues further, "within this genre, the consistency of extrapolation becomes an aesthetic factor; the cognitive element becomes a measure of the aesthetic quality and pleasure to be found in science fiction." (30) Suvin goes so far as to claim that Utopia "is the verbal construct of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than

in the author's community." (49) The very act of *cognitive estrangement*, therefore, is what defines SF as a genre in its own right, since it requires both the possibility of having a narrative within a world estranged from the reader's empirical world, as well as the possibility to cognitively deconstructthe *novum*, unlike Utopia which in its core proposes the impossibility of such a world to exist, since Utopia is not extrapolated from the empirical world, but rather imagined.

As regards *novum,* Istvan Csicsery-Ronay compares Suvin's and Ernst Bloch's definitions and argues that, according to Bloch, the Novum, intentionally capitalized, is a "moment of newness in lived history that refreshes human collective consciousness" (47), whereas *novums* by Suvin are in fact "historically unprecedented and unpredicted 'new things' that intervene in the routine course of social life and change the trajectory of history" (Csicsery-Ronay, 5). Csicsery-Ronay goes into great length to provide descriptions on the ways and forms in which *novums* are placed by the author into the narrative in a way to make them complex (6). The complexity of the *novum/novums* is in fact the very prerequisite necessary for the author to provide a narrative that enables*cognitive estrangement*: "*SF is distinguished by the narrative dominance or hegemony of a fictional "novum" (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic"*(Suvin 63, emphasis in the original).

On the other hand, Patrick Parrinder maintains that "for science fiction to be cognitive, however, it must first be estranged: its resemblance to myth, fantasy and fairy tale logically precedes its separation from them." (39) Jameson has quite the opposite stand on the use of devices usually found in genres such as fantasy: "Magic [...] reawakens all the unsolved generic problems inherent in distinguishing fantasy from SF, and in particular in determining why any number of fantastic SF technologies, such as teleportation or time travel, superhuman computers, telepathy, or alien life forms, should be regarded any differently from magicians or dragons." (63) Even though these two statements might seem contradictive, it is important to notice that both Parrinderand Jameson mention two things: *resemblance* and *distinction*. Even though SF in its roots is speculative fiction just as the genre of fantasy, the distinction between them is the appearance of *novum*, which does not exist in fantasy since fantasy does not need such an element to enable*cognitive estrangement*. Tatyana Chernyshova mentions that "modern science maintains that errors, illusory imaginings about the world, are from the outset characteristic of instrumental, model-constructing human consciousness, since fantasy is born at the same moment as concept formation." (347)

SF, in other words, requires *novum* in order to project the narrative not only as the imaginary on its own, but imaginary in a way that it is plausible and probable by speculating about its probability.

2.2. Defining *Land of the Golden Clouds* as postcolonial SF

Postcolonial themes as elements in SF have been in the loop for as long as SF, specifically, ever since the conception of the utopian narrative. John Rieder thoroughly elaborates on the connection between postcolonialism and SF in *Colonialism and the Emergence of the SF*. Rieder claims that

> no informed reader can doubt that allusions to colonial history and situations are ubiquitous features of early science fiction motifs and plots. It is not a matter of asking whether but of determining precisely how and to what extent the stories engage colonialism. The work of interpreting the relation of colonialism and science fiction really gets under way, then, by attempting to decipher the fiction's often distorted and topsy-turvy references to colonialism. (3)

Jessica Langer wrote a lengthy book on this topic, which is why this chapter mostly takes her work as the main source used in order to construct arguments. First and foremost, Langer defines postcolonialism as "the process by which a decolonizing society negotiates its identity apart from that of its colonizer, and apart from its identity as a colonized place or people, within the context of both colonial history and decolonized future"(8). In other words, postcolonial literature has a similar way of projecting the narrative through estrangement techniques, but rather than provoking estrangement as such, postcolonial literature serves the purpose of observing the perspective of the colonized/colonizer divide. Postcolonial SF, on the other hand, plays with the notion of describing these processes through the lenses of *cognitiveestrangement* and *novum*. In order to explain this further, Riedermaintains that

> the key element linking colonial ideology to science fiction's fascination with new technology is the new technology's scarcity. The thrill of the technological breakthrough is not that it benefits everyone but that it produces a singular, drastic difference between those who possess the new invention or power source and those who do not. (32).

Here, the point in question is the definition of the term Other. Technologies as well as processes of exploring the universe and discovering new world often pose the question of introducing the Other. In SF, the Other becomes the primary *novum* of the narrative. Patricia Kerslake writes about it in a similar way:

> Yet a willingness to push the centre outwards, to absorb the periphery, and thus create newer and greater peripheries, is a central and time-honoured theme within SF. The exploration of uncharted space, the discovery of new planets and the ambiguous desire to find intelligent alien life form one of the core doctrines of the genre. But what is this *urge to explore*? Can it be explained away as the pursuit of trade opportunities? (23, emphasis mine)

The *urge to explore* is, in fact, one of the basic tenets of the colonial approach, as well as one of the most discussed points in colonialist writing. Boehmer defines colonialist discourse as something that "can be taken to refer to that collection of symbolic practices, including textual codes and conventions and implied meanings, which Europe deployed in the process of its colonial expansion and, in particular, in understanding the bizarre and apparently untranslatable strangeness with which it came into contact" (48), in addition to the note about mapping, where "[f]rom the European point of view, therefore, colonialism was a metaphoric and cartographic—as well as a legalistic—undertaking. A country was 'mapped' or spatially conceived using figures which harked back to home ground." (18) It is always about discovering the alleged blank or unmapped spaces, or in the case of SF, the unexplored knowledge and space expanding to more than just Earth. Postcolonial SF is concerned with the imagery of this *urge to explore* and the topic of colonization of the other worlds – meeting extraterrestrials in space, where the colonisation of outer space planets and their alien cultures can be seen as a model colonisation, with aliens appropriating the role of colonised native peoples while the terrans are the colonizers. Yet the main difference comes into play when technology is included. In postcolonial literature, lack of technology on the side of the colonized becomes the main problem when dealing with the colonizer, whereas in SF frontiers usually explored through the genre of space opera, advanced technology is handled by introducing elements such as myths and heritage (for the indigenous) as opposed to urge to explore (the space travelers), as argued by Attebery:

> When sf draws upon traditional beliefs and stories, then, it places them in radically different discursive contexts, as well as juxtaposing them with advanced technologies and alien

landscapes. An essentially modern view of the world – scientific, psychological, historical, materialistic – is thus pitted against a traditional, magical view. And each of these world-views, along with narrative structures that encapsulate it, comes with a heavy burden of historical freight. (386)

The myth and its creation, as the process through which the colonized follow the narrative, is then used as a transfigurative mechanism. This transfiguration is mainly concerned with technology, as aforementioned, but the main element of discerning the postcolonial within SF has been noted by Rieder, who says that by "having no place on Earth left for the radical exoticism of unexplored territory, the writers invent places elsewhere." (4). Dale Knickerbocker reveals the cause of this process in history, noting that the "late nineteenth-century industrialization radicalized utopian imaginings, converting them into process-oriented visions of how revolution *against* the system would lead to an ideal tomorrow. At the same time, the exhaustion of new lands to colonize caused writers to displace utopias into the future." (348, emphasis in the original) Hence, *defamiliarization* comes into play once it gets linked to what the process of colonization truly does in its core: an entire culture is in danger of having its world and worldview destroyed due to the *impact* of the colonized.

Postcolonial SF, on the other hand, is defined differently. Langer offers a brief definition of the role of postcolonial SF: "The interpolation of divinity, spirituality and folktale with the science fiction genre holds a particular significance for postcolonial science fiction. Narrative, particularly folktale and legend, is a central function of cultural memory; erasure of these narratives is a central function of colonial power" (129) These narratives then must at the same time combine the Indigenous episteme and the Indigenous narrative as opposed to the Western colonizer perspective. In order to challenge and question the problematic of otherness, a specific dialect needs to be presented which encapsulates the postcolonial view within the SF genre. This is achieved through applying importance to the Indigenous characters and societies as opposed to the colonial SF tradition where the colonizers are placed as main characters who explore the land. However, Langer also claims that

[t]he key to postcolonial science fiction is not that it includes elements of fabulism, folktale, divinity, orature or other elements of indigenous culture or narrative. Neither is it that these works challenge the paradigm of Western science, progress and the scientific method as the only legitimate method of understanding the world. Rather, it is *how* these elements come into

play, and how they interact with science fiction, that is important." (132, emphasis in the original)

In other words, postcolonial SF must be presented in a way that it stays true to the genre of SF, keeping *cognitive estrangement* at a level where it can be experienced by the reader, as well as maintaining the ways in which the colonized (or, Indigenous natives in most cases) perceive the scientific and how that is extrapolated in the narrative of the work. Western science, in other words, is not taken as a carrier of progression and the device through which the author explores a specific problematic or creates a commentary. Western science serves the purpose of establishing an argument that progress always exists, even in colonized societies, although the perspective of it is rather different, as Grace Dillon maintains:

> [...] Native/Indigenous/ Aboriginal sustainable practices constitute a science despite their lack of resemblance to taxonomic western systems of thought. In contrast to the accelerating effect of techno-driven western scientific method, Indigenous scientific literacies represent practices used by Indigenous peoples over thousands of years to reenergize the natural environment while improving the interconnected relationships among all persons (animal, human, spirit, and even machine). (7)

Reverting back to what has been said about *how* particular mechanisms are found in SF genre, it is necessary to present the genre of postcolonial SF as something that extensively uses mechanisms such as *cognitive estrangement* and *novum* into consideration, but the focus is always placed on how these mechanisms affect the colonized/Indigenous. It is not strange, then, to see the combination of these two literary genres as natural, or, to quote Masood Ashraf Raja and Swaralipi Nandi,

> [t]he connection between science fiction and postcolonial studies is almost natural: both these fields are deeply concerned with questions of temporality, space, and existence. Central also to both these fields of study are the questions of the "other"—human, machine, cyborg—and the nature of multiple narratives of history and utopias and dystopias of the future" (Raja and Nandi, 9).

To add to the previous argument, the postcolonial SF author must keep in mind the mechanisms which are used in SF, in addition to being able to model it according to his/her cultural episteme coming from the marginal (post)colonial position. Postcolonial SF authors

are, in fact, allowed to redefine future through the SF, but to also provide the point of view from the "other", or, in this case, the colonized. The *truth*, if comparing its perception from the colonizer and the colonized, tends to be very different.AmbelinKwaymulina, a postcolonial SF writer, mentions that "the centre ground of 'truth' is claimed by Eurocentric knowledge traditions, while ancient Indigenous understandings are labelled myth and legend, the stuff of metaphor rather than metaphysics." (23-24). However, SF narrative handles metaphors rather differently, or as Kerslake puts it,"SF does not restrict metaphor to a narrow linguistic sense, but often applies it in a manner that conveys highly complex organizational models. Entire concepts may be mapped out by reference to points of paradigmatic familiarity, making metaphor a fundamental method of structuring conceptual systems." (46) Langer purports this by saying that "in a way, all science fiction speaks to the necessary link between science and art, between the concrete and the transcendent. Science fiction, as art form, provides not only cognitive but also emotional, and even spiritual, estrangement from our world: the distance required to look back with a critical eye." (151) In other words, *cognitive estrangement*and *novum* are mechanisms through which postcolonialism is shifted from one locality (Earth) to the infinite locality (which is space), but with speculated and plausible outcomes which serve as a further commentary.The final thought on this subject one should keep in mind regarding the perspective of a postcolonial writer is Kwaymulina's remarkthat "we [Australian Aboriginals] understand the tales of ships that come from afar and land on alien shores. Indigenous people have lived those narratives and, because of this, stories of colony ships exploring the vastness of space do not fill me with a sense of hope or excitement, but with dread" (29). In other words, the perspective of postcolonial SF takes into consideration the history in the same way in which classic SF takes the narrative of reimagined future, the key difference being that in postcolonial SF, futuristic treatment of history is voiced from the marginal position and speaks back to the mainstream position.

When it comes to science fiction and Australian Aboriginal writing, it needs to be kept in mind that SF is not a standard *modus operandi* forAboriginal writers. Or, as DelysBird states it: "Realism is the fictional mode *most characteristic* of Indigenous writers and writers from non-English speaking backgrounds. At odds with the dominant culture that has denied them a public voice and a cultural space, such writers use their fiction as a vehicle through which to protest their exclusion – and that of their people – from literary and social recognition." (201, emphasis mine).Since science fiction is a genre, it demands a specific audience with a penchant for it, whereas in the case of literary realism, there is a rather wider possibility of impact and influence on the audience. As soon as Aboriginal writing in English

was acknowledged in the 1960-80s period,there have been "two recurring subjects in Aboriginality in Australian fiction: One is black/white sexual and emotional relations; the other is the nature of the Aboriginal relationship to the land, with its central importance to Aboriginal culture and its implications for the white descendants of a settler culture." (Goldsworthy123) The second aspect, the relationship to the land, has been a motif not only for Aboriginal writers, but it has been almost a defining aspect for a plethora of Australian fiction in general. Bird names some of these authors: "Randolph Stow in his early novels, Elizabeth Jolley, Peter Cowan, Dorothy Hewett, Tim Winton, Robert Drewe and Fay Zwicky are Western Australian writers who use landscapes, evoking space and distance, not just as descriptive settings but as a narrative presence in their work." (194) In other words, there have been two different modes as regards the relationship between writers and their definition of the landscape as a motif in their works. Aboriginal writers are inherently connected to it, defining it from the perspective of the native understanding of it and the historical heritage of the native people, whereas non-Aboriginal Australian writers used the landscape as a way to inject their own culture through the appropriation of land. This does not mean appropriation in the sense of the word to conquer and claim it their own, but rather as a way to define the uncanny and incomprehensible spirit of the land. In other words, the landscape deemed natural by Aboriginal writers, is interpreted as uncanny by non-Aboriginal Australian writers. The claim that the realist writing is the standard form of writing applies for the previous works by Archie Weller, too.Bird also considers it surprising since his earlier works were realist, whereas in*Land of the Golden Clouds* he takes a rather different approach (192). Iva Polak extrapolates on the background of the Weller's publishing of the book:

> What actually happened with *The Land of the Golden Clouds* was in fact a set of circumstances which revealed quite overtly the functioning of Australian criticism. The novel was published in 1998 during the disputations about unlawful appropriations of Aboriginal identity […], while Weller's decision to conduct an inquiry into his own identity in 1999 put the final nail in the coffin. This should be topped with the fact that *Land of the Golden Clouds* belongs to the genre of science fiction which was significantly disparate from the "expected niche" of Aboriginal writing at the time, in addition to the genre being rarely discussed within the framework of the elitist academe. ("'Prizemljenje'*ZemljeZlatnihOblaka*" 103-104, trans. mine)

In other words, the novel was published in the wrong place at the wrong time, and Weller's inquiry did not help with the popularity of the book. The point is – this was Weller's first

endeavour into the sphere of science fiction writing, even though he has been previously recognized for his earlier works (e.g. *The Day of the Dog*, first published in 1981), albeit belonging to the realist writing. Keeping in mind that *Land of the Golden Clouds* was Weller's pioneering foray into SF, in addition to the complication that arose with the book's publication, it can be understood why it has generated a handful of reviews. One of the reviewers, Van Ikin, states that "There's a coyness about sexuality that becomes irritating after a time […], some of the hybrid dialogues are infuriatingly indecipherable, and the incantatory language sometimes sags and becomes banal." ("Feet First into Fantasy"1) Sexuality, although not thoroughly discussed in this paper, served as an element Weller used to provide means to pronounce the validity and importance of multiculturalism present in the book, or, as Katharine England notes: "The travellers proceed jerkily, hampered as much by their own suspicions, cultural prejudices and disputatious sexual liaisons as they are by the difficult terrain and its menacing inhabitants, but tutored in tolerance as they go by the tragedies they endure together, and the unexpected small kindnesses and major sacrifices that ensure the group's survival" (42). In addition to this, romancing between characters is not something that Weller does not do at all, he does so in his previous works as well, as Ivor Indyk maintains: "Weller's stories often feature a romance between an Aboriginal boy and white girl, so the manner of his telling seemed to conjure an ideal imaginative realm in which Aboriginal and European dreamings might coexist, healing old wounds, remaking the world in a brave new hybrid form." (10) Then again, the same reviewer states that "I don't think this is Aboriginal Writing. There's epic in it, and science fiction, and shoot-em-up video-game graphics translated into writing, three or four languages, poetic citations, leopards and giant ants, crystals and mind control – a naive and often compelling hotchpotch." (Indyk 11) Weller did have difficulties during publishing process, which might have caused this sort of assertion. The amount of languages, especially poetic citations, will be analysed in the continuation of this paper, since they convey a deeper meaning and are important for the overall understanding of the novel. However, when it comes to "hotchpotch", there are a couple of things that need to be kept in mind.

Defining *Land of the Golden Clouds* in a way that it belongs to the sphere of SF is slightly difficult. Ikin dubs it as "science-fantasy epic" ("Archie Weller's *Land of the Golden Clouds*"129), whereas Polak extrapolates on the genre of the book, maintaining that it does belong to the genre of SF ("'Prizemljenje'*ZemljeZlatnihOblaka*"104), in addition to elaborating on the elements that Suvin uses to define SF, notably *cognitive estrangement* and *novum*. Polak also notices that

[s]ome characters [...] belong to the supernatural, but this form of supernatural does not necessarily belong exclusively to SF, as is the case with the novel's antagonists, *Nightstalkers*. The *Nightstalkers*, resembling vampires, belong to the conventions of the Gothic novel. The same applies for Edra women who have immense telepathic powers. This ability is not an exclusive *novum* […], but rather a common trait of horror or Gothic genre" ("'Prizemljenje' *Zemlje Zlatnih Oblaka*" 106, emphasis in the original, trans. mine).

What becomes problematic in the definition of *Land of the Golden Clouds* by genre is mainly the approach taken when it comes to close-reading the text. Taking Suvin's definition of SF into consideration, it can be seen that the *locus* of *Land of the Golden Clouds* is definitely positioned as remote to the reader, and that the constituent elements of SF according to Suvin, notably *cognitive estrangement* and *novum,* can be pinpointed, the problem arises when it comes to determining the latter, specifically, the *novum*. Polak already mentioned that the "problem with *novum* is even greater in Weller's construction of flora and fauna in the novel. The characters encounter giant ants, giant butterflies, giant grass and giant trees." ("'Prizemljenje'*ZemljeZlatnihOblaka*",106, emphasis in the original, trans. mine). However, Polak also mentionsTzvetanTodorov's definition of the fantastic, primarily the one regarding hyperbolic marvellous: "In it [hyperbolic marvellous], phenomena are supernatural only by virtue of their dimensions, which are superior to those which are familiar to us." (54).

In conclusion,it can be said that *Land of the Golden Clouds* does belong to the genre of SF, but the reader needs to bear in mind the position from which this novel speaks, which is postcolonial, and then construct the novum. Specifically, in postcolonial SF*novum* must adhere to the aforementioned rules regarding the ways in which a postcolonial SF author creates the commentary and presents *cognitive estrangement*. Postcolonial SF, in other words, does not serve as a way to introduce novelty through exploring the scientific novelty and redefining future as such: instead it uses SF tropes to provide insight into the ways in which the narrative presents the culture of the colonized as opposed to the colonizer. Polak proposesa definitive *novum* in *Land of the Golden Clouds*: "What is actually interesting in the setup of characters in Weller's novel is that they reflect a new way of functioning of the society which does not exist in any empirical country, which indeed is a novum." ("'Prizemljenje' *Zemlje Zlatnih Oblaka*", 106, emphasis in the original, trans. mine). This paper mainly deals with the concept of hybridity found in the novel, and the way in which it

contributes to the forms of cultural translation and appropriation. The proposed term for it is hybridity that

> has frequently been used in postcolonial discourse to mean simply cross-cultural 'exchange'. […]By stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts on both the colonized and the colonizer, it has been regarded as replicating assimilationist policies by masking or 'whitewashing' cultural differences. The idea of hybridity also underlies other attempts to stress the mutuality of cultures in the colonial and postcolonial process in expressions of syncreticity, cultural synergy and transculturation" (Ashcroft et al., *Postcolonial Studies*136)

which is why this definition of *novum* fits the best in order to position Weller's text as a novel that belongs to the genre of postcolonial SF. Themodification of identities and beliefs, or, to be more precise, cultural translations, which eventually lead to singular unity of characters in a troubled world serves as a *novum*, as well as provide a very strong commentary on the contemporary situation.

3. Close-reading *Land of the Golden Clouds*

> *Life is one big road with lots of signs / So when you riding through the ruts, don't you complicate your mind / Flee from hate, mischief and jealousy! Don't bury your thoughts / put your vision to reality, yeah!*– Bob Marley, "Wake Up and Live", 1979

There is a certain amount of complexity that needs to be taken into consideration when close-reading *Land of the Golden Clouds* by Archie Weller. The methodology proposed here consists of defining the complexity of the act of reading Aboriginal narrative, followed by an analysis of two groups of characters – the Keepers of the Trees who represent the Aboriginal episteme, and Michael, who represents the ancient Western episteme, in order to define the hybridity of these two sets of characters. In other words, the characters are analysed in a way to provide insight into the characters' transculturation, a term used "to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (Ashcroft et al. 254), and in which way Weller represents two different cultural epistemes and how they interact with each other in a postcolonial SF work.

3.1. *Land of the Golden Clouds* and the Reader

  Whether reading an Aboriginal text or any kind of other text unfamiliar to the reader's socio-cultural background and knowledge, it is essential for the reader to become fully familiar with the implied hermetic configuration of the narrative. In this specific case, reading *Land of the Golden Clouds* requires a reader who is fully aware of political, social and discursive implications that the author places in his work. Specifically, the term mimesis comes in play here, elaborated in detail by Paul Ricoeur, where he explains the connotations of reader's experience necessary to understand the text. Ricoeur defines mimesis, the act of "presentation and artistic imitation" (Ricoeur in Polak, *Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina*59, trans. mine), into three types: $mimesis_1$, $mimesis_2$ and $mimesis_3$.

  $Mimesis_1$, according to Ricoeur, implies that "the composition of the plot is grounded in a *preunderstanding* of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its symbolic resources, and its temporal character." (54, emphasis mine) Specifically, preunderstanding the text such as *Land of the Golden Clouds* requires a reader that is familiar with both Aboriginal context and the context of colonizer/colonized in postcolonial Australia. Iva Polak defines this even furtherby saying that "it is implied that the reader is familiar with the corresponding prose genres, key definitions of the postcolonial literature, with socio-political environment in which an Aboriginal text is created and with the Aboriginal culture and Dreaming" (*Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina,* 60, trans. mine)

  $Mimesis_2$, on the other hand, "opens the kingdom of the *as if"* (Ricoeur, 64). Ricoeur additionally states that "a narrative makes appear within a syntagmatic order all the components capable of figuring in the paradigmatic tableau established by the semantics of action. This passage from the paradigmatic to the syntagmatic constitutes the transition from mimesis, to $mimesis_2$. It is the work of the *configurating activity"* (66, emphasis mine), hence it is necessary for the reader to differentiate plot from discourse, and it that manner, configure the one into another in order to perceive both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic components that constitute the text. As Polak maintains, the "reader's basic knowledge of narratologyor the way the text functions 'from within'" (*Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina*61, trans. mine) is the defining merit of the accomplishment of $mimesis_2$.

  And finally, $mimesis_3$, according toRicoeur, "marks the *intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader*; the intersection, therefore, of the world configured by the poem and the world wherein real action occurs and unfolds its specific temporality."

(71, emphasis mine)This implies that the reader is literate, experienced and is able to cross-reference and analyse any possible connections within the text and the grand narrative in order to understand the text itself. Polak says that it "implies that the reader adds his/her own personal experience of the text's 'prehistory' to the text itself, which creates a specific horizon of the reader's expectations." (*Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina,* 61, trans. mine)

When it comes to *Land of the Golden Clouds*, Weller incorporates an abundance of various literary, socio-political and historical elements. First, the work belongs to the genre of speculative fiction, presented as a sprawling epic SF narrative that encompasses narratological elements of a journey linked to a specific quest, in this case, to end the threat present in the narrative in the form of a villain and his army. Second, Weller incorporates a massive amount of cultural, social and political intertwining plots, structures and elaborations about the vast number of tribes, societies and groups. To be more precise, Weller introduces a multicultural setup of characters that might not be understood in completion if the reader is inexperienced and unprepared. Regarding reading the Aboriginal text as such, Polak maintains that

> the Aboriginal prose text, regardless of when it has been written, will mainly produce the effect of distance between the moments of our reading of the text and its making because of the lack of correspondence of cultural codes between the implied author (Aboriginal) and the real reader (non-Aboriginal). […] If we start from a position of an outsider, in other words, a non-Aboriginal reader, we might assume that this reader, if truly interested in Aboriginal corpus, should invest additional effort in order to approach the text of another culture. […] On the other hand, when the Aboriginal audience decides to approach an Aboriginal prose text, it is adequately experienced in advance, we could say, with a more compatible mimesis[1]. (*Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina* 61-62, trans. mine)

What is implied here is that a "perfect" implied reader for whom an Aboriginal text is intendedis a reader who belongs to Aboriginal episteme, who is deeply versed and educated in a given genre and who is experienced in terms of general knowledge and perception of both literary and historical connotations of the narrative. However, Polak also states that "a quite good implied reader could be a non-Aboriginal reader versed in literary genres, who has also invested an additional effort to understand, to the possible extent, the complexities of Aboriginal contexts." (*Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina*64)Specifically, when it comes to *Land of the Golden Clouds*, the implied reader who is a cultural outsider needs to fulfil the following four prerequisites in order to be able to read into the text:

1) The reader needs to be aware of the complex historical background of the Aboriginal culture as well as the socio-political structure implied in the formation of the Aboriginal text as such. Notably, the events and causes that formed the Aboriginal corpus;

2) The reader must be versed in his/her knowledge of SF and postcolonial literature in order to detect conventional SF tropes and conventional postcolonial literature topics which the author positioned in the narrative;

3) The reader must be acquainted with the culture-specific aspects of Aboriginal text, such as the importance of the landscape (i. e. country), and the Aboriginal Dreaming/Dreamtime

4) The reader must have a grasp of cultural backgrounds and narratives of other cultures present in *Land of the Golden Clouds*, most of which mimic or represent existing present-day nations and cultures. Specifically, the work requires a reader aware of the problems of Australia's multiculturalism.

3.2. Analyses of the Keepers of the Trees and Prince Michael of the Ants

Land of the Golden Clouds takes place in Australia three thousand years in the future, after a global nuclear war. The land is described as barren and irradiated, even though a certain population of people still exists. Notably, these are the members of the Ilkari people, who are descendants of the white population that mixed with the indigenous one. Apart from them, there are the Outsiders who were banished from the Silver City of Canaan, an odd group of Cricketeers who appropriated cricket as a religion (often using sport terms found in cricket to present their thoughts in an interesting, yet confusing sports lingo), and many others. However, the first part of the analysis will place focus on another culturally distinctive group in the novel, The Keepers of the Trees, who are direct descendants of the Aboriginal people, or in other words, Aboriginals who kept and retained their ancient customs and culture.

The Keepers of the Trees are introduced early in the book, where they meet one of the main protagonists and his party, encamped:

'Keepers of the Trees come.'
'We will make a fire,' Ilki said eagerly.

He enjoyed the company of these quiet, *dark people who walked the land all over*. It was known by every Ilkari that the Keepers of the Trees had sprung from this land like the rocks and trees themselves. They were *a part of this country – every grain of it – and they knew all its secrets*. They kept out of the way of the white people and their ways, for it had been the white people who *had annoyed the spirits* and caused the High Ones to walk upon this earth, bringing not sustenance but destruction. So they kept to themselves, these remnants of the *oldest Tribe*, with their own *language, laws and customs*. (Weller, 4-5, emphasis mine)

Describing them as people who walk across the entire land is a direct depiction of Aboriginal traditional way of life. Weller positions them from the beginning as part of the land, knowledgeable of every single aspect of the country, since they *are* the country. The Aboriginals have the concept of *Dreaming* or *Dreamtime*, which is a very misfortunate English coinage. Polak notes that in Aboriginal languages, there used to be "at least 500 different terms for *Dreaming*" (*Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina* 37), but the English coinage followed by definition was flawed from the beginning. Polakargues that

> the English words *Dreamtime* and *Dreaming* originated rather early in a careless translation of the word *Altjiranga* from the language of Aranda Aboriginal people who live in the Australian Northern Territory. The field work of W. B. Spencer, a professor of biology, and F. J. Gillen, a post office manager in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, led to the publishing of *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* in 1899, due to which they had been dubbed as the pioneers of Australian athropology focusing on the research into traditional communities. (*Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina* 38, emphasis in the original)

Polak then mentions A. P. Elkin, who noted that "coined word *dream-time* initially described the mystical time of ancient native people, something that belongs to the ancient history and can be placed only within the framework of the prehistory." (*Razvoj književne proze australskih Aboridžina*38).Swain, on the other hand, describes another way of translating the term by elaborating on the claim made by T.G.H. Strehlow:

> 'Dreamtime' or 'Dreaming' […] emerged with a mistranslation of the *altjira* root, which has the meaning of 'eternal, uncreated, springing out of itself. *Altjirarama*, literally 'to see the eternal', is the evocative description for human sleep-dreams, but the so-called 'Dreaming' is derived from *Altjiringangambakala*: 'that which derives from *altjira*'. Strehlow grasps at

'having originated out of its own eternity' as the closest possible English equivalent. (Strehlow in Swain, 21, emphasis in the original)

Moreover, Swain proposes a definite description of the term by suggesting that by "[f]ollowingStrehlow's rendering of the original Arandameaning, 'eternal events' approaches the reality but perhaps stillharbours too many unjustified time referents. The words that I findmost applicable in English are *Abiding Events*. Collectively, I suggestthese form an *Abiding Law*" (22, emphasis in the original). Therefore – abiding by the law of the land, as well as understanding the notion of time as eternity or the perpetual now, instead of linearity with its past, present and future, the Aboriginal concept of Dreaminghas a closer connection to a set of beliefs, rules and laws instead of a single aspect connected to the Western notion of dream and dreaming. W.E.H. Stanner, for an example, states that "The Dreaming conjures up the notion of a sacred, heroic time of the indefinitely remote past, such a time is also, in a sense, still part of the present. One cannot fix The Dreaming in time: it was, and is, *everywhen*." (58, emphasis mine) This notion of *everywhen* is used in order to add to the definition of temporality and spatiality of the Dreaming. To sum it up, the Dreaming consists of a belief (or, a set of beliefs) in which a connection to ancestral beings from ancient heroic time is still present. In addition, it does not belong to a defined temporal sphere,instead it belongs to the concept of *everywhen*. On top of that, it should be regarded as the Law instead of being connected to the act of dreaming.The Dreaming is omnipresent, yet eternal, which is why the aforementioned terms like *Abiding Law* fit more than the proposed coined term Dreaming and Dreamtime.

Keepers of the Trees follow very specific rules and adhere to laws in order to read the landscape, move the narrative by suggesting the courses of action through their guidance and provide spiritual input to other characters as regards understanding the world around them. No one but them, in fact, is able to do so, since no one *belongs* to their culture. Moreover, only by belonging to their culture is it possible to read the land. In other words, by being educated in their ancient customs, religion, stories and culture in general, they are able to provide a key to understand the world around them. In comparison to other characters, such as the Outsiders, who barely managed to navigate through the unknown, the Keepers have an advantage:

The country now became heavily wooded. There was an uncanny silence, and a great misery seemed to seep from the very ground. Even the occasional camping places of the Outsiders were seldom seen now. Indeed, their *two Outsider travelling companions* had to admit they

hardly knew this country. But the *two Keepers* had an *affinity to this land,* even though *they had never been here. Their people's laws and stories of the Creation were crisscrossed forever over the vast terrain,* joining communities in song, story, dance and law. (Weller 242, emphasis mine)

It is more than fitting to keep Swain's definition of the Abiding Law in mind when it comes to reading Weller's text. Since Keepers of the Trees belong to this mythical point of view of the history, they are also depicted by Weller as being a part of something eternal, timeless, in a way that they are in fact connected to the myth of Creation, being the part of its sacred eternity: "The Rainbow Serpent crept from waterhole to waterhole and the Wandjina kept each secret place, each birthing place sacred. The woman, Katunga, gave birth to children who then turned into egg-shaped stones. It was from these stones the Yalunga or spirit children were born, even today, so there would always be spirits in this magic land. *Every Keeper of the Trees was born a spirit child.*" (Weller 82, emphasis mine)

The Keepers see themselves as people who belong to eternity since they are all part of the Creation, and since they see the land as the spiritual being, they also attribute themselves to it as spiritual beings, children even, who have belonged to the land ever since the Creation.This Aboriginal relationship with the land is further described by Stanner: "[Aboriginals] neither dominate their environment nor seek to change it. 'Children of nature' they are not, nor are they nature's 'masters'. One can only say they are 'at one' with nature. (65) This specifically means that both their heritage and their understanding of the world around them makes them belong to the land in a way that they, in a sense, are the land in their own right. The contextual "forever" is often used in *Land of the Golden Clouds*. Stanner maintains that "[t]ime as a continuum is a concept only hazily present in the Aboriginal mind. What might be called social time is, in a sense, bent into cycles or circles." (67) In other words, placing specific events on a timescale does not exist. Instead, by making cycles, such as differentiating Old Time from the New Time in the book, the Keepers of the Trees purport this belief of combining the past, present and future into one unitary concept, which has cycles that repeat throughout eternity. To characters other than the Keepers of the Trees, the word merely represents a point in the linear flow of timewhich connoteseventswitheitherunspecified duration or terrible consequences.Such is the case with S'shony, a *nightstalker* woman who turns against her people in order to put an end to misery and evil her people have caused to the land, shedefines eternity by believing that "[f]orever was when the Gods walked upon the earth and banished the people to the homes of their only

allies, the bats. It was when the sun fell from the sky and all of the Gods' creations were destroyed. Forever was like the Never World, a scary and unwanted place." (Weller 15)

One of the main protagonists, Ilgar, later renamed to Red Mond,[1] serves as a connection between almost all the characters, being a party leader of the group that ventures across the land. Red Mond has some Aboriginal ancestry, but he does not in fact *belong* to them, although the Keepers of the Trees are able to discern details of his lineage just by observing him for a while:

> After all, were not Ilkari almost Keepers of the Trees, they reasoned. Look at that one there, the one that was supposed to talk to the moon. Look at that his deep-brown eyes. Were they not the eyes of our Race? And his skin was darker than the others, while some of his hand movements were shadows of our own. There was nothing anyone could hide from a Keeper of the Trees. (Weller 6)

When meeting Red Mond,S'Shony is depicted as someone who is afraid of eternity, since to her, the concept of eternal is not understandable:

> "I could look at you forever," he smiled.
> She remembered Willum also used this word and the uneasiness it had given her. Just before he died in the caves."What is forever?" she whispered. "Forever began when the oldest rock was only a grain of sand and the whole world was only dust in the sky."
> She stared at him a long long time, savouring this monumental thought. This word frightened her almost as much as the huge empty space above and around her. (Weller 35)

The concept of eternity is logically familiar to the Keepers. They understand it as a part of their own heritage and accept is as something that is considered to be understood by default. It does not pose estrangement or confusion to them, since they know that eternity is a part of everything, *everywhen*. They discern the eternity from linear temporality, but even they, at least in *Land of the Golden Clouds*, perceive the eternal in a similar aspect as the non-Keepers, specifically, when it comes to the reckoning of time since the nuclear war, differentiating the Old from New Time. The following quote depicts that, but it also mentions one more important reference regarding Aboriginal history:

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[1]The renaming ritual in the book is presented as an act where a member of the tribe receives his/her own story, upon which they are renamed according to the tradition of the village shaman called Baba: "The Baba was the clan's historian, lawmaker and, more importantly, the storygiver" (Weller 36). For the remainder of this paper, this character will be referred to as Red Mond instead of his birthname.

At the end of the Old Time, there had been many Keepers who did not know who their family were or what Tribe they came from. The various Totems had devised ways of making sure this never happened again. The old women of each family were the custodians and were the only ones who could recite back to three generations each member's genealogy. So there could be no mistake of brother marrying sister or even cousin marrying cousin. (Weller 84, emphasis mine)

The emphasized reference obviously points out to the Stolen Generation.[2] Weller intentionally uses this reference to affirm the statement that the Keepers truly are the original descendants as well as the oldest race to live on the continent of Australia depicted in the text. In addition to that, he mentions new laws and ways the Keepers appropriated, in order to adapt after the nuclear catastrophe. Old Time, in this sense, represents everything from the beginning of existence up to the event of the nuclear war catastrophe in 1999,[3] whereas New Time starts from that point onward. Even though the concept of *everywhen* of Dreaming does not fully apply here, what does apply is the code of law the Keepers have towards the land, which they must abide by, as Flood argues "[the] Aboriginal law is believed to derive from the Dreaming and therefore to be unchangeable." (159)Stanner proposes another definition when it comes to the connection between life and belief: "The active philosophy of Aboriginal life transforms this 'key', which is expressed in the idiom of poetry, drama, and symbolism, into a principle that The Dreaming determines not only what life is but also what it can be. Life, so to speak, is a one-possibility thing, and what this is, is the 'meaning' of The Dreaming." (61-62).

TheKeepers value, above everything, life in all its forms, and dedicate a good measure of time to dealing with burial rites and rituals, as well as ceremonies and rituals linked to the appreciation of the living: "Upon each rock they [the Keepers] splashed a mark of red ochre to show that the dead lay here but they had been avenged, so the spirits could rest in peace."

[2]Stolen Generations refers to the forceful attempt to educate the native population that the white Australian government did that in a rather aggressive manner, by enforcing schooling of Aboriginal children by taking them from their parents, in most cases by force, and putting them in enclosed, specialized boarding schools, in which Aboriginal children were taught to read and write, but in most cases, they would have been placed in white families "for their own good", most of them never getting a chance to ever find their biological families. After these policies were banned, a number of Aboriginal soon-to-be renowned authors would make a stand regarding the misconduct of the Aboriginal people. Penny Van Toorn mentions Oodgeroo, K. Gilbert, J. Davis and C. Johnson as writers who "called for justice and land rights, challenged racist stereotypes, dismantled exclusionary models of national identity, and corrected biased historical narratives of progress and peaceful settlement" (Van Toorn29), both in their works and in their political engagement.
[3] Most reviews, notably those of Van Ikin, state that the catastrophe in the book occurred in 1997 by the Western reckoning of time. However, Red Mond states at one point that there are three unlucky numbers according to Ilkari belief: 12, 16 and 99, the numbers being the date when the nuclear catastrophe happened – December 16th, 1999.

(Weller 29) This ritual happens more than once; every time someone significant dies, red ochre is splashed to calm the spirits of the dead. When it comes to the *nightstalkers*, however, the Keepers have a different belief: "Indeed, many said the unloved ones were the ghosts of the Djanaks,[4] doomed to walk forever in the shape of men and feel men's pain and the burning sun they detested so upon their skins for all time." (Weller 98) However, Billah, one of the Keepers present at that point, retorts to violence with an utterance of a doctrine of all Keepers: "We are the Keepers of the Trees . . . the peacemakers. Let the white man spill blood on this land. For we are but the caretakers of the spirits." (Weller 98) Through his heterodiegetic narrator, Weller positions the *nightstalkers*as unquestionable antagonists in the novel, and even though they convey most of the evil acts, due to hatred as well as survival needs, the Keepers on the other hand still stick to the idea that they need to upkeep the peace instead of propagating hatred, in addition to being responsible to the affairs of the land.Ikin additionally pinpoints this by saying that

> Weller concentrates uponfluidity and evolution ascharacteristics of cultural heritage. In their quest to survive, his 'good' characters seek space to be allowed tolive-and-let-live (whereas the 'bad' characters seek the destruction ofanyone who is different) and his moresensitive and intelligent characters seethe need to modify their identity andbeliefs (within acceptable limits) if thiswill promote harmony and tolerance. ("Archie Weller's *Land of the Golden Clouds*"131)

However, the Keepers rarely actively communicate with other characters and take a lot of precautions before even stepping into any kind of contact with someone who is not a Keeper, or, to be more exact, they take significant precautions when it comes to approaching anything non-Aboriginal: "As a rule, any Keepers kept away from […] remains of European civilisation, not only because of the law that forbade associating with any of the white people, but also because […] uneasy, restless spirits frequented the ruins of their home." (Weller 304)

The two characters who follow the main group on their quest are the Keeper twins Mungart and Weerluk. Red Mond makes an initial contact with them at the beginning of the story: "When Ilgar saw the two youths close up he got another surprise – they were twins! […] The twins decided to help Ilgar bury his dead. They were called Mungart and Weerluk, being the names, in their language, for Jam Tree and Salmon Gum." (Weller 28) They would henceforth leave Red Mond at that point and later reunite with him after a corroboree where they were initially headed: "About thirty miles from where the small group struggled across

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[4]Weller offers the translation of the term Djanak by noting that it translates to "spirit" (372).

the dry purple rocks a huge corroboree was coming to a close. […] It was the time to gather and get news from different parts of the Nation so they could see what parts needed healing. It was a time for alliances to be made or strengthened. Laws would be restrengthened also in secret meetings of the old people." (Weller 81)

This corroboree, in other words, serves as an introduction for the reader to observe one of the most sacred acts, or events, organized by the Keepers. The corroboree is not only a social gathering, but also an event in which the stories are shared, interpreted and given value. Here it can be seen that the Keepers share stories between each other and learn from them, treasuring that knowledge so they can use it later. From their departure from a corroboree they join the party of other protagonists on their quest, but they still adhere to ancestral laws inscribed in their minds. However, after witnessing a catastrophe in form of the attack of the *nightstalkers* on the corroboree, Weerluk renounces his connection to the law:

> "Brother, are you a fool?"Mungart asked. "This water is for the spirits of these hills. We should not even touch it, never mind drink it or take some with us."
>
> "I don't care about spirits. I am a dead man anyway, living only until the Djanaks kill me. From now on the laws of my ancestors do not mean a thing to me. I am already dead and walk with the ghosts of my ancestors." (Weller 101)

The twinsserve as silent guides of the party on their quests, observing and reading the land. On numerous occasions, the Keepers are the ones responsible for giving timely warnings and conduct path finding, due to their connection to the land. Red Mond, the appointed leader of the group on the quest to eliminate *nightstalkers*, notices this, but since he does not belong to the Aboriginal culture (although he has some Aboriginal ancestry), he cannot understand their ways of reading the landscape, since he is a member of the Ilkari people, who are in fact the descendants of the white race: "Red Mond watched the two brothers as their eyes roved over the ground, picking up signs he could *never* see." (Weller 113, emphasis in the original) This reading of landscape, tracking, forewarnings about the upcoming events and reasoning for all the occurring events the party experiences is thoroughly understood by the twins because they are part of the land, and because they do abide by the law (even though Weerluk, as aforementioned, rejects it).

The Keepers efficiently read the land during the entire journey. Traversing through the land is difficult, and the travelling group is aware of this: "Crossing the rocky, empty badlands had been an arduous journey for them all and now they knew why few people from

other places found their way to the Ilkari lands. *It was impossible to cross that country unless, like the Keepers of the Trees, you had the knowledge of the waterholes.*" (Weller 108 emphasis mine) Since Keepers are apt in reading the land, they know exactly where to look to ensure a healthy voyage for the group. The members of the group apart from the Keepers are inept in deciding which path is the most appropriate and easiest to traverse, but since they have the Keepers on their side, the voyage is so much easier due to their knowledge. The group eventually traverses through the desert badlands:

> They could sense the result of […] destruction on these *desolate pages of the landscape* they had just passed, where not a single tree stood to hold the spirit of an ancestor close to the earth. It was a forgotten land – an unhappy land for the keepers of the Trees and they were glad to get out of it. (Weller 139, emphasis mine)

The author uses the metaphor "desolate pages of the landscape", since the Keepers truly *read* the land in the same manner the books are read, drawing out meaning and importance of specific part of the land by reading the signs that are present therein. The land not having any trees to them is dead, since there is a scarcity of life, which they value the most, in any form.On the other hand, the Keepers are apt in recognizing the land travelling party first reaches the broken-backed mountains. All members of the party are astonished by what they see:

> so too did their first true sight of the broken-backed mountains before them cause their minds to stall at the enormity of what they saw. There was only one mountain in their desert home – the rooftop of the world. But that was a mere rock to these great, grey-green-blue monsters that erupted from the earth almost with a life of their own. (Weller 260)

The Keepers, however, attach another meaning to this sight: "The Keepers knew that they did, indeed, have a life of their own. Some of these mountains were *sisters turned to stone and every one of them was of sacred significance*." (Weller 260, emphasis mine) Having in mind the knowledge about the Creation and the Dreaming, the Keepers are aware of the ancient stories of how land came to be in the first place, and that these mountains, according to them, are in fact the ancestors themselves, or, their formation was caused by the ancestral beings that belong to the Dreaming. It is therefore essential that the reader is familiar with the concept of the reading of the country, belonging to the country and the Dreaming itself in

order to understand the role of the twins. Unlike most characters, the twins are not exposed to danger, nor do they converse with people the party meets on their journey across the country. Instead, they are described as camouflaged, as part of the landscape which is why barely anyone notices them: "Somewhere on the journey to the Hill People's village the two brothers had melted away as silent and unobtrusive as only they could be" (Weller 120). Their unseen presence persists through the entire voyage. The group is aware of them, but they only follow the group somewhere in the background, without revealing themselves more than necessary to the others. The only two parts of the book where the twins intentionally remain away from the rest of the party is during their visit to the Hill People's village, and during the visit to the Silver City, where they even give a grim warning to the rest of the party: "'We will wait for you beside the gates of the Silver City until she is well, ngooni. Don't forget, you are going into a world you have never dreamed of. A world we know of only in the stories of the Old Time—that came after the Dreamtime and all its creating,' Mungart called over his shoulder." (152) Whenever the twinsare present, the party progresses. However, when they are not around, the party is in jeopardy. This is visible in the visit to the Silver City, where the party remains for three months, a period of time where they remain in one locality,during which they have no support by the twins..

Hence, the heterodiegetic narrator evokes the importance of the Keepers for the party's survival as they exit the city: "Now was the time when the Keepers of the Trees came into their own. *By following ancient paths, even they had only heard of, and by following the signs of bird and creature*, they always came back from a hunt with food for all and every night they camped by some form of fresh water." (Weller 219, emphasis mine) In other words, Weerluk and Mungart have received specific sets of knowledge from their ancestors, firmly defined in their culture, to be able to make a mental map and read the landwith minimal effort. Storytelling is present in the entire book, almost at every time when the party decides to make a stop to rest or hunt. Exchanging stories brings up bits of knowledge about the world, whereas in Aboriginal (or Keepers') case, storytelling teaches them how to be one with the land, as the part of the *Abiding Law*:

> As usual there were songs and stories of the Creation of the earth and creatures upon it, retold to the youngsters who had not heard them yet. There was a reason why every animal was like it was, or bird, or flower, or contour of the land. The Creators were Julunggul; Ingaruko; Waugal, who lived in the waterways; Baiarni; Darralulun, who now lived in the sky, Nurunderi, the huge powerful man who created the mighty river once known as the Murray

and the lakes around its mouth and all the fish therein; Witana, who created the mountains in the southern part of this land once known as the Flinders; Nagacork, the gentle wanderer who loved and created all things then went up into the sky where the smoke from his fire was the great swathe of stars across the roof of the keeper's world. . . . And so the names went on. *They had made every being from the earth and some of these beings had turned into parts of the earth. So the earth and the Keepers of the Trees were truly one and the same in spirit and soul.*(Weller 81-82, emphasis mine)

Red Mond, on the other hand, known as someone who can read the stars and prophesisethe future often fails to discern the signs he is "given". Red Mondonly partly belongs to the Aboriginal/Keeper culture, and therefore is not versed in reading most important signs.Even though the twins keep away from most of the affairs of other members of the group, there is one individual who undeniably grasps their attention – Prince Michael of the Ants. The affection the twins have for Michael is seen through the act of mimicking, which represents an important colonial trope of the colonizee:

The two Keepers took him [Michael] into their hearts and made a special place for him there. Theirs was a nation of mimics and being able to simulate the strange customs of the white man had been the skill of their best comics. So they came to enjoy the old man's erratic characteristics, even though they did not understand a word he said. (Weller 225)

Later on, the Keepers conclude the following:

The two Keepers gave him the name 'biditwardakadak' which simply meant ant man of importance. Not even the fierce kirlirl, or bull-ant, would bite him and he would never wittingly hurt an ant, no matter how small. The two brothers treated this as a sign of respect for the land and all the land's ways. For even the ant had its place in the stories of Creation. Some ants were even heroes in some Tribes' stories and were, as with everything else, Totems of other families. *The fact that this ancient man loved the ants so much only showed he also loved the land from whence the Keepers had come.* (Weller 226, emphasis mine)

They recognize him, in other words, as an ascetic, as someone who *respects the land*even though for others he may seem as a lunatic. This is a crucial point in the book as regards the transcultural exchange of these two characters, since the Keepers, as stated before, avoid the Western characters as much as possible, yet they show a specific nexus with Michael since he,

like them, belongs to the social margin.Moreover, they notice an aspect that is common only to the Keepers, the aspect being love towards ants, living beings, and land as such, since the Keepers, as aforementioned, are directly bound to the land.This is why those three characters, the two Keepers who communicate and understand Michael, and Michael who is closer to the Keepers than other characters become emblematic of hybridity. As Ashroft et al. maintain,

> Hybridity has frequently been used in postcolonial discourse to mean simply cross-cultural "exchange". [...] By stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts on both the colonized and the colonizer, it has been regarded as replicating assimilationist policies by masking or 'whitewashing' cultural differences. The idea of hybridity also underlies other attempts to stress the mutuality of cultures in the colonial and postcolonial process in expressions of syncreticity, cultural synergy and transculturation (136)

The importance of Michael and his connection to the Keepers is crucial, since they replicate one another and share characteristics that make them both hybrid, and in terms of the text itself, they are positioned as "the guiding" characters who indirectly guide the party. The Keepers of the Trees have already been discussed. Michael, on the other hand, needs a separate analysis prior to concluding the connection between these characters and their impact and significance for the book.

Weller presentsMichael as someone who belongs to the Western episteme (Silver City, to be exact), and still appropriates the aspects of timelessness by quoting, from the book's point of view, ancient Western poets – Shelley, Yeats and Kipling. Appearing later in the book, Michael first approaches Red Mond and introduces himself:

> He was clothed in a long, ragged blue cloak that swirled around his ragged blue trousers and clung tenaciously to his thin shoulders.
> "Peace, brother. Fear not the might of an old man whose strength lies only in dreams now," he croaked out a greeting.
> […] "I am Prince Michael of the Ants. You have come across the plain of grass from new lands as yet untrodden by my path."
> "How do you know this?" Red Mond said, curious yet wary of witchcraft.
> "I am Prince Michael of the Ants," the old man repeated. "I *read* it in the tracks upon the sand,' he said simply." (Weller 220, emphasis mine)

The act of reading is immediately recognized by Red Mond, who also attempts to read the stars on many occasions, although not as efficiently as the Keepers read the land or as Michael reads the omens by quoting poetry. Unlike the Keepers who draw knowledge out of reading the signs directly from the land, Michael instead draws knowledge through precognition of events. Soon after the introduction, Michael quotes William Butler Yeats for the first time in front of Red Mond:

> *Land of Heart's Desire,*
> *Where no beauty has no ebb, decay no flood*
> *But* joy is wisdom, time an endless song.
>   He sank back down into himself again and smiled a cracked smile with broken yellow teeth. "William Butler Yeats.The Land of Heart's Desire. That is where you are now," he chuckled. (Weller 220-221, emphasis mine)

Michael intentionally refers to time as an "endless song", which is the first sign of his precognition and interpreted knowledge through wisdom of poetry, in the same manner the knowledge is interpreted in the Keepers' customs that involve sharing of stories and therefore the acquisition of wisdom needed to read the land. As the Dreaming has been previously discussed as a belief belonging to *everywhen*, conclusion can be drawn that Michael also has a specific way of deciphering the same concept. The Keepers adhere to The Abiding Law, whereas Michael adheres to the teaching of the "immortal ancient poets". One of particularly interesting poets in his repertoire of quoting is William Butler Yeats, whose quote he often distributes when it comes to precognition of the upcoming events and foreshadowing the signs of the upcoming future. As previously discussed, the Keepers become attached to him almost instantly, even though he is definitely a part of the Western episteme. Due to William Butler Yeats being an Irish poet, in addition to his quotes having the most impact on the Keepers, a connection can be drawn between their relationship and the relationship of the real-world Irish and Aboriginals. Ann McGrath makes a note regarding the connection between the Australian Aboriginals and the Irish:

> In Australian popular culture and labour history, Irishness came to be seen as a class and ethnic protest against English moral, class, political and "race" superiority. Irishness has thus been successfully mythologised not only as a historical victimisation epic but also as a subversive anti-colonial and working class "battler" identity. Not only did mainstream Australian colonial identities self-consciously distinguish themselves from the British in England, they embraced such "Irish" values. (74)

The connection between the Aboriginals and the Irish is not a new concept in both the politics, postcolonial literature and cultural studies,[5] nor is it a new approach used by Weller, who has involved the concept in his previous works. Watts mentions

> Doug Dooligan from […] Archie Weller's *The Day of the Dog* (1981). Doug, a troubled mixed-blood, feels excluded from modern society. His powers of sensuality, related to this ethnic bloodlines, are contrasted to the brutality of 1970's Perth […]Doug suffers because both his Irishness and his Aboriginality […] have been pushed from modern Australian cultural values. Nonetheless, he embodies the oppression felt by both groups whose re-established kinship and mutual history challenges the Anglo-Australian acquisition of national identity. (45)

To draw an example from *Land of the Golden Clouds*, both the Keepers and Michael are pushed in the background, serving others as some sort of guide characters, and these characters share a very specific connection unlike other members of the group. They recognize each other, and immediately upon the introductions, they maintain a very notable respect, as previously aforementioned. What Weller does here is a form of cultural recognition between these two characters, in order to maintain an approach where they mimic each other's actions, as well as sharing the knowledge of the world, the Keepers through their own customs, and Michael through his vast knowledge of ancient poetry.

Another very important aspect ascribed to Michael is his madness. Because of this, his presence *is* felt in the party, but he is not taken seriously enough to serve as some sort of a main protagonist. Instead, Michael keeps to himself, just like the Keepers. Where the Keepers serve as actual guides through the *locum*, Michael serves as a mechanism which foresees the upcoming events and concepts the party is going to experience. It is even specifically stated in the book, soon after Michael has been introduced: "Their lunatic singer of songs had gone off on one of his vacillating walks but they knew he would find them again. He seemed to have some *uncanny knowledge*as to their whereabouts". (Weller 227) Michael mimics the Keepers in their tendency to stay away from the main attention of the group. At first it might seem that

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[5] Edward Watts mentions two additional works, among others, which also depict the relationship between Aboriginals and the Irish. Specifically, he mentions that two "Aboriginal texts, Jack Davis' play *Kullark* (1979) and Eric Willmot's novel *Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior* (1987), have emerged which at once accurately recreate a brutal invasion and create parameters whereby the two races can ameliorate the lingering conflict without sacrificing indigenous identity or recycling exclusionary concepts such as integration." (33). McGrath also notes that in the framework of political identity, Aboriginals tend to more than often openly accentuate whether they have any Irish ancestry, due to both Aboriginals and Irish sharing a similar perception of the English being the 'Other': "The Australian hobby of travelling vast distances to find appealing Irish origin narratives is no longer the exclusive preserve of settler and migration identity quests. As with other Australians, the 'Aboriginal Irish' select from a range of potential ancestors. In addition, like other Australians, Aboriginal Australians of mixed ancestry would seem to prefer to identify as Irish rather than English." (75)

Michael's preference to staying in the background comes from his madness, but the Ilkari have a very specific perspective when it comes to madness: "[…] to the Ilkari, a mad person was the best sort of luck. A mad man or woman lived in their own world and *often saw thingsthat others did not*" (Weller 222) On top of it, Michael is old, which is another trait that the Ilkari consider very rare. At one point, Red Mond comes to Michael's defense when he is met with mistrust by others: "'He is an old man and where we come from any lucky to be kissed by old age are loved and welcomed by our clans for their wisdom and knowledge.'" (Weller 223) Yet even though he is mad, Michael still sticks to a specific logic that he adheres to, in the same way the Keepers do with their Abiding Law. Michael has a motto, which he states after another quoting of poetry:

> "Semel insanivimus omnes," Prince Michael said, sitting up from his pile of filthy blue rags. "That is my motto and my heart. The words pump life into me so I keep walking and talking. Semel insanivimus omnes: We have all once been mad." (Weller 222)

At first it seems as the motto is a way how Michael copes with his condition, but the idea behind it is that Michael is not mad to the point of being crippled by his madness. At one point, Red Mond even suggests that Michael is not in fact mad at all:

> But then, so it had appeared with the Prophets and their wives . . . and the Hill People . . . and the Outsiders . . . and even the Sisters were sometimes crazy in their thoughts. He sometimes thought that the only really sane person among the lot was the mad Prince of the Ants. (Weller 283)

Instead, his madness comes from his prophetic abilities, since Michael is first and foremost – an exiled prophet from the Silver City, which is discovered soon after Michael reunites with his former wife, Laelia, who has escaped the Silver City together with the rest of the party. Laelia recounts of Michael's past and mentions what he truly was:

> The one you call Prince Michael of the Ants was once known as Michael, God-like, and he was a Prophet—just as those you hated were Prophets. He was from the Tribe of Benjamin and a great and powerful man was he. You ask how I know all this?Because he was my husband. (Weller 255)

Being a Prophet means two things for Michael: First, he has the ability of deciphering the future, since the Prophets in the Silver City were apt in that, in addition to being able to use mind-reading abilities. Second, this affirms him as someone belonging to the Western episteme, since the Prophets in the Silver City are carefully chosen among the purebred

Canaanites. As aforementioned, Michael often quotes poetry from the "forbidden" poets of the "Old Time", namely Shelley, Yeats and Kipling. All three of them are in fact "the ancient poets" of the Western, European civilization which is dubbed as dangerous by the Keepers. Laelia adds this piece of information when she recounts Michael's story:

> The father of Michael, God-like, was called Jehiah and he had been a follower of Jehovah. […]
>
> But Jehiah had a very dangerous gift that had been passed down from father to son for many generations.
>
> The gift had been three slim volumes by three famous men who had lived even before there was any thought about ending the world. Thus were they the seeds from whence the Devil's rats had come, pitting their meagre minds against the one and only all-powerful God. Questioning his very existence and arguing about or discussing things they could not possibly comprehend. Poets, like Bards, were a dangerous and disturbing people and the three heretics that gradually turned from volumes to dust as the ages went by and only became memorised words to the family of Jehiah were: Rudyard Kipling, Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Butler Yeats. (Weller 255)

The verses used in *Land of the Golden Clouds* are often snipped in a way to *seem* as irrelevant and not connected to the narrative in a meaningful way apart from looking like a retort to the specific situation in the present by Michael.But the truth behind these poems lies hidden in the previously mentioned abilities that Michael has, notably the ability of precognition, which serves as a mechanism of warning and recounting of what is about to happen to the party as they travel to their final destination. Each poem is placed very carefully in the book. In addition, each poem depicts a very accurate future regarding the group's quest, which can be analysed only through close-reading of the full versions of some poems. "The Land of Heart's Desire" has been previously mentioned as the introductory poem Michael quoted upon meeting Red Mond, with an explicit quote shown in *Land of the Golden Clouds*. However, the reader should bear in mind the whole context of Yeats' original play, "The Land of Heart's Desire". The similarity between Yeats' play and Weller's book can be also noted since Weller is familiar with both the socio-political situation between the Irish and their colonizer in addition to the concept of "Shamrock Aboriginals". Declan Kiberd maintains that "Throughout the nineteenth century,the Irish had been treated in the English media as hopelessly child-like […] – unlike the adult, urbane and rationalAnglo-Saxon. Like the black peoples, the Irish were deemedchildish in an age when the answer to child-like subversion

was aritual beating." (131) Yeats' play's main topic is the position of a child as opposed to the adult, yearning for the land of heart's desire, or, as Kiberd notes it: "[…] childhood is surrounded by a *cordonsanitaire* of nostalgia and escape, and kept severely apart from theknowledge of change and growth in adult life. What the childactually is or wants means nothing in such literature, for this is thelandscape of the adult heart's desire" (130, emphasis in the original). To draw a parallel between the reference of the play in Weller's book, Michael immediately attaches the similar connotation to the *locum* of the book. He is versed in Western culture and immediately understands the problematic the party is dealing with; in this case, the land of heart's desire is the land of the golden clouds, the *locum*, and Michael is aware of the proposed end to the novel where the given society ultimately reaches their desire – the multicultural singularity. The concept of the "other" being children as regards the "Other", the colonizers, is more than obvious when put into a context such as the one in Weller's text, since the colonizer is the one who adjusts and controls the colonized in the same manner an adult would control a child, as Ashcroft maintains:

> Just as "childhood" began in European culture with the task of learning how to read, so education and literacy become crucial in the imperial expansion of Europe, establishing ideological supremacy, inculcating the values of the colonizer, and separating the 'adult' colonizing races from the "childish" colonized. (39).

Michael's introductory Yeats quote is in fact the resolution for the entire book, which once again additionally positions Michael as the all-knowing prophet with an insight into the future.Michael is also versed enough in this knowledge that through it, he can mimic and portray beliefs from other cultures through quoting of specific lines, as he did with the Keepers of the Trees. The example here is"Ode to the West Wind" by Shelley, which enraptures the minds of Keepers. In Weller's book, the following verses are mentioned:

> *O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn being,*
> *Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead*
> *Are driven, like ghost from an enchanter fleeing,*
> Yellow *and* black*, and pale and hectic* red,
> *Pestilence stricken multitudes.*(Weller 262, emphasis mine)

The Keepers do not understand Michael's language, but Weller places the colours – yellow, black and red – the colours the Keepers deem sacred:[6] "every one of the boys was given some gift with the special colours woven in them—red for their earth and their blood spilled upon it, yellow from the Mother Sun who gave them life and fire to keep alive, and black for the colour of the people." (Weller 85) Michael, in this case, is familiar with their culture, and understands the world in a similar manner as the Keepers, yet instead of reading the landscape, Michael *quotes the ancient poetry*, which serves as his personal law he abides by, which almost costs him his life since he is banished from the Silver City. Weller incorporates Western poetry and translates it culturally in the same way as he incorporates the Dreaming, and in this process of translation, poetry and the Dreaming change. To prove this argument even further, the remaining lines of the poem are worth quoting in full:

> […] Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
>
> Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
>
> Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,
>
> *Angels of rain and lightning* there are spread
>
> On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
>
> Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
>
> Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
>
> Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
>
> The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
>
> Of the dying year, to which this closing night
>
> Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
>
> Vaulted with all thy congregated might
>
> *Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere*
>
> *Black rain, and fire, and hail*, will burst: O hear! (Shelley707-708, emphasis mine)

The poem deals with the destructive power and the consequences the destruction brings with it. Harold Bloom argues in relation to the poem, "wind can have regenerative powers, but it can also mean intimation, something stated in an indirect or concealed manner; in this sense the wind can be a messenger or prophet of things to come" (49), which undoubtedly makes

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[6]The colours refer to the Aboriginal flag which was "first flown on National Aboriginal and Islander Day in July 1971 in Adelaide but became a strong, unifying symbol of Aboriginal identity when flown at the Aboriginal 'embassy' in 1972. It was designed by Harold Thomas of the Arrernte. Black symbolises Aboriginal people past, present and future, red the earth, red ochre and Aboriginal spiritual relationship to the land, and yellow the sun, bringer of life." (Flood 240)

resemblance to Michael's ability to prophesize the future. If compared to the discourse of *Land of the Golden Clouds*, the emphasised parts can be seen as the retelling of the catastrophe, prophesized in the immortal poetry Michael quotes from Shelley. Michael is a Prophet from the Silver City, and Shelley wrote the "Ode to the West Wind" with a biblical connotation, as Jennifer Wagner notes it: "The ambition of Shelley's ode is the ambition of [...] Hebrew prophetswhose Old Testament culmination is the suffering servant of SecondIsaiah, a suffering servant 'chosen,' proclaims Isaiah, but 'chosen in the furnace of affliction." (59) Weller has clearly known this, which is the reason why he took this specific poem to make an invocation by Michael who then truly serves as the prophet of the entire text. Thepoem also deals with the fierce and destructive power of the West Wind, and the beauty of destruction that comes along with it. This "beautiful destruction" can be taken as the parable for the entire Weller's book, since due to the destruction of the world, of the Old Time, a new world can be built in which a multicultural singularity is possible. This can be seen in the dichotomy of Australian landscape, noted in the book whenever the party would go from one locality and move to another, in most cases, the beginning of chapters usually start with a transposition from one specific type of landscape and it turns into something completely different, for an example: "After the bush-covered hills, they had made their way to the sparsely covered sand dunes near the huge river that had no other shore." (219)In other words, Michael has a deeper understanding of the world around him. He is an appropriated Western figure (due to his poetry and white Silver City's heritage) who attains the qualities of a non-Aboriginal and interprets it without subverting the Aboriginal episteme.

There is anotherpoem that provides insight into how Michael is made as a deconstructive element of the text by providing the hidden truth known only to him. Upon reaching Emceegee, Michael quotes Yeats' poem "An Acre of Grass":

> *My temptation is quiet*
> *Here at life's end*
> *Neither loose imagination*
> *Nor the mill of the mind*
> *Consuming its rat and bone*
> *Can make* the truth known. (Weller 316)

Finding truth in a barren wasteland such as *Land of the Golden Cloud*'s Australia is problematic, due to the devastating effects the war had on the land and almost a complete and

utter loss of historical evidence regarding former civilizations. The continuation of the poem is as follows:

> *Grant me an old man's frenzy*,
> Myself must I remake
> Till I am Timon and Lear
> Or that William Blake
> Who beat upon the wall
> Till Truth obeyed his call;
> *A mind Michael Angelo knew*
> That can pierce the clouds,
> *Or inspired by frenzy*
> Shake the dead in their shrouds;
> Forgotten else by mankind,
> *An old man's eagle mind.* (Yeats, "An Acre of Grass", 276, emphasis mine)

David A. Ross offers an explanation of the meaning of the poem, especially regarding the comparison with Michelangelo:

> Not only was Michelangelo the consummate artist, but he was an artist who remained vigorously active and creative into old age. When hedied at age 88, he was still hard at work as chief architect of St. Peter's Basilica. Yeats would have a mind like Michelangelo's, *a mind grown powerful in its solitude, a mind that moves with equal command between the realms of heaven and earth, life and death, a mind unbowed by time.* (35, emphasis mine)

For a good part of the book, as previously mentioned, Michael seems mad to other characters, but Michael in facts knows about the truth behind everything encountered through a form of precognition. However, this *cannot* be known to a reader who is not versed in Yeats, or any other poet quoted by Michael. Weller might have not expected his readers to go through this effort, but those who do can get a glimpse of hidden truth behind Michael's ramblings which then make deeper sense. Having "an eagle's mind" is a reference to a character's point of view that observes everything from a hidden perspective, known only to him and a properly prepared reader. Michael's persona, portrayed as an old, yet immensely wise albeit mad man can be compared with Yeats' obsession with old age, as discussed into detail by George Bornstein, who pinpointed specific figures in the song:

[Yeats] suddenly invokes "an old man's frenzy" to remake himself and continue as a productive artist. Technique matches theme once again, with the largely intransitive verbs and quiet, mostly end-stopped lines yielding to the more vigorous rhythms of the second pair with their array of kinetic verbs[...] Yeats chooses the figures to model transformation shrewdly—not only the aged Shakespearean characters, King Lear and Timon of Athens, but also his beloved Blake, who lived into his seventieth year, and Michaelangelo, who reached his eighty-eighth. In the course of the poem, Yeats not only wishes transformation into such a figure, but he enacts it. (57)

It can be noted that Weller's decision to include an old poet such as Michael as a personified Yeatsian figure additionally adds up to the argument that Michael is in fact a hybrid character who emulates the Western episteme not only through mere quoting, but also through his physique and mannerisms. Michael rarely speaks coherently and in prose. Instead, whenever he is prompted to speak, he quotes poetry, and by that, he foretells future. Not only that, his mind is so twisted that he cannot survive in any other way besides staying true to the poetry of the three forbidden poets: "The only way he [Michael] could survive, was to repeat the gentle, powerful or angry words of Kipling, Yeats or Shelley over and over in his secret mind." (254). Personification of Michael as Yeats himself can also be deduced from another poem he quotes near the end of the book, as he refers to his wife Laelia. The poem in question is "When You are Old" by Yeats, quoted by Michael:

> From the depths of his mind he dredges up one of her [Laelia's] favourite poems.
> *How many loved your moments of glad grace,*
> *And loved your beauty, with false love or true,*
> *But one man loved the Pilgrim soul in you,*
> *And loved the sorrows of your changing face.*
>   The placid words of the gentle Irishman, from thousands of years ago, drift through this turbulent atmosphere and curl around her numbed brain. All at once die whole of the green Island, Eire, Erin, the most magical land known to her who is supposed to know everything, opens up in her mind and all her old power is back. (Weller 358)

It needs to be noted that the historic Yeats had a similar relationship with a woman by the name of Maud Gonne, and their relationship is similar with the one that Michael and Laelia share. Since Gonne left Yeats and married another man, a parallel conclusion can be drawn

with Michael and Laelia. Laelia was Michael's wife, but she married another man once Michael was exiled from the Silver City. If interpreted this way, it can be seen as another argument that Weller puts Michael as the all-knowing Prophet who reinterprets Yeats as though he is Weller's personification of him. The continuation of the original poem, not quoted in *Land of the Golden Clouds* is as follows:

> And bending down beside the glowing bars,
> Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
> And paced upon the mountains overhead
> And hid his face amid a crowd of stars. (Yeats,"When You are Old", 1996:31)

The analysis of the poem provided by David A. Ross mentions the consequences of the historic relationship between Gonne and Yeats by providing insight into their relationship: "Yeats imagines her [Gonne] dreaming of her many admirers, some false, some true, but particularly remembering the "one man"—Yeats himself—who embraced her sorrow as well as her beauty, and murmuring to herself a little sadly how 'Love fled / And paced upon the mountains overhead / And hid his face amid a crowd of stars'." (284) If compared to the book in the context of Michael's and Laelia's relationship, in addition to Michael's ability to foretell future, it can be seen that there is a visible parallel between Michael and the lyrical subject ofYeate's autobiographical poem. In addition, the last two verses mention the mountain and starswhich can be interpreted to reflect the location of the final battle in the novel, and Michael's fate in the end, respectively. Moreover, Michael also reconciles with Laeila, whom he still loves. Weller uses this form of additionally appropriating Michael as a carrier of the Western episteme by ascribing him the quality of the aforementioned ancient poet himself, in this case, Yeats, who is referred to be Laelia's favourite poet.

The final part of this analysis deals with the fates of these two sets of characters, the Keeper twins and Prince Michael. They enable other characters to navigate through the epic space, and also enable the implied reader to "navigate" through deeper layers of the narrative. In the final battle, Michael dies and achieves martyrdom through his selfless act against the *nightstalkers*, leading an army of giant ants he controls through telepathy. Before his demise, Michael quotes Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"for the last time, as he soars into his death: "*Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud! I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!*" (Weller 360, emphasis in the original). G. K. Blank analyzes these verses written by Shelley, maintaining that "The speaker of the poem attempts to 'locate' his place in a scene where he hopes to

engage the force of influence in that moment of inspiration. And accompanying his invocations for lifting and scattering, for bleeding and blowing, for becoming a leaf, cloud, or wave, he demands that the wind make him a prophetic poet" (63). It is paradoxical to put these lines at this point in the text.Yet, since these lines are quoted by the all-knowing prophet Michael, the paradox becomes even more tangible as Michael dies a martyr.Even though he has already seen and prophesized the events that would occur, he still succumbs to his death. The similar fate is the one of Mungart. In the last scene of the book, Weerluk watches his brother die:

> "Do you want to die?"Weerluk had called. "*There have been too many rules broken already.*"
>
> But Mungart scarcely hears. He strays, in a dream, from Weerluk's protection. Into his mind comes an image of Surrey Anne on top of him, warm wet legs around him and brown purple-nippled breasts swaying above him as butterflies cartwheel around her ecstatic face in the sunny meadow of their first meeting. Surrey Anne bending down to skin the snake and holding the skin up so it shines like jewels in the dying sun. His eyes focus as he hears his brother scream.
>
> "Mungart!Nooooo!"
>
> The last thing he sees, shining like jewels in this new yellow-green sun, are the shards of glass embedded in a heavy club before it smashes into his surprised face. (Weller 352, emphasis mine)

Weerluk, who was the first to renounce his connection to the law now warns his brother of breaking the rules, as well. He is led astray by passion and by hatred, instead of following the rules all the Keepers abide by – to gain advantage in a combat only to survive enough to move onward. Upon seeing his brother die, Weerluk becomes furious not only at his assailants, but at his brother as well, whose recklessness in the end cost him his life. The battle goes on, and Weerluk makes a decision to fight until the end: "But he decides in that instant that he will *not* die. That he will live to fight and kill until every one of his brother's tormentors and killers are dead dead*dead*." (Weller 35, emphasis in the original). The situation eventually arises where Weerluk must accompany another member of the party to sound the horn so that the remaining allies of the party can enter the caves and finish the assault. Weerluk barely manages to survive, and he is now alone, tasked with leading the assault himself:

All his life he has lived apart from others except his own kind and adhered strictly to his laws. But this is his land and it is crying out for him to save it now. Grabbing up the foreign horn, he leaps noiselessly into the waters and heads for the outside world. It will be *his* lips that summon the Asian people, *foreigners—and yet friends—of the Keepers*. (Weller 363, emphasis mine)

This final connotation of friendship and camaraderie is linked to the statement that the *novum* of this text lies in the possibility of making an multicultural union where the battle against a common enemy can be fought by uniting forces, in this case, the Keepers of the Trees and all other members of the party. Michael and Mungartdie fighting. Both do so in their selfless acts, Michael since he knows about it due to his precognition, and Mungart due to his renunciation of his people's laws. Weerluk, on the other hand, survives, butmeets a different fate in the epilogue:

After he led the charge into the Cave of the King of Bats he disappeared like the rest of his surviving warriors. Back to their secret tracks and sacred life and their dedication to protecting their land. But it was said he was a lone man who had no family, no traditional home, who wandered all over. They said he was really only half a man, eventhough he was whole, for something was missing in his heart and mind and he carried a strange white man's instrument by his side. (Weller 368-369)

Deciding to wander the land alone, carrying the burden of his brother's death, his function of a guide is over. In the epilogue, Weerluk carries a nondescript white man's instrument, a token of cultural exchange between him and the rest of the party that, in a sense, belongs to the Western episteme.Hence, the twins are presented as characters without whom the quest would be impossible due to their knowledge of the land and their uncanny wisdom.Michael, on the other hand, serves as an element that has the ability to foretell the upcoming events. His link to the Keepers who appreciate him more than they appreciate other characters is Weller's attempt to both appropriate Western cultural influence and to extrapolate the aspects of the Dreaming and the Dreamtime through the point of view of a Western character who has the ability to grasp and understand the hidden truth behind the Aboriginal understanding of the world.

Moreover, the Keepers of the Trees are constructed as characters that truly belong to the land, in their death and their exile alike. Since these two sets of characters mimic one another, a conclusion can be drawn that Weller usesthem to construct a specific transcultural

dialogue relevant for postcolonial SF. Michael is clearly a character who undoubtedly belongs to the Western episteme, but he still appropriates the aspect of the Dreaming which the Keepers possess. It works vice-versa, since the Keepers accept implied reader detectsthe nexus between the Irish and Australian Aboriginals and draws a parallel to what Michael quotes, foremost Yeats, who is an iconic Irish poet, then their mutual understanding and mimicry becomes more apparent. This enables Weller to introduce a Western character with whom the Keepers *can* have a valid connection.

As the Keepers' twins and Michael are hybrid character who work together through mimicry and transculturation, the rest of survivors of the great battle will work together towards multiculturality and egalitarianism, which represents a *novum* from the perspective of the societal organisation in this futuristic rendering of Australia. Accordingly, the described multicultural epilogue stays true to the essence of postcolonial SF, which does not necessarily construct the *novum* to produce *cognitive estrangement* through technology, but rather through the impact the circumstances of the narrative on the multicultural society, which is the case in *Land of the Golden Clouds*.

4. Conclusion

As aforesaid, *cognitive estrangement* and *novum* are the main tropes that define SF as a genre, unlike other speculative fiction that is mostly rooted in speculation and not extrapolation.As regards postcolonial SF, as aforementioned, it is crucial to understand the implications of postcolonial literature and its functions as opposed to those found in SF. Postcolonial literature,when voiced by the former colonised other, as previously argued, observes the perspective of the colonized. When postcolonial literature incorporates SF and its standard devices, *cognitive estrangement* and*novum*modify their function to accommodate the Indigenous (native) view and introduce a different dynamic between the colonizer/colonized divide.Postcolonial SF, in other words, explores how the elements of postcolonial literature interact with SF, and it does so by having the future voiced from the margin which speaks to the mainstream. Having established these definitions, *Land of the Golden Clouds*can be analyzed as a text that fulfils these conventions.

As it has been noted regardingAustralian Aboriginal literary corpus, SF is not a standard modus operandi for Aboriginal writers, since realist writing is more prominent and has a greater impact on a wider audience. Archie Weller, too, has written most of his works by using literary realism, whereas *Land of the Golden Clouds* is his first SF work. It can be concluded, therefore, that *Land of the Golden Clouds*, belonging to the genre of postcolonial SF, demands an audience with a very specific penchant, in addition to being able to fulfil very specific prerequisites in order to fully appreciate and understand the text. These prerequisites are automatically fulfilled by the implied reader who belongs to the Aboriginal episteme and has an adequate amount of knowledge when it comes to literary conventions, but it has also been argued that the implied reader can be a non-Aboriginal reader who has devoted enough of time and patience to research very specific historical, social, culturaland literary implications present in *Land of the Golden Clouds*.

The ground focus in the analysis of two sets of characters in *Land of the Golden Clouds*has been the concept of hybridity and transculturation. First and foremost, the concept of Aboriginal Dreaming is defined in conclusion as a set of beliefs, rules and laws that deal with the notion of time as eternity rather than linearity, as a perpetual now or *everywhen*. These concepts are transformed from the real-world Australian Aboriginals onto the fictive Keepers of the Trees. They obey specific rules which enable them to have a better understanding of the world. The Keepers have a deeper understanding of eternity, as well.

They are also positioned as characters that move the narrative without directly intervening, by guiding the rest of the characters through the land familiar to them, since they are, as argued, ametaphor for land itself.

A very specific connection between the Keepers is seen with another character, Prince Michael of the Ants. Michael is a character who belongs to an entirely different episteme, in this case, the Western one. However, these characters replicate and mimic one another and by that they undergo the process of transculturation. When it comes to Michael specifically, he can be seen as a hybrid character that also has a deeper understanding of the world in a similar manner as the one that the Keepers have, which is also acknowledged by the Keepers. He uses ancient poetry as a law he abides by, and the poetry he quotes is mostly Irish. In this respect Weller repeats a widespread tendency of Aboriginal authors who appropriate Irishness in a positive vein due to Irish lower societal position in the British history of colonisation. This positive Aboriginal-Irish link is further visible in the current-day Aboriginals who readily call themselves Shamrock Aboriginals if they share any Irish ancestry. Weller's personification of fictional character Michael as a Yeats-like character adds to the connection between these two sets of characters, using real-life sociological and cultural implications that can be detected only by the reader who is aware of the history of Aboriginal-Irish relations.Hence, poetry in *Land of the Golden Clouds* demands a reader who will understand why specific pieces of poetry are used and how they interact with the main story-line.

In conclusion, the ending of the book presents a *novum*which reflects a multicultural and prosperous future. It needs to be noted, however, that this multicultural futuristic outcome is evoked earlier in the narrative by the Keepers and Prince Michael of the Ants, who effectively pave the way to transcultural exchange which is eventually followed by all other characters who survive the final battle.This type of novum constitutes *Land of the Golden Clouds* as an example of postcolonial SF which borrows its tropes from two arguably different literary domains.

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