Spatial Belonging:
Approaching Aboriginal Australian Spaces in Contemporary Fiction

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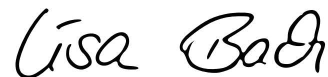

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1 Putting the Project on the Map

Imagining a broad map of Western academia, one can find a plethora of different disciplines, objects of research and possible approaches to these topics. Although all of these items are somehow interrelated with one another, their ultimate overlap is constituted by one specific element: knowledge. The construction, circulation and continuous development of knowledge is the starting as well as the terminal point, the alpha and omega of Western academic thinking. Nevertheless, with its focus on Western academia this map is spatially limited, as it only covers the territory of the West – but what about the rest? Where are non-Western academic traditions and disciplines to be found? And in what way are the West and the rest connected to each other in scholarly terms?

These fundamental reflections on the overall design and status of Western scholarship mark the beginning of the following study, which sets out to approach Aboriginal manifestations of spatial knowledge with the help of contemporary indigenous Australian novels while being situated within non-indigenous, European academic contexts. In order to carry out this endeavour in an adequate manner[1], it is crucial to acknowledge, first of all, that

> [t]he European world view tends to separate the spiritual, natural and human domains whose characteristics and attributes are ever open to challenge, debate and reinterpretation. In this lies [an] important distinction between the two cultural traditions as expressed in attitudes towards knowledge. In the Aboriginal world view, knowledge is an extension of the cosmic order and comprises the accumulated wisdom of the group since time immemorial, handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. (Gostin/Chong 1994: 123)

While Western perceptions of the world clearly categorise knowledge, Aboriginal peoples understand their existence as related to a more holistic system of knowledge free of clear-cut classifications. Therefore, this basic difference is one of the fundamental concepts that has to be kept in mind when examining indigenous knowledge, here in relation to literary representations of spatiality, from a non-indigenous point of view. It is also important to see these differences not as a legitimation for hierarchies or as an obstacle, but to question ways in which it is possible to approach Aboriginal knowledge nonetheless.

Zooming in on the cultural context of this study and indigenous Australian manifestations of knowledge, in a first step it is necessary to recognise that the "central values [of Aboriginal cultures] are embodied as knowledge that is spatially organised because the land and relationships to it underpin everything" (Turnbull 2003 [2000]: 34). Therefore,

[1] For a detailed description of the approach of this study to Aboriginal literatures from a non-indigenous perspective and the development of a viable methodological framework, see Chapter 1.3.

investigations into indigenous Australian spatialities are able to uncover culturally specific forms of knowledge, as they take into consideration one of the key elements of indigenous Australian knowledge construction and structuring. Moreover, Tony Swain (1993) notes that "[r]ather than a world creation, Aboriginal narratives affirm a multitude of independent place-shaping Events. […] The world is not made, but worlds take shape" (ibid. 32). Hence, spatial knowledge referring to indigenous Australian cultures can be particularly accessed with the help of narratives, because they contain information on how Aboriginal lifeworlds came into being in the first place and have a distinct focus on the creation of spatiality and, thus, the basis of the existence of these cultures. Finally, Stephen Muecke (2005) conflates indigenous Australian forms of knowledge, spatiality and narratives by stating that "[i]n Aboriginal country bodies are integrated with places via stories. It is not an anthropocentric world, so the bodies are also those of trees and stones. A stone is a body because it is simultaneously the egg of a rainbow serpent" (ibid. 50). This means that, due to the overall Aboriginal spatialisation of knowledge and the fact that this knowledge is constructed, stored and passed on with the help of narratives, narrative representations of indigenous Australian spatiality recommend themselves as a point of departure for approaching Aboriginal knowledge cultures.

In a next step, it needs to be clarified in which academic disciplines knowledge intersections of Aboriginal cultures, narratives and representations of spatiality are to be found. Most obviously, the study of literature and culture constitutes the perfect foundation here, as it provides narratives in the form of Aboriginal novels that contain representations of indigenous Australian spatial knowledge. For those working in the field of literary studies, the subject is of specific interest as it is easily compatible with the available methodological and theoretical tool set for analysing narrative texts. Indigenous spatialities referring to the Australian continent, for instance, can be related to the narratological category of space or to the diversity of approaches to space discussed on the story-level of a novel. Aboriginal spatiality is also interesting for literary scholars because the medium of the novel can open up culturally specific insights into the construction of (spatial) knowledge on the basis of its reciprocal interrelation with the extratextual world. As literary narratives "do not merely represent life, but they constitute and indeed 'form' life" (Nünning/Nünning 2010a: 12), they are themselves a means of constructing and transmitting indigenous Australian knowledge that can lead to new perspectives on how spatiality constitutes and influences Aboriginal lifeworlds. With this worldmaking[2] potential, indigenous Australian novels shape their culturally specific context

[2] For an introduction to the world-making approach as a tool for the study of literature and culture, see Grabes (2010) and Nünning/Nünning (2010a, 2010b). For a more detailed consideration of this concept within the analysis of Aboriginal literatures in this study, see Chapter 4.1.

and highlight that spatiality is the product of multi-layered processes of constructing and compiling knowledge.

Such a perspective on the construction of knowledge with the help of narratives has been conceptualised by Christoph Reinfandt (1997). He differentiates between three different *meaning orientations*[3] of literary narratives that define the most essential characteristics of the relationship between literary text and extraliterary world. Apart from a confirmation of the order and meaning of the world, as well as subjective experiences and perceptions of the non-literary surroundings with the help of narratives (cf. 149-152), Reinfandt introduces a third dimension. This literary 'meaning orientation' refers to the observation that the fictional means of a story, which are inherent in the narrative and do not directly relate to reality, also contribute to the construction of meaning. According to Reinfandt's understanding, the narrative structuring of events unearths culturally specific patterns of meaning production. This circumstance is, therefore, only to be found within literary texts; there is no other medium that would be able to perform likewise. In this way, this third level points to the distinct qualities of narratives in terms of their potential to construct knowledge and shape extraliterary contexts (cf. 152-154). Hence, indigenous Australian novels provide an exceptional possibility to approach Aboriginal spatiality via the knowledge these narratives contain.

Such an understanding of the functions of narratives is, for example, brought to the fore by Hanne Birk (2008), who, in her study on indigenous memory cultures from Australia, New Zealand and Canada, highlights that narrative space can serve as a tool for conveying knowledge about culturally specific manifestations of memory (cf. 243-273). By pointing to this specific field of indigenous cultures, Birk indirectly shows that narrative fiction has an overall potential in terms of comprising and sharing diverse forms of indigenous knowledge. This gives reason to expect that this holds true for contemporary Aboriginal fiction as well, meaning that it contains a huge range of knowledge that can shed light on the cultural constitution of indigenous Australian spatiality and belonging. Taking Reinfandt's and Birk's ideas as paradigmatic starting points, this thesis will analyse Aboriginal novels predominantly under the premise that they provide unique insights into the constructions and the contemporary cultural conditions of indigenous Australian spatial knowledge[4].

Apart from the potential of these distinctly literary studies, the analysis of narrative representations of spatiality is able to consider a second dimension that must not be neglected within spatial approaches to indigenous Australian cultures: the politics of Aboriginal space.

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[3] Translation by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). Original text: "Sinnorientierung" (Reinfandt 1997: 149).
[4] For a detailed conceptualisation of this approach, see Chapter 4.

For indigenous Australian people, spatiality has always been interwoven with politics, because their lands have been and still are the central venue for staging conflicts between Australia's indigenous and non-indigenous population. Beginning with the European colonisation of the continent in the eighteenth century and the often violent taking possession of ancestral lands up to the non-acknowledgement of the pre-colonial presence of indigenous communities until the early 1990s and the Aboriginal struggles for getting back their land that are still prevalent today, space has always been a controversial topic within the Australian nation. Therefore, discussions of Aboriginal spatiality are, due to the country's history, immediately political and also the examinations of indigenous Australian cultures in literary studies have to consider this circumstance. This centrality of spatiality in debates on Aboriginal cultures also points out that indigenous space is a highly important topic for pan-Australian discourses and has a huge cultural, social and political impact. Therefore, every analysis of Aboriginal spatial knowledge, including this study, has to recognise that this thematic field is politically charged[5] and that an apolitical approach would disregard the culturally specific conditions of indigenous Australian space.

Ultimately, the observations of the previous pages show that, although it is essential to reflect on the Western embeddedness of this study and the differences of indigenous and non-indigenous forms of knowledge, there is a way of approaching Aboriginal manifestations of spatial knowledge from a European point of view. Through an initial introduction of the crucial cultural and political meaning of space for Aboriginal lifeworlds and for literary studies, the knowledge domains of indigenous Australian spatiality, narratives as well as literary representations of space are finally conflated and, in this way, put on the global, not solely Western, map of acadamia, more precisely the study of literature and culture.

1.1 Aboriginal Spatiality Matters: Introducing the Field of Research and Epistemological Interests

As already briefly addressed, the category of space within indigenous Australian cultures is related to a huge range of different *matters*: the social structures of communities, the occupational organisation of everyday life, spiritual beliefs and narratives and the relation between human subjects and their environment. This centrality of spatiality for indigenous peoples that resonates in the title of this subchapter – underlined by James Clifford (2001), who

[5] The structure of these very first pages and the difference between the rather lengthy literary studies and the rather short political focus is not meant to lead to the false assumption that this study will only pay minor attention to the politics of Aboriginal space. As this topic, especially from an indigenous Australian perspective, is not to be disregarded and must be dealt with as soon as approaching Aboriginal spatial knowledge, Chapter 2 will provide a comprehensive overview of the political dimension of Aboriginal space.

states that "when thinking of differently articulated sites of *indigeneity*, however, one of the enduring constraints in the changing mix will always be the power of place" (ibid. 481) – highlights that space also *matters* in the context of these cultures: space and the lives of indigenous peoples are closely related when referring to the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. Nevertheless, it is absolutely crucial to not essentialise indigenous Australian manifestations of spatiality but to highlight their diversity, as "Australia cannot and should not be one culturally uniform nation. We need to recognise that from times beginning, this continent has been occupied by many nations in the sense of cultural, linguistic and economic difference" (Gale 1999: 12). There is not one or *the* form of Aboriginal space but many manifestations that belong to different indigenous communities all over Australia.

While dealing with the diversity of indigenous Australian cultures, it is also significant to note that they not only comprise the Aboriginal population on the mainland but also the Torres Strait Islander Peoples from the eponymous islands in the northern part of Queensland. As Torres Strait Islander Eddie Koiki Mabo, one of the most prominent figures in the indigenous Australian land rights movement, pointed out in his talk *Landrights in the Torres Strait,* which was presented in Townsville in 1981, "[i]n the Torres Strait, land ownership […] is different from Aboriginal land ownership on the mainland." (Attwood/Markus 1999: 294). Therefore, it is not only necessary to acknowledge these differences when approaching indigenous Australia from a Western perspective but to locate and spatially frame the working context of the following chapters. As this study will solely analyse literary representations of Aboriginal spatiality referring to the Australian mainland, the theoretical conceptualisation will be tailored to the demands of this particular context. Nevertheless, Torres Strait Islander peoples have heavily contributed to contemporary spatial discourses and the progression of indigenous politics of space in Australia, which is why their influences will be considered when dealing with the developments and current conditions of indigenous Australian spatiality and the struggle for land rights.

Referring to the overall contexts of this study, it is essential to question why Australia and its Aboriginal population serve as adequate cultural agents for the investigation of contemporary literary representations of indigenous spatiality. First and foremost, space is assigned a pivotal status within indigenous Australian cultures. Not only does material space play a crucial role in the organisation of everyday life, but the spiritual and cosmological dimensions of spatiality are of great importance as well:

> Aboriginal culture is spatialised linguistically, socially, religiously, artistically, and epistemologically. […] Dreams and narratives are cast in a framework of spatial coordinates. […] The pervasiveness of spatiality in Aboriginal daily life jointly derives from the semantic structure of the language in which the

> subjects of sentences are not things but relations and from the centrality of the land in Aboriginal cosmology. (Turnbull 2003 [2000]: 34)

According to Turnbull, space structures indigenous Australian languages, cosmologies and the Aboriginal way of understanding and making sense of the world. In this way, spatiality is a central element when attempting to approach indigenous Australian cultures from a non-indigenous perspective. Interestingly, Turnbull also connects Aboriginal land with narrativity by mentioning the spatial entrenchment of indigenous narratives. Both space and narratives form an integral part of indigenous Australian cultures and shape the lives and realities of Aboriginal people and communities all over Australia.

Apart from these characteristics that can be applied to pan-Australian contexts, aspects of locality, spatial specificity and their linguistic realisation are highly relevant for Aboriginal cultures as well:

> Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place […]. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart's ease. (Rose 1996: 7)

Instead of laying emphasis on the economic and environmental exploitation of the land, indigenous Australians are involved with their spatial surroundings in a non-hierarchical manner. Particularly relevant for literary investigations into the field, Aboriginal peoples refer to space as a very important person or even family member on the linguistic level and they are emotionally affiliated with their land and integrate space as a vivid and polymorphic entity into their everyday lives.

Taking into consideration that "the fact that [Aboriginal] knowledge is localised and specific is one of the keys to its value" (ibid. 32), and the dimensions of locality and the spatialisation of knowledge also come into play when dealing with indigenous Australian spaces. Based on these insights, there is an inferred assumption of a great diversity of Aboriginal spatial knowledge bound to a variety of places all over Australia and related to numerous Aboriginal communities. Gina Wisker (2007) subscribes to such a perspective and distinctly links Aboriginal space with the notion of belonging:

> Location, geography and land ownership contribute fundamentally to people's sense of belonging, and in many cultures, such as the Australian Aboriginal, they provide a fundamental sense of the wholeness of existence, of which all creatures and people belong, the mythical element known as 'The Dreaming'. (Ibid. 47)

Although Wisker notes the global and transcultural scope of the relationship between space and

belonging, she particularly brings to the fore the pervasiveness of spatiality within indigenous Australian cultures and in this way suggests an exploration of the culturally specific intersections of space and belonging in the Aboriginal context, which will be explicated in detail in the third chapter of this study. Furthermore, Wisker points to the relation between belonging, which "is about an emotional (or even ontological) attachment, about feeling 'at home'" (Yuval-Davis 2011: 10) and spiritual Aboriginal narratives and suggests a further area of investigation that is connected to indigenous Australian notions of space. Thus, Aboriginal cultures contain a huge range of linguistic, cosmological, historical, ideological, political and narrative manifestations of spatiality that make it possible to uniquely examine in which ways ancestral land, country and distinct localities function as influencing factors and structural forces for indigenous Australian belonging.

As already mentioned, indigenous Australian space also has a distinctly narrative dimension and attributes meaning to nearly every aspect of indigenous Australian cultures. Since "[a]s a means of understanding the world, literature takes the data of life and organizes it according to this or that plan, which can then aid readers in comprehending and navigating a portion of their own world" (Tally 2013: 42), it is appropriate to assume a negotiation of spatiality in contemporary indigenous Australian literatures. As Tally's statement also articulates the reciprocal relation between literary texts and the extraliterary world, literature seems to be a viable instrument for grasping narrative negotiations of Aboriginal space and belonging from a literary studies viewpoint as well. Linking these findings with the overall interpretation of cultures as "ensembles of narratives"[6] (Müller-Funk 2008: 171), which are circulated and represented via diverse media (cf. ibid.) such as literary texts, contemporary indigenous Australian fiction presents an ideal starting point for approaching diverse formations of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging. Bringing together the considerations on the selected context with the characteristics of narrative fiction and its potential to negotiate and discuss spatiality, this study will argue that belonging within indigenous Australian lifeworlds manifests itself particularly via spatiality and the interrelation between subject/human being and space and that spatial belonging[7] is mirrored in contemporary novels by Aboriginal authors. Therefore, the central hypothesis of this thesis is as follows: As spatiality is a central feature of indigenous Australian lifeworlds and can be examined as a manifestation of belonging, contemporary Aboriginal literary works, which are reciprocally interlinked with the

[6] Translation by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). Original text: "Ensembles von Narrativen" (Müller-Funk 2008: 171).

[7] This study is not the first text that employs the term of *spatial belonging*. For other publications using this idea or concept see, among others, Davis/Gorashi/Smets (2018), Jones (2007), Kuusisto-Arponen (2014) and Lee (2014).

extraliterary world, shed light on and can thus be discussed with a focus on their diverse illustrations of spatial belonging.

Apart from the legitimation of the Aboriginal context as matching the central issue of this study, it is essential to point to its epistemological interests and to reason why it makes sense to investigate indigenous Australian spatiality from a scholarly viewpoint. The key interest lies in approaching Aboriginal space, place and land with the help of contemporary fiction written by indigenous Australians as well as the associated utilisation of these texts for the study of literature and culture. In this respect, recent Aboriginal narratives will be understood as a means of representing indigenous Australian spatiality and spatial knowledge that allows for an innovative conflation of Aboriginal spatiality with belonging and an exposition of the spatial diversity of this culturally specific context.

Taking a look at the developments in the literary and cultural disciplines – currently "[s]pace, it would seem, is everywhere" (Riquet 2018: 11) – the focus of this study is in line with current insights into the significance of space for textual as well as extratextual worlds because "[s]pace, many scholars of various disciplines have come to acknowledge in recent years, is a fundamental category of both human life in general and cultural production in particular" (Sarkowsky 2007: 21). This thesis will further enhance this field and give particular insights into the crucial meaning of spatiality for Aboriginal cultures and their respective literary negotiations of this topic. This is supported even more, since research on the interrelations between spatiality and literature suggests that "[s]pace, place and mapping […] are crucial to literary and cultural studies, just as these concepts and practices are required for living in an ever-changing social and geographical milieu" (Tally 2013: 43). The narrative investigations in this study will enhance these discourses by analysing specific Aboriginal manifestations of fictional spatiality that point to the current pluralities and dynamics of indigenous Australian space and belonging from a historical, an environmental as well as an urban perspective.[8]

Within the discipline of (post-)colonial studies, spatiality has highly influenced the perception of the contemporary literary production as well. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2002 [1989]) support such a view, stating that "[a] major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement" (ibid. 8). This fundamental condition of (post-)colonial texts is mirrored in indigenous Australian literatures since narrative Aboriginal spatiality is inextricably linked with and represents the struggle for country, the agricultural or

[8] For more information on why the genre of the indigenous Australian novel particularly lends itself to an investigation into Aboriginal spatiality and belonging, see Chapter 1.5.

geological utilisation of ancestral land and the resulting displacement of indigenous communities all over Australia. Along with these topics, the theoretical and literary engagements with space are viable means for referring to current (post-)colonial discourses, since "[l]and, and its extensions into theories of the construction of space and place, has emerged […] as one of the most important recent sites for articulating contemporary cultural concerns" (Griffiths 2001: 445). As literary representations of spatiality contain cutting-edge insights into the situatedness of indigenous cultures in Australia, they can serve as a seismograph for the current social, political and economic status of Aboriginal peoples. Concerning a further specification of spatial issues in (post-)colonial studies, Pramod K. Nayar (2010) suggests that "[t]he theme of space and belonging in postcolonial literatures could be organized around the […] themes" of "[s]pace, [i]dentity and [b]elonging" as well as "[h]ome/lands and [c]ultural [b]elonging" (ibid. 142). The interweaving of space and belonging in this study not only bridges the conceptual gap between both notions but also facilitates a unique analysis of the narrative diversity of Aboriginal spatiality in relation to historical, urban and environmental aspects of belonging. This thesis also brings together the quintessential spatial topics of (post-)colonial studies within the framework of indigenous Australian cultures and provides a thematic overview of contemporary narrative discussions of Aboriginal land, space and country.

From an indigenous viewpoint, literary texts are remarkable cultural representatives and make it possible to approach Aboriginal lifeworlds from various ethnic angles, which is particularly relevant when taking into consideration the Western perspective of this study: "For many authors, 'writing Aboriginality' is a means of catharsis, and we use our writing as a tool to help non-Indigenous readers better understand Aboriginal Australia, which in turn improves race relations between Black and white Australians" (Heiss 2007b: 42). Although this statement might oversimplify the complex processes of cross-cultural dialogues in Australia, it nevertheless points to the communicative potential of Aboriginal fiction. For this reason, this thesis will uniquely employ narrative representations of indigenous Australian spatiality as a platform for approaching Aboriginal cultures from a non-indigenous perspective. This also relates to what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012 [1999]) remarks on the overall functions of indigenous cultural representations:

> Representation is also a project of indigenous artists, writers, poets, film makers and others who attempt to express an indigenous spirit, experience or world view. Representation of indigenous peoples by indigenous people is about countering the dominant society's image of indigenous peoples, their lifestyles and belief systems. It is also about proposing solutions to the real-life dilemmas that indigenous communities confront, and trying to capture the complexities of being indigenous. (Ibid. 152)

Hence, the selected primary corpus presents a distinctly Aboriginal perception on spatiality as well as the related political, social and cultural discussions. Incorporating current spatial discourses, the examinations of Aboriginal fiction in this thesis might also open up these debates by pointing to novel indigenous perceptions on pan-Australian issues such as mining, the exploitation of the environment or the living together in urban areas. Linking Smith's statement to Heiss's observations, it is worth noting that Aboriginal fiction deals with spatiality as a means of illustrating the complexity of indigenous (spatial) cultures to a global, also non-indigenous readership.

Taking stock at the intersection of spatiality and literary studies – characterised by the fact that "[i]n recent literary and cultural studies, […] space has reemerged as a principal concern" (Tally 2017: 2) – it has to be said that "[d]espite the rareness of systematic treatment, the category 'space' is and has been an important one for the analysis of literature" (Sarkowsky 2007: 27). Nevertheless, there are only a few studies that focus on the importance of literary texts in terms of their negotiation of space and spatial practices (cf. Neumann 2009: 116), which is why this thesis seeks to contribute to these discussions by bringing together indigenous Australian notions of spatiality and belonging, their contemporary literary representations and literary studies approaches to narrative spaces. Taking a closer look at the discipline of narrative theory, which will be of particular importance for the analyses of Kim Scott's (2012 [2010]) *That Deadman Dance,* literary scholars like Nünning (2009) emphasise that the narratological category of space, compared with others such as narrative time, has not yet undergone a thorough theorisation and systematisation, particularly due to the diversity of available spatial manifestations in narrative fiction (cf. 34). Based on these observations, Nünning sees a "discrepancy between the uncontested significance of narrative spatiality as a central element for the construction of fictional reality and the […] research desideratum"[9] (ibid.) concerning adequate narratological instruments for the analysis of narrative spaces.

Of course, there are initial terminologies and seminal models of space (cf. Dennerlein 2009, Ryan 2009), but as "narratologists have long privileged time over space, narrative space remains a relatively unexplored territory" (Ryan 2009: 431)[10]. Therefore, this study will advance the spatial area of narrative theory by innovatively applying narratological instruments

[9] Translation by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). Original text: "Diskrepanz zwischen der unbestrittenen Bedeutung der Raumdarstellung als zentralem Teil fiktionaler Wirklichkeitskonstruktion und dem [...] Forschungsdesiderat" (Nünning 2009: 34).

[10] In an interview from 2014, Ryan (2014) has confirmed such a perspective on narrative space: "The representation and conception of time in narrative has received a lot of attention, and justly so, because time is a very difficult but also very rich issue, but space, which is much easier to conceive than time, has been largely neglected" (ibid. 81).

– on the basis of a model of narrative space by Marie Laure Ryan (2009) – within an indigenous literary context and asking in what ways Aboriginal texts are able to inform and thus refine these narratological methodologies. Apart from this dissemination of narrative theory in the indigenous Australian context, the use of spatial narratology for Aboriginal texts will lead to innovative perspectives on the diversity of indigenous notions of space and give new insights into the interrelations between indigenous and non-indigenous spatialities.

Since Aboriginal spatiality and belonging will also be examined from an ecocritical angle, which accounts for the circumstance that "the convergence of critical practices attuned to both environmental and the spatial relations is especially timely" (Tally/Battista 2016: 3), this combination will open up unprecedented perceptions on the potential of the ecocritical approach for the study of (indigenous) literary works as well as cultures. As "[t]he global discourse on Indigenous knowledge […] runs into and across a range of interests such as sustainable development, biodiversity and conservation interests, commercial and corporate interests, and Indigenous interests" (Nakata 2007b: 7), this study will uniquely combine an ecocritical perspective with indigenous Australian spatiality and shed light on the ways in which Aboriginal texts and the negotiated spatial knowledge are able to contribute to indigenous, non-indigenous as well as national Australian and global discourses on ecology and the human dealing with nature, land and space.

Supporting this epistemological interest of this thesis, the (post-)colonial scholars Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010) have already pointed to the huge potential of an association of ecocriticism and (post-)colonial literary texts:

> What the postcolonial/ecocritical alliance brings out, above all, is the need for a broadly materialist understanding of the changing relationship between people, animals and environment – one that requires attention, in turn, to the cultural politics of representation […]. This suggests (1) the continuing centrality of the imagination and, more specifically, imaginative *literature* to the task of postcolonial ecocriticism and (2) the mediating function of social and environmental *advocacy*, which might turn imaginative literature into a catalyst for social action and exploratory literary analysis into a full-fledged form of engaged cultural critique. (Ibid. 12)

With an ecocritical investigation of recent narrative representations of Aboriginal spatiality, this study is not only able to prove the usefulness of ecocriticism for the discussion of distinctly indigenous approaches to spatiality and their respective literary representations but also fruitfully blend topics such as environmental exploitation with the more balanced indigenous Australian way of dealing with nature and land. Peter Minter (2012) supports such an application of ecocriticism, as he recognises that "drawing on contemporary ecocritical theory, a compelling disciplinary development can be found in theorising Aboriginal literary representations of Country and their ecopoetic terrain and potential" (ibid. 3).

Focusing on the Alexis Wright's (2009 [2006]) novel *Carpentaria* in this study, an ecocritical reading of the narrative discussions of spatiality in this text will unearth new perceptions on the equal relationship between Aboriginal communities and their lands and bring to the fore a plurality of spatial approaches to the Australian continent. With respect to the conceptual progression of ecocriticism, spatiality seems to be an adequate analytical focus, because "[a]s ecocriticism has developed, its questions and theoretical interests have become more refined and complex. One of these interests concerns concepts of place and space" (Berensmeyer 2009: 138). This thesis will further demonstrate the strength of this interrelation and, with its concentration on current literary manifestations of indigenous Australian space and belonging, introduce a new field to the study of spatial ecocriticism. Due to the fact that "[t]he ecocritic seeks to contribute to improving our ecological awareness by suggesting the Romantic view of the interdependence between human beings and their natural environment as a model for the present" (ibid. 137), the analyses of Aboriginal fiction will also make it possible to question in which ways the discussed forms of spatiality can extend ecological or environmental awareness within indigenous as well as non-indigenous contexts and cultures. Moreover, Aboriginal literatures can innovatively help to inform ecocritical readings of indigenous texts by illustrating conceptual alternatives to non-indigenous utilisations of nature and land. From a historical viewpoint, this study can also fill a blank in Australian literary studies, because "there is yet to emerge a scholarly reframing of Australian literary history from an eco-critical perspective" (Clark 2007: 440). Hence, this thesis illuminates a so far unnoticed facet of the continent's indigenous literary production and will bridge the gap between ecocriticism, (post-)colonial studies and literature as well as narrative negotiations of Aboriginal manifestations of space.

Finally, the concept of intersectionality, which refers to "relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" (McCall 2005: 1771), is also a productive means for the examination of literary representations of Aboriginal spatiality and belonging. Since "[f]or the literary scholar […], there is rather little flesh to the intersectional bones and methodologically intersectionality remains underdeveloped and largely related to empirical or quantitative research" (Luh 2013: 40), this study will refine the already existing intersectional instruments for the analyses of narrative fiction. This is also required as there is a "tremendous heterogeneity that currently characterizes how people use and understand intersectionality" (Hill Collins/Bilge 2016: 2). Drawing particularly on Katharina Luh's (2013) seminal study on intersectionality as an instrument for the examination of indigenous and non-indigenous fiction from Aotearoa New Zealand, this thesis will illustrate

the great methodological usefulness of intersectionality within a distinctly indigenous Australian context. In order to fulfil this epistemological interest, this study will follow Susan Lanser (2013), who notes that "[i]ntersectionality theory maintains that no coherent female or male experience exists even within a single culture let alone across cultures, since cultures are always constituted within, and in turn constitute, aspects of identity, location, individual agency, and discursive realm" (ibid. unpaginated). This means that spatiality is a central force within the construction of male and female identities as well as individualities and that every human subject is related to certain identity-shaping spaces.

This insight suggests space be regarded as an additional category that needs to inform intersectional research and to investigate its interrelations with masculinities, femininities and other parameters of difference such as ethnicity or indigeneity. As "[t]he local is an active and constitutive force in the formation of social categories and the uneven operations of power between them" (Jacobs 1996: 34), this study will innovatively integrate space within the intersectional analysis of Anita Heiss's (2007a) chick lit novel *Not Meeting Mr Right* and combine the spatial parameter with indigeneity and femininity. Referring once more to the realm of narratology, this thesis will also shed light on the intersectional potential of (spatial) narrative theory (cf. Lanser 2010) while exploring literary representations of Aboriginal spatiality.

In terms of content, intersectionality will uniquely allow for an association of narrative indigenous Australian spatiality with the topic of urban belonging. With this focus, this thesis will illustrate the importance of an aspect of Aboriginal cultures that has, according to Larissa Behrendt (2006b), only received minor attention in the twenty-first century:

> Little attention […] is paid to the vibrant and functional Aboriginal communities throughout the metropolitan area. There is no media coverage of the successful – and rather uneventful – day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people that show participation in a broad range of community activities. (Ibid. 8)

Therefore, the intersectional investigation of narrative negotiations of urban belonging will underpin the diversity of (female) Aboriginal lifeworlds in cities like Sydney and point to the existing thematisation of urban indigenous cultures in contemporary fiction. Since "[i]n the eyes of some people, an 'urban' Aboriginal is considered non-traditional, inauthentic and a cultural outcast"[11], the intersectional analysis of Heiss's novel is also able to introduce particular female Aboriginal urban lifeworlds as an indispensable feature of contemporary indigenous Australian cultures. Due to the fact that scholars such as "Diane Bell and Deborah Bird Rose confirm a significant shift in anthropological and academic understandings of

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[11] http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/70percent_urban/home, last retrieved 2014-08-15.

Aboriginal knowledges of the land, a shift in which women's business and environmentalist and feminist projects are at one" (Jacobs 1994: 179), the intersectional approach to urban belonging can contribute to this novel perception of indigenous Australian spatiality by emphasising the narrative relationships between Aboriginal spatiality, female self-determination and potential feminist endeavours in a distinctly urban landscape as well. For these reasons, an integrated examination of intersectionality and fictional indigenous Australian spaces will result in new perspectives on urban Aboriginal lifeworlds and their relationships with diverse notions of femininities.

As Aboriginal spatiality will be innovatively interpreted as a form of and connected with the concept of belonging, the investigations of contemporary indigenous Australian fiction can be expected to broaden the scope of current spatial and indigenous debates within the study of literature and (post-)colonial cultures. Since the outlined research endeavours include the conflation of Aboriginal space and belonging with spatial narratology, ecocriticism and intersectionality in a dialogic way, these approaches will be exposed as viable means for reflections on indigenous spatiality in general and for the examination of narrative representations of indigenous Australian notions of land in particular.

Due to the fact that the terms '(post-)colonial', 'Aboriginal' and 'indigenous' play a crucial role in the investigation of indigenous Australian texts and have already been used several times, the final paragraphs of this introductory section are dedicated to a discussion and definition of these concepts. Beginning with the more global item 'indigenous', Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012 [1999]) provides an initial problematisation of the concept:

> The term 'indigenous' is problematic in that it appears to collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under imperialism have been vastly different. Other collective terms also in use refer to 'First Peoples' or 'Native Peoples', 'First Nations' or 'People of the Land', 'Aboriginals' or 'Fourth World Peoples'. (Ibid. 6)

Smith not only points to the essentialising potential of the word 'indigenous' but she also names further generalising phrases used within various contexts all over the world. She also emphasises the difficulties of denoting certain communities by means of language while at the same time not aiming to neglect their diversity. Nevertheless, this study will employ the word 'indigenous' as a reference to Australia's first peoples keeping in mind these cultures are not to be understood as a uniform mass but are made up of many distinct groups. Regarding the term 'Aboriginal', tracing of its evolution leads to the following result:

> The term 'aboriginal' was coined as early as 1667 to describe the indigenous inhabitants of places encountered by European explorers, adventurers or seamen. While the terms 'aboriginal' and 'aborigine' have been used from time to time to describe the indigenous inhabitants of many settler colonies, they are now most frequently used as a shortened form of 'Australian Aborigine' to describe the indigenous inhabitants of Australia. (Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007 [2000]: 3)

Thus, the term 'Aboriginal' mostly relates to Australia today and will only be used as a reference to this particular space in this study and not in connection with peoples from other continents or places.

Nevertheless, the indigenous Australian context not only concerns the Aboriginal communities from the mainland and has to be defined in more detail with regard to the peoples from the Torres Strait Islands in the country's north:

> [T]he term Indigenous can be confusing in that its use in Australia includes not only all of the diverse Aboriginal nations that make up Australia, but also Torres Strait Islanders who became Indigenous to Australia when in 1879 the islands of the Torres Strait were annexed to Queensland through an act of Parliament. (Heiss 2012: 4)

While this study acknowledges the Torres Strait Island Peoples as belonging to Australia's indigenous population and contributing to their cultural conceptions of spatiality in various ways, the spatial conceptualisations and analyses in the following chapters will mostly refer to indigenous communities on the continent, which will henceforth be referred to as 'Aboriginal people' or 'indigenous Australians' (cf. Behrendt 2012: 27). If Torres Strait Islander people, for instance Eddi Koiki Mabo, or their cultures play a major role at certain points in this thesis, this will be made clear within the respective text passage. Regarding the overall positioning of the conceptualisations mentioned, this study is in line with what Marcia Langton (1993) mentions on the definition of Aboriginality:

> 'Aboriginality' arises from the subjective experience of both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people who engage in any intercultural dialogue, whether in actual lived experience or through a mediated experience such as a white person watching a program about Aboriginal people on television or reading a book. Moreover, the creation of 'Aboriginality' is not a fixed *thing*. It is created from our histories. It arises from the intersubjectivity of black and white in a dialogue. (Ibid. 31)

For this reason, this thesis positions indigeneity and Aboriginality as situated in an ever-changing process of construction instead of seeing them as stable and invariable concepts. With its examination of narrative spatiality in indigenous Australian fiction, this study thus seeks to take part in a dialogue as described by Langton and does not aim to essentialise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures but to highlight their spatial, literary and cultural diversity.

Just like 'indigenous' and 'Aboriginal', the term '(post-)colonial' is equally complex and problematic with regard to its application to indigenous Australian literatures and cultures. In a first step, it is important to recognise

> that insisting that Australian literature as a whole is solely postcolonial or not is reductive and essentialist. Clearly, many works of Australian literature are postcolonial in terms of subject matter and technique, and Australian society is postcolonial in many ways. However, many Australian texts do not engage with postcolonial issues at all, and Australian society can legitimately be viewed as other than postcolonial. (O'Reilly 2010: 6)

Hence, it would be too simplistic too assume a sole and uniform positioning of contemporary Aboriginal fiction as (post-)colonial, because it would disregard the multilayered social, political and historical environments in which indigenous Australian cultural production is situated. This is even more the case as "[a]ll writers have their own relationship to colonising and indigenous traditions, depending upon personal experience, artistic aims and the context within which they write" (O'Reilly 2001: 63). Aboriginal writers regard these very critical stances towards an identification of Australian literatures or society as (post-)colonial, as they see the marginal position and significance of their indigenous cultures today still being highly influenced by colonial attitudes and patterns of behaviour (e.g. in the case of land rights) (cf. Lucashenko 2000) and the divergence of colonial and indigenous Australian lifeworlds (cf. Scott 2007). Graham Huggan (2007) even notes that "Aboriginal people themselves […] have been much more likely to dismiss the term 'postcolonial' altogether" (ibid. 27). In a nutshell, the word '(post-)colonial' is not merely an academic concept or approach but it is related to indigenous Australian peoples and their perceptions of their own lifeworlds in many, even contradictory, ways.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to entirely omit the term '(post-)colonial' here, because what has been labelled '(post-)colonial studies' and the associated theories and concepts, especially in relation to spatiality, form a major foundation and overall orientation for the analysis of the selected primary corpus. Therefore, this study will not label indigenous Australian literatures as merely (post-)colonial, but position Aboriginal cultures and literatures as embedded in a complex web of colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial interrelations informing and influencing each other. Based on this conceptual decision, the spelling (post-)colonial will be employed throughout this study to indicate these interweavings and to refer to indigenous perceptions on this term as well as the theoretical embeddedness of this study.

1.2 Locating Literary Representations of Aboriginal Spatiality: Presenting the Current State of Research

During the last two decades, the study of literature and culture has increasingly brought to the fore issues of space, place, location and territoriality. What had been initiated by social geographers such as Edward Soja (1989) at the end of the 1980s and labelled as the 'spatial turn' by scholars across various disciplines, led to a realignment of literary and cultural theory in which "temporality as the organizing form of experience has been superseded by spatiality, the affective and social experience of space" (Blair 1998: 544). Based on these developments, more and more studies have centred around a practical application of innovative perspectives

on spatiality[12] in the last twenty years and formed a new branch of literary research dealing for instance with globalisation, mobility or mapping. Space has also been combined with already existing areas of investigation, which are "particularly […] the fields of post-colonial literatures and history, […] social and cultural geography" (Darian-Smith/Gunner/Nuttall 1996: 2) or the implementation of space in narrative theories. Nevertheless, the intensified debates on space have primarily concerned Western texts and cultures so far and have mostly neglected non-Western manifestations and representations of spatiality. Therefore, this subchapter will provide an overview of the current state of research on indigenous (Australian) spatiality and belonging and locate the central topic and the epistemological interests of this project on the bigger map of the study of literature and culture.

While analysing the spatial turn, it has been recognised as a major movement and influential force for the production of new approaches within the literary and cultural research of the last twenty years. Most notably, Doris Bachmann-Medick (2007) traces the growing interest in space from its beginnings in social geography in the 1980s to its current heyday in history, literary studies and ethnology and marks the spatial turn, among others such as the performative or iconic turn, as one of the most essential paradigm shifts in the contemporary study of culture (cf.: 284-327). The overall significance of the category of space for diverse academic disciplines ranging from architecture, archaeology and literary studies to biology, physics, legal studies and mathematics, which can be seen as a result of the insights gained due to the spatial turn, has already been pointed out, for instance by Stephan Günzel (2009).

Even though the Western-oriented spatial theories will not play a major role in this project, the spatial turn provides the backdrop for an abundance of research projects in the field of the study of literature and culture that form an important foundation for the analysis of contemporary indigenous Australian cultures. Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann (2009a), for example, bring together literary concepts of space and motion with questions of genre, memory or knowledge. Their collection contains theoretical perspectives on literary and narratological space (cf. Nünning 2009) as well as practical applications, for instance in the fields of semiotics (cf. Hallet 2009) or (post-)colonial literatures (cf. Neumann 2009). In the discipline of narratology, scholars have underlined the significance of narrative spaces as one essential factor for the construction of meaning within narratives. Katrin Dennerlein's (2009) narratology of space or Marie Laure Ryan's (2009) narratological conceptualisation of spatiality contribute innovative terminologies and approaches to recent discourses on narrative

[12] For an overview and summary of important spatial theories and texts across diverse disciplines and centuries, see Dünne/Günzel (2006).

space and they emphasise the important status of spatial examinations for contemporary literary studies. Very recently, investigations into the spatial structures of narratives and narrative theory itself have been opened towards more interdisciplinary approaches, such as a dialogue between narratology and geography (cf. Ryan/Foote/Azaryahu 2016), which constitute another pivotal influence for the approach carried out in the following chapters of this study.

The application of spatial narratology in this study will draw on this concentration of narratology on questions of space but open and sensitise the field for indigenous Australian (con-)texts and narratives at the same time. In this respect, Katja Sarkowsky (2007) has already successfully carried out the link between indigenous texts and narrative spaces. Her study is in line with the heightened exploration of narrative spatiality and stresses the suitability of distinctly indigenous representations of space for literary studies by introducing analyses of North American First Nations' novels. As the publications mentioned hint to the compatibility of (indigenous) notions of spatiality, literary negotiations of space and representations of indigenous lifeworlds, an examination of contemporary Aboriginal Australian novels is expected to innovatively shed light on the realms of space and belonging in this cultural context and to extend the literary toolset for the analysis of narrative spaces.

In addition, spatiality has influenced (post-)colonial literatures in general and the investigation of Aboriginal Australian fiction in particular. Theoretical and practical introductions to the study of (post-)colonial cultures feature chapters on the relationship between colonial histories and spatiality, the construction of colonial spaces with the help of maps and mapping, the spatial dispossession of indigenous peoples or spatially informed areas such as diaspora, hybridity or conceptions of the nation (cf. Chew/Richards 2010, Döring 2008, Innes 2007, Zacharias 2016). These publications render current debates on (post-)colonial literatures as significantly shaped by the category of space. Hence it is worth exploring contemporary indigenous fiction from Australia, which is interlinked with and informed by the study of (post-)colonial literatures, in terms of its manifestations of spatiality and its relations to aspects of the aforementioned discussions, here, for instance the European mapping of Australia or the colonial construction of Australia as *terra nullius* (cf. Chapter 2). In addition to these publications, seminal works like *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (cf. Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2002 [1989]) or Mary Louise Pratt's (2008 [1992]) *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* reinforce the spatialised condition of (post-)colonial discourses[13] and offer, with their individual surveys of colonial cultures,

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[13] Pratt (2008 [1992]) introduces the concept of the 'contact zone' as a means of analysing the meeting of different cultures due to colonisation, whereas Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002 [1989]) employ the notion of 'writing

theoretical links as well as practical impulses for the analysis of spatiality in Aboriginal Australian texts.

As already noted, the academic examination of contemporary texts by indigenous Australian authors also takes spatiality into consideration. Alongside with recent works pointing to the nexus between space and identity negotiated in indigenous Australian texts (cf. Schepanek 2017), Beate Neumeier and Kay Schaffer (2014a), for instance, have pointed to the nexus of spatiality, (post-)colonial studies and Aboriginal cultures. They provide a recent approach for the investigation of the spatial diversity of indigenous Australian cultures that is reflected in the open and dialogical methodology of this study. In the introduction to their collection, they state that

> a diversity of kinship ties and language groups and the varied histories of Indigenous land ownership and dispossession across the vast [Australian] continent foreground the necessity to recognize and respect the cultural differences, spatial diversity, and historical atemporalities of Indigenous lives, while inviting critics to communicate responsibly across these differences. (Neumeier/Schaffer 2014b: x)

Mirroring this claim, the publication comprises various essays dealing with specifically literary representations of Aboriginal space. While Sue Kossew (2014) introduces a reading of Kim Scott's (2012 [2010]) *That Deadman Dance* as a space for alternative histories, Philip Mead (2014) brings to the fore environmental and geopolitical topics in Alexis Wright's (2009 [2006]) *Carpentaria*. Another important source for the discussion of much-debated realms of Aboriginal literature, Graham Huggan (2007) blends issues of location, racism and whiteness in Australian literature with (post-)colonial studies and thus enables scholars to analyse and indicate the status of Aboriginal Australian texts on an (inter-)national scale. Hanne Birk (2008) presents Aboriginal space not only as a distinctive feature of indigenous Australian literatures and cultures but also as a site of memory and thus makes scholars aware of the reciprocity of indigenous temporality and spatiality. By demonstrating the importance of bringing together literary studies and indigenous cultures on a global scale, Chadwick Allen (2007, 2012) not only points to the high status of literary texts as a means of representing indigenous lifeworlds but also to the potential of literary studies and methodologies to approach, for instance, Aboriginal Australian narratives from various perspectives.

Besides the distinctly literary discussions of indigenous Australian spaces, disciplines like sociology, geography or anthropology have also vitally contributed to the discourses on Aboriginal spatiality. Cheri Ragaz (1988) sketches the great influence of the spatial parameter on elements of indigenous Australian cultures such as cosmology and spirituality, temporality

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back' to conceptualise the relation between texts produced in colonised countries, also known as 'periphery', and the 'centre', meaning the culture and the country of the coloniser.

and the social life within communities. These points are also to be found in the selected primary corpus and emphasise the close relationship between Aboriginal spatiality and its negotiation in contemporary novels. Stephen Muecke (2005) presents a seminal reflection on indigenous Australian cultures and knowledge from a non-indigenous perspective and explains his evaluation concerning the current state of research on indigenous Australian spatiality: “While political issues to do with country are vividly alive in Australian national awareness (Aboriginal land claims and ecological issues are being hotly debated), their cultural representation remains less focused” (ibid. 71). Muecke encourages a detailed consideration and exploration of fictional representations of space within the wider scope of indigenous (spatial) discourses in order to unearth their medium-specific forms and variety and shed light on their functions for already existing discussions about the politics and manifestations of Aboriginal spatiality.

The *Macquarie Atlas of Indigenous Australia* (cf. Arthur/Morphy 2005a) as well as Philip Clarke (2003) illustrate the Australian continent as an Aboriginal space and relate to aspects such as indigenous place names in Australia, Aboriginal art, languages and land ownership as well as historical topics such as the condition of indigenous Australian lifeworlds before and after European colonisation. Bill Gammage (2012 [2011]) illuminates how Aboriginal communities managed the Australian land before the times of colonisation and fosters an understanding of the continent as a distinctly indigenous space as well. Taking a look at current scholarly perspectives on Aboriginal spatiality across various disciplines suggests to transferring the acknowledged influence of land on Aboriginal spirituality, temporality, social life and history to literary studies and connecting these areas with an examination of representations of space in contemporary novels.

Since belonging forms one of the central points of departure for the analysis of Aboriginal literatures in this project, it is crucial to take a look at studies already existing that prove the usefulness of such an approach for the indigenous Australian context. Peter Read (2000) foregrounds the compatibility of Aboriginal spatiality and land ownership under the umbrella of belonging and provides an argumentative foundation for the reading of literary negotiations of indigenous space particularly as a form of belonging. Linn Miller’s (2003, 2006) publications, which theorise as well as apply belonging, rank among the most important starting points for this project, because her work also proves the usability of belonging within indigenous contexts. Miller presents a tripartite model of belonging[14] that links the latter with the realm of spatiality on the following dimensions: social connections, historical connections and geographical or environmental connections (cf. 2006: 6). Since this study will argue that

[14] For a detailed description of Miller’s model and its application within this study, see Chapter 3.1.

all of these connections are spatialised in Aboriginal Australian cultures in diverse ways, Miller already hints at a possible elaboration on manifestations of spatial belonging with the creation of her spatially-inspired terminology. Even if neither of the publications focus on literary representations of space, they suggest an overall applicability of belonging within indigenous Australian lifeworlds and point to a conflation of space and belonging as the basis for an investigation into contemporary Aboriginal fiction.

Although this subchapter is only able to present the most essential findings relevant for this project, a summary of the current state of literary, narratological, (post-)colonial, indigenous, anthropological and geographical research as well as the themes of contemporary Aboriginal writing emphasise that a conflation of these diverse strands within an examination of literary representations of space and belonging in contemporary indigenous literatures from Australia seems promising. Therefore, this project will tie in with recent interdisciplinary insights into the topic of spatiality and make them available for and applicable to the study of Aboriginal Australian fiction. Ultimately, this is even more necessary as a comprehensive analysis of space as a form of Aboriginal belonging with relation to literary representations of the plurality of indigenous and non-indigenous conceptions of space, the interrelations between belonging, environment and ecocriticism and manifestations of urban Aboriginal lifeworlds is still missing from the map of literary and indigenous research.

1.3 Aboriginal Literatures from a European Perspective

> "As for you indigenous communities whose struggles for justice I am at all times mindful of, I am neither borrowing from you nor trying to give you anything, except in dialogue when I quote the words of your scholars and offer my own. In the end it will be up to the readers to make their own assemblages, just as I have, for here there can be no final word." (Muecke 2005: vii)

As Western notions of space differ highly from Aboriginal conceptions and literary representations of spatiality, it is necessary to consider the European perspective and academic embeddedness of this study while writing about indigenous Australian texts. In this respect, one of the 'strategies' of Stephen Muecke's (2005) monograph *Ancient & Modern. Time, Culture and Indigenous Philosophy* will frame this thesis:

> The production of cross-cultural historical knowledge is not just an epistemological problem concerning the foundations for knowledge (principles we can settle on in order to work from them), but it is also an evolving temporal one occurring in rituals such writing an historical essay. It is therefore crucial continually to contrast accounts of ways in which other peoples come to know things with ways in which Europeans' institutions organise knowledge rituals. (Ibid. 27)

Following Muecke's positioning of knowledge production as a context-sensitive process, the writing of this study can be seen as exactly such a ritual of Western academia. The perspective

on Aboriginal literatures and cultures presented here is highly influenced by its European academic background, theories and knowledge and is, thus, one of an outsider. This is also the reason why this chapter is more than an introduction to its objects and fields of research or a mere presentation of its central aims and methods. As its title already indicates, this initial chapter seeks to locate the main endeavour of this thesis – the conceptualisation of indigenous Australian spaces as a form of belonging and the analysis of their representations in contemporary novels – on the huge map of research dealing with Aboriginal cultures, literatures and spatialities, which requires a contextualisation of the complex culturally specific discourses regarding indigenous Australian manifestations of spatiality and belonging.

The following chapters will be based on the awareness that this text is dealing with indigenous literatures from a non-indigenous point of view and that the approaches used are only one possible way among various others. Apart from that, this study will employ Muecke's idea of contrasting different modes of knowledge rituals. This means that the analyses of the primary texts will not take for granted the selected methodologies and simply apply them to Aboriginal spaces and their literary representations, but that they will attempt to challenge every theoretical instrument by considering indigenous views on the respective object of study. This study will attempt to establish a reciprocal dialogue[15] between the theoretical approaches and the indigenous narrative knowledge about spatiality to be found in the primary texts and interpret both as sources that feed back into the methodological framework. Therefore, this dissertation will reflect upon its own approaches and analyse Aboriginal Australian lifeworlds and their literary negotiations not only through the lens of Western academia. Instead, the intention of this project is to understand knowledge as eternally situated within processes of negotiation, construction and deconstruction, which is why non-indigenous and indigenous insights into spatiality will equally inform and influence each other within the proposed readings of *That Deadman Dance*, *Carpentaria* and *Not Meeting Mr Right*.

Finally, this thesis and its overall perspective on Aboriginal cultures aims to be in line with what indigenous Australian author Anita Heiss (2003) writes about non-indigenous views on the continent's Aboriginal population[16]: "For some white writers, credibility arises from the view that they are providing a voice (however indirectly), to Aboriginal Australia". As "this attitude is unacceptable to many Aboriginal writers who are tired of competing with white writers for the opportunity to write and be published in the areas directly related to their lives

15 For an illustration and application of this approach, see Miller's (2008) article on David Unaipon.

16 For further information on Aboriginal publishing and writing in a non-indigenous context as well as indigenous property laws see Heiss (2003, 2010, 2012) and Janke (2009). For the relations between indigenous and non-indigenous Australian literatures and discourses see Ariss (1988).

or life opportunities" (ibid. 10), the indigenous primary and secondary sources and their contents are not to be considered as diametrically opposed to the non-indigenous publications and debates about spatiality referred to in the following chapters. Both of them will be part of a complementary process of knowledge-construction, which targets a non-binary analysis of Aboriginal Australian spaces and their representations in contemporary fiction. This stance is also reflected in the decision to use the term 'approaching' in the title of this project, because it mirrors the overall positioning of this thesis as an approximation towards indigenous Australian literatures and cultures, not as a mere examination, with the means of self-reflection and –evaluation.

1.4 From Indigenous Australian Spatiality to Aboriginal Space as a Form of Belonging: Identifying Objectives and Research Questions

Referring to the central hypothesis outlined in the introductory section of this chapter, the overall aim[17] of this study is to approach and analyse contemporary literary representations of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging. Emanating from this major target, there are minor objectives and questions related to literary representations of indigenous Australian spatiality and the methodological and content-related design of this study.

First of all, this project seeks to interlink Aboriginal spatiality with the notion of belonging in order to underline conceptually the great importance of space, place and land for indigenous Australian cultures and to bridge the gap between both terms. By innovatively blending social, historical and geographical manifestations of belonging (cf. Miller 2006) this thesis will establish a working definition of Aboriginal spatial belonging, which will serve as the underlying framework for the analysis of literary representations of this topic in contemporary Aboriginal fiction. Apart from this rather theoretical discussion, Aboriginal spatial belonging will be connected with three central areas of indigenous Australian spatiality and diverse approaches while being practically applied to the selected primary corpus.

Kim Scott's (2012 [2010]) *That Deadman Dance* offers a juxtaposition of indigenous and non-indigenous notions of spatiality and at the same time negotiates the interrelations and differences of Aboriginal and European spatial practices. Therefore, the novel will be investigated with a focus on 'conflicted belonging' to transcend binary perceptions of space and expose the latter as related to diverse manifestations that are not opposed to but complexly

[17] Although I will introduce the corpus selection and legitimation only in the following subchapter, the contents of the primary corpus were taken into consideration for the formulation of the research questions and objectives in order to follow the overall approach of this project explicated in 1.3.

linked with each other. In order to achieve this, ideas from the discipline of narratology will be deployed and extended within a dialogue with the text to indicate the diversity of narrative notions of spatiality and spatial practices referred to in the novel. *Carpentaria* by Alexis Wright (2009 [2006]) will be explored in terms of its representations of 'balanced belonging', meaning the balanced relationship between Aboriginal people and their spatial surroundings. With the help of ecocriticism, this examination aims at illustrating diverse aspects of spatial Aboriginal lifeworlds such as spirituality or the relations to ancestors and showing in what ways this equality of land and indigenous peoples overlaps with environmental issues. The last analysis centres on Anita Heiss's (2007a) *Not Meeting Mr Right*, which presents the lives of four young Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in Sydney and thus aims to reveal the debates on 'urban belonging' within the novel. In this chapter, this thesis not only intends to innovatively establish (narrative) space as a category of difference by using intersectionality as a methodological instrument but also seeks to intersectionally conflate the categories of spatiality, indigeneity and femininity in order to shed light on the diverse interrelations between indigenous Australians and urban spatiality. As intersectionality "subverts race/gender binaries in the service of theorizing identity in a more complex fashion" (Nash 2008: 2), the examination of Heiss's text is also designed towards a deconstruction of a binary perception of indigenous and non-indigenous (urban) spatiality and the conceptualisation of urban space as non-indigenous.

Since this study locates itself as embedded in a complex web of miscellaneous cultural and methodological contexts and refers to manifold disciplines, it also seeks to be compatible with future fields of indigenous (Australian) narrative, spatial and literary research. The conceptual merging of Aboriginal spatiality with belonging is intended to indicate its applicability in relation to unmentioned aspects of indigenous and non-indigenous lifeworlds, e.g. temporalities or spiritualities. The possibility of implementing spatial belonging within contemporary fiction aims to underline adaptations to other genres or literary epochs. Regarding the analysis of Scott's novel, it is intended to show the potential refinement of narratological instruments for the investigation of fictional representations of space. By proving the usefulness of ecocriticism for indigenous Australian literatures, the reading of Wright's text aims at demonstrating the availability of indigenous contexts that are suitable for ecocritical analyses. Concerning the intersectional approach to Heiss's novel, the inclusion of the spatial parameter as an intersectional category and its use in an indigenous context points to two potential fields of expansion. Hence, this study will point to the applicability of the developed notion of Aboriginal spatial belonging across various disciplines, medial forms and genres as well as spatial and temporal contexts in its final chapter.

As an overall aim, this study finally intends to deconstruct binary constructions of indigenous and non-indigenous cultures and seeks to render dichotomising narrative and extratextual perceptions of European and Aboriginal Australian spatiality as too simplistic. This is also in line with observations by scholars like Lynette Russell (2006), who highlights the importance of overcoming binary oppositions within the Australian cultural context:

> A cultural politics has emerged in […] Australia that is concentrated […] around the binary opposition of the colonized indigenous (or more commonly Aboriginal) and the colonizing diasporic white newcomer […]. Needless to say, this binary is both oversimplified and essentialized. […] Such a polarity offers little hope to the conceptualization of indigenous/nonindigenous relationships where there can be a multitude of subject positions, […] similarities, and differences developing out of ongoing […] exchange. (Ibid. 2)

As Russell remarks, these binaries are still prevalent in contemporary discourses and highly influence the view of Australia's indigenous and non-indigenous population. In order to not affiliate this study with these very recent tendencies, it will follow David Turnbull (2003 [2000]) and his statement "that there is not just one universal form of knowledge (Western science), but a variety of knowledges" and that "a cross-cultural, comparative form of analysis is required to understand our own knowledge traditions" (ibid. 1). Instead of simply imposing Western theories and approaches on Aboriginal literatures, without taking into consideration distinctly indigenous notions of spatiality and belonging, this project aims at conflating insights gained by indigenous and non-indigenous scholars working with Aboriginal Australian novels and the spatial topics these texts negotiate and, in this way, suggest a detailed analysis. With respect to this approach, this thesis is one form of knowledge production, among many others, that aims at mediating between various manifestations and conceptions of spatiality and cultural contexts. Ultimately, just as "the story [by the indigenous artist] is perpetually in motion across the page because storytelling is an open-ended process" (Knudsen 2004: 63), so this study intends not to be a universalist, closed or normative but an open and flexible endeavour hopefully contributing to a lively and perpetual discourse of indigenous Australian literatures and cultures.

1.5 Corpus Selection or Tracing Representations of Spatiality in Contemporary Aboriginal Fiction

From the huge variety of contemporary Aboriginal writing from Australia, Kim Scott's (2012 [2010]) *That Deadman Dance*, Alexis Wright's (2009 [2006]) *Carpentaria*, and Anita Heiss's (2007a) *Not Meeting Mr Right* provide adequate objects of research for analysing representations of spatial belonging and thus form the primary corpus of this study. This subchapter aims at legitimating the selection of these texts by answering the following

questions: In what way is the genre of the indigenous Australian novel suitable for an examination of literary representations of Aboriginal spatiality? Why do contemporary texts most adequately contribute to the objectives of this thesis? Which kinds of spatial representations do the three novels provide and how do they fit into the overall conceptual and methodological framework of this project?

The selection of the novel as the central object of investigation is owing to its textual and medial characteristics. Initially, it is worth noting that "[i]n its dynamic and productive interrelationship with culture, the novel displays both mimetic and poietic potential" (Luh 2013: 24). Together with the acknowledged centrality of space for indigenous literatures and cultures and recent discussions in literary studies and theory, examining Aboriginal novels with a focus on their individual contributions to the (de-)construction and negotiation of indigenous Australian spatiality is recommended. Since the novel as a genre is made up of narratives which are both historically and culturally contingent and always reflect certain worldviews and ideologies (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 119), the decision to analyse this form of Aboriginal writing warrants anticipating manifold representations of indigenous Australian spaces that open up innovative perspectives on spatiality as a form of belonging.

Russell West-Pavlov (2010b) also suggests such an inextricable connection between text and extratextual world. He draws his readers' attention to the "reciprocal enablement between narrative and context" (ibid. 59) and further explicates his observation with relation to narrative spatiality:

> Narratives […] generate their contiguous spaces of narration again and again only because they need those spaces to enable their own narration. The generative activity of narrative, an activity which spawns stories upon stories is not merely active. It is also profoundly dependent upon the spaces in which those stories can be told. The very act of space-creation betrays the debt that narrative owes to the spaces which sustain it. (Ibid.)

According to West-Pavlov, narratives are reliant on and could not exist without referring to extratextual spaces as well as spaces inherent in the text. Taking this extraordinary status of spatiality as an argumentative basis suggests distinctly investigating Aboriginal narratives not only with a focus on their production and construction of textual spaces but also their negotiation of cultural and spatial Australian contexts such as Dreaming stories or the relationship between Aboriginal subjects and their environmental surroundings. Considering its historical development, the novel, with regard to its content as well as its form, has also been pluralised and diversified over the centuries and proven to be a viable genre for a plethora of different topics and purposes (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 104). As Virginia Woolf (1958) points out in her essay "The Narrow Bridge of Art", "[t]hat cannibal, the novel which

has devoured so many forms of art will by then have devoured even more. We shall be forced to invent new names for the different books which masquerade under this one heading" (ibid. 18). Therefore, the novel can be adapted to innumerable contexts, including the Aboriginal Australian, and, although it is a Western literary genre, consider indigenous, non-Western manifestations of (oral) narratives or Dreaming stories.

This means that the novel is the most adequate genre for investigating Aboriginal spaces, because no other literary form features such an inherently polymorphic character that allows an equal, culturally specific adjustment of the text and its relation to the respective non-literary contexts. The volatility of the novel as narrative genre additionally opens up the possibility of discussing new, alternative or even subversive forms of Aboriginal spatiality and belonging because "[d]esigning characters in fictitious timespace has the potential of opening up territory for exploring identity, reaching beyond traditional boundaries, and testing out novel identities" (Bamberg 2009: 133). In this way, indigenous Australian novels are also able to discuss unprecedented perceptions of Aboriginal lifeworlds and point to innovative political, environmental and historical conceptualisations of spatiality and belonging within this context.

From the perspective of culture-specificity, the genre of the novel seems suitable for an investigation of Aboriginal spatiality because it conforms with the research objective of working against binary perceptions of indigenous Australian lifeworlds and spaces. This is due to the fact that the Aboriginal novel is a hybrid and complex text type in itself, which emphasises that "[t]he makeup of all contemporary Aboriginal cultures is a complex mix of pre-European and post-European elements in varying degrees across Australia" (Clarke 2003: 209). It relates to the non-indigenous medium of the book, which "arrived in Australia in 1788 with Governor Phillip and the first shiploads of convicts, officials and marines, as did paper, pens and ink" (Webby 2009: 34), but employs this medial form within an indigenous context by incorporating Aboriginal culturally specific narratives from the Dreaming[18].

This adds another dimension to the complexity of indigenous Australian novels, as oral and written cultures are blended within contemporary narratives and many texts contain Aboriginal stories that were originally transmitted orally from generation to generation. Nevertheless, this does not mean that indigenous Australian cultures were merely oral before the European colonisation, as Penny van Toorn (2009) explicates:

> Aboriginal people had for thousands of years been engaged in practices of communication and storing and retrieving information that might broadly be called writing and reading. Consequently, […] the arrival of the British in 1788 did not trigger a shift from Aboriginal orality to European literacy, but rather an entanglement between radically different reading and writing cultures. (Ibid. 52)

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[18] The Dreaming can be defined as "[a] set of origin myths forming the environmental, cultural and legal backbone of Indigenous society" (Martin Renes 2011: 103).

Hence, recent Aboriginal writing can be seen as a continuation of a centuries-long production and dissemination of indigenous narratives across various media and fosters a non-binary reading of these stories as embedded in a complex web of diverse histories and traditions of reading and writing. Since space is a central aspect of these indigenous cultures and writings and, as already outlined in the very first paragraphs of this study, created via Aboriginal Dreaming narratives, it highly influences the production of Aboriginal literatures. Due to this inextricable linkage between the narrative form of the Dreaming stories and the construction of indigenous Australian spatiality through these narratives, the novel with its narrative form is the one literary genre that most closely corresponds to the culturally specific context of Aboriginal peoples and is most likely to enable indigenous Australian authors to present fictional negotiations of their own lifeworlds. This means that, due to its medial affiliation with indigenous and non-indigenous cultures and the huge narrative overlap of novels and Aboriginal spatialities, the indigenous Australian novel finally emphasises that binary conceptualisations of space are too simplistic and helps to deconstruct and de-essentialise notions of spatiality in the manner of indigenous vs. non-indigenous.

Moreover, it is essential to note that the primary corpus solely comprises very prominent Aboriginal authors and texts. Wright's and Scott's texts belong to what might be called an indigenous 'canon' in Australia and Heiss's novel is widely read and popular all over the continent as well. This selection is primarily due to the diversity of spatial issues and manifestations negotiated in these narratives. Nevertheless, the huge impact of these novels on Australian literary discourses has three further advantages. Firstly, the texts chosen have already been discussed with regard to spatiality as well as many other topics[19]. This leads, secondly, to the possibility of drawing on a great variety of indigenous and non-indigenous opinions and already existing analyses, which is particularly relevant as this study is carried out from a Western perspective. Thirdly, the popularity of the primary corpus leads to the assumption that the spatial topics addressed in the texts are able to influence and shape discourses on the Aboriginal politics of land, country and environment and thus have a relevance for pan-Australian debates on spatiality.

Taking a look at the history of (indigenous) Australian literatures, the concentration on novels seems reasonable from that perspective, too. When regarding the overall progression of the continent's literary history, the novel has played a major role throughout the last century; according to Richard Nile and Jason Ensor (2009):

> There seems to be little to dispute the assertion that, despite the often challenging conditions of writing

[19] For a thorough overview of secondary literature dealing with the primary corpus of this thesis, see 1.2.

> and publication, the novel became Australia's essential literary form from this time [the early 20th century]. Its centrality to Australian literary culture has persisted through many changes in tastes, technologies and markets into the 21st century. (Ibid. 520)

Spanning a time frame from the early 20th century up to today, Nile and Ensor mark the novel as Australia's most important genre and encourage an investigation into its manifold forms and subgenres from a literary studies perspective, indirectly including a focus on narrative representations of spatiality. Although the passage does not mention Aboriginal novels in particular, the huge influence of this genre on the production of Australian literatures gives reason to expect a similar status of novels in the field of indigenous texts, too. Keeping in mind these developments, the distinct focus on contemporary texts seems reasonable, as "[s]ince the early 1980s, the burgeoning interest in and publication of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writing across a number of genres […] has become increasingly well established" (Grossman 2003: 1). The unprecedented engagement with indigenous cultural production, along with the multiplicity of Aboriginal texts published, leads to the establishment of Aboriginal writing, including novels, as one of the most influential branches of contemporary Australian literatures. Texts like Sally Morgan's (2004 [1987]) *My Place*, in which the author traces the Aboriginal history of her family, or Ruby Langford Ginibi's (2007 [1988]) memoir *Don't Take Your Love to Town* became Australian bestsellers and laid the foundations for a growing popularity of indigenous writing.

Taking a closer look at the recent developments in Aboriginal literatures, indigenous Australian writer Anita Heiss (2003) presents the following evaluation of its genre-specificity:

> Considering the number of published poets and autobiographers we have, it would be hard to ignore these as our main genres for writing, but as we move more into fiction, […] this is changing. Aboriginal writers are telling their stories through the printed word in poetry, fiction, autobiography and biography, essays, histories, short stories, plays and film scripts. (Ibid. 35)

Even though Heiss also and very clearly states that Aboriginal writers "are still categorised and known largely for life-writing" (ibid.), indigenous writing from Australia includes a large number of textual forms and genres. Especially in the greater realm of contemporary indigenous fiction, more and more authors discuss their individual lifeworlds and thus space-related topics in their writing. Thus, this genre offers itself as fertile soil for a detailed investigation into the literary manifestations of indigenous Australian spatiality.

In the twenty-first century, Aboriginal literary production is increasingly flourishing and presents a wider spectrum of indigenous lifeworlds and spaces than ever before. Hence, "readers can now make themselves familiar with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imaginative, historical and personal writing in ways that were impossible a generation ago" (Grossman 2003: 1) and are enabled to uniquely approach the diversity of indigenous Australian

spatiality with the help of literary texts. Matching the research focus of this dissertation, contemporary indigenous Australian writing from about the year 2000 and onwards frequently relates to issues of space, place and land, mostly employing the genre of the novel. Aboriginal authors use their texts, for instance, as a means of mirroring the complexity of indigenous Australian lifeworlds and conceptions of space with relation to their own heritage. Famous examples are Kim Scott's *Benang. From the Heart* (1999) or his and Hazel Brown's (2005) *Kayang and Me*. Both relate to the Noongar people, to which Scott belongs, and highlight the global importance of country for Aboriginal people by referring to a local Western Australian context and its indigenous history. In his most recent novel *Taboo*, Kim Scott (2017) once again puts the Noongar at the heart of his narrative.

Also, Alexis Wright, who ranks among the most prominent Aboriginal authors of the last two decades, addresses spatial issues in her texts, for instance in her first novel *Plains of Promise* (2006 [1997]), in which "the natural world features as an important force" (Valenta 2012: 48). Australian writer Jane Gleeson-White (2013b) even relates all of White's novels, i.e. *Plains of Promise* (2006 [1997]), *Carpentaria* (2009 [2006]) and *The Swan Book* (2013), to spatiality: "If *Plains of Promise* is about the fate of three women severed from their ancestral land and *Carpentaria* is about a community's battle to prevent the mining of its ancestral land, *The Swan Book* is concerned with the entire Earth" (Gleeson-White 2013b: unpaginated). Gleeson-White identifies Aboriginal connections to country as a central motif of White's work and demonstrates the diversity of spatial representations within contemporary Aboriginal novels referring to indigenous Australian history, politics or the protection of ancestral land.

Another influential topic in the current landscape of Aboriginal novels is the negotiation of urban spatiality. Anita Heiss illustrates the lives of young urban Aboriginal women in Sydney in her chick-lit[20] narratives *Not Meeting Mr Right* (2007a) and *Avoiding Mr Right* (2008), whereas Melissa Lucashenko deals with the problems Aboriginal people have to face in Australia's cities and suburbs in *Steam Pigs* (1997) and *Hard Yards* (1999). Nicole Watson combines indigenous politics of space with the genre of the mystery novel in her text *The Boundary* (2011), which addresses the indigenous struggle for land in Brisbane thereby adding another nuance to the literary debate about indigenous Australian spaces. Even if the texts mentioned are only a small proportion of what contemporary Aboriginal writing has to offer in terms of its representations of spatiality, land and nature, they point to the kaleidoscope of

[20] Juliette Wells (2006) identifies chick-lit as a type of women's fiction that "centers on a love plot, although the nature of that plot varies according to its heroine's age and marital status" and explains that "the genre's characteristic elements [are]: the heroine's search for an ideal romantic partner; her maturation and growth in self-knowledge, often aided by friends and mentors; and her relationship to conventions of beauty" (ibid. 49).

possible subjects for spatial literary analyses[21]. Together with the centrality of space for indigenous Australian cultures already outlined, the themes referred to by contemporary Aboriginal writers recommend a detailed investigation into their dealing with and understanding of representations of space and belonging.

The first text that will be part of a detailed analysis in this study is Kim Scott's (2012 [2010]) *That Deadman Dance.* It presents a historical perspective on the colonisation of Western Australia and the meeting of European and Aboriginal spatiality. The novel fits into the methodological and content-related research framework of this thesis because it can be investigated with regard to what will be called 'conflicted belonging'. This take on the text aims to draw attention to different manifestations of spatiality in order to dissolve binary perceptions of indigenous and non-indigenous spaces. Such an approach matches recent examinations of *That Deadman Dance*, since, for instance Sue Kossew (2014) highlights that "[i]n Kim Scott's novel, […] the space of cultural contact and exchange is represented as a space of potential *agency* for Indigenous people and of *mutual* transformation rather than in the simpler binaristic terms of an exploitative encounter between colonizer and colonized" (ibid. 175). Thus, the text simultaneously helps to establish a more differentiated picture of diverse spatial manifestations and practices in Australia and to substitute colonial, binary perceptions of the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants and respective spatialities with a more nuanced way of proceeding free of hierarchies.

That Deadman Dance facilitates an exploration of a variety of additional topics under the umbrella of 'conflicted belonging'. As the novel is set in the 19th century, the text offers itself especially for a spatial-historical analysis[22] referring to topics such as the European exploration of the country, the establishment of first settlements, the Aboriginal responses to the exploitation of their land and the relationship between Scott's literary representations and historical illustrations of this era (cf. e.g. Shellam 2009). Another research field relevant for this study is the colonisers' utilisation of ancestral space, especially in relation to whaling in Western Australia (cf. Gibbs 2010). A prominent theme throughout the narrative, Scott employs whaling as a means of stressing the economisation of Aboriginal space as one implementation of the European *terra nullius* policy. Lastly, *That Deadman Dance* makes it possible to examine

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[21] Interestingly, both Anita Heiss and Alexis Wright employ the genre of non-fiction within two of their most recent publications. Heiss (2018) edited a collection titled *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*, which relates to the diverse ways of growing up as an indigenous person on the Australian continent and indirectly raises the issues of identity and belonging. Wright's (2017) *Tracker*, which "is based on a collection of oral testimonies from Tilmouth and many of those who knew him" (Bongiorno 2018), deals with the indigenous Australian activist Tracker Tilmouth.

[22] Such an approach to the text is also suggested by recent publications on *That Deadman Dance* (cf. e.g. Brewster 2011, Kossew 2014, Ravenscroft 2013).

how indigenous and non-indigenous spatial practices of the past can have an impact on the present and future situation of Aboriginal Australians; as Kim Scott stated in an interview, his narrative is also about "the regeneration and consolidating of culture in its own community, and empowering people through the sharing of that in a controlled way" (Brewster 2012: 229). With this implication, which indirectly includes Aboriginal land and its representations in the novel, and the abovementioned variety of spatial topics and approaches that can be brought together with the help of *That Deadman Dance*, the text presents unique perceptions on the plural nature of spatiality and its interrelations with various forms of belonging in non-indigenous as well as indigenous cultures.

Alexis Wright's (2009 [2006]) *Carpentaria* also deals with the non-indigenous utilisation of Australian land, but introduces this topic in relation to current, not historical, discourses on indigenous spatiality and offers another angle from which to examine Aboriginal Australian spatial belonging. The setting of the novel is the Gulf of Carpentaria in Australia's Northern Territory, where diverse storylines intertwine in the narrative of the fictional town of Desperance and its indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants. *Carpentaria* concerns spatiality with reference to environmental debates; its narrative evolves around geopolitical issues such as mining (cf. Mead 2014) and the associated occupation and destruction of ancestral land. This content-related design lends itself to an ecocritical reading, because such an interpretation concentrates "on the dialogic intersection of nature, culture and literature" (Berensmeyer 2009: 137) in the text. Since "ecocriticism has a political agenda and is largely, though not exclusively, oriented towards the present" (ibid.), it is also able to shed light on the indigenous struggle for land rights and ownership illustrated in the novel.

Apart from these dimensions, the proposed focus of 'balanced belonging', which points to the indigenous people's lives in and with the land, their perspective on nature as an element of equal value and the differences between such a balanced relationship with space and non-indigenous practices like mining etc., will be analysed and explicated in detail with regard to the influence of space on various aspects of Aboriginal lifeworlds. Moreover, *Carpentaria* features a vast number of references to Aboriginal cosmologies. Since the importance of spirituality has already been the object of several studies (cf. Devlin-Glass 2008, Martin Renes 2011) and is inseparably connected with indigenous Australian spatiality, the novel allows for an innovative merging of indigenous spiritual narratives and spaces under the heading of 'balanced belonging'. The text also debates and will be explored in terms of indigenous localities and temporalities (cf. Ng 2013), as well as the nomadic way of living. With relation to ecocriticism, the analysis will also ask whether the Aboriginal interactions with space

represented in the text might be read as an alternative to exploitative and economically biased ways of dealing with land. The use of *Carpentaria* within this study also fits in with current research insights into the nexus of ecocriticism, (spatial) literary studies and related disciplines (cf. Nayar 2010). Various publications (cf. Huggan/Tiffin 2010, Fricke/von Rath/Nechutnys/Senft 2014) support critical inquiries into the areas of spatiality, land and environment with the help of literary texts and highlight the huge impact of narrative representations of space within ecocritical discourses. Moreover, Hubert Zapf (2002, 2005, 2008) has already noted intersections of literature and ecology and the versatility of ecocriticism as a transdisciplinary approach for literary studies, and Marion Gymnich (2008) has explicated the potential of a joint consideration of (post-)colonial studies and ecology in the realm of indigenous literatures. *Carpentaria* fosters a mutual dialogue between fictional negotiations of indigenous Australian land conceptions and ecocritical studies of narrative texts and can innovatively illuminate current Aboriginal politics and notions of space on the basis of contemporary research in literary and (post-)colonial studies.

The third primary text will be Anita Heiss's (2007a) chick-lit novel *Not Meeting Mr Right*. The choice of a publication from the realm of popular fiction might seem inappropriate at first glance, especially in relation to Scott's and Wright's texts, but the text offers unique possibilities for the examination of Aboriginal spatiality. Since the novel is set in Sydney, it addresses urban forms of Aboriginal spatiality and adequately completes the narrative corpus of this study. *Not Meeting Mr Right* deals with the lives of four Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in Sydney and the indigenous protagonist's search for 'Mr Right' in this spatial context. Hence, the investigation of the novel aims to unearth the diversity of Aboriginal women in urban spaces and to illustrate multifarious forms of Aboriginal 'urban belonging'. Methodologically, this will be realised by a dialogue between intersectionality and the representations of urban Aboriginal women in the text. The analysis will interweave Aboriginal indigeneities and femininities with urban spatialities for the first time in order to gain a new kind of perspective on the complex interrelations and indivisible connection of these parameters of belonging. The centrality of space and belonging for indigenous Australian cultures will thereby be further underlined, since "by always foregrounding the spatial distribution of hierarchical power relations, we can better understand the process whereby a space achieves a distinctive *identity* as a place" (Gupta/Ferguson 1992: 8).

As such a reflection on Aboriginal spatiality in urban contexts is in line with current research in several disciplines, *Not Meeting Mr Right* makes unprecedented views on contemporary indigenous Australian cultures and spaces possible, especially the establishment

of spatiality as a category of difference for intersectional and indigenous studies. While belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011) and geographically oriented categories such as origin or nationality (cf. Lutz/Wenning 2001) have already been recognised as fruitful areas of study for intersectional analyses, narratologists have noted the theoretical (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2014) and practical potential (cf. Luh 2013) of this approach as well as highlighted the need to combine intersectionality and space (cf. Weixler 2011). There is also increasing attention towards Aboriginal people living in urban environments (cf. Hinkson 2001, Cowlishaw 2009). *Not Meeting Mr Right* facilitates a conflation of these diverse scholarly strands with intersectionality and is thus an adequate choice for an investigation of contemporary literary representations of Aboriginal spatial belonging with a focus on urbanity. This is further recommended by a recent discussion of the text referring to the novel's productivity for discourses on urbanity and cosmopolitanism, and gender, as well as indigenous issues (cf. Ommundsen 2011).

Heiss's narrative also offers the possibility of tackling "the popular misconceptions that 'real' Aboriginal communities only exist in rural and remote areas" (Behrendt 2006a: unpaginated). The emphasis on pointing out literary discussions of urban spatiality as a potential form of Aboriginal belonging can lead to innovative insights into how indigenous Australians perceive cityscapes such as Sydney and in what ways they interlink these places and spaces with indigeneity. Besides that, the analysis will also ask whether the negotiations of 'urban belonging' in the novel are connected to the genre of the chick-lit novel that points to the category of femininity covered in the intersectional exploration, and, if so, in what way this particular text form contributes to the representations of urban Aboriginal belonging.

As a last point, it is worthwhile to point to the interrelation of the spatial foci of the three novels and the authors' individual backgrounds. Every text either relates to the respective writer's regional origin, meaning the area of his or her own Aboriginal community, or a part of Australia that represents a meaningful place in their lives. Kim Scott (2014) is "identifying [himself] as an Australian Aboriginal person or, more specifically, a Nyungar (the people and culture Indigenous to south-west Australia)" (ibid. 3). In *That Deadman Dance,* Scott presents a historical engagement with this indigenous community during the time of European colonisation in the 19th century. Alexis Wright, who is a "member of the Waanyi nation of Queensland's far north" (O'Brien 2007: 215), sees her novel connected with her ancestral land. In an interview, she stated that *Carpentaria* "was based on the Gulf country which I consider is my traditional homeland" (ibid.). Anita Heiss (2012) makes Sydney the main location of *Not Meeting Mr Right* and describes her connection to that place particularly as follows: "[W]hile

I can easily call Greater Sydney my home, it is not *my* country. My spirit belongs and will finally rest with those of my ancestors back in Wiradjuri ngurumbang (country)" (ibid. 3). Even if she does not take into consideration her ancestral land in the novel, Sydney is nevertheless a place to which Heiss feels related.

Referring to the central topic of this study, Kim Scott, Alexis Wright and Anita Heiss might express and mirror personal forms of spatial belonging in their novels. Of course, this study does not aim to promote author-oriented readings and interpretations, as this may only be a coincidence and the three writers also employ other spaces in their books and publications. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Scott, Wright and Heiss seem to be interested in a literary examination of spaces and places they feel associated with, which supports the compilation of exactly this primary corpus in the context of spatiality and belonging.

1.6 Structuring Space and Spatialising Structure

Since Aboriginal space forms the overall nexus of the analyses of indigenous Australian literatures and cultures in this study, the final subchapter of the introduction will be dedicated to a first conceptualisation of spatiality. In order to define this category, Aboriginal space will be referred to as a "complex, highly structured life-giving and sustaining [element]" (Ragaz 1988: 29) of indigenous lifeworlds. This may seem too broad a description at first glance, but it exactly allows for what the rather open and dynamic methodological framework of this project (see Chapter 1.3) calls for: a conceptual foundation as well as a basic structuring of Aboriginal spatiality that is still open to be filled and modified. In the course of the following chapters, Ragaz' notion of space will form the starting point for a detailed elaboration on the centrality as well as an illustration of key elements of indigenous Australian spatiality. This gradual outline of Aboriginal space will be both product- and process-oriented. The focus on the final product is mirrored in the intended formulation of a working definition of Aboriginal spatiality at the end of Chapter 3. At the same time, the creation of this concept, like the rest of this thesis, is in line with its bottom-up principle of constructing knowledge. Therefore, Ragaz' understanding of space will be questioned by diverse perspectives on indigenous Australian space before finally asking in what way every single element is able to contribute to and shape the proposed working definition.

Particularly from a Western academic viewpoint, this non-linear manner of developing a definition of indigenous space might appear uncommon, because it does not rely on a fixed foundation theorised in the context of the research focus and then applied to its object of study, but instead on a broad first concept and a multiplicity of ideas that will be brought together

within a working definition. The choice of exactly such a way of proceeding is because of its flexibility and the need to reflect upon every single theoretical step before deciding how on how to compile and design the working definition of indigenous Australian spaces. Ultimately, this methodological pathway will briefly regard Western approaches to space and pay attention to these notions of spatiality and compare them with Aboriginal perspectives on space, because

> Western classifications of space include such notions as architectural space, physical space, psychological space, theoretical space and so forth. […] For the indigenous world, Western conceptions of space, of arrangements and display, of the relationship between people and the landscape, of culture as an object of study, have meant that not only has the indigenous world been represented in particular ways back to the West, but the indigenous world view, the land and the people, have been radically transformed in the spatial image of the West. (Smith 2012 [1999]: 53)

According to Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, it is crucial to reflect on the use of non-indigenous conceptions of spatiality within indigenous (research) contexts, because these theories alter the image of indigenous forms by bringing them in line with their own categories. For these reasons, Ragaz' definition will only constitute a preliminary working ground of this study, yet shape the design of its structure, which will be outlined in the following paragraphs. As a first step, the second chapter of this dissertation will historicise Aboriginal spatiality in order to understand the centrality of this category within indigenous Australian lifeworlds up to the present. It will also serve as an argumentative backdrop for comprehending the crucial position of spatial representations in contemporary Aboriginal literatures. While tracing indigenous narratives of land from the settlement of Australia, the British colonisation to the Mabo case and the post-Mabo era, this section will particularly concentrate on Aboriginal politics of space and the ongoing struggle for land rights.

The third chapter will centre on answering the following question: Which elements of indigenous space must be introduced in order to approach and read the Aboriginal Australian representations of spatiality in Scott's, Wright's and Heiss's texts? It will be simultaneously based on the core structures and topics of the primary corpus and tailored to the content-related requirements of the analyses to underline the significance of Aboriginal portrayals of space for this project. With regard to the theoretical framing of this thesis, Chapter 3 will introduce indigenous Australian spatiality as a form of belonging and in this way present the first fulfilment of Ragaz' basic definition. After a comparison of various notions of belonging and a conceptualisation of the terms of this study, the most important characteristics of Aboriginal spaces will be illustrated and subsumed under the categories of geographical or environmental, social and historical connections with land (cf. Miller 2006: 6).

These explications will then lead to the formulation of a working definition of Aboriginal Australian space, which will provide the conceptual foundation for the rest of this

project. The term working definition here points to the dynamic understanding of the developed concept, because it will not be seen as universally valid but as one possible approach among many others that was developed and will be applied particularly in the context of this thesis. As already mentioned earlier, a brief consideration of the canon of Western theories of spatiality will be the last step within the proposed conceptualisation of space and will problematise the applicability of non-indigenous spatial theories within indigenous Australian contexts. This section will finally suggest conceptual differences and/or intersections of indigenous and non-indigenous manifestations of spatiality and belonging, because these interrelations are frequently negotiated in the primary texts and will thus be a significant aspect of the analyses.

Chapter 4 aims to appropriate Aboriginal space methodologically as a form of belonging for the literary studies context and the narrative analyses. Therefore, it will be dedicated to the transfer of the working definition to the realm of literature and literary analysis and the required methodological instruments, mainly focusing on narrative theory. In the case of this study, these will be, first and foremost, the worldmaking approach to literary texts as well as (spatial) narratology and thematically oriented investigations of fictional texts. This chapter will signify the final conflation of the theoretical and conceptual strands of this dissertation and build the platform for the following examinations.

The core of this study will be represented by three analytical chapters dealing with Kim Scott's (2012 [2010]) *That Deadman Dance*, Alexis Wright's (2009 [2006]) *Carpentaria* and Anita Heiss's (2007a) *Not Meeting Mr Right*. As every analysis will have its own focus, each of the chapters will be structured in the following way: initially, there will be a brief introduction of the respective content-related emphasis and the selected methodology, namely spatial narratology for Scott's, ecocriticism for Wright's and intersectionality for Heiss's novel. After the examination of the texts according to these foci, short conclusions will summarise and record the main findings. Here, too, the literary texts will serve as a means of challenging the narratological, ecocritical and intersectional methodologies by attempting to unearth potential weaknesses of these approaches in terms of their application for the study of current literary representations of Aboriginal spatiality and belonging.

2 Narratives of Land: Historicising Aboriginal Politics of Space

Although only briefly touched upon in the introduction of this study, the political dimension of indigenous Australian spatiality related to this topic is, not to be underestimated. As Julia Finlayson and David Martin (2006) clearly demonstrate, every human being is related to the politics of difference in one way or another:

> A person's gender, ethnic, or racial identity is not self-evident and given, or just a matter of individual background or choice. Rather, it is an often contested political product of the individual's engagement with his or her immediate familial and social networks, and their engagement in turn with the wider world. As the feminist catchphrase of the 1970s put it, the personal *is* the political. (Ibid. 367)

Even though they do not refer to Aboriginal Australian peoples at first glance, they further contextualise their observation: "The inherently political nature of identity can be clearly seen in the case of Aboriginal people, who were subject to successive waves of policies and laws that sought to define, regulate, and transform them individually and collectively for the purposes of the colonial enterprise" (ibid.). The political condition of Aboriginal cultures becomes nowhere more palpable than in the case of space and land rights, because spatiality constitutes one of the main grounds of Aboriginal existence:

> To understand our law, our culture and our relationship to the physical and spiritual world, you must begin with the land. Everything about Aboriginal society is inextricably interwoven with, and connected to, the land. Culture is the land, the land and spirituality of Aboriginal people, our cultural beliefs or reason for existence is the land. You take that away and you take away our reason for existence. We have grown the land up. We are dancing, singing, and painting for the land. We are celebrating the land. Removed from our lands, we are literally removed from ourselves. (Dodson 1997: 41)

As Dodson highlights, the individual and collective circumstances in Aboriginal cultures and, thus, their political situatedness is always and inextricably linked to indigenous spatiality and a community's ancestral land. Therefore, the land provides an adequate starting point for shedding light on the historical progression and current political positions of indigenous Australians and for tracing and critically questioning the transitions and developments of Aboriginal spatiality from pre-colonial times to the 21st century.

Based on the reciprocal relations between Aboriginal land, cultures and politics, this chapter will historicise indigenous Australian politics of space. In reference to the literary studies focus of this thesis, non-indigenous readers in particular are only then able to understand the importance of spatiality not only for Aboriginal cultures and politics in general but for the representations of indigenous lifeworlds in contemporary fiction in particular. This is even more the case as "[t]he cultural representation of country has, no doubt, an aesthetic dimension, but the beauty thus presented also has a political dimension" (Muecke 2005: 71). Nevertheless, the notion of history is a problematic one in relation to indigenous cultures, as it

“itself is a colonialism” (Knudsen 2004: 20) and immediately raises questions of representation, point of view and the proper account of historical events. In that sense, “[h]istory as historiography is never objective, however great its commitment to telling the truth” (Fludernik 2009: 3). Instead, history always presents subjective perspectives on certain topics and people and is “as an authoritative discourse […] a story of the impact of the West on the world” (Ashcroft 2010: 33). Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012 [1999]) notes that these discourses often exclude indigenous communities from all over the world and do not represent or misrepresent their lives, cultures and traditions (cf. 29-30), which is why “Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes” and “bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying” (ibid.). Since this purpose of indigenous stories is different from the hegemonic claims of many non-indigenous histories, “[t]he sense of history conveyed by these approaches is not the same thing as the discipline of history, and so our accounts collide, crash into each other” (ibid.).

Hence, this chapter attempts to construct, within “a process of selection and inclusion” (Ashcroft 2010: 33), a narrative of Aboriginal politics of space[23] in Australia interlinking past and present instead of writing a spatial history of indigenous Australia, because “history in the oral (Aboriginal) tradition assumes a conjunction between past and present” and “that the past is something which is fluid and shifting and so amendable to intervention, and has an inevitable subjectivity as people seek to establish meaning for the past in the context of their present” (Attwood 1996: xx). For the sake of comprehensibility and due to the concentration on 21st century Aboriginal fiction – not for the sake of supporting exclusive Western historical discourses and non-indigenous, linear notions of temporality – the proposed narrative will portray indigenous Australian spatial politics beginning with the pre-colonial era and describing the most important lines of development up to the present day. Of course, the following section is not able to present a complete illustration of the colonisation and dispossession of Australia’s Aboriginal peoples and their fight for land rights – it primarily intends to back up the analyses of the primary corpus – but it aims to enable readers to grasp the millennia-long grown foundations and manifestations of Aboriginal spatiality by introducing crucial information on historical and political contexts of this study.

[23] Bain Attwood (1996) notices that “Aboriginal histories […] present a profound challenge to the discipline of history itself. This is evident in the narrative forms they assume, in particular those of oral history and myth. Most Aboriginal historical narratives are oral testimonies and, as such, like any oral history, they constitute a different type of history” (ibid. xx). Therefore, the selected presentation of Aboriginal politics of space as narrative, even if it is conducted in the written form and not orally, is an attempt to take into account the narrative quality of indigenous Australian historical testimonies. For a closer examination of Aboriginal manifestations of temporalities as well as notions of histories in relation to the Dreaming and the creation of the land and its inhabitants, see Chapter 3.2.

Recalling the disciplinary focus of this dissertation, it must be stated at this point that the understanding of narrative in this chapter is different from its literary studies conceptualisation, because

> [t]he author of a novel […] develops a fictional world and produces both the story and the narrative discourse that goes with its product, the narrative text. Historians, by contrast, construct the most convincing and consistent account of events possible from their sources (which may also be narratives). (Fludernik 2009: 3)

Even though this chapter does not aim to contribute to exclusive, Western historical discourses, the mere form of the spatial-political Aboriginal narratives will be in line with the latter part of the definition and be constructed 'on the way' and with the help of a bottom-up-technique conflating the insights of several scholars and writers. These will then determine and influence the shape of these diverse narratives of indigenous Australian land and illuminate how Aboriginal spatiality and its political status have developed over the centuries. Finally, the proposed narrative will also predicate the "broad critical consensus that colonial and postcolonial histories in fact consist of a plurality of heterogeneous temporalities" (West-Pavlov 2013: 166) and, thus, the conviction that there are diverse possibilities of constructing a historicisation of Aboriginal politics of space. For these reasons the following descriptions can be rendered solely as one possible narrative and one small contribution to the diversity and heterogeneity in terms of existing approaches to indigenous Australian spatial cultures and their developments over several millennia.

In a first step, it is worth taking a closer look at the times before European colonisation. It is believed that the indigenous Australian population has lived on and inhabited the continent for about 50,000 years (cf. Clarke 2003: viii). Although there are assumptions that "half a billion people had lived and died in 'Australia' before the continent was so named by the Europeans", today the Aboriginal population only "make[s] up about 2 per cent of the Australian people" (Rowse 2006: 361). Concerning the ways of life of the "some six hundred different indigenous groups" (Russell 2006: 4) in pre-colonial times, Barry Butcher and David Turnbull (1988) introduce three controversially debated possibilities: firstly, that the Aboriginal population arrived in Australia and neither changed themselves nor their environment; secondly, that the indigenous people were hunters and gatherers and lived in balance with and from their spatial surroundings; thirdly, that they actively changed the country and the spatial appearance of the Australian continent, for instance by using fire (cf. ibid. 14). Although it is not manageable to single out which of these potential interpretations might be the 'right' or most appropriate one, they point to a very interesting aspect of Aboriginal lifeworlds: it is very likely that, even in the times before colonisation, Australia's

indigenous communities have had a close relationship with their environment and that space has been a significant feature of their cultures ever since.

Concerning the first European preoccupations with the Australian continent, cartographers initially got involved with *terra australis incognita* in the seventeenth century (cf. Meyer 2007: 178). This means that spatiality and its cartographic representations were the access points not only for developing an imagination of the alien and far away landmass but also, with an eye toward further historical developments, the colonisation of Australia. While Dutch explorations, also in the seventeenth century, can be regarded as the first European contact with the material space of Australia, Captain Cook arrived at Botany Bay in 1770 and claimed the continent for the British. In 1788, the First Fleet with about 1,500 people, mostly British prisoners, made landfall in Australia and marked the beginning of its colonisation (cf. Döring 2008: 136). When the first British settlers entered the unknown continent, their "colonial assumption was one of *terra nullius,* an empty land, based on the perception of the original population as nomadic and the erroneous conclusion of non-possession" (Meyer 2007: 182-183). This policy was the most powerful instrument for legitimating the taking possession of Australia and the consequent destruction of the indigenous populations' ancestral land – the foundation of their social, spiritual and environmental lives. Therefore, the European colonisation can be seen as disrupting previous narratives of the Aboriginal inhabitation and spatial organisation of Australia and, due to the unprecedented struggles over land and novel questioning of who the land belongs to, as the beginning of an increasing politicisation of Aboriginal space that lasts until today. Eventually, *terra nullius* was a means used by the colonisers "to justify their occupation, effacing in the process the specific modes of emplacement of Aboriginal cultures, which is tantamount to effacing the people themselves" (Muecke 2005: 13-14).

At the heart of the deliberate colonisation of Aboriginal space[24] stood the colonisers' assumption that indigenous cultures and their approaches to space were diametrically opposed to how Europeans perceived their spatial surroundings. For instance, the colonisers were of the opinion that the indigenous peoples neither had a concept of ownership, which is why they were seen as savages incapable of possessing land, nor did the British recognise the indigenous use and agricultural management of the country but thought that they could care

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[24] According to Fay Gale (1990), "[t]he first attempts at accommodation by the British colonizers followed two divergent approaches. One was to encourage, indeed force, the assimilation of the indigenous owners into the social and spatial structure of the newly arrived groups. […] The other approach favoured more by the soldiers, but also by many of the settlers, was open warfare. […] Over many of the vast territories of the 'New World' this latter approach was far more successful than the former. A third, unplanned but very successful, method of subjugation was the inadvertent introduction of European diseases and food" (ibid. 217-218).

more successfully for the land using their own techniques instead (cf. Heiss 2012: 149, Ryan 1996: 155). The centrality of spatiality for Australia's history of colonisation is also mirrored in the colonisers' early literary texts, because "central to the history of Anglo-Australian literature is that endeavour to find a way of describing and coming to terms with the not-Englishness of Australia's geography, flora and fauna" (Innes 2007: 80). However, the introduction of cattle and sheep and the appropriation of Aboriginal space as grazing country by the European settlers resulted in the destruction of native plants and irreversible changes in the botanic structure of indigenous Australian land (cf. Broome 2009 [1982]: 39). In lieu of collaborating with indigenous communities and paying attention to their spatial knowledge and ways of making use of the land so different from Europe, the British constructed a dichotomy of indigenous and non-indigenous spatiality, in which the latter was superior, and intentionally created a clash of these spatial systems in order to politically subjugate the space of the Australian continent and its Aboriginal population. Along with these arguments of the colonisers, "[t]he necessity to win the land was entirely consistent with Enlightenment philosophy and its most powerful legacy, the idea of progress" (Miller 2006: 33). Hence, the initiation of a colonial Australian narrative that presented the repression of indigenous peoples and the occupation of their spaces as a logical step on the way to further progress could easily be incorporated into the prevailing European worldview of that time. On top of this, these political intentions inherent in Enlightenment philosophy facilitated the legitimation of the at times violent dealing with the Aboriginal population under the heading of indispensable progress and silenced potential critics of the colonial endeavour at the same time.

Compared to other settler colonies, the narratives of indigenous Australian land during the early days of colonisation took another turn. While, for instance in North America or New Zealand, the new settlers accepted the sovereignty of indigenous communities and attempted to politically establish bonds with the indigenous people via land treaties, in Australia the British simply claimed the whole continent for the Crown on the basis of the *terra nullius* policy (cf. Goodman 2006: 165). This means that, even if many colonisers acknowledged the presence of Australia's indigenous population, they did not at all approve their rights, traditions and laws (cf. Bourke/Cox 1994: 53). In order to make the colonisation and the economic and agricultural utilisation of Aboriginal lands possible, reserves for the indigenous population were set up in New South Wales, later all over the continent, from 1815 onwards. Since these reserves were quite small and could not be compared to the size of the respective Aboriginal peoples' ancestral lands, the indigenous communities were not able to pursue their nomadic way of life and hunting and gathering any more but had to stay in these spatially

secluded areas. Due to the fact that many of the reserves were run as missions, the European settlers also aimed to Christianise the Aboriginal people (cf. Gale 1990: 219-220). Although the missions made the survival of some Aboriginal communities possible, they often prohibited the use of indigenous languages or the practice of rituals and ceremonies (cf. Muecke/Shoemaker 2009 [2004]: 67-68, Peterson/McConvell/McDonald/Morphy/Arthur 2005: 101-107). Therefore, the missions represented one agent that actively took part in the destruction and non-recognition of Aboriginal cultures and traditions.

At that point of Australia's colonisation, it is worth integrating some thoughts (see the following two paragraphs) on the roles and functions of maps and mapping within the development of Aboriginal narratives of land, because in the first half of the nineteenth century, diverse expeditions aimed to map Australia (cf. Garfield 2012: 234-235) and in this way make the entire continent, not only the coastal regions, available for settlement and agricultural usage. Although "[i]n 1860, Australia was a place of barren mystery" (ibid. 234) – only the already established settlements and their direct surroundings were known well by the colonisers – the attempts to map the huge landmass heavily contributed to the imagination of Australia as an outpost of Europe and helped to dissolve the perception of the land as an Aboriginal or indigenous space:

> Maps are the ultimate metonym of representation itself – ideology in material form – and nowhere have maps been so important as in Australia, because the discursive control of place has been such a struggle. The map is in some ways the ultimate simulation because it creates the reality of place, creates knowledge of place, and imputes ownership by the mapmakers. (Ashcroft 2010: 27)

In this way, maps also represented a political practice of making space available to the colonisers, in this case the ancestral land of Australia's indigenous population, and "function[ed] efficiently as a *model* of reality" (Huggan 1994: 4) by constructing Australia under the umbrella of European colonial ideologies.

Hence, maps literally 'drew' the country, made it visible and tangible as a whole and were a graphic representation of the new property situation controlled and instituted by the British. Graham Huggan (1989) even attributes "rhetorical strategies" to maps, meaning "the reinscription, enclosure and hierarchization of space, which provide an analogue for the acquisition, management and reinforcement of colonial power" (ibid. 115). Hence, the British colonial maps could also be interpreted as visual manifestations of speech acts that, with reference to Australia, intended to superimpose a European version of the continent over the indigenous space, promoted the political and cultural silencing of the Aboriginal peoples and eventually supported the removal of continent's original inhabitants from their ancestral lands.

Apart from these legal and political purposes of the maps, they also had another, more psychological, function for the colonisers: they enabled the Europeans to establish a form of belonging on the Australian continent so far away from their homeland, because "the drawing of lines is a fundamentally geographical and spatial act in which identities are 'inscribed' and the logos of western thought is founded" (Pickles 2004: 1). This means that the maps, line by line, created narratives of a European affiliation with Australia and helped to construct an emotional, home-like sense of belonging for the new settlers as well. Therefore, the cartographic representations of colonial Australia were directly involved in the initial setting up of a new nation and crucial agents in the de-visualisation of the Aboriginal population. The ultimate effect of these non-indigenous mappings[25], whose consequences are perceivable up to the present day, was, and still is, that "the lands […] colonized are literally reinscribed, written over, as the names and languages of the indigenes are replaced by new names, or are corrupted into new and Europeanized forms by the cartographer and explorer" (Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007 [2000]: 28). Due to these processes, the maps were a main instrument of erasing the Aboriginal people as well as their place names, an important sign of their actual existence, from the continent and colonising Australia and its indigenous population by linguistic means. Combined with the observation that "[m]aps fascinate us because they tell stories" (Garfield 2012: 18), mapping was, finally, one of the most useful colonial practices for the foundation of a European narrative of Australia. Maps told the stories of the 'discovery' and the exploration of this new space belonging to the British and disseminated knowledge about the ownership and occupation of land not only in Australia, but also, in the sense of displaying and legitimating successes and supporting colonial politics, in the motherland and the rest of Europe. The importance of maps highlights firstly that the country's colonisation rested on the invention of cartographic narratives that allowed the new settlers to justify all of their colonial actions. Secondly, the centrality of maps emphasises that the appropriation of ancestral land was dependent not only on the material, but also on the imaginary destruction of the Aboriginal population, their culture and, most notably, the narrative of their millennia-long occupation of the Australian continent.

Summarising the early outcomes of Australia's colonisation for its indigenous peoples, it becomes palpable that "[l]and – its description, control and exploitation – was both the material and the ideological base of colonialism" (Featherstone 2005: 201). It was this key facet of colonialism and the ultimate ideological aim of constructing the space of a European Australia that collided with ancestral land as the foundation of Aboriginal cultures and

[25] For a detailed description of Aboriginal mapping techniques, see Chapter 3.2.

lifeworlds. Spatiality was one of the most relevant categories in terms of deciding colonial conflicts and of determining the future and prosperity of the new British settler colony. Thus, space was from the beginning of colonisation heavily politicised and the ownership of and the power over land defined the European governance of Australia in the end.

The nineteenth century and the times after the early decades of colonisation were particularly characterised by two simultaneous movements conflated with a bilateral spatial narrative: the spreading of European cultures and the spatial dispersal of non-indigenous settlements as well as the forcing back of the Aboriginal population and the effacement of their traditional modes of life including the non-indigenous occupation of ancestral lands. These developments were inextricably linked with the ideology of the Europeans, because "[t]hroughout the nineteenth century, when the majority of the British expansion in Australia occurred, the prevailing opinion was that the Aboriginal 'race' was doomed to annihilation in the face of European settlement" (Clarke 2003: 201). The initial narrative of the taking possession of Australia and the indigenous spaces proceeded to another stage in which the extinction of the Aboriginal peoples, and in this way also potential struggles over land, was seen as a logical outcome of the non-indigenous settlement of the continent. At that time, the indigenous communities mostly lived in missions or reserves and were cut off from their lands and, thus, the basis for living out their traditional ways of life. Nevertheless, some Aboriginal groups actively fought for their rights, for instance the indigenous inhabitants of Coranderrk in Victoria, who used their writing skills as a means of negotiating spatial matters regarding the mission and its land with the local government via petitions and letters (cf. van Toorn 2006: 123-153). This underlines that the long tradition of the relationship between writing, politics and space in indigenous Australian cultures, which also plays a major role in contemporary Aboriginal fiction and the novels to be analysed later, was already palpable in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Almost at the same time, from the 1850s to the 1880s, a huge gold rush all over the continent attracted thousands of immigrants, who mostly settled in urban and suburban areas (cf. Meyer 2007: 180). This phase can be seen as one of the early heydays of the economisation of Aboriginal land and the on-going dissemination of Western, capitalist spatial ideologies, which are nowadays particularly reflected in the (literary) debates on mining. Due to the ever-increasing number of non-indigenous settlers, the decades after 1850 were also characterised by a growing interest in the foundation of an Australian nation[26] and

[26] One of the most central events highlighting the growing strength and influence of the non-indigenous settlers was the 1854 Eureka Stockade, "an uprising of gold diggers […], which originally began with only local demands but soon called for a republic of Australia. The eventual formation of unions within the next

an ultimate declaration of the country as a non-indigenous spatial entity. The culmination of the non-indigenous expansion and indigenous repression was the establishment of the Australian nation in 1901, whose "constitutional arrangement […] defined a nation of white Australian citizens which excluded Aboriginal people (amongst others)" (Anderson 2003a: 45). From a political perspective, indigenous Australians were then officially and on the basis of common non-indigenous laws eliminated from the newly founded state. Referring to Aboriginal politics of space, the year 1901 marked the most extreme cut in the narrative of the indigenous Australian inhabitation of the continent since colonisation, because the proposed social configuration left nearly no hope for indigenous communities in terms of gaining land rights or having the possibility to live on their ancestral lands.

As part of the Australian nation building, the government also decided to legally determine who was supposed to immigrate to and, thus, shape the new state and who not: "From the start of the Australian nation in 1901, the *Immigration (Restriction) Act* encouraged the arrival of the (white) British into Australia as migrants, marginalising other nationalities and races" (Brabazon 2006: 148). Although Aboriginal people were not directly mentioned and were, as opposed to immigrants already present all over the country, the proposed and explicit whiteness of Australia's future was also a racist act against its indigenous population. Such a perspective is supported by Linn Miller (2006), who states that "[f]rom the 1890s to the 1950s, […] the expression 'White Australia Policy' was not in official use in Australia. Nevertheless an ethos of racially restrictive immigration was enshrined in public policy and retained almost unanimous public support" (ibid. 39). Only in the 1970s, did Australia substitute the 'White Australia Policy' with "the allegedly 'non-racist' agenda of multiculturalism" (ibid.). Even if this new policy sought to alter the status of Australia as a merely white nation, it again did not take into consideration the country's Aboriginal population and was a further sign of a development that had been going on since the First Fleet made landfall on Australia's coast:

> It hasn't only been the alien from without that white Australia has sought historically to proscribe, but the alien from within. It is notable that for the first 200 years of European settlement in Australia the absence of Aborigines in discourses on Australian identity politics was routine. Nor were Aboriginal Australians considered important figures. The role of Aboriginal Australians was undervalued until the 1970s. In the 1940s and 1950s there was little or no mention of Aboriginal people in Australian national history, or in books on Australian society and identity. (Miller 2006: 39)

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decades, and the political constitution of further individual states (preceded by New South Wales, 1788; Western Australia, 1825; and South Australia, 1836; Victoria followed in 1851, Queensland and Tasmania in 1859) and the institutions within the British framework of the constitutional monarchy shows this extensive political consolidation of the country. The ultimate union of these states was strongly anticipated in Australian literature by a search for a common national identity" (Meyer 2007: 181).

The multicultural policy opened up unprecedented possibilities for immigration from all over the world and for many people to move to Australia from outside. Simultaneously, it neither changed the living situation of the indigenous peoples inside Australia nor did it put an end to the century-long narrative of their oppression and exclusion from the state. Another part of this narrative was the removal of Aboriginal children, the so-called Stolen Generations, from their families in order to make them part of the white Australian society. These children were forced to assimilate into non-indigenous ways of life, as their indigenous perceptions of the world were seen as inferior, bad and not in line with the idea of a white Australian nation. This taking away of children from their indigenous parents lasted from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the early 1970s and involved more than 50,000 boys and girls, who were then mostly raised in missions or adopted by white Australian families (cf. McMahon 2008: unpaginated)[27]. Together with the above-mentioned policies, the first half of the twentieth century in particular was characterised by racist actions against Aboriginal peoples and families creating a narrative of suppression and, for many indigenous Australians, hopelessness in terms of ever receiving acknowledgement within a non-indigenous nation and being recognised as the continent's original population.

Despite the ongoing marginalisation of Aboriginal peoples and the destruction of their ancestral lands[28], the twentieth century brought about a change for Aboriginal politics of space and the struggle for land rights[29] as well. According to Jon Altman and Kingsley Palmer (2005), "[t]he sesquicentennial of colonisation, 1938, marked the nadir of Indigenous land rights in Australia. In that year, the Aboriginal Day of Mourning Conference in Sydney sowed the seeds of an Indigenous civil rights movement that included a call for land rights" (ibid. 142). Even if there was already awareness within Aboriginal communities of the need to fight for spatial and political rights in the 1930s, a broad indigenous Australian movement emerged in the 1960s. These groups initially concentrated on topics such as land rights, indigenous sovereignty and the preservation of traditional cultures (cf. Anderson 2003b: 18), which made spatiality the central interface of their claims. As a sign of the increasing interest in indigenous cultures, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (today Aboriginal Institute

[27] The actual enormity and the consequences of the Stolen Generations became palpable especially for non-indigenous Australians only in 1997, when the *Bringing Them Home* report by Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was published and revealed the huge numbers of Aboriginal children, who were forcibly taken away from their families (cf. Summers 2008: unpaginated).

[28] For instance, atomic bombs were tested on Aboriginal land in South Australia during the 1950s and 1960s (cf. Altman/Palmer 2005: 154).

[29] Jane M. Jacobs (1988) offers the following definition for land rights and the respective movements: "Simply put, Aboriginal land rights is a process by which Aboriginal groups seek access to resources now in the control of white Australia. Attempts to gain land rights operate within the limitations set by the attitudinal, political and legal constructs of those in power" (ibid. 31-32).

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) was founded in 1964 (cf. Peterson/Arthur 2005: 252). In 1967, a nationwide "referendum removed the constitutional barriers to Aboriginal citizenship" (Anderson 2003a: 46) and presented another landmark due to its changing of the legal status of indigenous people within the Australian nation. Nevertheless and even if Aboriginal people "were not excluded anymore, [they] were 'included' in the sense that they were suddenly supposed to be like the common Australian citizen" (Castejon 2005: 99). This means that, although the 1960s signified a major shift in the narrative of the indigenous peoples' inhabitation of Australia towards political self-determination, the (land) rights movement was still in its early stage.

However, and with a focus on this study's central spatial questions, the impact of the 1960s on the establishment of Aboriginal land rights is not to be underestimated. The burgeoning consciousness of inequalities and the novel attention on indigenous peoples demanding rights regarding their ancestral lands eventually laid the foundations for a more powerful political status of Aboriginal communities within the Australian nation as well as nationwide discourses on land ownership and spatial indigenous rights. Pramod K. Nayar (2009) sums up the associated developments as follows:

> During the 1960s Aboriginals in Australia demanded the right to self-determination and land rights. These demands were based on historical claims that rejected and re-wrote settler histories of 'virgin lands,' and discovery narratives by the European settlers. […] It was an attempt to draft their own histories, in their own languages and narrative modes. More than anything else such Aboriginal writings called into question the issue of […] belonging: who belonged in/to the Australian nation – the white settler or the pre-settler Aboriginal? History writing was thus being used to debate the question of precedence, a question intimately linked to land rights, cultural identity and belonging. (Ibid. 173)

Taking into account Nayar's perspective, the 1960s implied an ultimate conflation of Aboriginal politics, spatiality and belonging on the basis of aiming to change the narrative of the Australian nation from an indigenous position. Aboriginal communities not only wanted to stand up for their rights in order to officially voice their rejection of the *terra nullius* policy and the non-indigenous ownership of land but they also aimed to articulate their narratives of belonging to the country within pan-Australian discourses and re-establish a consciousness for their occupation of the land, in particular prior to colonisation, on a national scale. Interestingly, this period was also considered the phase that initially saw an increasing publication of Aboriginal authors and texts (cf. Grossman 2003: 1). Hence, the intended transformation of the status of indigenous peoples within Australia's narratives also found expression in literary texts and already highlighted the link between political and spatial discourses and the Aboriginal literary production. Referring to the twenty-first-century focus of this study, these publications were essential predecessors of contemporary texts and laid the foundations for the rise of indigenous Australian literatures a few decades later.

The developments that commenced in the 1960s as well as the struggles of the Aboriginal liberation movements[30] continued during the following decades. As a sign of the growing presence and influence of Aboriginal peoples, indigenous Australian Harold Thomas designed an Aboriginal flag in 1971 “with red and black halves emblazoned with a yellow disc symbolising the unity of sun, land and people” that “was raised all over the country” (Broome 2009 [1982]: 245). With its direct reference to spatiality as a shaping force of Aboriginal cultures, this flag was a sign of the strength of the indigenous land rights movements and a visual claim for Aboriginal self-determination and spatial control. With the election of the government led by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1972, Australia entered a phase of social and cultural liberalisation. This was a particular benefit for the country’s indigenous population and the related land rights movements, since the new liberal atmosphere increasingly enabled Aboriginal people to receive acknowledgement (cf. West-Pavlov 2005: 5-6). This novel social climate found expression in various political changes, among which the eventual abandonment of the ‘White Australia Policy’ in 1973 (cf. Döring 2008: 139) was one of the most crucial achievements for Australia’s indigenous population.

One of the key events of the indigenous Australian land rights movement was the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in front of Canberra’s Parliament House on 26 January 1976, which marked a new stage in the fight for spatial justice:

> This calico tent, which [Aboriginal activist] Tony Coorey brilliantly dubbed the ‘Aboriginal Embassy’, became a centre of activity. It was soon stuffed by Aboriginal activists from across the country and white supporters, and visited by those seeking dialogue. […] The tents grew in number and their defiant label of ‘embassy’ challenged the massive white parliamentary building opposite. […] Demands laughable a few years earlier were being earnestly reported and debated. Everybody was talking. Younger activists with more radical ideas were willing to take to the streets and to use direct action and threats. Land claims, the Embassy and Indigenous rights galvanised many Aboriginal people across the country into a pan-Aboriginal identity. (Broome 2009 [1982]: 229)

The Tent Embassy was not only an articulation of the intensifying claims for land rights but also a visual manifestation of the spatial-political consciousness of the Aboriginal population. Due to the creating of a dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous Australia and the unprecedented self-consciousness of the Aboriginal land rights movement, “the Embassy

[30] Among the most important political achievements for Australia’s indigenous peoples was “the establishment of Aboriginal legal services in all states during the 1970s” (Bourke/Cox 1994: 55). Apart from that, “[e]lected national Indigenous representative bodies have been part of Australian Indigenous governance arrangements since 1973. The National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC, 1973-7), the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC, 1977-85) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC, 1990-2005) were all created by the federal government in an attempt to give Indigenous people a structured national voice” (Sanders 2005: 222). These developments decisively contributed to the political participation of Aboriginal communities in Australia and increased the possibilities for the land rights movement to successfully claim indigenous country. Nevertheless, “[i]n 2005 ATSIC was abolished by the federal government and the future of government-created national Indigenous representative bodies became highly uncertain” (ibid.).

achieved a semi-legendary status and inspired Aboriginal activists over the following years" (Robinson 2014: 3). The huge impact of the Tent Embassy became palpable just a few years later: in 1976, the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* was the result of the first legal decision in Australia that made it possible to give back ancestral lands to Aboriginal communities. Even if the Act did not invalidate the *terra nullius* policy, it presented a milestone within Australian legislation and the first opportunity for the indigenous peoples to legally demand back their lands since colonisation (cf. Deane 1997: ix-x). Summarising the achievements and developments of the Aboriginal peoples since the 1960s, "[i]ndigenous rights in the form of land rights had become a powerful force in politicising Aboriginal people and binding disparate groups into a national movement" (Broome 2009 [1982]: 245).

At about the same time, there was a huge "flourishing of Aboriginal art, literature and other forms of cultural activity" (Anderson 2003b: 19), which, too, underlines the role of literature as one essential medium for the discussion of spatial Aboriginal issues. Since the 1970s, literary texts in particular have conferred new perspectives on and revised definitions of the Australian nation in order to achieve an inclusion of the country's indigenous population within these spatial conceptions (cf. Mead 2009: 550). As "these developments suggested a shift towards control by Indigenous Australians over cultural processes of self-representation" (Anderson 2003b: 19), the political Aboriginal movements concentrating on social and legal liberation also had effects on the Aboriginal cultural production and the themes of literary texts. Nevertheless, the tensions between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians were once again brought to the fore during the Bicentennial, the "re-enactment of the arrival of the First Fleet on January 26, 1988" (Jensen 2005: 51). While the non-indigenous population looked back upon the history of the nation, Aboriginal people demonstrated against the festivities, because they saw them as a mere celebration of Australia's colonial history. From an indigenous viewpoint, the Bicentennial was not least a commemoration of the beginning of their dispossession and the occupation of their lands.

In 1992, the struggle for spatial Aboriginal rights experienced its most notable progress and the indigenous Australian land rights movement its biggest success due to the constant efforts of Torres Strait Islander Eddie Koiki Mabo[31]. As Russell West-Pavlov (2013) comprehensively outlines,

> [i]n its 1992 Mabo decision, the Australian High Court ruled that, contrary to previous *terra nullius* understandings, traditional Indigenous ownership of territory could persist unbroken from before the arrival of white settlers in 1788 and the massive displacement, dispossession and indeed genocide

[31] Having fought for its legal acknowledgement for various years, "the 1992 judgement by the High Court of Australia […] recognized the claim of Eddie Koiki Mabo (1936-92) to Native Title to his traditional land on the island of Mer in the Torres Strait" (Baker/Worby 2007: 18).

> which ensued. Subsequent legislation made it possible for Indigenous groups to lodge claims for the reassertion of traditional land ownership […]. Paradoxically, the land rights legislation demanded as proof of ownership the very sorts of continuity which had been virtually obliterated in the long two-hundred year war of attrition against Indigenous culture and the confiscation of Indigenous territory upon which it was based. The very necessity to reassert ownership was predicated upon the loss of ownership, whose proof then became the precondition for return. (Ibid. 170-171)

This means that, on the basis of the Mabo decision, the Australian state acknowledged the occupation of the Australian continent by Aboriginal peoples before 1788 and finally revoked the *terra nullius* policy. Apart from that, this spatial achievement was one of the decisive changes in the course of indigenous Australian narratives of spatiality, because it provided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with a solid legal foundation for regaining ancestral lands. Also from a political viewpoint, "the consequences of the Mabo decision are massive, for it casts into question the very foundations, both legal and territorial, of white Australian national self-understanding" (West-Pavlov 2010a: 18) and, in this way, challenges the entire narrative of the non-indigenous occupation and inhabitation of the continent. Nevertheless, and as West-Pavlov also mentions in his comprehensive summary of the Mabo case, it proved difficult for further Aboriginal groups to actually get back their lands. Although various Aboriginal communities all over Australia were able to reclaim certain areas successfully (cf. Broome 2009 [1982]: 302-306), it was and still is the case that "territorial tribal rights are only hesitantly granted and still need court approval, as in some cases they clash with other groups' (and multinational companies') economic interests" (Meyer 2007: 183)[32]. Moreover, for many Aboriginal communities not only the land but also the sea counts as influential factor in the construction of belonging (cf. Rose 1996: 8-9), which is why rights of ownership regarding the sea are equally important and "from an Indigenous perspective it seems artificial to separate sea rights from land rights" (Altman/Palmer 2005: 148).

As the Mabo case presented the first return of land to its indigenous owners, it provided the legal and political backdrop for prospective Aboriginal land claims. Nevertheless, the implementation of further trials turned out to be a complicated process, because the legislation did not take into consideration the spatial diversity and complexities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures nor the economic interests related to indigenous country. Eventually, and as indigenous Australian Galarrwuy Yunupingu (1997) clearly states, "[n]ative title is not just about pieces of whitefella paper. It is the customary law and system which still governs us right now and gives us the rights to survive and live" (ibid. 14).

[32] This was particularly due to "the High Court's *Wik* judgement of 1996, [which] said that native title can coexist with other forms of land interest such as pastoral leaseholds. Precedence is given to commercial rather than Indigenous interests if there is any conflict between them" (Altman/Palmer 2005: 146).

Hence, the recognition of spatial Aboriginal rights is not only connected to legal and political decisions but is inextricably linked with the social and cultural acknowledgement of indigenous communities all over Australia.

The political events such as Mabo that positively influenced the conditions of spatial Aboriginal rights were superseded by new conservative waves[33] that brought about a change for the worse. Therefore, and "[i]n a relatively short space of time, the cultural possibilities of new, more inclusive forms of nationalism seemed to dissipate" (Anderson 2003b: 20). These concerns were directly represented by the government's legislative actions, which included the amendment of the *Commonwealth Native Title Act* of 1993, the political result of the Mabo decision. The *Native Title Amendment Act* of 1997 was a mere non-indigenous construct, since it complicated Aboriginal native title claims and simultaneously protected non-Aboriginal land owners (cf. Kerwin 2010: 170). These developments were also palpable for Australia's indigenous population and they once again felt the need to fight for their (spatial) rights as well as the maintenance of the political successes gained in the early 1990s (cf. Yunupingu 1997: 14). Thus, the decade presented diverse narratives of going back in forth in terms of bringing forward the legal and political conditions of Aboriginal spatiality and belonging. Despite these ups and downs, the 1990s essentially contributed to and brought forth increasing debates on Aboriginal spatiality and spatial rights as well as the public perception of Aboriginal people and their ancestral lands as an integral aspect of Australian culture.

In the 2000s, there was one event in particular that concentrated the national attention once more on the interrelations between Australia's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population, namely Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 2008 apology speech:

> On 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered a historic address in the federal parliament, where he apologised to Indigenous Australians for past wrongs committed by governments against them, particularly for the removal of children from their families. This apology was seen as an act of enormous symbolic importance. (Behrendt 2012: 14)

While Rudd clearly emphasised the Stolen Generations, the speech could be interpreted with relation to spatiality as well, because his focus on political actions of the past indirectly comprises the colonial times and the settlers' taking possession of Aboriginal land as one of the aspects for which he wanted to express regret. Concerning Australia's indigenous peoples, there were different responses to the apology: some addressed the recognition of the century-long suffering of the Aboriginal population and its inclusion within Australian national

[33] These developments were especially represented by the election of Prime Minister John Howard in 1996 and the successes of the One Nation Party, who both advocated conservative values (cf. Anderson 2003b: 20).

narratives, whereas others perceived the speech particularly as a possibility for articulating new claims (cf. Moses 2010: 318-322). Even if these reactions highlight that the Aboriginal reactions to Rudd's speech were mostly positive, "[t]he apology was not seen by Indigenous peoples as a universal panacea, of course" (ibid. 318). This is due to the fact that it did not automatically result in political or legal actions improving the living conditions of Australia's indigenous population or, regarding this study's focus, enhancing their possibilities for re-claiming ancestral lands. Rudd's apology was first and foremost a symbolic political act, that nevertheless emphasised, together with the progressions of the 1990s, that "[t]he conviction that the Australian future is contingent upon our coming to terms with the Aboriginal past has been [and still is] very influential" (Attwood 1996: xxxi). The 1990s and the 2000s definitely underlined that the future of the Australian nation is heavily dependent on its cooperation with and inclusion of the country's indigenous peoples as well as the acknowledgement, promotion and protection of their spatial, cultural, social and political rights.

Despite these positive changes, the Australian government was not able to keep Rudd's promises and, as recent developments highlight, there is still a lot to be done to improve the living situations of Aboriginal communities. One example is the so-called Northern Territory Intervention[34] that started in 2007 and whose "emergency measures were initially designed to tackle suspected child abuse in some Indigenous communities" (Pazzano 2013 [2012]: unpaginated). However, these actions once again brought to the fore the low political status of indigenous peoples within the Australian nation that is still prevalent in the twenty-first century, since "[t]he measures are widely opposed by Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, who say they were not properly consulted on the government's plans and that the laws are racist" (ibid.). Moreover and, most interestingly, "since the intervention was rolled out […], not one person has been prosecuted for child sex abuse" (ibid.). Hence, indigenous Australians are still not able to make decisions regarding their communities in a self-determined and independent way. As Marcia Langton (2008) nicely sums up, this means that "[p]aradoxically, even while Aboriginal misery dominates the national media frenzy – the perpetual Aboriginal reality show – the first peoples exist as virtual beings without power or efficacy in the national zeitgeist" (ibid. unpaginated).

[34] The Northern Territory Intervention or "Northern Territory National Emergency Response" (Roffee 2016: 132) refers to "[o]ver 500 pages of […] complex legislation to tackle the systemic problems surrounding child abuse in the Northern Territory's Indigenous communities [and] were introduced into Parliament on 7 August 2007 in three main bills" (ibid.). These "contained a range of provisions: on access to and consumption of alcohol; on pornography on publicly-funded computers; on possession and distribution of prohibited material such as pornography and films classified as X 18+ or publication, film or computer game classified as RC; on acquisition of rights, titles and land interests; on access to Aboriginal land; on law enforcement, bail and sentencing; on licensing of community stores; and on implementation of an income management regime" (ibid.).

This holds true for the realm of space as well, as mining[35] on ancestral lands is still heavily debated and is always located between the conflicting poles of global companies' economic concerns and the interests of indigenous communities. In addition, the contemporary literary negotiations of this topic, such as in Alexis Wright's (2009 [2006]) *Carpentaria*, display the crucial importance of spatial debates within the current political landscape of Australia (cf. Mead 2014). Most recently, Prime Minister Tony Abbott took up the field of Aboriginal space, too. During the G20 summit, that took place in Brisbane in 2014, he stated that, in his point of view, the continent was only bush and its original population basic in its ways of life before the British colonisation (cf. McQuire 2014: unpaginated). Hence, he "reiterated the legal fiction of 'terra nullius'" (ibid.) and clearly made evident that he is neither interested in a political strengthening nor any kind of indigenous influence within Australia's national politics and, in this way, finally declared the cultural and social achievements for Aboriginal people of the last decades negligible. Even though these events are only a small proportion of the political developments of the twenty-first century, they emphasise the still difficult conditions of Aboriginal cultures and politics[36], also in relation to spatiality. Indigenous Australian communities are still dependent on the decisions made by non-indigenous governments as well as the current political and economic conditions within Australia and are, most of the time, not able to decide autonomously on the futures of their own peoples and ancestral lands.

A summary of the depicted developments of Aboriginal politics of space leads, on the one hand, to the insight that "the fight for independent land title […] has unified an otherwise extremely diverse people" (Gale 1990: 231). Space serves, up to today, as a means of underlining the inferior status of Aboriginal cultures and lifeworlds in Australia and fighting against the on-going consequences of colonisation. Nowhere else but within the narratives of the indigenous Australian land rights movements and the respective spatial legislation can the political struggles for social and cultural acknowledgement as well as their successes for Aboriginal cultures be more clearly detected. On the other hand,

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[35] Remarkably, "[m]ining on Aboriginal land contributes more than a billion dollars a year to the Northern Territory economy and accounts for 80 percent of the Territory's income derived from mining." Cf. Central Land Council, http://www.clc.org.au/articles/cat/mining/, last retrieved 2019-03-20.

[36] Although there are very recent developments that indicate a growing awareness of indigenous Australian cultures and politics of space on a pan-Australian scale such as the idea to change the names of places that might be offensive for Aboriginal peoples in Canberra (cf. Dingwall 2018) or the introduction of Aboriginal dialects within the teaching of languages in kindergartens in Victoria (cf. Cook 2018), there are other events that point to the fact that there is still a lot to be done. One of these crucial subjects is for instance the non-existence of a treaty between Australia's original population and the colonisers that has recently been discussed by Aboriginal leaders (cf. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-40024622, last retrieved 2019-03-20) and further underlines the still difficult (spatial) relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

> the wrenching of Aboriginal people from their lands, their placement in walled and regulated institutions, and the subsequent containment within police cells, welfare jurisdictions, and Aboriginal Departments shows the many ways in which space has been an active component of an ongoing colonization. (Johnson 1994: 143)

This means that indigenous Australian space, apart from its function as a symbol for the achievements of the Aboriginal (land) rights movements, is a sign for the century-long dispossession, non-recognition and discrimination of the continent's indigenous population that lasts up to the present day. As mentioned earlier, space was not only a major force in realising the colonial endeavours of the British but, as Johnson points out, it marks the still prevailing inequalities of indigenous and non-indigenous people within the Australian nation. In this way, Aboriginal spatiality becomes a political interface representing the on-going destruction and suppression of indigenous Australian cultures and rights by non-indigenous people but also the Aboriginal struggle against non-Aboriginal legislation and social structures. Thus, the explicated narratives of indigenous Australian politics of space incorporate colonial, anti-colonial as well as neo- and post-colonial aspects and conflate the country's indigenous past, present and future by illustrating that "indigenous identities must always transcend colonial disruptions (including the posts and the neos), claiming: we were here before all that; we are still here; we will make a future here" (Clifford 2001: 482). Aboriginal spatiality turns out to be a seismograph for the achievements of the Australian nation with regard to its coming to terms with its colonial past, the occupation of Aboriginal lands and the political actions for better living conditions of the continent's first peoples.

Such a perception of spatiality and land rights as two of the most important facets of indigenous Australian politics and cultures, referring to the times before and since colonisation, is encouraged by Aboriginal people as well. Galarrwuy Yunupingu (1997), for instance, states that

> [l]and rights are the basis of Aboriginal rights. Getting the land back has been important because the land is part of us, we are one because of our relationship. There is nothing – no law, no person – that will separate our connection with the land. Getting the land back has kept our spirits alive. (Ibid. 11)

Yunupingu clearly demonstrates that the spatial narratives of indigenous Australia are also the overall narratives of Aboriginal cultures and their inhabitation of the continent. In recognising these links and the fact that regaining control over ancestral lands was a major motivation for Aboriginal peoples to fight for their rights over various centuries, spatiality can be seen as one of the keys that help to unfold the social, cultural and political complexities of Australia's original population, also in relation to its representations in contemporary indigenous fiction.

Hence, spatiality can open up perspectives on and facilitate an understanding of the multifaceted and multi-layered developments of the narratives of indigenous Australian

cultures and spaces that were highly altered and influenced by non-indigenous forces. Regarding the future developments of Aboriginal politics of space, many indigenous Australians would favour a bicultural state policy instead of multiculturalism and a subsequent acknowledgement of their peoples as the continent's original inhabitants and land owners, as they do not want to be seen as one of several ethnic communities within the Australian nation (cf. Cohen 2006: 67). Indigenous writer Alexis Wright's (2006) presents another take on this question and points to the Aboriginal peoples' responsibilities in terms of the design of their own future:

> We have been left with the results of two centuries of their 'solutions', including those who keep saying that we should be like all other Australians. […] The reality, however, is that most of those who have wanted to help us found that it is too exhausting. […] It may be that in planning and owning our future we would have to make some hard decisions, but only we as Indigenous people with our own culture at stake are able to make those decisions. (Ibid. 107)

From Wright's point of view, Aboriginal people were and are too much governed by non-indigenous Australia and need to free themselves from these influences. Keeping these conditions in mind, the future for indigenous Australians that Wright proposes only works without being dependent on non-indigenous support or sympathy, so that Aboriginal communities are not only enabled to pursue self-determined ways of life but also to determine individually and shape the future narratives of their cultures.

At the end of this chapter, it is worth taking a look at Stephen Muecke's (2005) perspective on the history of Australia: "Australian history is a non-event, relatively speaking, Australian history, that is, conceived of as the spinning out of a narrative of settlement and progress beginning in 1788. A couple of hundred years out of how many millennia of human civilisation here?" (ibid. 23). As Muecke demonstrates, the European occupation of the continent, compared to the indigenous inhabitation of the Australian continent, is ridiculously short. Nevertheless, the British settlement entirely changed Aboriginal narratives of land and destroyed a huge amount of the indigenous Australian's basis of existence. Therefore, the narratives of Aboriginal spatiality and politics of space portray the development from a spatial belonging to the Australian continent to colonial disruptions, dispossessions and violence and the consequent formation of an indigenous land rights movement and the struggle for ancestral lands that shapes Aboriginal spatial narratives up to the present day.

3 Indigenous Australian Space as a Form of Belonging

The lives of individual human beings and existence as such are both based upon stories – stories of being, belonging and identification. In order to make sense of the world and their own (spatial) surroundings and senses of belonging, people refer to smaller and bigger stories that bear endless layers and interrelationships. Such a perception of life as a network of narratives – in other words, "*seeing* life *as* storied" (Bamberg 2009: 136) – leads, first, to the insight that existence and human lives are turned into narratives reaching across space and time. Second, this means that spatiality itself and the interrelationships between human beings and their spatial surroundings are not only related to these stories in one way or another, but that they are themselves also constructed and circulated via narratives. Spatiality, then, involves narrativity and the passing on of spatial knowledge by means of narratives. Finally, the overall complexity of such (spatial) stories and their constant (de-)construction reveals that these dynamic metamorphoses are embedded in narrative processes rather than products. Hence, the narrativization of (human) existence and the related manifestations of spatialities and belonging are volatile processes subject to permanent transition and flux.

For the purpose of describing the emergence and production of narratives of life and belonging more closely, it is indispensable to recognise that "[n]arrating, a speech activity that involves ordering characters in space and time, is a privileged genre for identity construction because it requires situating characters in time and space through gesture, posture, facial cues, and gaze in coordination with speech" (Bamberg 2009: 132). Therefore, the construction of indigenous and non-indigenous spatialities, temporalities and related modes of belonging are automatically interlinked through the narrativization of life as such. Due to their inherent reciprocal relationship with these non-literary narratives of human existence and belonging, fictional narratives in the form of literary texts constitute an invaluable source for approaching diverse conceptions of belonging and spatiality. This chapter thus sets out to construct a culturally specific framework for approaching indigenous Australian spatialities and patterns of belonging in literary narratives on the basis of the overall narrative contingency of existence and stories of life.

3.1 Conceptualising Belonging

Introductory Reflections or the Overall Spatial Contingency of Aboriginal Belonging

As the contents and lines of argumentation of the two previous chapters have shown, it became palpable that spatiality is central to indigenous Australian cultures, and "Aborigines

themselves do not, or at least once did not, understand their being in terms of time, but of place and space" (Swain 1993: 2). This means that their belonging to the Australian continent is characterised in particular by spatiality, not temporality or even a completely different category. Although the term 'belonging' has already been mentioned repeatedly in the course of this thesis, the ways in which it is related to and manifests itself in Aboriginal cultures have not been explicated yet. For this purpose, Deborah Bird Rose (2011 [2002]) provides an adequate starting point by highlighting the significantly close interrelation of Aboriginal space and belonging:

> Country is the place of belonging. The people, the other living things, the waters and soils, rains and winds all bring each other into being, nurturing and impacting on each other. Linear models of cause and effect are too simple to describe the dynamic, symbiotic, kinship-based, mutually nurturant and sometimes predatory relationships between people, non-human beings and place. What happens to one affects what happens to another; but most importantly, all have long-term commitments to these relationships that nurture their lives. (Ibid. 92)

Rose actively employs the concept of belonging to describe the reciprocal relationship between indigenous Australian land and its peoples, and she underlines that the category of spatial belonging can be interpreted as a major element of Aboriginal existence. Everything belongs together due to its inextricable linkage with the spatial surroundings, and the constant processes of maintaining these connections decisively shape the social and cultural lives of indigenous Australian peoples.

Concentrating on Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land, John Rudder (1999) supports Rose's observations by pointing out that "each clan group has a particular piece of land that they call their homeland. It is the land that their clan belongs to" (ibid. 8). This means that these peoples particularly define their social affiliations particularly be means of spatial references and the feeling of belonging to these spaces. Taking into consideration indigenous Australian lifeworlds as well, Denis Byrne (2004) even goes so far as to claim that "the linkage between people and the soil – the ground they stand on – is considered to be the very essence of nativeness and belonging" (ibid 138). In this way, Byrne marks spatiality as the most influential factor within the construction of Aboriginal belonging and makes ancestral lands the literal grounds for formulating and defining indigenous Australian identities.

As the previous paragraph suggests, belonging in Aboriginal cultures seems to be closely related with indigenous spatiality. From a scholarly viewpoint, this initial observation must nevertheless be further described and conceptualised in order to form a practicable foundation for the analysis of spatial representations in indigenous Australian fiction. The following chapter therefore not only provides a fundamental theoretical conceptualisation of

belonging, but also identifies Aboriginal spatiality as a form of belonging by illustrating central aspects of indigenous Australian cultures such as the Dreaming, social life and kinship or the role of the environment. Building on these insights, the third subchapter will focus on the construction of a working definition of Aboriginal space and belonging for this study and for the examinations of the primary text corpus and conduct a first testing of the conceptualisation developed. Finally, there will be a brief juxtaposition of the working definition developed in this study and influential, Western spatial thinkers in order to further legitimate the selected approach.

In terms of content, the order of the following subchapters might, at first glance, seem inappropriate for the selected bottom-up approach to Aboriginal spatialities, because the central concept of belonging will be introduced prior to the interrelations of space and belonging in indigenous Australian cultures. This particular sequence is due to the fact that it opens up the possibility of illustrating the various facets of Aboriginal space as a form belonging by directly conflating the conceptualisation outlined with the respective spatial indigenous Australian elements in order to formulate a viable working definition afterwards. Despite this arrangement of the sections, the diversity of manifestations of spatiality in Aboriginal lifeworlds nevertheless forms the basis for singling out the concept of belonging as an adequate instrument for the description of fictional representations of indigenous Australian spaces.

Before taking a closer look at different perceptions of belonging, it is worthwhile to critically reflect on the use of such a Western concept within an indigenous context once again. As Stephen Pritchard (2006) rightly explains,

> [t]here is no doubt that […] the notion of indigenous as 'belonging,' but only belonging in terms that are not themselves indigenous, carries a strange resonance in the context of the recognition and definition of indigenous culture and cultural property insofar as European-derived names, concepts, and categories have overwritten and effaced indigenous ones. (Ibid. 98)

Of course, the idea of belonging and the related social, philosophical or cultural theories as well as the conceptualisation of belonging in this study are highly dependent on insights gained within non-indigenous contexts. Nevertheless, this study will not employ belonging in such a way that it is simply superimposed on Aboriginal spatiality. I will apply the selected concept as a fundamental means of explicating indigenous Australian spaces, and I will then formulate a working definition afterwards that combines belonging with the culturally specific manifestations of spatial Aboriginal cultures described. For these reasons, the use of academic concepts as such within this thesis ties in with Birgit Neumann's and Frederik Tygstrup's (2009) contextualisation of their overall application:

> Concepts are first and foremost intellectual tools of academic discourse: They fulfil heuristic, cognitive and descriptive functions and thus enable discussion and exchange on the basis of a common language. […] Although the growing importance of concepts is sometimes viewed critically, their use as tools for organizing and systematizing knowledge is widely acknowledged. However, more often than not, the meaning and operational value of these concepts differ between diverse disciplines, national cultures and historical periods. (Ibid. 1)

Thus, the concept of belonging will represent a means of developing an approach to and of describing narrative negotiations of Aboriginal spatiality as well as an instrument of enabling readers to comprehend the insights gained in the course of the literary analyses.

In view of this study's cultural context, it is at the same time essential to acknowledge that "[t]he Aboriginal world view is essentially inclusive or holistic. [A]ll aspects of human endeavour […] and all natural phenomena […] are seen as equal manifestations of a timeless spiritual or cosmic order whose origins, meaning and integrity are not challenged" (Gostin/Chong 1994: 123). At first glance, this seems to indicate that it is almost impossible to introduce Western concepts such as belonging to investigations of Aboriginal literatures. Nevertheless, "[t]hese holistic systems are capable of accommodating a great deal of in-put, as long as that which is new is socialised into the system" (Rose 1996: 40). Therefore, the flexible conceptualisation intends to pay attention to the distinctly indigenous Australian notions of spatiality by conflating Aboriginal spatial cultures with the concept of belonging before formulating a final working definition for this study. This definition will then be combined with three further approaches – spatial practices and narratology, ecocriticism and intersectionality – in order to analyse the selected primary texts on the basis of their own inherent narratives and culturally specific manifestations of Aboriginal belonging.

Zooming in on the Phenomenon of Belonging

As a first step into the wide field of belonging it is worth mentioning that "[w]hen we say that we want to belong we typically locate the realisation of this desire in an identity, in a self or a place or a time past that we would have again in the future" (Game 2001: 226). Game highlights, on the one hand, the close relationship between notions of spatiality, temporality as well as social affiliations and belonging, whose interrelations are mirrored in Aboriginal manifestations of space which all play a major role in the following subchapter. On the other hand, she points to the conceptual proximity of identity and belonging and, thus, emphasises that the scholarly application of the latter calls for a clear differentiation from the concept of identity. Pramod K. Nayar (2010) defines belonging as "a sentimental attachment to territory or space" (ibid. 146), which expands the field by adding the category of emotion. Nayar distinguishes between "two senses of 'belonging' […]: *legal belonging* as a citizen, but also a

cultural belonging as a member of an ethnic group/community" (ibid. 150). While the first dimension particularly considers questions of nationality and (spatial) legislation, the latter addresses the individual's ethnic belonging detached from the issue of nationality. Both aspects can be related to indigenous Australians, because they play a major role in terms of their act of defining their status and their rights as first peoples within the Australian nation as well as in terms of the condition of their cultures in a non-indigenous state.

Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) presents another take on the concept of belonging and names three major dimensions, namely "social locations; […] people's identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings; and […] ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others' belonging" (ibid. 12). Although her perspective also includes, like Nayar's, social and emotional aspects, Yuval-Davis's definition is first and foremost political, which is why she notes that "[i]t is important to differentiate between belonging and the politics of belonging" (ibid. 10). In her understanding of the concept, belonging is therefore inherently pluralistic, always connected to its historical and social contexts and not fixed, but always flexible and embedded in processes of dynamic construction and deconstruction, which means that it can also be challenged as such (cf. ibid. 12-13). Moreover, Yuval-Davis recognises that belonging "becomes articulated, formally structured and politicized only when it is threatened in some way" (ibid. 10). This means that her approach to belonging is pre-eminently characterised by its political contingency and by the tension between individual and collective forces that encounter each other within multi-layered and always volatile constructions of belonging. Finally, Yuval-Davis considers another feature of belonging and identity that is of particular interest in view of the focus of this thesis on literary studies. She explains that "[i]dentities are narratives, […] [but] [n]ot all of these stories are about belonging to particular groupings and collectivities – they can be, for instance, about individual attributes […] or sexual prowess. […] Identity narratives can be individual or they can be collective" (ibid. 14). As identities and belonging are conceptually adjacent, this narrative constitution of identities and their thematic diversity give reason to expect that fictional Aboriginal narratives are able to shed light on indigenous Australian manifestations and culturally specific constructions of (spatial) belonging.

The perspectives on belonging[37] outlined so far agree on several points. They particularly foreground its overall relation to spatiality as well as its conceptual association

[37] For the sake of clarity and comprehensibility, the overview of different theoretical approaches to belonging does not include a historical or a thematically wider introduction to the concept. A profound description of the historical and disciplinary developments of diverse notions of belonging is provided by Linn Miller's (2006) doctoral thesis (cf. 89-165). For more recent perspectives on belonging, see for instance Stokes-DuPass and Fruja (2016) or Block (2018).

with individual emotions and with a person's social and political background. Additionally, they hint at possible destructions of belonging and at the fact that there is not one single form but endless forms of the latter, because belonging must be perceived as a volatile construct, not as an unchangeable and everlasting human condition. All these characteristic features will be reflected in the following descriptions of Aboriginal spatiality as a form of belonging. Nevertheless, they do not represent as thorough and viable a foundation for this thesis as Linn Miller's (2006) theory of belonging, which she outlined in her dissertation *Being and Belonging*. Miller addresses similar aspects as, for instance, Nayar or Yuval-Davis, but the distinct strength of her conceptualisation of belonging is the comprehensive, yet clearly structured philosophical-anthropological framework that is easily compatible with other disciplines and transferable to multifaceted fields of study. At the same time, she interweaves her perspective on belonging with Aboriginal cultures and spatialities and thus suggests an investigation of Aboriginal spatiality as a form of belonging in Aboriginal literatures[38].

Linn Miller's Three Senses of Belonging

In terms of content, Miller takes belonging as a starting point for her argumentation and illustration of Australian nationality issues with reference to indigenous and non-indigenous people and identifies places as decisive features of this concept (cf. Miller 2006: 5-7). While she is particularly interested in developing a theoretical model of belonging as well as in the ways Aboriginal and settler Australians belong or do not belong to Australia, this study focuses on Aboriginal spatiality and employs the notion of belonging as an instrument to conceptualise and describe the status and condition of spatial representations in indigenous Australian cultures and literatures. Miller's theoretical foundation consists of three basic dimensions of belonging that form her starting point for discussing the complexities of this concept. Beginning with these basic conceptual ideas, Miller initially states that

> [t]hree primary 'senses' of belonging and identity seem apparent – the sense of belonging and identity that refers to social connections, to a sense of connection to a particular community of people, the sense of belonging and identity that refers to historical connections, to a sense of connection to the past or to a particular tradition and a sense of belonging and identity that refers to geographical or environmental connections, to a sense of connection to a particular locality or dwelling place. (Ibid. 6)

According to this tripartite model, social environments, temporalities and a person's geographical surroundings are the key factors in constructing and composing the feeling of

[38] The selection of Linn Miller's concept of belonging is not only due to her overall relation to indigenous Australian cultures, but it also nicely ties in with the focus of this study on literary studies, because her dimensions are directly reflected in various narratological categories and in the diversity of spatial representations in the primary text corpus. For a more detailed illustration of these interrelations, see Chapter 4 of this study.

belonging. The second section of this chapter will outline that these features are all interwoven and permeated by spatiality in indigenous Australian cultures. At this point, it is worth mentioning that, although the third element of Miller's model has an evident spatial reference, particular places and environmental surroundings only represent a small fraction of the immense significance of spatiality in Aboriginal cultures. Thus, all three aspects are necessary in order to approach indigenous Australian spatialities, because regarding the latter as merely related to the geographical environment would be too simplistic.

In order to get a better overview of Miller's model, it is necessary to take a closer look at every single dimension. To begin with, a social connection in Miller's sense means "to be closely associated with others; to be accepted as part of a particular social group or to identify with others in (or as) a particular social group" (ibid. 96). In addition, she points out that "belonging is taken to have certain positive consequences, one concerning the establishment of shared identity, and the other concerning the positive experiences derived from being so connected or identified" (ibid.). Hence, the relationship between individuals and collectives and the consequent question to which group(s) a person belongs are at the heart of what Miller calls social connections. These social affiliations are also emotionally charged, because the acceptance or the possible rejection of a person by a group, which are synonymous with belonging or not belonging, imply a change of his or her emotional condition. In addition to that, the identification with a certain group of people is closely linked to these persons' values, because sharing similar values can foster belonging and strengthen a group's common identity. As one human being can simultaneously belong to several groups, belonging involves potential social diversifications and stratifications. Therefore, the term 'social' refers to politics as well, because it is automatically interlinked with power relations that influence a community's social status and acknowledgement. Eventually, social connections represent the intersubjective dimension of belonging and clearly underline that every human being is part of a complex web of social clusters and hierarchies, which are marked by a reciprocal relationship with the individual's construction of values and emotions (cf. ibid.).

The second dimension – historical connections – refers to the fact "that our understanding of ourselves, the world in which we presently live and our relation to it, is derived from an analysis of past actions, events and connections" and that "the past is often used to evaluate the political, social and moral spheres of current lived experience" (ibid. 129). This entails the recognition that what human beings perceive as present manifestation of belonging is always the result of an interpretation of past actions. At the same time, the individual's assessment of his or her way of life is, first and foremost, a comparison between

earlier and current stages of belonging or not-belonging and the terminal point of diverse lines of personal development. Therefore, the construction of belonging is always a process, never a mere product, which can change over time. This process-orientation indirectly points to the overall narrative constitution of belonging mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Because a "narrative is *the representation of an event or a series of events*" (Abbott 2009 [2002]: 13), the present classification of belonging on the basis of the past is nothing less than a narrativisation of the events shaping a person's sense of belonging, with the aim of legitimating one's current perspective on the self and its relation to the world. In a nutshell, Miller's understanding of historical connections shows that her concept implies an inextricable linkage of past and present in which the past serves as a means of creating and coming to terms with present senses of belonging (cf. ibid.).

The third feature of Miller's (2006) basic model, environmental connections[39], concern "the impact of the environment – both natural and built – upon the lives of those who dwell in them" and they point out that "[w]hen we say that we belong somewhere, speak of 'home' or 'away', or long to be 'here' or 'there' we do so recognising the strong existential purchase that those places have on us" (ibid. 151). Simply put, Miller explicates that the direct surroundings of a person crucially co-determine his or her sense of belonging and that it matters where people are. Her observations also point to the fact that the degree to which an individual belongs somewhere can vary with reference to different places. Additionally, the differentiation between constructed and natural environments emphasises that places are changeable and that a modification of a place can lead to a change of a person's sense of belonging to that location. As with the above-mentioned social connections, "[w]e often understand this attachment to place in emotional terms" (ibid.), because many people attach great value to the existence of familiar surroundings and perceive a breakdown of their established feelings of belonging and security as soon as the relationship to certain places is no longer possible. For these reasons, the last aspect of Miller's tripartite model highlights the fact that the location of the self within a specific environment and the feeling that such places are available at all heavily influence a person's sense of belonging.

A closer look at the application of this model within contemporary Aboriginal narratives reveals that each of these dimensions nicely ties in with the respective foci of the

[39] In addition to the outlined conceptualisation of environmental connections, Miller (2006) notes that "there is also a substantial body of research that frames the question of belonging in an environmental sense in more biological terms. That is to say, in terms that refer to peoples (like other living organisms) as biologically, or functionally, proper (or improper) to a place" (ibid. 151). As this dimension will not be considered in more detail here, the previous illustration was included primarily in order to illustrate Miller's conceptual foundation as completely as possible.

selected texts. *Carpentaria* by Alexis Wright (2009 [2006]) tackles the issue of mining on ancestral lands as well as its consequences for the environment and the local peoples' senses of belonging to these places, which is why it brings to the fore the environmental or geographical aspect of belonging. Because *That Deadman Dance* by Kim Scott (2012 [2010]) is a narrative account of the early days of colonisation in the southern part of Western Australia, this novel sheds light on questions of historical belonging. Finally, Anita Heiss's (2007a) chick-lit text *Not Meeting Mr Right* deals specifically with the social dimension of belonging to the urban area of Sydney by introducing a female, politically conscious Aboriginal protagonist who is searching for her perfect partner together with her friends.

The Idea of Belonging as a 'Correct Relation'

Despite the initial separation of Miller's three senses of belonging mentioned above, she clearly states that, even if "at first apparently distinct and isolated, [they] turn out to be interconnected and mutually dependent" (ibid. 6). This means that, although the parameters of belonging outlined above are crucial for its construction and can be treated separately at first, they must be analysed interdependently in the end. For this reason, this thesis conceptualises Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging in such a way that the environmental, social and historical senses of belonging are directly conflated while taking a closer look at indigenous Australian spatiality. Apart from this initial problematisation, Miller recognises another conceptual gap in her model:

> Belonging is to be in accord with who we are *in ourselves* as well as who we are *in the world*. Accordingly, the articulated senses of belonging I first sketched out refer us forward to objects that are in some sense external to us (community, history and locality). Nevertheless, it is also true – and clear to us when we say we belong in any of these senses – that each also refers us back to ourselves as subjects. (Ibid. 242)

From Miller's point of view, the social, historical and local aspects of belonging are able to grasp the external dimension of belonging, but they lack the possibility of examining a person's internal and subjective perspectives on what it means to belong. Therefore, "a model that presents a relational account of being in the world (and thus the ontological connection between belonging and identity)" as well as "a methodology that allows us to see belonging from the inside" (ibid. 6) are required in order to conceptualise belonging properly. Along with that, such an approach needs to consider, in Miller's view, "that their particular nature, character or identity is only disclosed *in* their relation" (ibid. 169), meaning that the inner and outer aspects of belonging and the relationship between a human being and his or her surroundings do not develop unconnectedly, but, instead, are dependent on one another already during the process of construction (cf. ibid. 168-169).

Miller's solution for this problem is a philosophical one. She makes use of this discipline's debates on place and locality and particularly draws on the work of Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard in order to formulate her final conceptualisation of belonging:

> What is also found in this philosophy of place is an internal relation between the concepts of 'place' and 'person', suggesting that the ontology of place and person are analogous. It follows then that a self with the capacity to *belong* (whether it does *belong* or not) has to have an ontological structure that is complex, dynamic and relational. Such a self is found in the thinking of Kierkegaard, as are the conceptual tools to formulate the theory of *belonging qua correct relation*, a way of understanding *belonging* as an ontological matter (that is, in terms of the constitution of the individual, rather than its relation to anything else outside itself). (Ibid. 253)

Miller's foundation for further reflections and the advancement of her tripartite understanding of how belonging is divided thus takes the ontological link between individuals and place as a basis, which entails that belonging in Miller's opinion must be relational in some way. As Kierkegaard's definition of the self incorporates such a dimension, this particular concept forms Miller's starting point for creating what she calls *belonging qua correct relation*[40], an idea of belonging in which the latter is an inherent feature of the self. Recalling the social, historical and environmental senses of belonging, Miller states that "[a]ccording to this thinking, belonging is a state of being constituted in relation that is fitting, right or correct. This being the case, a minimum conception of belonging might be understood as *standing in correct relation to one's community, one' s history and one' s locality*" (ibid. 241). Hence, belonging is an ontological and constitutive element of the self that articulates itself via a *correct* affiliation with a person's historical, social and geographical surroundings.

Of course, the term *correct* must be further differentiated[41] and, most of all, problematised here because it implies normativity, exclusion and a reference to unchangeable conventions determining what might be *correct* or *not correct*. What is more, such a static definition would be diametrically opposed to the volatility and complexity of the (indigenous Australian) narrative contingency of spatiality and belonging outlined at the beginning of this chapter, which is why the idea of belonging as a *correct relation* requires further

[40] From now on, the terms *correct* and *correct relation* will always be written in italics. This is due to the fact that it refers to Miller's notion as well as the individual conceptualisation within this thesis and in order to avoid the exclusive and normative connotations that the term might otherwise imply.

[41] Miller (2006) herself pins down the notion of *correct relation* as follows: "According to this understanding, *belonging* is a particular mode of self-being in which there is a *correct relation* between the self's *necessity* and its *possibility* – heredity and environment, and the individual's capacity to choose beyond the limitations that these things present. Such a relation involves *integrity*, which entails *transparency* – knowing oneself – and *authenticity* – being oneself. To be oneself is to be in *correct relation* – to exist in accord with who we are *in ourselves*, but also in accord with who we are *in the world*" (ibid. 253-254). Since the terms *integrity, transparency* and particularly *authenticity* would have to be further problematised with reference to Aboriginal cultures and forms of spatial belonging, such as the notion of *correct*, this thesis follows the process-oriented approach mentioned above, which is based on the overall idea of life and belonging as a constant (de-)construction of narratives.

flexibilization and pluralisation. A viable solution for this problem is already inherent in the description of the problem itself, namely the transformation of *correct* from something fixed and exclusive into a condition of constant flux and negotiation as well as in Miller's idea of relationality. As soon as one perceives a *correct relation* as a balanced interrelatedness of all agents dealing with and being connected with space – in Miller's model social, geographical and historical parameters – and the *correct* aspect of this *relation* as a permanent process of negotiating such a balance, a perspective on *correctness* as being normative or dogmatic is no longer possible. This is due to the fact that such a dynamic construction of *belonging qua correct relation* is ever-changing and never ultimately fixed.

Consequently, the spatial contingency of indigenous Australian cultures and belonging outlined above leads to the conclusion that Aboriginal spatialities cannot be separated from these processes of negotiation. Space, belonging and their reciprocities in indigenous Australian lifeworlds are likewise perpetual negotiations as well and are themselves volatile and diversifying. Together with the narrative structure and coming into being of these processes of negotiation, literary narratives that are dedicated to the question of how *correct relations* manifest themselves in indigenous Australians cultures in the twenty-first century make it possible to gain novel insights into these processes of negotiation and into their inherent and culturally specific complexities. Since the selected texts especially tackle potential imbalances within Aboriginal peoples' establishment of a *correct relation* with their spatial surroundings – among these are mining on ancestral lands, British colonisation and its aftermath or the lives of indigenous people in big cities – this also means that these fictional narratives might point to ideas for regaining an overall balance of belonging, thus also shedding new light on the reciprocal connections with their extraliterary contexts[42].

Finally, it is now indispensable to tackle the question of how the selected concept of belonging is related to the idea of identity and why the concept of belonging is a more appropriate choice for approaching Aboriginal spatialities than identity[43]. Miller explains her perspective on their intersections and differences as follows:

> We often attribute our identities – the distinctive characteristics that make us who and what we are – to the influence of the group or community of which we understand ourselves to be part. This is clearly evident in relation to the national, racial or cultural identities we assume, and also applies to identities relating to occupation, gender and religion. It is generally agreed among theorists across a range of

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[42] This observation already includes a preview on Chapter 4 and its conceptualisation of indigenous Australian narratives as a means of worldmaking, since this concept is based upon the idea of an ever-changing and reciprocal relationship of fictional literary narratives and their extraliterary worlds. For more information, see Chapter 4.

[43] The interrelations of identities and belonging are further conceptualised in Chapter 7, which deals with Anita Heiss's (2007) novel *Not Meeting Mr Right*, because the selected intersectional approach eminently relies on the concept of identity. For more details, see Chapter 7.1.

> traditions and disciplines that a proper understanding of the self requires acknowledgment that collective influences are exceptionally powerful in shaping our sense of personal identity and selfhood. Indeed, many theories hold that the mechanisms that produce unique selves are exclusively, social ones. Given this – the fact that identity is increasingly understood predominantly as a social mode of being – it is easy to see how belonging and identity have become conceptually linked. (Ibid. 110)

As Miller demonstrates, the concepts of belonging and identity are, in fact, directly connected to each other and feature several similarities: both concepts address the self as associated to the outside world and recognise that human subjects do not exist in an isolated bubble excluded from the rest of the world, but always within complex webs of intersubjective relations. Moreover, either concept entails the conviction that the shaping of subjects relies on external forces and vice versa. Nevertheless, the concept of identity makes the self its focal point; its conceptual core is not formed by communities or the connections between the self and its respective external environment, although recent theories have already and quite rightly pointed to the importance of considering social dimensions within definitions of identities as well. Therefore, it is precisely the immediate embeddedness of belonging in a relationship and the perception of belonging itself as a relationship that foregrounds neither the self nor the outer world but its interconnectedness that turns it into an ideal platform for a description of Aboriginal spatiality.

What the following pages will show is that particularly this theoretical and conceptual emphasis is needed in order to describe the link between Aboriginal peoples and their relationships with their ancestral land and the Australian continent. Miller's model provides a unique tool for this endeavour, because her conceptualisation not only includes the inseparability of the self and the world embedded in an equal relationship, but also comprises the theoretical instruments to grasp potential disturbances of peoples' senses of belonging by outer forces. This is crucial for approaching the social, historical and environmental manifestations of Aboriginal belonging, particularly from a Western perspective.

3.2 Identifying Spatial Manifestations of Aboriginal Belonging

The Dreaming and the Ancestors: Spatial Beginnings

Having outlined the central theoretical approach used to illustrate the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and their manifestations of spatiality, I will apply Miller's model of *belonging qua correct relation* within the context of indigenous Australian cultures in the following section. As mentioned above, the selected conceptualisation of belonging will not be simply superimposed on Aboriginal spatiality, but it will be employed as a descriptive tool instead. The presented insights on indigenous Australian space will be conflated with

belonging along the way and then form the foundation for the creation of a working definition of Aboriginal space and belonging.

The basis of Aboriginal being and existence, and thus also the foundation of belonging to the world and space, is the Dreaming. Bill Edwards (1994) explains the creation of all life in relation to Aboriginal Dreaming stories as follows:

> The concept of The Dreaming does not assume the creation of the world from nothing […]. It assumes a pre-existent substance, often described as a watery expanse or a featureless plain. [...] The Spirit Beings, on emerging from the formless substance, moved over the surface of the earth, performing the everyday activities of the humans and other species they represented. […] As they travelled, they and their tracks, artefacts and activities were transformed into the rocks, mountains, waterholes, caves, sandhills, trees, watercourses, stars and the other phenomena of the environment. (Ibid. 68)

Once more, the extent to which indigenous Australian creation narratives, spatiality and belonging are inextricably linked with each other becomes palpable. What is more, Edwards underlines the spatial entrenchment of Aboriginal belonging from the beginning of their existence that becomes articulated through the narratives of the Dreaming. This is related to the insight that "there is general Aboriginal accord in affirming that the spiritual aspect of all humans (and other existents) is land derived" (Swain 1993: 39). The creatures of the Dreaming that formed the Australian continent could, most of the time, be recognised as either clearly male or female, and they created spaces, rituals and ceremonies that were exclusively reserved for Aboriginal men or women (cf. Rose 1996: 36-37). Hence, the indigenous Australian landscape also comprises a huge variety of "gendered places" (ibid. 36), which means that Aboriginal spatiality is also directly connected with issues of masculinity and femininity and that indigenous places all over the Australian continent are sometimes gender-specific.

Recalling Miller's understanding of belonging, the Dreaming stories interweave the social, environmental and historical dimensions and are, thus, constitutional features of Aboriginal spatiality and belonging. Because "Aboriginal country is where its countrymen feel a sense of acceptance and being accepted and an open-ness to being who and what they are – a sense of profound belonging" (Miller 2006: 27), the land shaping described in the Dreaming narratives provides indigenous Australians with a spatial environment they can relate to, thereby establishing a sense of belonging between themselves and their surroundings. In addition to that, the Dreaming constitutes the foundation for both social and historical senses of belonging, because "[t]he Ancestral Spirit Beings of The Dreaming are believed to be the ancestors of both the Aboriginal groups which live in the areas of the various stories and of the species associated with them" (Edwards 1994: 69). Therefore, the ancestors mark, on the one hand, the beginning of Aboriginal communities and the

relationships among various of these groupings, also on a spatial level, and, on the other hand, the inseparable interrelations between human beings and animals, plants etc..

Simultaneously, the ancestors and their stories form the basis for legitimating Aboriginal existence and for becoming aware of one's own origin and traditions. In this way, the Dreaming is responsible for the initial construction of Aboriginal subjects, their outer world as well as their mutual dependency in every aspect of life. Moreover, the Dreaming narratives constitute the indigenous Australians' foundation for developing a sense of belonging after all. The country created by the ancestors enables Aboriginal people to create and maintain a *correct relation* with their external world, which means that they are able to know who they are and where they come from. Therefore, "belonging to country is not merely an important aspect of what it is to be Aboriginal, but the first and fundamental principle of Aboriginal ontology" (Miller 2006: 19). This means that spatiality is the one factor that influences and determines indigenous Australian manifestations of belonging and shapes the ways in which Aboriginal subjects are associated with their (spatial) surroundings – a constant process of negotiation in order to build up a *correct* or balanced interrelatedness.

In view of the lines of development of Aboriginal narratives of land on the Australian continent, the Dreaming as a basis for belonging can also be brought together with Aboriginal politics of space. Despite their status as the one foundation of Aboriginal cultures, it is possible that these "[o]ld myths and genealogies change, connect, and reach out, but always in relation to an enduring spatial nexus" (Clifford 2001: 482). Such potential alterations indirectly indicate that outer spatial forces can transform narratives such as the Aboriginal Dreaming stories and, thus, the spatial structures that attribute meaning to indigenous Australian lifeworlds as well. As Linn Miller (2006) notes, "[s]o long as the environment […] allows human beings to perform physical and socio-cultural practices deemed necessary for their survival then a belonging relation pertains. If the environment is such that these practices cannot be performed then belonging is logically extinguished" (ibid. 165). This holds true for indigenous Australian lands in particular, because, in the course of Australia's colonisation the Europeans represented an alien political force from the outside that forever changed and, in many cases, also destroyed the literal grounds of Aboriginal cultures. From these days on, the colonial endeavours of the British and their aftermath persisting up to the present day have shaped the indigenous Australian peoples' belonging to their lands, which had been established and maintained for thousands of years. Consequently, Aboriginal peoples' senses of belonging have been heavily disrupted and they had and still have to alter their processes of negotiating their individual forms of belonging to their ancestral spaces.

Before the occupation of ancestral lands by the British colonisers, indigenous Australian communities were able to perform their ways of live, for instance, traditional ceremonies or searching for food, within their respective areas. The colonisers brought different approaches to space with them, which were not entirely compatible with the indigenous perceptions of spatiality, such as European agricultural methods or the utilisation of vast spatial areas as grazing country. Since Aboriginal "[c]ountries were created to be nourishing places for all the living things who belong there, and humans have the responsibility, by Dreaming, to care for the country" (Rose 1996: 29), indigenous Australians were not able to live their lives according to the Dreaming any longer, and their sense of belonging to their continent was disrupted by the consequences of colonisation. Therefore, the Aboriginal land rights movements and their struggle for reclaiming ancestral lands, which continue to this day, can be interpreted as an outcome of the disturbance of the *correct relation* between indigenous Australian subjects and their external world and as an attempt to re-establish these balanced relationships and their culturally specific processes of negotiating belonging spatially.

Based on the narratives of the Dreaming, the interrelations between Aboriginal spatiality and belonging become palpable in the structure of everyday life and in a huge range of social and spiritual realms of indigenous Australian cultures. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, these spatial realms of indigenous Australian cultures also mirror central elements of Aboriginal knowledge, which is underlined by Aboriginal woman Nancy Daiyi in Deborah Bird Rose's (2011 [2002]) *Country of the Heart. An Indigenous Australian Homeland*:

> If it takes people being in country for country to impel itself into people, it also takes knowledge for people to be in country. Westerners may think of such connections as mystical or spiritual, and perhaps they are; but it seems enormously significant that they come into being in the most mundane actions of daily life. (Ibid. 35)

Indigenous Australian existence in and through space is only possible if the members of Aboriginal communities share and keep alive their spatial knowledge within their everyday activities. In this sense, belonging via space, or, more precisely, the ties with the ancestors and the community as well as the interconnection of subject and environment, is always re-enacted through these preoccupations in and with space.

Additionally, rituals and ceremonies are particularly important to Aboriginal cultures, because they strengthen their relations to the ancestors, the ancestral land, "release special Ancestral powers that help maintain country, health, abundance and fertility" (Hume 2002: 40) and thus the communities' belonging to their spatial surroundings. Apart from the

ceremonies related to death[44], initiation rites for Aboriginal men in particular rank among the most significant rituals in indigenous Australian cultures (cf. Muecke/Shoemaker 2009 [2004]: 42-43).

There is a direct interrelationship between the Aboriginal ways of structuring their everyday and spiritual lives with the help of spatial knowledge and the fact that "[t]hrough the Dreaming, the law is prescribed for the land and its inhabitants" (Bourke/Cox 1994: 50). Since there are manifold laws and rules in various indigenous communities all over Australia and because Aboriginal peoples pass on their traditions and knowledge orally, there is no single catalogue of fixed rules that determine and organise the lives of Aboriginal peoples. Rather, "[t]he Dreaming ancestors provided the model for life. They established a pattern for the daily round of economic, social, political, cultural and ritual activities" (Edwards 1994: 71). Therefore, the Dreaming narratives contain these laws and can also be interpreted as an initial articulation of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging, because they already predefine space as an active agent in the structuring of indigenous Australian lifeworlds and thus also as the most important tie between Aboriginal beings and their external world. The process of negotiating belonging, thus, is always and inextricably interwoven with spatiality.

To sum up the previous paragraphs, it is justified to conclude that "[a]bove all, Aboriginal culture was characterised by a fusion of the material and tspiritual. The tasks of daily life were themselves imbued with religious meaning, while the function of the great rites was to reaffirm and sustain the community's relationship with the land" (Rickard 1988: 17). This means that the Dreaming narratives and the ancestors are part of the landscape and of the Aboriginal peoples' everyday lives; they co-exist with and are actively around indigenous communities in Australia, while their members pursue their daily activities and acknowledge the presence of the ancestors within traditional rituals and ceremonies. Through these actions, Aboriginal people show how their processes of negotiating a balanced relationship or belonging via space are re-enacted through religious and day-to-day practices and, what is more, that the relation between themselves as subjects and their spatial surroundings is mutually constructed and confirmed on a daily basis – highlighting the fact that belonging is not static, but an ever-changing process of establishing balanced interrelationships. In Linn Miller's conceptualisation of belonging, these actions, which combine one's social belonging to an Aboriginal community, the historical ties to one's own ancestors as well as one's

[44] In Aboriginal cultures "[d]eath […] is [seen as] a return of place-being to place" (Swain 1993: 45). This once more underpins that belonging is ultimately conflated with spatiality, because human subjects are always, according to Tony Swain, also spatial subjects and death means an alteration of this relationship between subject and space and a return of the human being to its environmental surroundings.

connection to the environment, eventually reaffirm the indigenous Australians' *correct relation* between themselves and their external world and thus represent a means of reassuring their overall sense of belonging.

Everything is Processual: The Overall Spatial Contingency of Everyday Life and Belonging

Functioning as an essential structuring force of Aboriginal cultures, the inseparability of spiritual and material spatiality is also mirrored in the "religious landscape" of Aboriginal cultures, which "linked widely dispersed people" (Clarke 2003: 21). Every indigenous nation has its own ancestral land and is recognised in connection to this specific area. What is more, "[t]he efficiency of Aboriginal occupation of the whole landscape and the exploitation of its resources rested on the network of Dreaming connections and kinship links" (ibid.). Hence, the Dreaming narratives are also responsible for the social structures of indigenous Australians' communities, which, in turn, are again inconceivable without the indigenous peoples' environmental, social and historical belonging to the land. This interconnectedness of kinship systems and space is mirrored on the collective and the individual levels of indigenous Australian societies. Regarding the level of a group or an entire nation,

> kinship determines access to resources and connections to the landscape. […] Aboriginal families are composed differently from those of Western Europeans. In everyday life, Aboriginal people moved around in bands which were groups of flexible membership, made up of people in various social relationships. Bands came together during ceremonies and for economic activities, such as food gathering and trading. (Ibid. 31)

In contrast to those of non-indigenous families, indigenous Australian forms of kinship are more dynamic and permit a fluctuation of people among different bands. Kinship ties are essential in defining which positions indigenous Australians can acquire within these communities and which tasks they are obliged to fulfil in everyday life.

Thus, belonging to space and what Miller calls a *correct relation* are heavily dependent on a person's status within the collective kinship structure of an indigenous Australian community. Because "in Aboriginal societies the family structures and the sets of rights and obligations underlying them are extended to the whole society" (Bourke/Edwards 1994: 88), the connections to land that are established on the basis of kinship apply to an Aboriginal person's family and its relation to broader social networks at the same time. Hence, indigenous Australian belonging to space always entails distinct rights and duties resulting from an individual's social status, which means that it is automatically positioned between the poles of individual and collective manifestations of belonging.

On the individual level, the connection between self and natural world manifests itself in a human being's personal totem, for instance a specific animal or plant, which refers to "structured relationships between human groups and 'natural' species" (Rose 2011 [2002]: 82). Since each and every person has his or her individual totem, "[t]hese connections between humans and animal and plant species, or with other parts of the natural world, overlap and crosscut each other. […] The different ways of being connected produce for each person a web of kinship with the natural world" (ibid.). This means that, in addition to the relationship between an Aboriginal nation and its ancestral land, every indigenous Australian can be referred to a unique manifestation of belonging to the spatial surroundings. This adds to the complexity of Aboriginal figurations of spatial belonging, because kinship and its shaping through space not only involve a group's social connections among themselves as well their historical and environmental relations to their ancestors and land, but also one-of-a-kind links in the form of totems. Therefore, every indigenous Australian also belongs to space by being embedded in a complex network of individual and collective kinship relations and processes of negotiating spatial belonging. The importance of spatiality for Aboriginal kinship becomes even more palpable when one recognises that "[w]hat maintains the relationships between places is the maintenance of kinship, the interconnected web of kin and country" (Muecke 2005: 16). Belonging to country is therefore reinforced and protected by taking care of individual and collective manifestations of kinship and by preserving the social, environmental and historical connections to ancestral lands.

These kinship systems and the respective links to a community's environment are likewise structured in terms of masculinity and femininity, because "[t]he gendering of landscape and social organization is typical of Aboriginal life" (Langton 1998 [1987]: 112). As Marcia Langton further explicates, particularly Western scholars incorrectly assumed a male hegemony within indigenous Australian cultures for a very long time by superimposing their own male-dominated perception of the world on Aboriginal peoples:

> The established […] orthodoxy which was constructed from the emerging ethnographic literature from last century was that Aboriginal women were excluded from any role in the important affairs of Aboriginal societies. These were the domain of male gerontocracy, it was believed. We now understand that this was the interpretation of men […] whose view of humanity […] was that women were inferior by virtue of a biologically determined set of conditions. Even though […] such propositions are no longer acceptable, the androcentric stance of Western observation of the Other still distorts, if not the scholarship, then certainly the social institutions in which claims and other aspects of the contemporary Australian recognition of Aboriginal customary land tenure are carried out. (Ibid. 109)

As Langton clearly points out, culturally specific approaches to Aboriginal lifeworlds with a pronounced focus on the roles of women are needed in order to counteract exclusively male, androcentric and binary conceptualisations that can still be found in many Western

investigations into indigenous cultures, literatures and lifeworlds as well as in non-indigenous institutions responsible for indigenous Australian peoples.

It is crucial to acknowledge not only "[t]he contribution of women to all areas of the life of hunters and gatherers" (Clarke 2003: 47), but also to the social lives of indigenous communities as well as Aboriginal cultures in general: there are places in the landscape distinctly related to femininity; indigenous women have specific tasks within everyday life and, thus, their very own status in indigenous Australian communities. Aboriginal ways of belonging to a certain community, a distinct spatial area and the ancestors are always also gendered, and gender marks an important differentiating criterion in terms of the diversity of indigenous Australian manifestations of space and belonging. The analysis of Anita Heiss's (2007a) *Not Meeting Mr Right*, which presents a self-determined, female perspective on urban indigenous Australian forms of belonging, makes a considerable contribution to these discourses and pays attention to how indigeneities, femininities and urbanities are interrelated.

There is a direct relation between Aboriginal kinship and the nomadic way of life of many indigenous Australian communities.[45] As Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker (2009 [2004]) explain, "[t]raditional Aboriginal people travelled for many reasons within a defined geographical region. They travelled to find food in season, or they arranged to arrive in meeting places at a certain time of year to perform ceremonies, organize marriages, and to trade goods" (ibid. 41). Remarkably, indigenous Australians do not move across the whole continent, as one might expect, but certain communities belong to certain spatial areas or sites and have their individual spaces for hunting and gathering (cf. Clarke 2003: 38). According to Muecke and Shoemaker, this nomadic lifestyle enables Aboriginal clans to establish social, spiritual and economic relationships and secures the survival of these groups in terms of food and finding marriage partners. Because their own limited geographical space is not able to supply everything that is needed for a thriving community, the habit of moving from one place to the next along well-known trading routes also makes it possible to procure otherwise non-available goods from far-away places[46] by getting in contact with other Aboriginal clans or nations (cf. Clarke 2003: 107, Kerwin 2010: 63). This means that the process of negotiating a *correct* or balanced interrelatedness with communal lands is carried out by moving according to the seasons and by adapting to the respective spatial circumstances.

[45] In this context, it is important to point out that "[m]any Aboriginal people lived in established villages" (Kerwin 2010: 15) as well and that in the twenty-first century most indigenous Australians live in urban areas. For more information on this final issue, see Chapter 7. Nevertheless, the selected texts refer to the issues mentioned above, which is why they are introduced as an overall framework and in detail here.

[46] According to Dale Kerwin (2010), the trading among Aboriginal communities included for instance shells, ochre or fur cloaks (cf. 98-102).

Nevertheless, the indigenous Australians' nomadism is much more than a mere means of securing the nutrition and survival of a huge diversity of groups all over the continent; an Aboriginal community's land and the everlasting journeys within this area literally provide the basis for the structure of everyday life. What is more, this way of "[m]oving across the land reinforces a sense of belonging to it" (Muecke/Shoemaker 2009 [2004]: 42), because indigenous Australians are constantly connected to their ancestral surroundings, get to know their space better and better due to their nomadic lifestyles, and secure their belonging to the land by reiterating the routes established and travelled by their ancestors. Hereby, Aboriginal people perpetuate not only their environmental sense of belonging to their land but also their social and historical connections, because moving across the landscape ensures staying in touch with the ancestors and other indigenous groups as well as keeping alive the journeys and traditions that have been practised since the coming into being of the land during the Dreaming. Once again, all three dimensions of belonging are part of larger processes of negotiation that are constantly performed anew and that influence and shape each other as part of Aboriginal peoples' everyday lives.

Along with its social and economic functions, the "Aboriginal movement over the landscape was the result of cultural practices and knowledge systems used to manage the land and harvest resources" (Kerwin 2010: 11). This means that the nomadic lifestyle of indigenous Australians is interrelated with culturally specific forms of environmental and spatial knowledge that enable indigenous communities to survive on their ancestral lands. Hence, a *correct relation* to one's own country and a sense of geographical, social and historical belonging is inextricably linked with understanding the functioning and character of one's direct spatial surroundings. This is why "traditional Aboriginal environmental knowledge can best be understood […] in terms of knowledge appropriate for inculcating in the individual a valued attitude towards the environment" (Laudine 2009: 99). This entails that in indigenous Australian communities, spatial knowledge and the protection and maintenance of a group's land constitute central elements of belonging and it is the task of a whole clan to respect and take care of their own country.

Once again, this appreciation of ancestral lands stands in direct relation to indigenous Australian spirituality and the Dreaming, because "[t]hrough ceremonies celebrating and re-enacting the actions of their Dreaming Ancestors, Aboriginal people help to maintain the abundance of economically important plants and animals" (Clarke 2003: 64). Therefore, a *correct relation* to a nation's land includes the preservation of historical and social connections to the ancestors as a means of securing the environmental and economic well-

being and the overall balance of their own community. Moreover, the ceremonial rituals mentioned are able to strengthen the communal spirit and, thus, the sense of belonging to the land as a social entity that, as it is made up of descendants of the ancestors, is responsible for the ongoing acknowledgement of space as one of the central foundations of Aboriginal existence and for the perpetuation of spatial and environmental processes of negotiation that secure the survival of the group and its traditions performed since the Dreaming.

In addition to the overall recognition of nature and spatial knowledge as crucial aspects of Aboriginal belonging, "there is much historical evidence to show that Aboriginal people actively harnessed the resources of the environment" (Clarke 2003: 62). Belonging to a certain area thus also implies the need to gain and pass on knowledge on what this particular space offers and how it can be used within everyday life. This is even more important as the two essential nutritional areas of indigenous Australians are vegetables and animals (cf. Clarke 2003: 57). One of the most widespread and significant practices of Aboriginal people in terms of the management and protection of natural resources is the application of fires[47], whose functions are described by Deborah Bird Rose (2011 [2002]):

> 'Cultural fires' is the term used to discriminate between wild fires and fires deliberately started and managed. It has taken white settlers, scientists and others a very long time to appreciate the fact that Indigenous peoples in Australia (and elsewhere) consciously manage their country through the expert use of fire. […] Many Australian plants require fire either to flower, or for their seeds to germinate. Likewise, many animals also depend on, or respond well to, the effects of fire. […] Proper burning regimes require detailed knowledge of the terrain and of a range of local factors […]. Aboriginal culture fire regimes are thus implemented by the people who have the responsibility for, the and knowledge of, the country. (Ibid. 17-18)

This use of fires in Aboriginal cultures is inextricably linked with spatial knowledge and belonging, most evidently in Miller's environmental sense. The multifaceted application of these practices is only possible if the indigenous peoples know their spatial environment and are enabled to adequately care for their lands. The fact that the fires are a decisive factor within the conservation of ancestral countries makes them indispensable in terms of maintaining these spaces and with regard to the Aboriginal foundation for belonging to the landscape, their ancestors and communities. In other words, the fires facilitate the establishment and keeping alive of a *correct* or balanced relationship between indigenous communities and their lands.

Therefore, the indigenous Australians' management of the environment, for instance by means of fires, represents, in addition to its function as a supporter of the continued

[47] In indigenous Australian cultures, the use of fires can be seen as a multi-causal and multi-functional land management practice, because "[t]he Aborigines used fires for signalling, clearing tracks, killing snakes, hunting and regenerating grass and shrubs as feed for game" (Butcher/Turnbull 1988: 16).

existence of Aboriginal communities and their lands, a crucial element of protecting their space as a central means of belonging environmentally, geographically and socially. Interestingly, Rose also interprets the Aboriginal use of fires as a symbol of the overall differences between Western and Aboriginal approaches to space and of the non-indigenous difficulties with recognising the importance of this culturally specific practice for indigenous Australians. This way, the significance of acknowledging non-Western manifestations and knowledge of spatiality and the general diversity of spatial and environmental practices, which is a crucial aspect of this study, is highlighted once more inasmuch as Rose emphasises that there is not one but endless forms of spatial belonging.

Finally, the indigenous Australians' nomadic lifestyle, their management and use of the environment and the appreciation of nature as an equal partner of existence underlines the recognition that "[a]cross the world, hunter-gatherers typically possessed more direct relationships to their physical environment than was possible for people living in sedentary horticultural societies" (Clarke 2012: 10). The social, historical and environmental belonging of indigenous Australians and their organisation of everyday life is, as the previous paragraphs have underlined, shaped in particular by space as well as the interaction and relation between human beings and their spatial surroundings such as, for instance the constant, nomadic moving across the landscape or the active management of the environment in order to obtain food. Due to this mutual dependence, Aboriginal people do not only see the economic or nutritional benefits their country provides, but they also understand nature as an equal partner that must always be protected and cared for. With reference to the definition of the *correct relation* established above, it is justified to conclude that the processes of negotiation are already inherent in indigenous Australian lifeworlds – the balanced interrelatedness with the land and its processuality structure everyday life and ensure that the balance between communities and their spaces can be maintained over time.

Songlines: Indigenous Australian Mapping Techniques

From the indigenous peoples' practice of moving across the landscape, the interrelated questions of how they know their ways on the huge Australian continent and how they orient themselves arise. Andrea Bender and Sieghard Beller (2013) identify the use of the four cardinal directions as the main means of Aboriginal orientation in the desert (cf. 131-140). Apart from that, the most significant culturally specific tools for moving to different places are the so-called songlines, "which are accounts of journeys made by Ancestral Beings in the Dreamtime" and "connect myths right across the country" (Turnbull 1994: 27). Here again,

the narratives of the Dreaming provide the foundation for everyday life by showing indigenous Australians how to reach diverse locations. What is more, the songlines are another sign of the blending of the spiritual and material within Aboriginal lifeworlds, since "[s]onglines distributed land spiritually; 'country' distributed it geographically" (Gammage 2012 [2011]: 139). Knowledge of these spiritual and material elements of indigenous Australian space thus reinforces a sense of belonging to the land, because it ensures both orientation and the safe movement across the landscape.

Due to this structuring of the landscape by means of songlines, "[t]he land itself was a kind of text, a scripture, which each Aborigine learnt to read" (Rickard 1988: 17). Therefore, a *correct relation* to a nation's ancestral land is always linked to the process of acquiring, applying and passing on spatial knowledge in order to make sure that everyone can find his or her way and to preserve the relationship between Aboriginal subjects and the external world. At this point, the tension between the emotional need and the practical necessity to belong that is part of Miller's (2006) understanding (cf. ibid. 253-254), becomes easily comprehensible: on the one hand, indigenous Australians feel the need to belong to their lands, in particular socially and historically, because they aim to keep alive the connections to their ancestors and the Dreaming. On the other hand, and due to the nomadic lifestyle of indigenous Australians, there is a definite practical necessity of belonging in the sense of knowing one's own spatial environment in order to be able to orient oneself while travelling across the country. For these reasons, the indigenous Australian senses of historical, social and environmental belonging to one's own land are dependent on culturally specific knowledge of the landscape such as, for instance, songlines that ensure the orientation during the nomadic movements across a community's land.

Serving as a means of saving their knowledge about orientation as well as shedding light on "not only questions of material culture but the cognitive systems and social motivations that underpin them" (Woodward/Lewis 1998: 10), the maps indigenous Australians draw of their songlines and ways across the land differ considerably from Western mapping techniques. As David Turnbull (1994) outlines, Aboriginal maps

> have the appearance of being incapable of being combined in the European […] way. Their maps appear to have no grid, no standardised mode of representation. Nonetheless it is possible for Aboriginal people to know about, and to travel across, unknown, even distant, territory. Their knowledge is in fact combinable because it is in the form of narratives of journeys across the landscape. […] One individual will only 'know' or have responsibility for one section of the songline, but through exchange and negotiation, the travels of the Ancestors can be connected together to form a network of dreaming tracks. These may be constituted as bark paintings or song cycles. (Ibid. 26-27)

Although non-indigenous people would probably hardly be able to decipher Aboriginal maps

due to their fundamentally different appearance, these drawings constitute crucial culturally specific representations of indigenous Australian space. As Turnbull describes, there is no universal way of designing Aboriginal maps but, rather, different communities have their individual spatial drawings and, thus, multifarious manners of relating themselves to space. Therefore, the diversity of Aboriginal maps and representations of space highlights the multi-layered character of indigenous Australian manifestations of space as a form of belonging.

At the same time, the presence of maps serves as a further underpinning for the Aboriginal peoples' practice of belonging distinctly through the category of spatiality. This is due to the fact that the mappings are not only an expression of the indigenous communities' social and historical belonging to their lands through their visual re-enactment of ancestral songlines, but also of their environmental belonging, because they are a storage of the spatial information that secures their orientation while travelling across the landscape. Additionally, the existence of indigenous Australian practices of mapping is particularly crucial from a historical point of view. In view of the significance of maps for the European colonisation and occupation of Australia, the drawings produced by Aboriginal people counteract the merely non-indigenous visualisation of ancestral lands and claim the understanding of Australia as an indigenous continent. For this thesis, the narrative dimension of indigenous maps that Turnbull mentions is of particular interest.

It highlights the narrative entrenchment of Aboriginal orientation, the constant negotiation of belonging to space on the basis of narratives and, thus, the multi-dimensional intersections of narratives and spatiality that reach far beyond the narrativity of the Dreaming stories as the foundation of indigenous Australian being. Such a centrality of narratives on various levels of Aboriginal spatial cultures gives reason to expect that, with a focus on this study's object of research, contemporary novels by indigenous Australians feature and negotiate these multi-layered manifestations of spatiality as well and provide numerous perspectives on the diversity of Aboriginal space and belonging. Indigenous Australian maps function, on the one hand, as an indicator for the multiplicity of spatial representations in Aboriginal cultures that go beyond the scope of mere orality. On the other hand, the visual recording of spatial knowledge shows the huge interest in protecting the information that keeps alive the Aboriginal belonging and the *correct relation* to their land and their ancestors.

Indigenous Australian Spatialities, Temporalities and the Present

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the relation to spatiality is an essential part of how the Aboriginal world came into being, which is why "[a] central meaning of the Dreaming *is* that

of a sacred, heroic time long ago when man and nature came to be as they are" (Stanner 1998 [1987]: 227). Nevertheless, "neither 'time' nor 'history' as we understand them is involved in this meaning. […] [T]he sense of history is wholly alien here" (ibid.), and it is worth taking a look at indigenous Australian notions of temporality and their interrelations with spatiality.

First and foremost, it is crucial to recognise that time and space are mutually dependent on one another and that the construction of each category is inextricably linked with its respective counterpart (cf. Hallet/Neumann 2009a: 21). Despite this link of these two concepts, "time is culturally constructed, and thus concepts of time vary as a result of historical evolution"[48]. There is a diversity of culturally specific conceptualisations of temporality, just as there are diverse approaches to the intersections of time and space. In Aboriginal Australian cultures

> [i]ndigenous lore reposes upon two fundamental concepts which transform extant notions of temporality. The first is that the ancestral past is embodied in the country itself. Features of the landscape or creatures of nature *are* the Dreaming ancestors […]. The second is that the landscape is endowed with a powerful agency which makes human beings mere residues […]. Together, these two precepts make the landscape an embodiment of ongoing, immanent temporalities constituted by nature itself as a community of actants. (West-Pavlov 2013: 172-173)

Due to West-Pavlov's observation that spatiality and the spatial links to the ancestors are the actual foundations for Aboriginal temporalities and, thus, for the historical senses of belonging in Miller's conceptualisation, indigenous Australian temporality is another culturally specific element that relies on the Dreaming narratives and spatiality as its bases of existence. Spatiality and the landscape set the temporal rhythm of Aboriginal peoples and decisively shape the "atemporal environmental ethos of the Australian indigenous nations" (West-Pavlov 2013: 6). In other words, the spatial belonging to the ancestors, the community and its land defines Aboriginal temporalities. Space itself, meaning flora, fauna, the climate as well as links to indigenous cosmologies and the Dreaming, determines the Aboriginal perspective on temporality and subdivides time into respective sections and seasons (cf. Clarke 2003: 112).

Due to these temporal patterns and the establishment of a temporal framework of life on the foundation of spatial processes of negotiation, indigenous Australians have a perception of time that is different from that of non-indigenous people, which is why "[t]he gradual streamlining of temporality down to universal linear time […] has repressed and elided other possible temporal structurings of individual and global existence" (West-Pavlov 2013: 6). It is crucial to acknowledge that, in the Aboriginal context, the behaviour of animals

[48] Scheffel/Weixler/Werner (2014 [2013]), http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/time, last retrieved 2019-05-21.

or the blossoming of plants are more important for the segmentation of time than linearity. Eventually, indigenous Australian time is constructed via spatiality and not, as in many non-indigenous cultures, based on a clear division between past, present and future. Spatiality as a form of belonging highly informs Aboriginal notions of time, which thus represent a counterpoint to Western, linear conceptions of temporality by focusing on nature as their central structuralising element.

At this point, it is indispensable to point out that many of the described aspects specifically hold true for Aboriginal people pursuing a traditional way of life in mostly rural and remote areas[49] such as the Northern Territory. As mentioned in the introduction, however, about 70 per cent of indigenous Australians live in cities in the twenty-first century, which is due to the fact that "Australia had been thoroughly urbanised for most of the 20th century" (Lever 2009: 502).[50] Hence, one essential question is the following: In which ways do these indigenous people feel a sense of belonging to that particular kind of space, and how might their processes of negotiating a *correct relation* or balanced interrelatedness with urban spaces be shaped by this particular kind of location.

For this purpose, it is worth taking a look at the following poem by Aboriginal poet Lionel Fogarty, which deals with indigenous Australians living in urban environments and the question of how they are able to belong to this distinct space:

> Urban Aboriginals, go back in time
> You will find you are a tribal person
> You'll find the tribe
> That roamed the land
> That is now dumps.
> Urban blacks
> Don't die in wine …
> Urban black the time is
> NOW.
> (Fogarty 1995: 137 in Heiss 2007b: 50)

In his poem, Fogarty calls on Aboriginal people to try to belong to urban spaces instead of feeling disconnected from or not belonging to their own country in this specific kind of spatial environment. In this way, he "is speaking to the urban blackfella who can sometimes feel so

[49] Of course, this is not supposed to establish a binary distinction between rural, traditional and urban, modern Aboriginal communities, because indigenous Australians living in cities can have an equally traditional way of life as those living in non-urban areas and vice versa. Nevertheless, it is important to pay attention to the fact that cities only emerged in Australia only after its European colonisation and that they are not an element that is automatically inherent in Aboriginal cultures. Hence, it is necessary to find out how cities as specific spatial formations influence, shape or even alter indigenous Australian manifestations of belonging.

[50] From a historical point of view, the urbanisation of the Australian continent commenced already much earlier. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, a huge percentage of the immigrants settled either in urban or suburban areas, thus shaping the typically Australian settlement pattern that is to be found on the continent up to the present day (cf. Meyer 2007: 180).

assimilated and indoctrinated to believe that he or she is no longer really Aboriginal" (Heiss 2007b: 50), because indigenous Australians are often thought to be able to pursue their traditional ways of lives and their traditions in a rural environment only. Using his poem as an instrument to counteract these convictions, "Fogarty […] urges the urban Aboriginal to reconnect to our tribal ancestry and thus to country and culture" (ibid.) and, thus, to actively expose that indigenous Australian can belong to cities as well as rural spaces. In addition to that, the poem attempts to draw the readers' attention, especially the non-indigenous ones', to the Aboriginal history of Australian cities and the fact that every urban area in Australia is in fact an Aboriginal nation's ancestral land. Eventually, Fogarty nicely summarises the prevailing contradiction related to indigenous Australians and urban environments: although a huge majority of indigenous Australians are residents of cities such as Sydney or Melbourne, most non-Aboriginal people imagine them as living in the country or the desert.

The fact that many indigenous Australians actually live in urban areas "is a paradox for many non-Indigenous people", because this "does not fit the stereotype of Aboriginal Australians sitting around peacefully in nature, in the 'outback'" (Shaw 2007: 3). In contrast to this, many indigenous Australians were born and grew up in big cities, which is why they are able to relate to that particular environment and do not, as many non-indigenous Australians assume, have problems with living and feeling comfortable there. One of the most common stereotypes these Aboriginal people encounter in their daily lives is, according to Larissa Behrendt (2012), that "[i]ndigenous people, especially in the cities, have lost their culture" (ibid. 33). Once again, this is related to the stereotypical association of indigenous Australians with the desert and non-urban regions and the idea that Aboriginal people are only able to establish a connection with their lands, cultures and traditions in these areas.

Here, this study's focus on space as a form of belonging is explicitly brought to the fore, because the (mis-)conception of indigenous Australians as merely rural peoples is linked with the perception of cities as 'anti'-indigenous spaces. Cities are densely populated and built-up areas, which seems to stand in stark contrast to the nearly uninhabited image of non-urban Australia. Because many people regard the latter as the only space where Aboriginal people are enabled to feel a sense of belonging and, in Miller's terms, to develop a *correct relation* between themselves and their spatial surroundings – urban areas seem to represent the opposite of a balanced interrelatedness between indigenous communities and their lands – the idea of the indigenous Australian subject living in remote regions of the country is still highly prevalent in pan-Australian discourses on the continent's original population. For these reasons, Aboriginal activists and writers seek to work against the construction of urban areas

as non-indigenous spaces that, in the eyes of many non-Aboriginal Australians, destroy their traditional cultures, values and their connection to ancestral lands. For instance, Aboriginal author Anita Heiss (2012) struggles for a new perception of urban indigenous people and clearly states that "[i]n public forums I try to contain my frustration over the reality that urban Blackfellas – one fifth of the Indigenous Australian population in Australia lives in Greater Sydney – remain invisible" (ibid. 159). By pointing to the need of understanding urban Aboriginal people as a common and existing aspect of twenty-first century indigenous Australia, Heiss aims to underline that cityscapes are Aboriginal landscapes as well and that these communities must be included in the public perception of and national debates on the country's urban present and future.

Particularly from a non-indigenous viewpoint, it is essential to see that it is wrong to assume that "Aboriginal people in the more settled regions do not have significant relationships to their own country. My experience has been that many people have sustained those relationships against the most overwhelming efforts to eradicate them" (Rose 1996: 2). This means that the fact that Aboriginal spatiality serves as a form of belonging holds true for urban regions as well and, with regard to Fogarty's poem, that indigenous Australians living in cities are able to rediscover their individual self as a 'tribal person' belonging to a particular nation and land. Therefore, this study seeks to actively work against the stereotypical image of the 'non-urban indigenous Australian', and, particularly in the analysis of Anita Heiss's (2007a) *Not Meeting Mr Right* by means of intersectionality, it attempts to unearth the diversity of Aboriginal people who perceive cities such as Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide as their 'natural' surroundings and as their home space. At the end of the day, cities are a vital element of contemporary Aboriginal cultures, and it is thus crucial to recognise cityscapes, not only rural regions, as a foundation for connections to ancestral lands and for the establishment of an equivalent sense of belonging.

Due to the still existing, above-mentioned stereotypes urban indigenous women and men have to face in their everyday lives in Australia, it is worth concluding this section with Aboriginal writer Larissa Behrendt's (2006a) perception of the relationship between indigenous Australians and the city. In her view,

> [t]he 'traditional' and the colonial and the present are all a fluid history connected to place and kin in our culture. And so too, wherever we have lived there is a newer imprint and history, one that is meaningful and creates a sense of belonging within Aboriginal communities that have formed in urban areas. (Ibid. unpaginated)

As Behrendt explicates, contemporary Aboriginal cultures and, thus, also spatialities must be perceived as palimpsestic constructions in which indigenous Australian traditions, the

country's colonial history as well as contemporary manifestations of Aboriginality resonate. Thus, urban communities do not contradict Aboriginal ways of life that are characterised in particular by a social, environmental and historical connection to their own country. By contrast, Behrendt claims that they must be seen as a continuation of indigenous traditions that transforms but simultaneously also incorporates and keeps alive Aboriginal lifeworlds in urban environments. For these reasons, urban indigenous people are a constitutive feature of contemporary Aboriginal lifeworlds and thus further corroborate the fact that indigenous Australians construct their individual senses of belonging via the category of spatiality in particular.

Drawing Conclusions: Belonging and Indigenous Australian Politics of Space

At the end of this subchapter, which has not referred to the political dimension of this study yet, it is mandatory to reconsider the insights gained in the second chapter and to briefly bring together Aboriginal politics of space with the social, historical, environmental and spiritual dimensions of indigenous Australian spatiality. For this purpose, Stephen Muecke's (2005) examination of the concept of coexistence and its reference to the links between Australia's indigenous and non-indigenous population serves as an adequate point of departure:

> Coexistence is the word for different cultures living together in the same place and within the cultural bounds of the nation and this coexistence extends from the micro level of interpersonal relations to the image of the nation. Once *my* place expands into *our* place circles of responsibility lead to contested ownership, land rights and a variable sense of belonging to a national identity. (Ibid. 63)

Belonging in and to Australia is, according to Muecke, heavily dependent on the appreciative interactions among indigenous and non-indigenous people and the insight that each and every person living in Australia is responsible for creating a sense of belonging. In his view, the country needs to implement this national endeavour by coming to terms with its colonial past, developing novel approaches to spatial rights and thus enabling its original population to actively participate in the establishment and shaping of a national Australian sense of belonging.

At this point, the vital importance of the distinction between belonging and the politics of belonging by Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) becomes evident, because the social, environmental and historical relationships between the subject and his or her outer world that constitute Aboriginal manifestations of belonging can never be approached without taking into consideration their political as well as historical dimensions as well {cf. ibid.). Belonging and spatiality do not exist in a vacuum, but, rather, they are always linked to culturally specific social and historical contexts and the related processes of negotiating belonging to space as

related to these dimensions of human existence. Referring again to Muecke (2005), this means that instituting just spatial rights and mutual recognition constitutes of the key prerequisites for the respectful coexistence of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians from the individual person up to the entire nation (cf. bid.). In addition to underlining the topicality of this study's focus, these observations emphasise the main recognition gained within this subchapter: spatial belonging and a *correct relation* – in the sense of a balanced interrelatedness with one's social, environmental and historical surroundings – between Aboriginal subjects and their ancestral lands, which is not disturbed by outer forces such as the political or judicial non-acknowledgement of indigenous land rights, is the most crucial foundation of indigenous Australian cultures and the most essential means of creating and keeping alive a sense of national belonging for everyone living on the Australian continent.

Eventually, the previous pages and the examination of spatiality on all levels of indigenous Australian cultures provide an overview of the status of the category of space for Aboriginal peoples: it permeates and shapes not only their senses of belonging to the land, but it also facilitates the preservation of their cultural traditions and the on-going relationship to their ancestors. This permeation manifests itself in endless and ever-changing processes of negotiating the relationship between indigenous Australian peoples, their communities and their manifold senses of belonging to their ancestral lands, ranging from the oral passing on of Dreaming narratives and ancient songlines for the purpose of orientation in space to asking the question of what belonging to cityscapes might look like in the twenty-first century. Although these processes are always dynamic and indigenous Australian people and communities have different and individual connections to their respective spaces, all of them share the objective of establishing and maintaining a balanced interrelatedness with their spatial surroundings – a mode of belonging that appreciates the land as the ultimate foundation and preserver of existence.

Keeping this in mind, it is advisable to bring to the fore the Dreaming narratives once again in order to finally substantiate the interrelation between indigenous Australian spatiality and the concept of belonging:

> The indigenous Australian creation stories – just like the ceremonial songs which are chanted as one travels the country, encountering sacred sites – keep a multiple sense of being in flux. People can be sure about their belonging in places; historical time becomes far less important. The power that created the world resides in these physical locations. When an Aboriginal man or woman travels to one of these sacred places they put their bodies in the locus of creation and of continuity, and thus the power that resides there not only recognises them but also inspires them to act. (Muecke 2005: 22)

This text passage nicely wraps up this subchapter and perfectly summarises what has been said so far: First, the Dreaming stories represent the foundation for (spatial) Aboriginal

cultures and they hold available spatial knowledge in a narrative format, which makes literary narratives, here contemporary novels, an adequate starting point for approaching indigenous Australian spatialities and spatial belonging. Second, by referring to this spatial knowledge in order to organise their everyday lives within the community and, thus, maintaining the links to their ancestors, indigenous Australians develop a sense of historical, environmental and social belonging to their own country that is constantly (re)negotiated and ever-changing.

In this way, the establishment and maintenance of a *correct relation* or balanced interrelatedness between indigenous subjects and their outer, spatial surroundings becomes, third, entirely dependent on space and the land, because spatiality structures all three, inextricably linked dimensions of Aboriginal belonging in Miller's understanding of the concept. This means that, fourth, the first part of this study's central hypothesis, namely the assumption that indigenous Australian space can be interpreted as a form of belonging, has been successfully confirmed by the insights gained within this subchapter. In the end, space, and not temporality, serves, as Muecke explains, as the major source and inspiration of life for indigenous Australians, which is why investigating its narrative and thematic diversity represented in contemporary novels on the basis of the outlined theories as well as the following working definition is a worthwhile endeavour.

3.3 Indigenous Australian Space as a Form of Belonging: A Working Definition

Approaching Indigenous Australian Spatialities: A Working Definition of Aboriginal Manifestations of Spatial Belonging

After dealing with the political, social and cultural dimensions of Aboriginal spatiality and belonging, it is now time to formulate a final working definition of indigenous Australian space for this thesis. Before introducing the actual theoretical and conceptual framework, it is crucial to point out that the term 'working definition' has been selected deliberately – it intends to emphasise that the following concept of Aboriginal spatiality as a form of belonging is not to be universalised but applies to the specific research context of this project only. Since space "is always understood and used in different ways by different people" (Tönnies/Grimm 2010: 101), the following conceptualisation of Aboriginal manifestations of belonging to their lands from a non-indigenous perspective constitutes merely one possible definition among various others and must not be seen as representing the entire, multi-layered diversity of indigenous Australian spatial lifeworlds.

As far as its structure is concerned, this chapter initially provides a definition of Aboriginal space, which then forms the basis for interlinking indigenous Australian spatiality

with the concept of belonging outlined by Miller. Based on the fundamental approach from the introductory chapter, Aboriginal space has been initially conceptualised as a "complex, highly structured life-giving and sustaining [element]" (Ragaz 1988: 29) of indigenous Australian cultures. With regard to the insights gained in the previous subchapter, this definition still grasps the most important aspects of Aboriginal spatiality – it functions as a structuring force of indigenous Australians' everyday, spiritual and social lives; it is considered to be the foundation of Aboriginal existence, and it is a multi-faceted concept with many different layers. Nevertheless, Ragaz's explication it too broad and too vague in order function as a platform for a nuanced literary-studies investigation into indigenous Australian space.

For this purpose and for a more refined description and analysis of narrative representations of Aboriginal spatiality, Deborah Bird Rose (1996) has "developed a definition of country which starts with the idea that country […] is a nourishing terrain. Country is a place that gives and receives life. Not just imagined or represented, it is lived in and lived with" (ibid. 7). Serving as an adequate conceptual starting point for this thesis, Rose's definition underlines that her idea of indigenous Australian country[51], which is based on her "studies with Aboriginal people" (ibid.), incorporates the reciprocal linkage between the land and its inhabitants, including people, animals and plants. This becomes particularly evident in Rose's statement that "[a] 'healthy' or 'good' country, is one in which all the elements do their work. They all nourish each other because there is no site, no position, from which the interest of one can be disengaged from the interests of others" (ibid. 10). Put differently, there is no hierarchical perception of the land by indigenous Australians, but they seek to negotiate their spatial belonging or relationship with their ancestral spaces in a well-balanced manner. Consequently, Aboriginal peoples and their lands are mutually dependent on one another, and they consider themselves to be inseparably related to space, which is why the protection of the land, the foundation of all forms of life, is of utmost significance.

Moreover, Rose's hint at the imaginary and non-imaginary dimensions of Aboriginal land represents the blending of material and spiritual spatiality in indigenous Australian

[51] Rose's conceptualisation of Aboriginal Australian country points to the fact that "[i]n tandem with the idea of 'a country' as a politically bounded sovereign state lies the concept of 'Country' as a specific environment enmeshing the individual in subjective relationships with place, including other inhabitants. Such relationships do not have rigid boundaries but are themselves shifting spaces, changing through time and experience" (Ramoutsaki 2014: 1). While Rose's definition emphasises the latter aspect, it is mandatory to mention here that the selected, basic conceptualisation of Aboriginal space as a *nourishing terrain* will not be understood as an apolitical concept here. Instead, this study assumes a perpetual political embeddedness of indigenous Australian spaces and places, and I will always interpret these with having in mind their inextricable connection with the Australian nation as well as with discourses on spatial Aboriginal rights and the country's colonial history in mind.

cultures. Finally, Rose's approach to Aboriginal country matches this study's take on indigenous space in Australia, because is likewise considers the role of the Dreaming to be the main source of life and land already mentioned:

> Nourishing terrains are the active manifestation of creation. This does not mean that everything that happens is right or good, but it does mean that everything that happens has creation as its precondition. For many Aboriginal people, everything in the world is alive: animals, trees, rains, sun, moon, some rocks and hills, and people are all conscious. […] All have a right to exist, all have their own places of belonging, all have their own Law and culture. (Ibid. 23)

Due to the identification of *nourishing terrains* and, thus, country and spatiality, as the direct expression of creation and the Dreaming, the Australian ancestral lands turn out to be the ultimate and literal grounds of Aboriginal being and their relations to their ancestors. With this characteristic, Rose's description exhibits another important advantage: her perspective on indigenous Australian country not only incorporates space as such, meaning the overall existence of material and imaginary spatiality, but it also features places, i.e. specific spatial sites. Therefore, Rose's explications are able to form the basis for comprehensive examinations of Aboriginal space, since her idea of country enables researchers to refer to all levels of indigenous Australian spatiality. For these reasons, the selected definition of Aboriginal space as *nourishing terrain* according to Rose (1996) incorporates the main elements described in Chapter 3.2 and thus serves as one reference point for the conceptualisation of indigenous Australian space throughout this thesis.

Despite Rose's focus on the function of spatiality as a giver and preserver of life and on process-based, balanced interrelationships between indigenous peoples and their lands, the entire significance of space for Aboriginal cultures becomes palpable only by using Miller's concept of belonging, because the latter emphasises the most critical aspect of indigenous Australian space in an even more detailed manner: the inseparable relationship between and contingency of Aboriginal subjects[52] and their spatial surroundings. Because Aboriginal spatiality conflates all of the environmental, historical and social elements illustrated in the previous section of this thesis and thus serves as an interface between the three levels of Miller's approach to belonging, it demonstrates that indigenous Australian manifestations of

[52] The term *subject* requires further problematisation here, because it possibly implies that there is a separation between indigenous Australian subjects and their spatial surroundings within the outlined concept of a *correct relation* or balanced interrelatedness. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, indigenous Australian cultures are characterised by holistic relationships between human beings and their spatial surroundings, which also entails that these two entities cannot be separated from one another but are inextricably linked. Due to the selected corpus and its introduction of a range of diverse characters and their manifold perceptions of space and belonging, this thesis will employ terms such as *subject* or *individual*, which might imply a separation, in order to highlight the diversity of manifestations of spatial belonging exhibited by these different characters, while simultaneously being aware of the overall inseparability of indigenous Australian peoples and their ancestral lands and spaces.

the latter are structured spatially and that Aboriginal space can be defined as a manifestation of belonging. Therefore, this study conceptualises indigenous Australian spatiality as a form of belonging according to Miller: thus, the *correct relationship* between Aboriginal subjects and their external worlds is constructed and maintained via spatiality on the environmental, social as well as historical levels and within constant processes of negotiating these connections, always with the objective of a balanced interrelatedness among them. These processes – as well as belonging and spatiality themselves – are structured narratively, because life and existence are perceived as being permeated by narrative structures here, which means that they all exhibit narrativity as an inherent feature. Based on this relationality of space and place as well as on the narratives of and the knowledge within the Dreaming stories, indigenous Australian peoples relate themselves to their communities, their identity with a group, localities, ancestors as well as ancestral lands by means of spatial narratives. Because these spatial positionings are not to be analysed as isolated cultural phenomena, their literary analyses always pay attention to the fact that Aboriginal space as a form of belonging is situated within political, social and historical (Australian) contexts that influence the shape and composition of their narrative representations in contemporary fiction.

To wrap up the overall applicability of Miller's model of belonging for this study, it allows for a more explicit description of the concrete functions of indigenous Australian lands than Rose's (1996) *nourishing terrains* or other definitions of Aboriginal spatiality. In addition to that, Miller's methodological set of instruments and her theoretical model make it possible to differentiate between various levels of space as a form of belonging, which results in a multi-layered characterisation of the complexity of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging. Along with that, Miller's concept of belonging facilitates answering the questioning of whether and if, in what ways, the negotiation processes of establishing a relationship between Aboriginal peoples and their external world can be disrupted, altered or even destroyed. Thus, the situatedness of indigenous Australian belonging within political, social and historical contexts can be examined in detail. This aspect is of particularly great importance for the literary discussions of Aboriginal space due to Australia's colonial history, the European occupation of ancestral lands and the still ongoing struggles of indigenous Australian peoples for land rights. Without these aspects, which are not considered when one merely approaches Aboriginal space as such, a culturally sensitive investigation into their narrative representations would not be possible, because the centrality of land and country for indigenous Australian cultures and politics becomes evident only by a deliberate focus on the interrelations between space and human subjects. Finally, the compatibility of Miller's

methodology with narratological categories, more precisely with narrative space, time as well as characters, likewise makes her conceptualisation of belonging a suitable foundation for the analyses of the primary text corpus and the narrative diversity of spatial Aboriginal cultures.

As a nice conclusion to this working definition, it is worth taking a look at the final section of Torres Strait Islander Martin Nakata's (2007a) introduction to his book *Disciplining the Savages. Savaging the Disciplines*, in which he writes the following:

> The lived space of Indigenous people in colonial regimes is the most complex of spaces and one of the goals of this book is to persuade the reader that understandings of the Indigenous position must be 'complicated' rather than simplified through any theoretical framing. The possibilities for this are more open than at any time over the last century. In this historical moment, […] it is critical that Indigenous people and those who are committed in their support for us develop deeper understandings of how we are positioned at the interface of different knowledge systems, histories, traditions and practices. (Ibid. 12)

Acknowledging Nakata's demand for a differentiation and complication of academic investigations into indigenous cultures, the developed working definition seeks to be in line with his claim. While the selected conceptualisation of Aboriginal spatiality as a form of belonging needs to provide a viable toolset for the analyses of fictional texts, its development 'on the way' and in the course of several chapters intends to consider the intricacy of indigenous (Australian) lifeworlds and the culturally specific, complex circumstances of their spaces at the same time. Of course, the working definition outlined is deficient in terms of its representation of the overall diversity of Aboriginal manifestations of spatiality – it is simply tailored to the requirements of this thesis in literary studies, heavily influenced by its author's Western, non-indigenous perspective and thus not applicable to every possible form of indigenous Australian space as a form of belonging. Nevertheless, this study will hopefully contribute to a more differentiated and novel perception of (narrative) Aboriginal spaces by employing a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach and by unearthing their positioning at the complex intersections of indigenous and non-indigenous forms of knowledge, colonial, post-, neo- and anti-colonial histories and temporalities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal traditions as well as Western and non-Western academic, cultural and political practices.

Does the Working Definition Work? Putting Theory into Practice

Although a working definition represents a viable point of departure for focusing on further theoretical delineations that are required to be capable of adequately approaching contemporary Aboriginal narratives, it is expedient to incorporate a brief preview on the upcoming application of the concept developed above here. Such a brief experiment is likewise in line with the bottom-up approach of this thesis, because it checks at a very early

stage of the theoretical design of spatial belonging whether the selected concepts are viable instruments for the examination of the primary text corpus.

To this end, Kim Scott's (2012 [2010]) novel *That Deadman Dance* offers appropriate excerpts due to its illustration of the early days of the colonisation of Western Australia and of the encounter between indigenous peoples of this area and the colonisers. For the sake of clarity, conciseness and comprehensibility, the following passages from the text – which deal with the indigenous characters Bobby, Wooral and Menak and the English settler Dr Cross – are not analysed separately but together, because they all share a direct connection to the working definition conceptualised above:

> When Bobby, the protagonist of the novel, is sailing with Dr Cross, he describes his ancestral home lands as "the harbour at home with land all around like a mother's arms" (ibid. 19).
>
> "Sometimes Wooral addressed the bush as if he were walking through a crowd of diverse personalities, his tone variously playful, scolding, reverential, affectionate. It was most confusing. Did he see something else?" (Ibid. 43)
>
> "Only in the old stories had Menak ever known of so many whales in the bay. […] He was deep in the whale story of this place right now, resonating with it, but there was some new element, some […] embellishment of its well-known rhythm that distracted him […]." (Ibid. 225)

Above all, Deborah Bird Rose's (1996) idea of *nourishing terrains* resonates in each of the three passages – in the direct relationship between Bobby and his mother-like home lands, Wooral's approaching the nature surrounding him as if it were a human being and Menak's feeling connected to the ancestral stories of his peoples' ancestral spaces.

As a central object, the reciprocity of indigenous Australian people and their lands as the framework of existence as such marks the overall nexus of the passages quoted above. While, in Bobby's eyes, the spaces surrounding him are laden with maternal and, thus, life-giving qualities, Wooral's behaviour articulates almost human-like interactions with space. Menak feels connected to his ancestral lands, waters and its animals by means of spatial stories which also points to the narrativity of indigenous Australian forms of establishing and maintaining a sense of spatial belonging. These narratives also blend the spiritual and material levels of Aboriginal spatialities and form a link to the Dreaming as narrative basis of indigenous Australian existence in space. What is more, Bobby, Wooral and Menak share an inextricable connection with their spatial surroundings that is characterised by an almost human-like treatment of space – Bobby and Wooral articulate such a stance either literally or through their behaviour, Menak almost becomes one with the spaces he feels related to.

Taking a closer look at the concept of belonging reveals that these passages also mirror the three levels of Linn Miller's model. The three characters display an overall geographical relation with their spatial surroundings, because they consider themselves to be

directly connected to their country and because they all interact with space in different ways. Bobby's explications that he shares with Dr Cross resonate with a highly social attachment to space, because Bobby refers to the lands of his people as the foundation of his own life and thus of his belonging to his indigenous community as well. Menak displays a specifically historical take on belonging, because he feels tied to the ancestral stories of his people that interlink Aboriginal pasts, presents and futures on the basis of feeling a sense of belonging to the land. Through his connectedness with space, Menak likewise becomes aware of the disruptive forces in terms of his sense of spatial belonging, which, in this case, constitute an indication of the colonisation of his people's areas.

Although this subchapter merely represents a brief glimpse of the application of the working definition within the analyses of the novels selected, it is nevertheless capable of initially bridging the gap between theory and practice and thus highlights the fact that relationality and mutuality, both of which are pivotal aspects of this study's conceptualisation of spatial belonging, are to be found in contemporary Aboriginal narratives. The passages from Kim Scott's novel show that indigenous Australian people are inextricably connected with their spatial surroundings and thus prove that indigenous Australian spatialities constitute the foundation of Aboriginal manifestations of spatial belonging.

3.4 Aboriginal Spatial Belonging and Non-Indigenous Approaches to Space

A Clash of Concepts? Aboriginal Spatial Belonging and Non-Indigenous Spatialities

The methodological and conceptual progression of this study has not taken into consideration the most prominent Western theories of space yet. The following pages legitimate this decision and deliver a juxtaposition of the working definition of Aboriginal space and influential non-indigenous thinkers and their reflections on spatiality. Before taking a closer look at various Western concepts of space, it is worth drawing attention to the overall differences of indigenous Australian and non-indigenous approaches to spatiality.[53]

To begin with, it makes sense to briefly reflect on Laurelyn Whitt's (2009) observation that "[t]he politics of property is the central historical dynamic mediating western and indigenous relations" (ibid. 13). This means that, as soon as European settlers and the continent's original population encountered one another in Australia, the specific question of who owns, occupies and controls the land primarily determined the relationships between

[53] Although this chapter differentiates between non-indigenous and indigenous notions of spatiality in its initial paragraphs, this is not to stabilise binary perceptions of Western and Aboriginal concepts of space but to highlight that there are various manifestations of spatiality, each of which require culturally- and context-specific approaches and methodologies.

coloniser and colonised. This becomes even more evident when one takes a closer look at the times before the European settlement of Australia:

> In the pre-European period, Aboriginal people perceived the social and physical aspects of the world as closely linked. Culture and landscape existed together, with no true separation in Aboriginal thought. To them, the Ancestors made the land, imbuing it with their spirit and giving it meaning. Aboriginal people derived religious power from the landscape by acknowledging the deeds of the Ancestors. This contrasts with prevailing Western European belief leading up to the Industrial Revolution, which was that the whole physical world was subordinate to human purpose. (Clarke 2003: 218)

As Clarke clearly demonstrates, indigenous Australian peoples lived without even having a distinct concept of property before the advent of colonisation but concentrated on their spiritual relations with the land and their ancestors instead. Due to Australia's colonial history and the fact that the colonisers brought along their European conviction that country and, thus, the Australian continent, is an additional property of the British Crown, the living conditions of the Aboriginal peoples changed and their spiritual, balanced relationship to the country was heavily disrupted. The new settlers did not regard nature and the land as equal partners as the indigenous Australian nations did, but, rather, they considered it, above all, a means of gaining and exposing their colonial power as well as of securing their survival by providing the basis for economic and agricultural success. For these reasons, the existence of the concept of property in Western cultures and its non-existence in Aboriginal cultures, respectively, constitutes one of the main differences between indigenous Australian and non-indigenous perceptions of land.

In addition to that, the spiritual linkage between indigenous Australians and their country marks one of the most significant characteristics of Aboriginal spatiality that distinguishes them from the settlers' approach to space. As Linn Miller (2006) explains, this is especially due to the following reasons:

> Unlike the indigenous population, settler Australians are unable to trace their identity and belonging in this country back to its cosmogonic origins. While Aboriginal peoples can refer to a canon of ancient authorised philosophical explanations regarding their intrinsic affiliation with country, settler connections are not cosmogonically defined – not explicitly anyway. Rather than *being* connected to country, for settler Australians it has been a matter of *becoming* connected. (Ibid. 28)

While the Australian continent itself has provided the main foundation for the Aboriginal peoples' sense of environmental, social and historical belonging over thousands of years, the settlers needed to find a different way of relating themselves to the unknown spatial surroundings because they lack the spiritual, spatial interrelations with any kind of ancestors.
Due to these conditions, the colonisers have established the concept of property as one of the central instruments of establishing a sense of belonging to the Australian continent, because the ownership of a specific spatial area can be interpreted as a confirmation of a person's

belonging to his or her own land as well. These divergent approaches to becoming connected to Australia as a home space once again underline how colonisation not only led to a coming together of non-indigenous and indigenous peoples and ways of life but also caused a clash of very different manifestations of and interactions with space. The most striking disparity among all these differences might be the ‘product’-orientation of non-indigenous spatial thinking in contrast to the indigenous Australian process-orientation outlined above. While Aboriginal people and communities seek to constantly maintain and pass on their senses of belonging by means of the Dreaming and other oral narratives and their daily interactions with the land, non-indigenous relationships with space are specifically linked to the aim of owning a certain plot of land.

Along with spirituality and the concept of property, the economisation of land likewise points to the overall differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal conceptualisations of spatiality. As Barry Butcher and David Turnbull (1988) describe,

> Aboriginal knowledge […] all forms part of a unified knowledge network. This knowledge network links people and land so intimately that the land owns the Aborigines as much as they are guardians of the land. The Europeans, by contrast, brought their ideas with them from outside. They wanted to achieve economic ‘progress’ by bringing the new land into the British Empire and re-shaping its environment so that it would produce goods needed by the mother country and by the new settler population. (Ibid. 13)

In lieu of recognising the spatial knowledge of Australia’s original population as a rich resource for getting to know the right way of dealing with the alien landmass of the continent, the European settlers were merely interested in the direct economisation and agricultural utilisation of the country. Still, “[i]t is simply wrong to assert that indigenous people did not and do not have economic interests in, or economic rights over, land. Nevertheless, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not drive an absolute dichotomy between economic and other factors” (Dodson 1997: 43). Instead, “[o]ur traditional relationship to land is profoundly spiritual. It is also profoundly practical” (ibid.). Indigenous Australians only take what they need from nature and trade in selected goods as well, but they do not exploit their environment. They regard themselves as protectors who need to ensure that the land, their basis of existence, will be kept alive. By contrast, the non-Aboriginal, colonial manner of spatial economisation is intended to get the most out of nature in order to maximise the potential profits. Today, it is particularly the ongoing destruction of huge areas of ancestral lands due to mining that can be interpreted as a perpetuation of colonial and economic spatial practices and as disregard for Aboriginal rights – one of the main issues in Alexis Wright’s (2009 [2006]) *Carpentaria*. While indigenous Australian cultures thus seek to live in harmony with nature and only cultivate the land to secure their survival, Western and colonial spatial

practices often aim to purely exploit nature for financial reasons, without any awareness of the destruction of the Aboriginal nations' environment.

To conclude the juxtaposition of indigenous Australian and Western approaches to space, it is worth acknowledging the fact that "[k]nowledge, in all Aboriginal systems of information, is specific to the place and to the people. To put it another way: one of the most important aspects of Aboriginal knowledge systems is that they do not universalise" (Rose 1996: 32). Because spatial indigenous Australian knowledge does not imply universalisations, there is no inherent comparison with other forms of spatiality either and, thus, no automatic hierarchisation. By contrast, hierarchies are a typical feature of Western approaches to space. The British settlers interpreted their way of mapping, occupying and taking possession of Australia as superior to the Aboriginal peoples' ways of life, which do not incorporate spatial ideologies and the consequent oppression of other human beings. Additionally, the relationship between Western people and their environment is structured hierarchically, because nature is not appreciated as a partner but as inferior and as a mere instrument for guaranteeing progression. This means that, although there is an endless diversity of indigenous and non-indigenous perceptions of space, of which the previous pages were only able to provide a very simplistic overview, spirituality, economic success, property and their relationships to space and belonging finally provide insights into the differences and similarities between Western, colonial and Aboriginal spatial practices – both approaches consider the land to be the foundation for belonging, whereas only indigenous Australians treat nature as their equal counterpart and not mainly as a source of progress and profit.

The outlined differences between Western and Aboriginal approaches to space constitute one reason for my decision to work mostly with concepts that directly relate to indigenous Australian lifeworlds, such as Miller's and Rose's, in this thesis. At the same time, it is of crucial importance to finally and very briefly problematise and explain this study's relationship to non-indigenous spatial concepts. Obviously, this study is, simply due to its embeddedness in European academia and its Western perspective on Aboriginal spatiality, influenced (in one or another way) by the insights gained during the spatial turn within the study of literature and culture (cf. Bachmann-Medick 2007, Tally 2013). Thus, it acknowledges the overall centrality of the works by spatial thinkers such as Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]), Michel de Certeau (1988 [1984]), Edward Soja (1989, 1996) and Marc Augé (2008 [1995]) and their contributions to the theoretical and conceptual development of spatiality. Although their models of spatiality are not directly used within this thesis, their insights into the cultural and social dimensions of spatiality resonate with the selected

methodological and conceptual approach. For these reasons, it is evident that a conceptualisation of Aboriginal spatiality and its narrative representations would, as Demelza Hall (2012)[54] nicely illustrates, have been possible also on the foundation of non-indigenous spatial concepts as well. In addition to that, the spatial turn and the resulting academic focus on space were fundamentally inspired by (post-)colonial thinkers and theories as well as strongly influenced by literary studies (cf. Neumann 2009: 115), whose combination forms one central theoretical and methodological nexus here and would thus likewise constitute an adequate starting point for the analysis of indigenous Australian space.

Nevertheless, the insights of major spatial thinkers such as Soja or Lefebvre will only play a minor role here, which is due to two main reasons. First, their concepts of spatiality were designed within Western cultural and academic contexts and thus mostly with reference to non-indigenous peoples. Although this does not entail that they exclude indigenous or non-Western cultures completely, their focus is clearly on the Western world as well as primarily on urban spaces. Second, the conceptualisations of Aboriginal space and belonging actually selected for this study, specifically those by Rose and Miller, distinguish themselves by referring to indigenous Australian cultures more directly. They are, of course, highly influenced by Western spatial thinkers as well, but they were developed either in direct contact with Aboriginal peoples or at least with the social, historical and political contexts of the Australian nation in mind. Hence, their conceptualisations of space and belonging display a closer cultural proximity to indigenous Australian lifeworlds than, for instance, de Certeau's or Augé's, and they are more aware of the culturally specific difficulties as well as political and judicial conditions of Aboriginal space. Therefore, in the end, these contextual circumstances make the selected concepts more compatible with the narrative negotiations of indigenous Australian space as a form of belonging than Western-oriented conceptualisations of spatiality and thus legitimate the theoretical design of this thesis.

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[54] In his lecture 'Des espaces autres', presented as early as 1967, Foucault introduced the concept of heterotopias, which refers to his observation that "[e]very society needs and creates a set of 'Other' spaces to deal with social tension and crisis, and to reproduce its own volatile structure. These heterotopias […] are, in contrast to utopias, 'real' places" (Sarkowsky 2007: 34). Demelza Hall (2012) employs the concept of heterotopia for analysing Alexis Wright's (2009 [2006]) *Carpentaria*, which demonstrates the applicability of canonised non-indigenous conceptualisations of space for indigenous contexts and the overall compatibility of Aboriginal fiction with non-Aboriginal insights into space. Although this study will not go in the same conceptual direction and use Foucault's concept, Hall's article is an important complement to this thesis, because it illustrates that a culturally sensitive way of approaching indigenous Australian literatures and their negotiations of space with non-indigenous instruments is possible at all.

Drawing Conclusions or Embracing the Narrativity of Life

Finally, this chapter has led to one distinct insight. No matter whether the theoretical framework of this study is based on indigenous or non-indigenous, merely Australian or Western concepts and methodologies – the proposed investigation of fictional representations of Aboriginal space and belonging is situated at the intersections of a wide variety of different knowledge systems and traditions. While the analyses of the selected indigenous Australian texts, thus, need to rely on a complexity of different knowledge bases in order to meet this study's objectives, it is of prime significance to not see these circumstances as an obstacle but to draw on the diversity of available (spatial) knowledge as a source of gaining unprecedented perspectives on Aboriginal manifestations of (narrative) spatiality instead.

Returning to the very beginning of this chapter, I would like to point out that this diversity of knowledge is linked to the fact that human lives are collections of manifold stories and narratives criss-crossing, challenging and sometimes contradicting each other. Nevertheless, such a kind of "narrative is not merely something we tell, listen to, read, or invent; it is an essential part of our sense of who we are" (Eakin 2008: ix). Human beings situate themselves within causal relationships that provide the foundation for smaller and bigger stories of life and that make it possible to create a sense of belonging together. From a literary-studies perspective, the fact that narrativity permeates and even constitutes life is the key prerequisite for comprehending the potential of literary texts as a means of approaching indigenous Australian manifestations of spatial belonging. Because the condition of constant processuality underlies both narratives and belonging as conceptualised above, literary texts can be regarded as an active agent in these processes, which enable unprecedented perspectives on Aboriginal modes of spatial belonging.

With regard to indigenous Australian lifeworlds and their creation, constitution and maintenance, narrativity plays a decisive role, too. Based on the Dreaming stories, Aboriginal spatialities are themselves constructed and circulated narratively, which highlights the overall narrativity of indigenous Australian forms of space and spatial belonging. Aboriginal spatial knowledge and their knowledge about social, geographical and historical modes of spatial belonging consist of narrative patterns and are passed on via stories. Since novels – with their reciprocal interrelation with their extraliterary worlds – can be perceived as a transcript of this specifically narrative knowledge, they are an adequate instrument for approaching manifestations of Aboriginal spatial belonging and for gaining insights into the current situatedness of the related spatial discourses at the intersection of contemporary indigenous Australian literatures and the narrative contingency and construction of space and belonging.

4 Contemporary Aboriginal Fiction as a Means of Spatial Indigenous Worldmaking

4.1 The Worldmaking Potential of Indigenous Australian Narratives of Space

Narratives as Constitutive Feature and 'World-Makers' of Aboriginal Lifeworlds

Fictional narratives about Aboriginal spatiality as a form of belonging mark the overall media nexus of this study. However, the previous chapters particularly dealt with a conceptualisation of the culturally specific spatial context and the establishment of the most crucial content-related aspects, such as indigenous Australian politics of space or the spatial lifeworlds of Aboriginal communities. As the final conceptual chapter before the analyses of *That Deadman Dance*, *Carpentaria* and *Not Meeting Mr Right*, the following pages set out to bridge the gap between material manifestations of Aboriginal spatiality and belonging and their narrative representations by presenting a viable literary-studies framework for approaching the selected novels and by conceptualising contemporary Aboriginal fiction as a means of spatial indigenous worldmaking.

From the perspective of cultural specificity, narratives are an ideal medium for a discussion of indigenous Australian land and country. As William McGregor (2008 [2005]) explains, narratives are to be found on many levels of Aboriginal lifeworlds:

> Narrative holds a primary place in Australian Aboriginal societies, traditional and post-contact. Storytelling is highly valued, […] and narratives are valuable as items of exchange; moreover, the narrative mode of thought has a fundamental role in comprehending and codifying knowledge about the world. (Ibid. 31)

Ever since their settlement of the Australian continent, Aboriginal peoples have been using narratives as a means of storing and circulating knowledge. Indigenous Australian stories contain information about cosmologies and the Dreaming, daily routines, ways of orienting oneself in the desert or the individuals' relationships to their ancestors. Because these narratives have been passed on from generation to generation, they have become an archive containing a huge amount of knowledge about the lives of indigenous Australians. Put differently, "[p]lace is fundamental to ANN [Australian Aboriginal narrative] and worldview; indeed, landscape apparently serves as a mnemonic system, places evoking memories of events associated with them. […] Narratives recount sequences of spatio-temporally related events and event-types" (ibid.). Because spatiality is mirrored on many levels of Aboriginal cultures such as the interrelationship with a community's ancestors and their lands, it becomes an organising component of indigenous Australian narratives and, thus, knowledge.

In this way, Aboriginal spatiality, belonging and storytelling are reciprocally interlinked, are dependent on one another and mutually construct their respective counterpart. Narratives not only serve as a means of passing on knowledge, they are also a constitutive feature of indigenous Australian manifestations of spatial belonging, and they even ‘make’ and actively shape these spatial lifeworlds themselves. For these reasons and due to the perpetual connectedness of literary texts and their non-literary contexts, the narrative medium and its fictional representations of these cultures constitutes an adequate research object for approaching spatial belonging and Aboriginal knowledge about space, place and country.

Referring to Linn Miller’s senses of environmental, historical and social belonging as the foundation for this study’s investigation into Aboriginal spatiality, indigenous Australian narratives feature, in addition to the above-mentioned aspect of spatiality, links to indigenous temporalities and social structures as well. On the temporal level, especially contemporary stories by Aboriginal authors aim to conflate indigenous pasts, presents and futures:

> Through narrative structure, Aboriginal […] writers seek out an intertextual relationship with their past traditions; but they do not strive for pure imitation. […] If the indigenous pasts do not engage in continuous dialogue with contemporary concerns, they will become static and the indigenous characters of contemporary literature will seem like fossils living in a time-warp. (Knudsen 2004: 60)

As an indigenous Australian medium, narratives serve as a bridge between colonial pasts and (post-)colonial presents. With their transformative intentions, they might also inspire future discourses on the constitution of Aboriginal cultures. At the same time, this textual conjunction of different temporal levels in an indigenous manner and the incorporation of non-linear, alternative perspectives on time display the storage and representation of Aboriginal knowledge about temporalities within their culturally specific narratives. Therefore, these stories inherently comprise information about indigenous Australian notions of time and the ubiquity of past, present and future. Additionally, “[t]raditional stories and explanations passed down in a community or country act as modes of self-disclosure also. In this case, the stories we hear and tell relate most keenly to our sense of ourselves as a community” (Miller 2006: 143-144). Because many Aboriginal peoples share their stories referring, for instance, to their ancestors, their spatial surroundings or the Dreaming, their senses of belonging to a certain community are strengthened via these narratives and the related processes of communal narration. Just as in the case of temporality and through their formation of indigenous Australian collectives, such stories also comprise knowledge about the social structures as well as individuals’ belonging to these Aboriginal groups.

In a nutshell, Aboriginal cultures are socially, spatially and temporally constituted by means of narratives in particular. Casting a glance at the worldmaking approach (cf. Nünning

2010a, Nünning 2010b, Nünning/Nünning 2010a, Nünning/Nünning 2010b) that will be introduced later, narratives are an agent of 'making' – creating, circulating, challenging and preserving – indigenous Australian lifeworlds and their culturally specific modes of spatial belonging. Of course, this very general observation manifests itself differently in diverse indigenous communities, and there are endless forms of storytelling and passing on narrative forms of Aboriginal knowledge. Nevertheless, narratives play a crucial role within the temporal, social and spatial structuring of indigenous Australian lifeworlds, and they embody and construct spatial, temporal and social knowledge in a context-sensitive way. This means that Aboriginal narratives and ways of storytelling already incorporate, in Linn Miller's conceptualisation, information about the three main senses of historical, environmental and social belonging. Thus, they can be understood as a medial interface between these three levels. Coupled with the reciprocity of literary texts and their cultural contexts, fictional narratives by Aboriginal authors represent an adequate means of approaching contemporary discussions of indigenous Australian space and its interrelationship with the notion of belonging.

The Politics of Aboriginal Narratives of Space

In addition to containing spatial, social and temporal knowledge, indigenous Australian narratives fulfil political functions, which are significant for Aboriginal discussions of spatiality and belonging as well. Because "Aboriginal writing […] is about reclaiming our history and place in Australian society on our terms" (Huggins 2003: 60), literary texts, including narratives, are able to shed light on Aboriginal politics of space by demonstrating recent indigenous perspectives on the social, judicial and cultural condition of indigenous Australian spatialities. Due to the fact that literary as well as non-literary Aboriginal narratives are always parts of wider indigenous (Australian) discourses, the politics of representation that are bound up with these types of storytelling must likewise be taken into consideration when examining their fictional representations:

> Alongside the colonial discourses in Australia, we have always had our own Aboriginal discourses in which we have continued to create our own representations, and to re-create identities which escaped the policing of the authorised versions. They are Aboriginalities that arise from our experience of ourselves and our communities. […] They are also a political project designed to challenge and subvert the authorised versions on who and what we are. Self-representations of Aboriginality are always also acts of freedom. (Dodson 2003: 38-39)

Interrelating Dodson's explications with Aboriginal space as a form of belonging makes evident the reason why this study solely considers indigenous Australian literatures, and not writing about Aboriginal spatiality by non-Aboriginal authors: only indigenous Australian

texts and their own literary negotiations of spatiality mirror recent Aboriginal experiences of spatial belonging, and represent culturally specific discussions of indigenous Australian politics of space. In other words, contemporary Aboriginal writing and the spatial indigenous Australian knowledge represented in these stories are always embedded in local, national or even global political contexts.

What is more – and this holds true for *That Deadman Dance*, *Carpentaria* as well as *Not Meeting Mr Right* – the political implications inherent in Aboriginal fiction are not to be neglected in the analyses to be conducted, all the more so because I examine these texts from a Western point of view. With regard to the overall, potential political intentions of indigenous Australian narratives about spatiality, it must be noted that

> [n]ot all Australian spatial stories stem from a desire to find intimacy and a sense of belonging. Aboriginal spatial stories, for instance, are often the reverse. Aboriginal people reveal that they already have a strong sense of authority and belonging, and their stories are often a way to make this authority legitimate in the settler culture. (Hawkes 2010: 100)

Thus, the topic of this study and the political agenda of its literary negotiations bring to the fore a decisive function of Aboriginal narratives. Instead of merely representing and underpinning Aboriginal senses of belonging, indigenous Australian narratives often seek to point out the millennia-long presence of Aboriginal peoples on the Australian continent. Therefore, fictional negotiations of Aboriginal spatiality can never be analysed as isolated from their contexts, but, instead, these texts must always be examined for the ways in which they might attempt to engage in current political debates about land rights, the judicial status of Aboriginal country or economic interests related to ancestral spaces. Referring to worldmaking once again, I want to highlight the fact that contemporary Aboriginal narratives directly influence extraliterary discourses, and that they have the power to 'make' and have an impact on non-fictional debates on the politics of space.

The above-mentioned political intentions regarding spatiality and the significant relationship between indigenous Australian narratives and their non-literary lifeworlds are able to unfold their full potential within contemporary times and texts in particular, because "[t]he postcolonial is […] interested in *spaces of belonging* – cultural, geographical and even metaphoric" (Nayar 2010: 149). Apart from this more general observation, the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century seem to be particularly characterised by a growing awareness of spatial topics and debates all over Australia:

> The evolution of a […] new Australian spatial consciousness in recent decades, profoundly influenced by Aboriginal being, has allowed Australians to relocalise their understanding of literary production and its representations of place in new ways. This spatial consciousness is expressed across an impressively varied discourse of spatiality, and it now works as one of the most influential developments in Australian intellectual life. (Mead 2009: 554-555)

Most interestingly, this national, Australian 'spatial turn' was highly influenced by Aboriginal people and their artistic negotiations of their homelands. As a clear indicator of the growing indigenous confidence within Australia's literary production, these Aboriginal texts now present a huge diversity of indigenous conceptions of spatiality and belonging.

The recent spatial awareness in Australia, which forms part of the backdrops of the extraliterary contexts of Aboriginal writing, is a more fertile soil for the political intentions inherent in contemporary narratives than ever before. Because this new appreciation of spatiality holds true for national Australian and, thus, not only Aboriginal discourses, it is worth mentioning that "[p]lace […] for both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians is uttered into being and maintained by narrative. Cultural production is marked by an ideological struggle over how Australian place should be uttered into being, [and] how it should be represented" (Ashcroft 2010: 21). Not only Aboriginal but also non-Aboriginal cultures construct knowledge about spatiality by means of narratives. Although the focus of this study is clearly on indigenous cultures and texts, it must nevertheless be kept in mind that these Aboriginal fictional perspectives on land and country have always been connected with both non-indigenous and indigenous realities as well as the interrelations and intersections between them. In tandem with the (post-)colonial interests in and the current heyday of space and place within national debates, the pan-Australian engagement with spatiality enables a most fruitful investigation into contemporary Aboriginal spatial narratives, their represented knowledge as well as their political and social agenda.

The construction of knowledge via narratives and the overall narrativity of indigenous Australian spatialities and spatial belonging conceptualised in Chapter 3 likewise have the potential to overcome monolithic perspectives on these issues, since the fictional narratives analysed here and their related extraliterary discourses are mutually dependent. In order to explain this idea in more detail, it is worth taking a closer look at what Hubert Zapf (2016) calls the idea of literary texts as a *culture-critical metadiscourse* – "[i]n this function […], literature responds to hegemonic discursive regimes by exposing petrifications, coercive pressures, and traumatizing effects of dominant civilizational reality-systems that are maintained and reinforced by those discursive regimes" (ibid. 104). With this perspective on the selected primary text corpus, it is justified to argue that all three novels create their own literary discourses that are capable of serving as a counterpoint to extraliterary discourses. Bearing in mind the status of indigenous Australian spatialities within pan-Australian discourses on the politics of Aboriginal space and belonging, I would furthermore like to highlight the fact that literary texts are particularly suitable a medium for pointing to

alternative points of view and to the overall diversity of spatial belonging. With regard to Zapf's concept, literary narratives thus make it possible – on the basis of their inherent *culture-critical metadiscourses* – to unmask monolithic perspectives on indigenous Australian lifeworlds and the related manifestations of spatial belonging as too simplistic, because such one-dimensional debates fall short of grasping their diversity. According to this understanding of literary narratives, such texts can finally also function as a means of worldmaking in terms of providing models against narrow-minded and one-dimensional ways of thinking.

Approaching the Core or Defining 'Narrative'

Having pointed out the significance of narratives for Aboriginal cultures, politics and spatialities, which makes their fictional representations a viable means for approaching indigenous Australian space as a form of belonging from an outsider perspective, I now intend to develop a conceptualisation of narrative from the point of view of literary studies. On this basis, cultures will in the following be interpreted mainly as a system of narratives that are ordered in one way or another, but that are not necessarily hierarchized (cf. Müller-Funk 2008: 175). Such a viewpoint takes account of the observation that "[w]e are immersed in a world resonant with stories, for narrative is a trans-medial macro-mode of structuring sign configurations […] which informs a plethora of discourses and perhaps even the very structure of our consciousness" (Wolf 2013: 2). Narratives and storytelling represent much more than a mere succession of events; they are an elementary structuring force of individuals' and collectives' everyday lives and their perpetual exchange of knowledge. In other words, narratives 'make' the worlds human beings inhabit.

With regard to the final point of Wolf's explications, the human consciousness, it becomes evident that stories are themselves an instrument of structuring and organising knowledge and, thus, the world itself. Narratives are treasuries of information and can help store, pass on and circulate various forms of information. In this way, the writing, reading and analysing of literary narratives becomes a means of approaching and disseminating knowledge, in the case of this study diverse perceptions of spatial Aboriginal lifeworlds. Fictional narratives are more than mere representations of the extraliterary world; they refer to but are themselves also a form of spatial knowledge. Bearing in mind the introductory pages of this study, I want to point out that literary texts are, in the following, primarily understood as media containing and constructing culturally specific knowledge about Aboriginal space and corresponding textual representations, respectively, which open up the possibility of approaching indigenous Australian manifestations of space as a form of belonging.

However, the term 'narrative' itself has not been conceptualised in further detail yet. The following definition of narrative by Monika Fludernik (2009), which emphasises the positioning of literary narratives as always associated with the reciprocity of their textual and non-textual worlds mentioned above, builds one of the main conceptual bases for the following investigations into indigenous Australian spatialities:

> A narrative […] is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions […]. It is the experience of these protagonists that narratives focus on, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a different world and in the life of the protagonists. […] The narrator or narrative discourse shape the narrated world creatively and individualistically at the level of the text, and this happens particularly through the (re)arrangement of the temporal order in which events are presented and through the choice of perspective (point of view, focalization). (Ibid. 6)

According to Fludernik, narratives are characterised by their illumination of potential worlds or by opening up new perspectives on current non-textual realities. With regard to Aboriginal spatial belonging, Fludernik names the four elements of narratives that make up the major narratological categories of this study: space, its main analytical dimension, which refers to Linn Miller's environmental or geographical sense of belonging; time, which relates to historical senses of belonging; and narrative characters, which represent the social parameter of Miller's concept. What is more, focalisation and point of view, respectively, play a crucial role for the interpretation of diverse narrative perspectives on and the associated notions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal manifestations of space as a form of belonging. With this focus on the ability of narratives to not only refer to actually existing worlds but to also utilise their fictionality in order to create unknown, transformative or even subversive perceptions of spatiality and indigenous lifeworlds, Fludernik's definition of narrative builds an adequate conceptual framework for the epistemological foundation of this thesis in literary studies.

Despite its overall congruence with the methodological design of this study, Fludernik's concept must be briefly problematised with respect to indigenous Australian narratives, above all its idea of human subjects and individual characters as main protagonists that initiate and maintain stories and the related actions. As pointed out in Chapter 3, Aboriginal lifeworlds are characterised in particular by their holism and by the idea that human beings and their spatial surroundings are not separated from one another but are inextricably linked, which forms the foundation for the indigenous peoples' spatial belonging to their ancestral lands. Consequently, Fludernik's definition must be adapted to the specific context of this study, because Aboriginal narratives feature human as well as non-human protagonists and characters. A case in point here is Menak in Kim Scott's (2012 [2010]) *That Deadman Dance*. In the selected passage, which has already been briefly analysed in the third

chapter of this study, he is connected with an ancestral whale story of his people, and it is not possible to see any separation of Menak, the personal protagonist, and the story of whales, the non-personal element of the text (cf. ibid. 225). Taking into consideration the bottom-up approach of this study once again, I would like to emphasise that the non-indigenous definition of the term *narrative* must therefore be expanded by incorporating non-human or non-personal protagonists as well, always on the basis of the selected primary texts.

As a final side note, it is crucial to point out that there is nevertheless a large array of individual indigenous and non-indigenous characters and human beings in the three novels to be analysed in the course of this study. All these texts feature personal protagonists and their subjective perspectives on spatial belonging, which are essential for the narratives and their initiation. This is also the reason why I have included a theoretical perspective on individual focalisation in Chapter 4.2, all the more so because there is a need for conceptualising these points of view with regard to the examinations of the narrative representations of spatial belonging and its great diversity within the primary texts of this study.

Narratives as a Means of Spatial Worldmaking

As the previous paragraphs clearly outlined, the overall approach of this study to literary narratives concentrates particularly on the reciprocal relationship between and the mutual construction of fictional texts and their extratextual worlds as well as on the manifestations of spatial knowledge they contain. Therefore, "[p]hilosophically speaking, the approach I shall take to narrative is a constructivist one – a view that takes as its central premise that 'world making' is the principal function of mind, whether in the sciences or in the arts" (Bruner 2004 [1987]: 691). Because cultural processes are, particularly since the spatial turn, conceptualised as being spatially contingent (cf. Hallet/Neumann 2009b: 12), the making of cultural worlds relies on space. This is why I will interpret literary texts as a means of spatial indigenous worldmaking in this study from now on. In order to outline the worldmaking approach to literary narratives and to delineate the ways in which it can be employed for the analysis of Aboriginal representations of space and indigenous spatial knowledge, the following paragraphs set out to introduce this specific take on fictional texts in more detail.

On a very basic level, "[t]he phrase 'ways of worldmaking' asks us to consider questions such as the following: What is a world? How is it made and kept in being? How do worlds connect and collide?" (Connor 2010: 29). Bearing in mind the contents presented in chapter so far, one can already answer a large part of Connor's questions: in this study, real and imaginary worlds and their intersections are seen as created, perpetuated and interlinked

by narratives. In order to specify the issues raised by Connor's questions and to bridge the gap between worldmaking and this study more directly, it is worth taking a look at Birgit Neumann's and Martin Zierold's (2010) suggestions regarding the overall connection of the concept of worldmaking and media:

> If worlds are intrinsically social, then the formation of a world does rely, fundamentally, on means of sharing and exchanging knowledge. Worldmaking cannot do without symbols that represent or embody knowledge of the past, present, and future and have the capacity to circulate in social groups. In other words, the production and circulation of cultural as well as individual knowledge, i.e. the making of worlds in the broadest sense, is to a large extent dependent on media use and medial externalisation. (Ibid. 103)

For Neumann and Zierold, worldmaking is, first and foremost dependent on the circulation of knowledge in an intersubjective manner and on an instrument that is able to serve as a means of mediating that knowledge – be oral narratives passed on from generation to generation or written texts such as the contemporary Aboriginal novels selected for this study.

Although they are not explicitly mentioned in the passage quoted above, narratives provide an ideal medium for these purposes. Stories are able to function as tools for knowledge construction and transfer; narratives and the knowledge they contain can be exchanged among individuals or social communities, and they are capable of referring to temporalities and spatialities. In tandem with the fact that the environmental, social and historical senses of belonging are, thus, indirectly inherent in the concept of worldmaking, it conflates all of the culturally specific requirements for analysing fictional Aboriginal narratives as a storage and creator of indigenous Australian spatial knowledge. As the overall epistemological frame of this thesis, the concept of worldmaking opens up the possibility of tackling the questions of how Aboriginal literatures currently construct and 'make' their own manifestations of spatial belonging, and how these literary representations are linked with and shape their non-literary realities.

Regarding a proper narratological ground for the examination of Aboriginal narratives, Vera and Ansgar Nünning have – based on Nelson Goodman's (1985 [1978]) *Ways of Worldmaking* – conceptualised the worldmaking approach for literary narratives. In addition to demonstrating the intersections of worldmaking and narratological categories (cf. Nünning 2010a), Nünning and Nünning (2010a) classify narratives as crucial instruments for our human understanding of the world, and they draw attention to the historical and cultural contingency of narrative structures and of the ways these stories are constructed (cf. 6). The idea of worldmaking serves as a linkage for the merging of the understanding of belonging as *correct relation* as a constant process of negotiating a balance between the self and the outer world and the narrative representations of Aboriginal spatial belonging:

> Narratives in general are not only one of the most powerful ways of worldmaking, but also of 'self-making'. The main reason for this is that storytelling can generate real and possible worlds; narratives also exert performative power, i.e. they do not merely represent life, but they constitute and indeed 'form' life. Life itself, like reality, is pretty amorphous, chaotic, and contingent. When it is turned into a story, however, it is given form, structure, and meaning. (Ibid. 12)

As Nünning and Nünning point out, narratives are able to initiate not only individual processes of making one's self but also wider constructions of possible worlds. Narratives are capable of structuring and attributing meaning to these otherwise unorganised ways of worldmaking by actively shaping images of selves as well as collectives.

Because they negotiate processes of constructing indigenous Australian selves and their outer worlds on the material and the imaginary level, Aboriginal narratives of spatial belonging thus become agents of 'belonging-making', so to say, in Linn Miller's conceptualisation. As active tools of worldmaking and instruments of forming Aboriginal spatial lifeworlds, such stories form and shed light on the ways in which the relationships between indigenous Australian subjects and their external worlds are designed socially, environmentally and historically in a narrative manner. By being analysed as narrative ways of worldmaking, the fictionality of the selected corpus can thus also contribute specifically to the development of diverse contemporary perspectives on Aboriginal spatial belonging:

> Non-fictional as well as fictional narratives can serve both to multiply and detail the perspectives that can be adopted on the world […]. However, two features of fictional works render them particularly valuable in this respect. On the one hand, because of their fictionality, they invite a 'suspension of disbelief' and can develop alternative worlds that as yet are not part of the cultural knowledge of the time. On the other hand, they allow us insight into the characters' consciousness – something that is rare in non-fictional stories – and help to enlarge our store of knowledge about modes of perceiving, thinking and feeling as well as about the hierarchy of values and patterns of judgement that help or impede our understanding of others. (Nünning 2010b: 238)

Fictional narratives, the medial centre of this study, bear the potential to create new perspectives on Australia's indigenous past, present and future, and they incorporate manifestations of spatial knowledge that present possible alternatives to current realities of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging. By means of fictional characters and their narratively represented knowledge and attitudes, for instance towards indigenous Australian notions of land and country, fictional storytelling fosters the elucidation of the diversity of Aboriginal spatialities in various times and settings as well as the unearthing of the overall multi-layered complexity of indigenous and non-indigenous spatial lifeworlds.

Finally, "ways of worldmaking are never merely a disinterested or neutral way of viewing or structuring reality; instead they can fulfil a range of cognitive, normative, and political functions" (Nünning/Nünning 2010b: 9). This final element completes and ultimately testifies to the compatibility of the worldmaking approach with indigenous Australian

narratives of space, because an a-political perception of literary narratives would be inadequate for the Aboriginal context. Thus, worldmaking also becomes a form of 'making' politics, and it turns out to be a context-sensitive framework that opens up the possibility of relating fictional discussions of space to non-textual discourses and realities.

To sum up the insights gained in the course of the previous sections, "[w]orldmaking is […] conceived of as an activity or process that actively constructs patterns and versions rather than merely representing them" (Nünning/Nünning 2010a: 8). Hence, it highlights the fact that recent Aboriginal fiction not only reproduces already existing spaces, but that it can also generate unprecedented views on indigenous Australian lifeworlds and their ancestral lands. This becomes all the more important when one considers the Aboriginal politics of space, which are, in the case of this study, crucial elements of all three texts of the selected primary corpus. With its pronounced focus on the poietic function of literary texts and their ability to create their own manifestations of reality (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 15), the worldmaking approach can take into consideration the political, social and cultural implications of Scott's, Wright's and Heiss's storytelling. In addition, it also sheds light on their agenda regarding, for instance, land rights, the protection of the environment or the lives of indigenous Australians in urban areas. No other concept from literary studies captures match the narrative entrenchment of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging in such a precise and comprehensive way; therefore, the worldmaking approach is the ideal instrument for examining how fictional indigenous Australian spatiality relates to and negotiates real-life issues centring on ancestral lands and Aboriginal country at the same time.

With respect to the conceptualisation of spatial belonging as a process of constantly negotiating a *correct relation* or an interrelated balance with one's spatial surroundings, worldmaking, itself a dynamic process, becomes performative, and indigenous narratives turn into performative acts. In other words, indigenous social and cultural realities and their endless manifestations of spatial belonging are constructed by narratives – as a foundation for these Aboriginal lifeworlds, it is of prime significance that they are permanently narrated in order to be kept alive. Finally, this means that space has a constitutive function for indigenous Australian cultures and their culturally specific narratives, which is why belonging via space can be approached most adequately by means of contemporary narratives.

4.2 The Narrative Structure of Aboriginal Spatial Belonging

Bridging the gap between the socio-cultural dimensions of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging and their literary representations, the following two subchapters seek to introduce

the literary studies tool kit for the analysis of the primary text corpus on the basis of the worldmaking approach. In a first step, it is worthwhile to remember that, according to Birgit Neumann (2009), the contexts of literary texts feature unique, context-sensitive perspectives on and conceptions of spatiality, which are negotiated, discussed or even transformed in fictional narratives by means of culturally specific aesthetic techniques (cf. 116). These methods and, more precisely, the literary studies instruments for approaching the structure and diversity of Aboriginal representations of space and belonging on the story and discourse levels of narrative texts form the focus of the following pages.

Regarding the structural level of indigenous Australian narratives, the insights on the narrative elaboration of spatiality gained by narratologists are of major importance here. Because space constitutes the main object of investigation in the context of this study, the eponymous narratological category constitutes the central platform for investigating fictional discussions of Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging. However, the theoretical design of this thesis and the developed working definition of indigenous Australian space not only incorporate the mere spatial dimension of Aboriginal belonging, meaning the environmental or geographical senses of belonging according to Linn Miller, but also social and historical manifestations of belonging. Since these two categories are directly mirrored in the narratological categories of character and time, respectively, these dimensions are taken into consideration within the examination of indigenous Australian spatial narratives as well. Of course, the historical and social aspects of the novels are approached in direct relation to spatiality, not as isolated dimensions, but it is essential to conceptualise them individually beforehand in order to unlock their full analytical potential in the relational investigation of narrative negotiations of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging.

Zooming in on the narrative category of space, the most crucial insight for this study is the recognition that not only temporality plays a central role in the organisation of narratives, but also the spatial dimension of (temporal) narrative structures (cf. Dünne 2011: 179). Because space is always a central element of the selected texts and forms the centre of the respective analyses, the three novels could also be regarded as what Wolfgang Hallet (2009) calls *fictions of space*, meaning texts in which spatiality becomes a crucial element of the narrative and constitutes a pivotal carrier of narrative meaning (cf. 107-108). Based on this overall importance of spatiality for narrative fiction, which is one of the results of the theoretical realignments summarised as the spatial turn earlier in this thesis, "space is understood as a performatively constructed fabric, perpetually renegotiated, which historically is the result of prevailing power relations" (Berning/Schulte/Schwanecke 2014: 2). Aboriginal

discussions of space as a form of belonging in contemporary novels are, thus, approached as context-sensitive, volatile and socially, historically and politically contingent representations of culturally specific manifestations of spatiality and related ways of worldmaking.

A closer look at spatial narratology reveals that narrative representations of space are "an umbrella term for the conception, structure and presentation of the entirety of objects such as settings, landscapes, natural phenomena as well as items in various genres"[55] (Nünning 2009: 33). Another conceptualisation of narrative space describes the latter as "[t]he place or places within which the situations and events represented […] and the narrating instance(s) occur. […] [T]he features of or links between the above-mentioned places can be significant and function thematically, structurally, or as a characterization device" (Prince 2003 [1987]: 90). In contrast to these concise theoretical perspectives on spaces represented in narratives, Sabine Buchholz and Manfred Jahn (2008 [2005]) provide a more extensive definition of the term:

> At its most basic level, narrative space is the environment in which story-internal characters move about and live. Narrative space is characterised by a complex of parameters: (1) by the boundaries that separate it from coordinate, superordinate, and subordinate spaces, (2) by the objects which it contains, (3) by the living conditions which it provides, and (4) by the temporal dimension to which it is bound. (Ibid. 552)

Instead of referring only to the structure and different ways of presenting fictional places or landscapes as the setting of a narrative, Buchholz and Jahn broaden the scope of narrative space by incorporating fictional characters and the narratological category of time.

Although Nünning's and Prince's definitions are valuable starting points, Buchholz and Jahn's concept contains one decisive advantage – its direct interrelation with Linn Miller's senses of historical, social and environmental belonging. Their underpinning of narrative space as being inextricably linked with narrative time and characters enables the investigation into fictional negotiations of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging most adequately. In a nutshell, narrative space is conceptualised, from now on and on the basis of Buchholz and Jahn's definition, as the diversity of narrative environments of fictional characters and their related objects from now on, which can also lead to a huge variety of different living situations. These representations of spatiality are always tied up with narrative time, and they can stand in various interrelations with each other, which are marked by boundaries. Concerning the overall configuration of these spaces their related objects in particular, it is important to return to the insights gained in Chapter 3 once again. Because in

[55] Translation by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). Original text: "ein Oberbegriff für die Konzeption, Struktur und Präsentation der Gesamtheit von Objekten wie Schauplätzen, Landschaften, Naturerscheinungen und Gegenständen in verschiedenen Gattungen" (Nünning 2009: 33).

indigenous Australian lifeworlds, objects are not always constituted materially – for instance creatures from Dreaming stories that are responsible for the creation of the land still have an impact on how Aboriginal peoples approach their ancestral spaces today, such as the rainbow snake in Alexis Wright's (2009 [2006])) *Carpentaria* (cf. ibid. 1) – imaginary objects related to spatiality and belonging are likewise included in the conceptualisation of narrative space mentioned above.

This primary definition raises several questions on the seminal facets of narrative space: which landscapes, places, spaces, objects as well as situations and parts of the narrated world are described, and if, in what ways? A first and fundamental insight is the fact that the narrative construction and representation of spatiality is not an end in itself, but carries distinct meaning, which entails that narrative space and the structure of its literary presentation become semanticised (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 131-133). What is more, it is important to remember that "[w]hen speaking of space in narratology and other fields, a distinction should be made between literal and metaphorical uses of the concept. As an a-priori form of intuition, space is particularly difficult to capture in its literal sense" (Ryan 2009: 420). In the contexts of Aboriginal literatures, this aspect is of particular relevance because material and spiritual spaces are often merged in indigenous Australian lifeworlds (for more details, see Chapter 3.2). This condition must also be taken into account in the following analyses of their fictional representations. Thus, potential "symbolic space[s] […] which point towards secondary levels of meaning in the text" (Lethbridge/Mildorf 2004b: 17) must be examined in connection to the culturally specific linkage of material and spiritual indigenous Australian spatialities and with regard to their semanticisation of these Aboriginal spatial structures.

Additionally, the examination of narrative representations of indigenous spaces exhibits another highly relevant level for this study, namely the references to distinct localities:

> Narratives are not only inscribed on spatial objects, they are also situated within real-world space, and their relations to their environment go far beyond mimetic representation. When a nonfictional story is told where it happened, gestures and deictic elements may be used to point to the actual location of events. By telling us how certain striking landscape features came into being or what happened on certain sites, narratives of myth, legend and oral history build a 'spirit' of place […]. In aboriginal Australia, stories, known as song lines, marked salient landscape features and helped people remember routes through what may look to outsiders as a monotonous desert. (Ryan 2009: 424)

Although Ryan only refers to non-fictional storytelling here, the fictional incorporation of real existing sites and places is worth analysing as well, all the more so because all three novels to be examined in the following chapters involve specific Aboriginal locations and the

respective local communities, cosmologies and their individual forms of approaching space. Therefore, the spatial knowledge inherent in contemporary indigenous Australian narratives and their function of actively making worlds must be discussed in association with issues of locality, different symbolic and metaphorical levels of spatial storytelling, and the semanticisation of space and its narrative structures throughout the analyses of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging.

In order to be able to fully analyse these features of Aboriginal novels, a more detailed set of tools needs to be introduced yet. Narratologist Marie Laure Ryan (2009) distinguishes between five manifestations of narrative spatiality (cf. 421), which constitutes a viable foundation for this study. The first dimension is called "*[s]patial frames*: the immediate surroundings of actual events, the various locations shown by the narrative discourse or by the image". More specifically, these "[s]patial frames are shifting scenes of action, and they may flow into each other: e.g. a 'salon' frame can turn into a 'bedroom' frame as the characters move within a house". Regarding the interrelationship between different spatial frames, "[t]hey are hierarchically organized by relations of containment (a room is a subspace of a house), and their boundaries may be either clear-cut (the bedroom is separated from the salon by a hallway) or fuzzy (e.g. a landscape may slowly change as a character moves through it)" (ibid. 421-422). Along with that, every text contains a certain "*[s]etting*: the general socio-historico-geographical environment in which the action takes place. In contrast to spatial frames, this is a relatively stable category which embraces the entire text" (ibid. 422).

As a third level, Ryan points to the element of "*[s]tory space*: the space relevant to the plot, as mapped by the actions and thoughts of the characters. It consists of all the spatial frames plus all the locations mentioned by the text that are not the scene of actually occurring events" (ibid.). The fourth and, by far the most complex, aspect of textual spatiality is the so-called

> *Narrative (or story) world*: the story space completed by the reader's imagination on the basis of cultural knowledge and real world experience […]. While story space consists of selected places separated by voids, the narrative world is conceived by the imagination as a coherent, unified, ontologically full and materially existing geographical entity, even when it is a fictional world that possesses none of these properties. […] In a story that refers to both real and imaginary locations, the narrative world superimposes the locations specific to the text onto the geography of the actual world. In a story that takes place in wholly imaginary landscapes (e.g. *Lord of the Rings*), readers assume that the narrative world extends beyond the locations named in the text and that there is continuous space between them, even though they cannot fill out this space with geographic features. (Ibid.)

Again, this dimension is of particular relevance for Aboriginal narratives, since imaginary and material places are often inextricably linked with each other and shape the narrative worlds of their stories in their own, culturally specific way. The final feature of Ryan's

conceptualisation of spatiality is the "*[n]arrative universe*: the world (in the spatio-temporal sense of the term) presented as actual by the text, plus all the counterfactual worlds constructed by characters as beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, dreams, and fantasies" (ibid.). This final step, which constitutes the most comprehensive level of Ryan's understanding of narrative spatiality, ultimately merges fictional spaces, time and characters as the pivotal narratological facets of this study.

For this reason, Ryan's concept provides an adequate starting point for investigating Aboriginal spatiality as a form of belonging in contemporary texts, and for interweaving the spatial analyses with the elements of temporality and character at the same time. Eventually, it is worth mentioning that "[a]ll of these levels are described here from a static perspective as the final products of interpretation, but they are progressively disclosed to the reader through the temporal unfolding of the text" (ibid. 423). Hence, the singularisation of certain elements within the following examinations of narrative Aboriginal spatiality must be perceived as the product of a long reading process in which the mentioned features of narrative spaces dynamically interrelate. Such an approach likewise nicely ties in with the overall idea of perceiving spatial belonging as related to constant processes of negotiating an interrelated balance between the self and the outer worlds – reading and simultaneously analysing modes of Aboriginal spatial belonging thus becomes a process of negotiation itself, which does not lead to a final research product, but is itself embedded in ever-changing and volatile processes of knowledge acquisition and (de-)construction. In the end, these five dimensions outlined by Ryan constitute the conceptual basis for shedding light on the processes of spatial worldmaking in Aboriginal fiction, and they enable a clear distinction between different elements of narrative space and their particular functions in the textual construction of spatial belonging in indigenous Australian contexts. At the same time, Ryan's clear, non-indigenous segmentation of narrative space makes it possible to highlight the distinctly holistic nature of Aboriginal representations of spatiality by pointing to potential overlaps of the levels mentioned above.

In a next step, the question of how narrative spaces come into existence at all must be asked, because "'[s]pace' in itself does not exist unless it is signified and configured in symbolic form, both individually and culturally" (Hallet 2014: 40). Space is not automatically inherent in literary texts, but it must be constructed with the instruments of language. Such processes of signification include "direct deixis both in the interaction between characters in a novel and in the direct speech of interlocutors in conversational exchange" (Fludernik 2009: 42). Apart from the importance of characters for the narrative construction of spatiality,

"descriptions are the other main means of characterizing settings, of putting flesh on the bare bones of place, as it were" (ibid.). Once one has worked out which indigenous and non-indigenous spaces are to be found in the selected fictional texts and how they are narratively constructed, it is of central importance to examine the question of who perceives these narrative locations and, thus, to analyse the subjective spatial perspectives[56], including a character's or narrator's attitudes and values. This is in line with the concept of "[n]arrative ethics [, which] regards moral values as an integral part of stories and storytelling because narratives themselves implicitly or explicitly ask the question, 'How should one think, judge, and act – as author, narrator, character, or audience – for the greater good?'" (Phelan 2014 [2013]: unpaginated). Such an understanding of narrative fiction as containing and representing a great variety of culturally specific spatial attitudes and values suits the Aboriginal Australian context and literary texts as well, because all three novels display different indigenous and non-indigenous perceptions of spatiality and belonging. What is more, "[t]he phenomenon of multiperspectivity […] seems to be particularly suited to stage perceptual relativism and skepticism towards knowledge and reality" (Hartner 2014 [2012]: unpaginated). Therefore, the conceptualisation of literary texts as storage of Aboriginal spatial knowledge applied here is reflected in the overall consideration of diverse spatial perspectives as a means of indigenous Australian worldmaking.

For this specific analytical purpose, the concept of *focalisation* provides an adequate narratological instrument, because it enables us to examine the perceptual, emotional and cognitive processes of characters and narrators. While *internal focalisation* refers to focalisers who are at the same time characters of a narrative and, thus, are also called *character-focalisers*, *external focalisers* or *narrator-focalisers*, respectively, are situated on the level of narration. If one single character is the only focaliser of a narrative, this type of focalisation is called *fixed focalisation*, whereas *multiple* or *variable focalisations* denote the change of focalising subjects within the narrative (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 125-126). In tandem with the different possibilities of signifying narrative locations mentioned above, fictional representations of spatiality are able to unveil a huge range of attitudes towards space and to shed light on the cultural specificity and literary contingency of how worlds and spatialities are made and constructed. These diverse perceptions can likewise provide information on how processes of negotiating a *correct relation* or a balanced interrelationship

[56] In order to narrow down the concept of narrative perspective, the following definition will provide the foundation for the following chapters: "Perspective in narrative may be defined as the way the representation of the story is influenced by the position, personality and values of the narrator, the characters and, possibly, other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld. The more common term in Anglo-American criticism, which will be treated as equivalent here, is 'point of view'" (Niederhoff 2009: 384).

– on the basis of Linn Miller's model – might differ among individual characters or even between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal characters within a narrative.

Narrative time[57] or "[t]he period or periods during which the situations and events presented […] and their presentation […] occur" (Prince 2003 [1987]: 99), also play a major role within the following literary investigations of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging. The fundamental differentiation of several types of temporality addressed in the following section is based on Gérard Genette's (1980) insights into the temporal structure of narratives. On the most basic level, there is a distinction between the order of the narrative, meaning chronological or non-chronological forms. The chronological order can be interrupted by flashbacks or analepses, and by prolepses or flash-forwards (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 129-131). In the context of this study, this parameter constitutes the most important temporal dimension because it enables us to grasp the non-linear manifestations of Aboriginal spatialities as well. This is because "[f]lashbacks and foreshadowings […] play games with the allocation of information to the reader: they are late dispatches from the past, or a special delivery of information from the narrative future" (Bode 2011 [2005]: 88). Both types can relate, for instance, to Aboriginal manifestations of literary knowledge about ancestral pasts or futures of the Australian continent and its indigenous lands, which might involve information about the historical relationships between indigenous Australian peoples and their spatial surroundings. In addition to that, the question of narrative frequency is important in order to find out whether certain events of the story are narrated in a singulative, repeating or iterative way.

The categories of duration and the differentiation between narrated time (duration of the story) and the time of narration (duration that is needed to tell a story) are of great importance as well. The relationships between these two levels can be described by means of the following temporal dimensions: equation of narrated time and time of narration, slow-downs, speed-ups as well as pauses and omissions (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 129-131). Bringing together all these facets of narrative temporality, Mark Currie (2010 [2007]) points out that "[o]ne of the obvious things that can be said about a fictional narrative is that, in the relationship between a text and its reading it offers a kind of model of time" (ibid. 16). Every literary narrative automatically unfolds, during the reading process, its very own form of temporality, and it always incorporates knowledge about the culturally specific, temporal context of the text. Thus, the investigation of narrative time structures in Aboriginal fiction

[57] Regarding the signification of time in narratives, it is worth mentioning that "[u]nlike information relating to place, points in time or periods are realized linguistically by prepositional phrases and deictic words (*now, nowadays*)" (Fludernik 2009: 43).

sheds light not only on indigenous Australian ways of approaching temporality, but also on the ways in which Aboriginal subjects are historically related to their external worlds.

Finally, the parameter of narrative character, which "is used to refer to participants in storyworlds created by various media [...] in contrast to 'persons' as individuals in the real world" (Jannidis 2013 [2012]: unpaginated), and which represents Miller's social level of belonging, is illuminated in more detail. One narratological instrument for analysing narrative characters is their comparison by means of *contrast relations* and *correspondence relations*[58] in order to outline the differences and similarities of their character traits (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 96). The main means for the narrative shaping of characters are direct or indirect characterisation by themselves or others as well as the elaborations on the different characters by the narrator (cf. Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 109). Space and spatial localisation within narratives are also of central significance for a character's orientation and his or her subjective positioning in terms of identity and various senses of belonging (cf. Hallet/Neumann 2009b: 25), which means that narrative spatiality or "[t]he environment in which a character moves can function as a means of characterisation" (Lethbridge/Mildorf 2004c: 48). In terms of recognising narrative characters as such, the understanding of textual characters as having a human form operates on the basis of the information the text contains as well as the reader's own experiences and his or her general knowledge of the world (cf. Grabes 1978). Thus, every text creates its very own character world and narratively enacts, with its representations of individuals as well as their affiliations to collectives, the social dimension of belonging as described by Miller.

In the end, narrative spatiality, temporality and characters transfer Miller's understanding of belonging from its anthropological and philosophical routes to the context of literary studies. The conflation of all three dimensions, thus, enables us to investigate the ways in which contemporary Aboriginal fiction discusses the social, geographical and historical connections between indigenous Australian peoples and their ancestral lands. As these parameters of contemporary narratives have revealed themselves to be related to constant processes of (re-)negotiation and (de-)construction by means of reading and analysing the selected novels, they are, as forms of spatial belonging itself, elements of larger, culturally specific processes of constantly defining and conceptualising the connections between the self and its related outer worlds.

[58] The terms *contrast relations* and *correspondence relations* are translations by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). The German equivalents are "Kontrastrelationen" and "Korrespondenzrelationen" (Nünning/Nünning 2007 [2001]: 96).

4.3 The Narrative Diversity of Aboriginal Spatial Belonging

Because indigenous Australian narratives in general and the selected primary texts in particular feature a great diversity of indigenous Australian spatial representations, spatiality must be analysed not only on the structural but also on the thematic level of these texts. These two levels of the narratives are inextricably linked with each other, but nevertheless, it does make sense to pay attention to the different spatial themes of the three novels as well. Based on this crucial insight, the following subchapter is dedicated to the conceptualisation of a thematic approach to the variety of spatial narratives in this study. To this end, it is essential to initially recognise that "[t]he first and foremost task of the analysis and interpretation of literature is to find out in some way or other what the text is about, to discover its theme, the abstract concept a text presents or deals with" (Lethbridge/Mildorf 2004a: 19). Not only the spatial form and organisation of Aboriginal narratives but also their contents in terms of spatiality, meaning the different facets of space negotiated in these texts, are relevant here.

Because literary narratives are capable of negotiating an endless number of different issues, the crucial themes are, most of the time, consistently present throughout a literary text. In the case of this thesis, indigenous Australian representations and discussions of space, place and land constitute the central themes of the selected novels, and they simultaneously mark their most significant overlap in terms of content. With regard to distinctly literary conceptualisations of the term, the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines a theme as follows:

> A salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject-matter; or a topic recurring in a number of literary works. While the subject of a work is described concretely in terms of its action (e.g. 'the adventures of a newcomer in the big city'), its theme or themes will be described in more abstract terms (e.g. love, war, revenge, betrayal, fate, etc.). (Baldick 2008: unpaginated)

Hence, the main themes of literary texts unfold during the reading process and decisively inform the overall composition of a narrative. In tandem with the narratological examination of literary texts, thematic analyses open up the possibility of holistically grasping the significance of narratively discussed topics such as indigenous spatiality and belonging, by adding a more content-oriented perspective to the structural focus of narrative theory.

Nevertheless, the way in which the thematic analyses will be carried out in this study requires further clarification. To begin with, "[t]hematisation refers to either writing or interpreting texts in the light of given themes" (Pyrhönen 2008b [2005]: 599). The thematic investigations of the primary text corpus in terms of Aboriginal spatiality will be implemented by means of focused readings of the texts followed by a discussion of the range of different manifestations of indigenous Australian space presented in the course of the novels. Such an

approach is possible because readers are capable of recognising the theme of a text by applying what Max Louwerse and Willie van Peer (2002) call "*thematic inferencing*, the fact that readers construe some coherent picture in their mind of what the lines of the text describe" (ibid. 2). This cognitive composition of literary themes hints at another essential advantage of the thematic approach for this study: the fact that the knowledge and the information contained in a literary text play a major role in the construction and deciphering of its themes. Thus, "[t]he theme of a text serves as a pointer to relevant world knowledge and imposes organization on the discourse ideas" (von Oostendorp/Otero/Campanario 2002: 55).

This conceptual classification of narrative themes as containing pivotal elements of the information literary fiction conveys nicely ties in with the perception of Aboriginal narratives as a rich storage medium of indigenous spatial knowledge. Analysing precisely this facet of contemporary Aboriginal novels entails exploring the narrative diversity of Aboriginal spatial belonging. In addition to that, literary themes are also in line with the perception of indigenous Australian texts as a means of spatial Aboriginal worldmaking, because "[m]any see theme as having a triple linkage: with itself, with literature, and with the world. It thus has a referential function in providing an interpretation of human experience and of the world" (Pyrhönen 2008a [2005]: 597). Therefore, narrative themes are embedded in a complex web of self-referential, literary and extraliterary information, and they exist at the intersection of literary and extraliterary worlds. Themes are able to design, shape and influence the construction of literary knowledge, and eventually, they represent one crucial feature of all worldmaking processes of fictional texts, including Aboriginal narratives and their making of spatial indigenous worlds.

In addition to their capacity to inform the processes of worldmaking, knowledge construction and knowledge presentation in literary fiction, themes are likewise able to reveal and refer to culturally specific contexts of narratives, all the more so because

> writers from different cultures may develop these themes differently. A culture's history, a particular region's geography, or a country's social structure can suggest a unique way of developing a conventional theme. The assumptions, concerns, values, ideals, and beliefs of a particular country or society – or of a particular group within that society – can have an impact on the themes writers choose to explore and on the manner in which they do so. (Kirszner/Mandell 1994: 4)

Themes, thus, always function as a seismograph of their extraliterary contexts by reflecting their central cultural, historical and political values and by shaping the constitution of a narrative's fictional world. For these reasons, spatiality as a form of belonging, the main theme in the selected primary text corpus, marks space as an important facet of indigenous Australian cultures and lifeworlds, precisely because of its continual renegotiation in

contemporary Aboriginal fiction. What is more, the omnipresence of indigenous Australian spatialities in Scott's, Wright's and Heiss's texts assigns spatial themes a pivotal position within current Aboriginal discourses and underlines the necessity of investigating the diversity of their distinctly literary manifestations.

In a nutshell, employing the instrument of narrative themes for the analysis of the huge variety of indigenous Australian negotiations of space, place and land perfectly complements the methodological, narratological foundation of this study. While the latter makes it possible to grasp the narrative structures of indigenous Australian representations of space and belonging, the former facilitates a detailed survey of the textual, content-related complexity of Aboriginal notions of spatiality. Only by bringing together these two complementary aspects will the analysis of the primary text corpus be able to produce a comprehensive description of how the selected narratives construct, discuss and incorporate indigenous Australian forms of space and belonging. As mentioned above, themes are also context-sensitive, which means that they always refer to and represent a negotiation of extraliterary discourses as well. Contemporary literary representations of Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging do have an impact on their extraliterary worlds, and they can thus have an impact on how the non-literary realities debate issues of indigenous spatialities and belonging in the twenty-first century.

Drawing Conclusions or Locating the Literary Studies Framework for the Analysis of Narrative Representations of Aboriginal Spatial Belonging

At the end of this final theoretical chapter, it must be noted that the approach to Aboriginal fiction outlined above is only one possible way of investigating indigenous Australian literatures among many others. As the title of this subchapter indicates, every theoretical and methodological framework is an academic construction and a compilation of diverse concepts and instruments that refer to a particular object and context of research, including a highly unique set of research questions. Hence, it is crucial to acknowledge that (literary) texts, just like the conceptual design of this study, are always embedded in a "global asymmetrical knowledge landscape"[59] (do Mar Castro Varela/Dhawan/Randeria 2010: 179). Not only do the various forms of spatialities represented in the three selected novels refer to culturally specific, here Aboriginal, ways of worldmaking and constructing knowledge about space and belonging, but also the applied methods and concepts relate to certain academic contexts and context-sensitive manifestations of knowledge. Therefore, these two elements and their relationship to one another are to be classified as an integral part of precisely this complex

[59] Translation by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). Original text: "globalen asymmetrischen Wissenslandschaft" (do Mar Castro Varela/Dhawan/Randeria 2010: 179).

landscape of knowledge. Because the connection between indigenous literatures and non-indigenous approaches to such texts is decisively marked by knowledge hierarchies and power relations, the politics of location, once again, influences the investigation into Aboriginal fiction carried out in this study.

As the following analyses are carried out from a Western, non-indigenous perspective, the theoretical approaches presented will not simply be applied to the primary text corpus, but instead, there will be a dialogical way of proceeding. Here, the adjective 'dialogical' refers to the fact that the novels and their discussions of and insights into Aboriginal space as a form of belonging are always understood as a means of challenging the selected methodological approaches by means of their textual, indigenous perspectives on spatiality. In order to constantly question the results of the following chapters, every analysis moreover includes materials provided by the authors on their novels and related topics as well as on the cultural, political and historical contexts. Eventually, the local focus of every text and the consideration of local narratives within the texts likewise support me in refraining from a monolithic, culturally non-specific conceptualisation of indigenous Australian spatiality as a form of belonging, by pointing to the overall diversity and complexity of Aboriginal cultures, knowledges and ways of worldmaking.

5 Conflicted Belonging: Reading Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance* from a Spatial-Narratological Perspective

To begin the following examination with a brief overview of its main object of investigation, *That Deadman Dance* is a fictional account of the first contact between the Noongar and white British settlers upon the latter group's arrival in the southern part of Western Australia, spanning a time frame from 1826 to 1844. Scott's narrative traces the development of the relations between the Noongar and the British from trying to get along well with each other in the beginning to the eventual failure of the attempt to establish friendly connections between the indigenous people and the white settlers due to the colonial intentions of the British. In the course of the plot, the Noongar get in contact with the Europeans, and they experience the arrival of various groups of settlers, the foundation of a settlement and explorations of the area. Although these developments and the establishment of the colony are like a common thread running through the entire novel, Australian scholar Anne Brewster (2012) remarked in an interview with Kim Scott that "[t]he book isn't very strongly plot driven. Rather, it has a number of mini plots" (ibid. 234). Hence, the following analysis focuses mainly on single events that involve insights into the Noongar manifestations of space and spatial belonging, whereas the chain of events that ultimately interlinks the various plots – the arrival of settlers at King George's Sound, the initial good contacts between colonisers and colonised, and the continuous decline of indigenous and non-indigenous contacts – serve as a backdrop to the incidents examined.

5.1 Introducing the Methodological Framework

In his novel *That Deadman Dance* (*TDD*, 2012 [2010]), Aboriginal Australian writer Kim Scott illustrates, in his own words, "the history of early contact between Aboriginal people – the Noongar – and Europeans in the area of [...] Albany, Western Australia" (ibid. 405), thus presenting a distinctly indigenous perspective on the colonisation of the continent. Among many other elements of indigenous Australian spatial lifeworlds, Scott's narrative thereby incorporates, in particular, a negotiation of the coming together of a huge diversity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perceptions of spatiality and belonging. Via the examination of narrative representations of space and the related spatial practices, this analysis seeks to shed light on the connection between the Noongar and their belonging to their spatial surroundings as well as on the encounter of the Aboriginal population and the European settlers on ancestral land in the first half of the nineteenth century. This particular approach to

the novel aims to unearth not only the complexity of Noongar spatial belonging but also the overall indigenous and non-indigenous layers of belonging to diverse spatial surroundings.

With its above-mentioned historical focus, *That Deadman Dance* particularly tackles the question of what consequences the colonisation of the Australian continent by white settlers might have had for the original and for the new population of the country. On both sides, indigenous and non-indigenous, the aim of the protagonists of the consists in maintaining or establishing a sense of belonging to Australia. As outlined above, this is particularly related to culturally specific notions of spatiality. In the novel, these concepts are reflected in diverse activities related to space and in the surroundings of the indigenous and non-indigenous characters. Hence, the idea of spatial practices that lead to the aim of belonging are the starting point[60] for theorising the approach to Scott's narrative discussion of Noongar as well as colonial manifestations of spatialities and belonging. What is more, they are also able to answer the question of how space can be examined in *That Deadman Dance.*

To begin with, the idea of a practice implies some kind of action or activity. In his famous monograph *The Practice of Everyday Life*, whose title already includes the central term of this chapter, Michel de Certeau (1988 [1984]) refers to "everyday practices […] or doing things" (ibid. xi) in its introductory remarks as well as "ways of making" (ibid. xv) while talking about practices. With regard to the developed working definition of spatial belonging, this means that there are culturally specific modes of acting and doing permeated by diverse concepts of and perspectives on space that lead to the establishment of a sense of belonging. In Scott's text, central spatial practices, such as exploring or naming the land, whaling and constructing or crossing borders, can be identified, which represent pivotal activities on the indigenous and non-indigenous characters' ways to their overall goal of belonging.

Particularly from a narratological point of view, the idea of activity must be problematised because it seems to imply that in a novel, there are merely fictional characters who perform several spatial actions in order to belong, such as taking possession of land or erecting a fence. Of course, there is more to the idea of indigenous and non-indigenous spatial practices during the early period of Australia's colonisation. Hence, it must not be neglected that the spatial practices to be examined refer not only to material spaces and practices, such

[60] In contrast to Chapters 6 and 7 of this study, which deal with the novels by Alexis Wright and Anita Heiss, and which employ a concrete and already established theoretical model – ecocriticism and intersectionality, respectively – the idea of spatial practices seems to represent rather loose a methodological framework. In order to underline the usability and choice of the selected modus operandi, a brief passage in the final part of this chapter is dedicated to Jurij Lotman's (1977) perspective on narrative space (cf. ibid.) and its interrelationships with *That Deadman Dance.*

as the construction of borders or the exploration and naming of land, but also to imaginary actions, such as the idea of Australia as *terra nullius*, as well as metaphorical spatial practices, such as the crossing of cultural borders. With regard to Marie Laure Ryan's (2009) model of narrative space introduced[61] above, these practices concern all five dimensions of narrative spatialities, and they also incorporate their non-material and imaginary aspects, i.e. they include what Ryan calls *narrative world* and *narrative universe* (cf. ibid. 421-422). Regarding culture-specificity, this observation is of great importance for the multiple material and non-material levels of Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging precisely because the methodological approach centring on spatial practices is also able to pay attention to this circumstance and its fictional representations.

Taking up the term 'spatial practices' and its link to literary studies, the conceptualisation of literature by Dünne and Mahler (2015) includes diverse "aesthetic and cultural practices such as film or theatre"[62] (ibid. 1), and it points to the relevance of practices for literature and its production. What is more, they perceive the analysis of the spatial dimension of literature and the development of adequate instruments as an ever-changing process (cf. ibid. 1-2), which means that it is related to a huge diversity of approaches for a great number of objects of study or practices, respectively. In tandem with the "reflexivity"[63] (ibid. 4) of narrative spaces, Dünne and Mahler create a perspective on narrative spatialities and their examination that is not determined by final models and instruments, but rather by volatility and ongoing development. This is also in line with Robert Stockhammer's (2005) observations, who argues for the "constructedness" and "variability" of spaces and for examining the "impact of the story on the setting"[64] (ibid. 15) and, thus, for investigating the ways in which the analysed practices affect the spatialities represented. Thus, Dünne, Mahler and Stockhammer support a flexible approach such as the path taken here, because the concept of different spatial activities – as one specific type of practices within the bigger picture of practices of artistic production as such – that are carried out in order to belong could be adapted to other contexts as well. At the same time, this methodological design has the potential to unearth the multiple facets and intersections of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal spatial belonging, thus resulting in a more diversified conceptualisation of belonging that dismisses binary, exclusive or hierarchising notions of the latter.

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[61] For a detailed description of Ryan's (2009) model, see Chapter 4.2.

[62] Translation by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). Original text: "ästhetische und kulturelle Praktiken wie etwa Film oder Theater" (Dünne/Mahler 2015: 1).

[63] Translation by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). Original text: "Reflexivität" (Dünne/Mahler 2015: 4).

[64] Translations by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). Original text: "Gemacht-Sein", "Wandelbarkeit" and "die Wirkung der Geschichte auf den Schauplatz" (Stockhammer 2005: 15).

All these items corroborate the selected approach of regarding space and, thus, also spatial belonging, as culturally and narratively constructed within ever-changing processes of negotiating a *correct relationship* between human beings and their spatial surroundings – both Dünne and Mahler and Stockhammer indirectly point to process-oriented conceptualisations of narrative spaces. This entails the recognition that these continuous (de)constructions must somehow be turned into action. With reference to Dünne's and Mahler's above-mentioned concept of literature, this creation of narrative spatialities is carried out by a diversity of spatial practices that are automatically bound to and part of the overarching cultural practices that define literature as such. Linking these insights into narrative spaces and belonging to Scott's text, this chapter seeks to shed light on the question of which of the practices carried out by the characters of the novel are related to the (de)construction of spatialities and, thus, also to the construction of belonging and the characters' processes of establishing a *correct relation* to either their ancestral or colonial spaces. Each of the subchapters of this analysis represents one of these practices and thus guides the way through the spatial reading of *That Deadman Dance.*

Interlinking spatial practices and the selected concept of belonging, Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) explains that "[t]he politics of belonging involves not only constructions of boundaries but also the inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries by those who have the power to do this" (ibid. 18). The actions she describes are clearly recognisable as central spatial practices during the times of colonisation discussed in Scott's texts; thus, they are, specifically in their interdependency with power structures, of pivotal significance for the indigenous maintenance as well as for the non-indigenous constitution of belonging to the Australian continent. Because the early decades of colonisation, which constitute the focus of Scott's novel, are especially marked by practices such as the calculated construction and attempted deconstruction of material and imaginary spatial borders, Miller's perspective on belonging allows for a detailed analysis of how historical, environmental and social belonging as well as the politics of their respective processes of (de)construction are discussed in *That Deadman Dance*.

Due to the fact that the colonisation of Australia is, in all of its stages, also a history of the spatial contact between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and, thus, of the coming together of a huge diversity of different spatial practices, it is noteworthy that

> spaces can be read as key elements in the ways in which individuals and groups construct their identities. This immediately turns space into a site of struggle, either deliberately or unconsciously marking positions, supporting hegemonic structures or attempting to subvert established meanings in a quest for dominance. (Tönnies/Grimm 2010: 101)

Within such a perspective on spatiality, space becomes a viable means for approaching (historical) ways of indigenous Australian spatial belonging precisely because it is one of the most controversial subjects in the establishment of a European colony and simultaneously the central element of the construction of indigenous Australian forms of belonging. With regard to the narratological framing of this thesis and the spatial practices as the instrument for approaching forms of spatial belonging in *That Deadman Dance*, the different actions carried out by the characters that can be referred to space might also generate insights into the (power) relations of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal protagonists.

Taking into consideration the use of this highly flexible approach for the reading of a contemporary indigenous Australian novel, it is also worth taking a look at the author, because when "[a]pproaching post-colonial texts, it is important to be sensitive to the different levels of influence within the writing because these can reflect the cultural experience of a writer, but also because they reflect the sophisticated set of influences that make up post-colonial literature" (O'Reilly 2001: 63). In this respect, every literary text is a blend of numerous historical, political and literary traditions and perspectives. Thus, it becomes impossible to deny that – although this study employs terms such as 'Indigenous Australian literature' – every narrative and its author do not represent a fixed group of people or one culture, but rather a set of diverse influences and practices that make up a unique composition of different cultures.

Although he connects himself distinctly with Noongar culture, history and language[65], Kim Scott has been described as "the 'white,' urban Aborigine [who] has successfully written himself back into his Nyoongar community and country" (Martin Renes 2011: 104). This characteristic feature of (post-)colonial texts, mirrored in Scott's biography and writing, then also feeds back into his own way of writing texts. Scott (2014) himself delineates this particular quality of his texts with an indigenous narrative:

> The willingness of historical Nyungar individuals to play with the language of strangers is notable, as is their linguistic ability. The founder of the Western Australian colony was startled on his first exploratory river trip in Nyungar country to hear Nyungar people on the riverbank calling out to him in English, a language they'd picked up from other maritime explorers. Later in the nineteenth century, the Australian author Henry Lawson met a Nyungar who, although clad only in a possum-skin garment, spoke French fluently. All this language fluency, all this skill in language play and cross-cultural communication, suggests at least a propensity for literary activity. Such historical examples of

[65] This overall characteristic of his narratives arises from the fact that "Kim Scott is the most 'local' of writers, and devoted to the language and country of the Noongar people and this inspires the generic and linguistic innovation of his fictions, *Benang* and, more recently, *That Deadman Dance*, as well as the innovative collaborative life writing of *Kayang and Me*" (Whitlock/Osborne 2013: unpaginated). Therefore, Scott's entire literary oeuvre is dedicated to the presentation of the Aboriginal lifeworlds of the Noongar, their spaces and the bringing together of indigenous and non-indigenous cultures in twenty-first century Australia, which is particularly relevant for an approach of contemporary manifestations of Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging from a non-indigenous perspective.

> ‘entanglement’ partly inspired my novel *That Deadman Dance*, particularly the transformation of a military drill into an Aboriginal dance. (Ibid. 7-8)

In other words, the main source of inspiration of this novel is, according to its own author, the overlapping of indigenous and non-indigenous Australian lifeworlds and their historical developments. This approach highlights the fact that contemporary Australian cultures are always both influenced and shaped by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and that a binary conceptualisation of indigenous versus non-indigenous cultures would fall short of describing the actual situation by simulating their possible separability.

Apart from emphasising what the indigenous peoples had to endure due to the colonisation of their lands – *That Deadman Dance* thus also displays, on a more general level, the indissolubility of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal lifeworlds and cultures, which have co-existed on one continent since the early days of colonisation. This circumstance implies the worldmaking potential of Scott’s narrative, because the particular historical stage this narrative discusses represents a remarkable moment in Australian history and an exception to the rule with regard to the colonisation of the country, its original population and their lands. This concentration on the historical moments when the colonisers and the colonised work and live together and, what is more, the new settlers do not simply aim to bring the ancestral lands and their peoples under their control could be interpreted as a role model in terms of indigenous and non-indigenous cooperation in Australia as well as with regard to the overall acknowledgement of Aboriginal cultures and their forms of belonging.

For these reasons, the focus of the following analysis is – in relation to Miller’s conceptualisation – on the historical aspect of belonging, because the novel opts for a particularly historical take and thus concentrates on the phase of the colonisation of Australia. This decisive period in the history of the Australian continent is of particular interest for this study due to its superimposition of Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging with non-indigenous conceptions of spatiality. As *That Deadman Dance* clearly outlines, this period was moreover marked in particular by practices of spatial negotiation – on the material as well as on the political and imaginary levels. Due to its integration of intercultural cooperation and communication, this historical subject simultaneously raises questions of indigenous and non-indigenous living together in contemporary Australia and thus is able to bridge the gap between the continent’s past and present. Because this novel serves as an intersection of historical forms of spatial belonging, i.e. of indigenous spatial practices as well as spatial practices of colonisation, this chapter eventually aims to reveal the multi-layered complexity of indigenous as well as non-indigenous forms of belonging – which are all based on spatiality as such, but which are different in their individual manifestations – by analysing the

diverse and overlapping spatial practices discussed in Scott's text, which form the foundation for belonging to the country of Australia.

5.2 Reading Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance* from a Spatial-Narratological Perspective

Spatial Imaginations and the Terra Nullius Policy

As mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter, *That Deadman Dance* is a narrative of cultural contact and colonisation, and it tells the story of the arrival of the first settlers at King George's Sound in the southern part of Western Australia. Scott's plot centres around Bobby Wabalanginy, initially a young boy, his Aboriginal friends and peoples and their encounter with non-Aboriginal groups of settlers on their home lands. This reading of the text seeks to highlight the development of these cross-cultural interrelationships and their various manifestations from a spatial point of view – from the appearance of the first colonisers to the final criminalisation of the colonised Noongar and their complete exclusion from King George Town, the newly established town of the Europeans.

As an overall spatial starting point for the analysis of *That Deadman Dance*, the first activities at hand are the spatial imaginations discussed in the text and the respective practices of imagination. The hero Bobby, like many other Noongar characters, is not familiar with the colonial enterprises, and none of them anticipates any borders or future limitations at first. When the British land on the coast of Western Australia, the Noongar still see the land as described in the following passage:

> [Bobby's] little cluster of people had travelled with the wind at their backs, touching the earth lightly, buoyed by the journey their old people had made over and over before them. […] Smoke showed the family's group trail, their return to the place of their youngest child's creation and to this very centre of home by the sea's edge. (*TDD* 64).

The Noongar have been closely related to the land for generations, and, what is more, it also serves as a means of orientation and a link to their ancestors. In addition to that, the coastal region is clearly marked as the home space of their tribe. The fact that Bobby and his group are repeating a journey that has likewise been made by their ancestors turns the main setting of the novel into a distinctly Aboriginal space. Kim Scott describes Bobby's initial mindset as follows: "He [Bobby] just does not have it in his mind that anyone could ever want to conquer another's country, because he was so connected with it: you're the same, you and your country" (Brewster 2012: 230). From Bobby's point of view, it is not only inconceivable that a human being would voluntarily leave his or her own ancestral lands, but he cannot imagine

either that anyone would ever be able to go to another country in order to take or occupy the lands of the original population of this place or continent. Bobby and his people do not think of their ancestral lands as primarily a political issue with clearly marked areas of ownership; instead, they see it as the one and only basis of their lives, traditions and cultures and thus preserve it as such – the Noongar have always belonged to the Southern part of Western Australia; accordingly, they protect this part of the continent as the source of their existence.

The British settlers, by contrast, arrive in Australia with their image of Australia as *terra nullius*, a continent belonging to nobody, in mind. They perceive the Australian continent as a meaningless and blank space, which seems to be waiting, from their point of view, for people to inhabit and take possession of the country. Scott presents the British partly in line with this conviction, as they explore the area around their new settlement:

> [The explorers] said they'd […] come across excellent grazing country. The land awaits development; there is fine hinterland. […] We were helped on our journey, the black people led us here. They are friendly, indeed. […] And they rested, dined and made plans to explore the country all around this port. Land would be granted here, too, they insisted, to those with capital and without need for the purse strings of government. (*TDD* 126-127).

The British see primarily the economic and agricultural utilisation and development of the land, which is directly connected to the progress and eventual success of their settlement and, in inverted commas, their "civilisation" of terra nullius. They also discuss the property situation, with an eye to finding European landowners. Although the British do not recognise that they are actually taking away the home space from the indigenous people, they realise that they need their support to inspect and find their way through the unknown area of the new colony. Thus, this colonial spatial endeavour contains an insoluble dilemma – the British seek to become the rulers and owners of a continent that they can only manage to bring under their control with the help of those people whose land they intend to take away.

In Scott's novel, this dilemma resonates in the diverse interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous characters and in their individual manifestations of belonging to the Australian continent. While Dr Cross, for instance, is able to develop a strong feeling of belonging to the new land and a relationship with its original people that is also part of this analysis, many settlers simply aim to take every plot of land in the area from the Noongar without being interested in establishing any kind of relationship with the Aboriginal people. *That Deadman Dance* thus does not offer a one-dimensional solution for this dilemma, but instead, the novel foregrounds the various spatial practices of making contact and creating a sense of belonging – with the land as well as with its original peoples.

To sum up the findings on the practice(s) of spatial imagination, the novel integrates a Noongar and a British version of the future of the Australian continent. The two groups have

their own visions of what Australia should be like or remain, respectively, although there are diverse interrelations and interactions between the settlers and the indigenous characters. Their material spatial practices arise from different imaginary practices and convictions, and the difference between spatial indigenous belonging and the non-indigenous logic of possessing plots of land is palpable in the practices to be analysed in the following as well.

The Constitution of (Spatial) Boundaries as Representatives of Cultural Difference

The politics of space and the different ideas of how to deal with the future of Australia mentioned above indirectly imply another crucial issue in the novel – the constitution and maintenance of boundaries, specifically as a representative of cultural difference. While searching for grazing country for sheep, the convict Skelly and the former sailor Jak Tar intend to erect fences as a means of protection: "At first Skelly gave only instructions: how to build a bush shelter or fence, the dangers of dingoes. Occasionally the blacks, he added" (*TDD*: 224). In this scene, the fence not only becomes a signifier of different and culturally specific spatial practices but is also turned into a marker of cultural difference. Skelly classifies the Aboriginal people as dangerous and from his point of view, they potentially pose a threat to himself and the sheep. The Noongar are constructed as the inferior, uncivilised 'Other', whose spatial rights and connection to their ancestral lands are cut off by means of a fence that reflects the deliberate degradation of their (spatial) lifeworlds and the denial of their culturally specific manifestations of belonging.

At the same time, the building of the fence serves as a means of spatial monitoring, because "[c]olonialism mapped non-European spaces into segments for better understanding and control" (Nayar 2010: 135). Due to the fact that the British settlers were not willing to adopt the Noongar notions of spatiality, they superimposed their segmentation of land onto the indigenous lands. This is why the fence also points to the monolithic notion of European spatialities negotiated in the novel, because the fence as such is an element unknown to indigenous Australian cultures:

> The situatedness of country depends upon boundaries, […] an organised geography of difference. Aboriginal boundaries, however, while they promote and rely on difference, mark difference primarily in order to overcome it. Boundaries are permeable, flexible, rarely monolithic. (Rose 1996: 45)

In Rose's description of Aboriginal perspectives on borders, it is most remarkable that indigenous people such as the Noongar do not negate the existence of borders, but they do have a more nuanced notion of such spatial boundaries. They know where they belong without having to visually signify their territory or homelands because – as Bobby indicates in his final speech – they have always belonged to their ancestral spaces.

In order to further differentiate the analysis of the fence as a marker of cultural difference, an appropriate addition to the conceptual framework of this chapter is what Michael C. Frank (2006) calls *anxiety of cultural influence* [66], the fear of Europeans regarding cultural, climatic and racial alienation and transformation on non-European grounds while being exposed, either alone or as part of a small group, to a dominant other. According to Frank, literary negotiations of such processes of cultural contact are always also an enactment of borders, because these texts incorporate both European and non-European spaces and represent the overcoming of the distance, both temporally and spatially, between these spatial entities. In this way, literary characters, narrators or the authors of the respective texts make visible the configuration of their own identity and the differences between the latter and the other's identity (cf. 16-18). From this perspective, the spatial practice of building a fence in the novel is turned into a symbol of the settlers' fear of becoming too acquainted with the Noongar's lifeworlds and spatialities, while simultaneously losing their own spatial and cultural forms of belonging.

The articulation of cultural difference on the overall basis of spatial demarcations is realised on other levels in the novel as well. One of these levels concerns the area of the body and its respective clothing, which becomes palpable when Mrs Chaine watches Bobby: "Mrs Chaine studied the greased and ochred face of the young man, the matted hair held by a headband of fur, the body thickly smeared with oil and reddish clay, the scanty belt of woven hair or fur" (*TDD*: 16-17). This passage represents an Aboriginal body through European, colonial eyes. The natural origin of the things covering Bobby's body once more hints at the also physical connection of Bobby and his people to their surroundings, and it underpins the inseparability between Aboriginal peoples and their lands. At the same time, the selected verb "studied" emphasises that Mrs Chaine seems to examine Bobby not as a human being but more like an object of study, from her point of view, must be analysed by an allegedly superior, 'civilised' person. Aboriginal scholar Irene Watson likewise supports such a reading of the novel:

> We had no traditional costume. […] Nakedness was our identity and culture. What is our culture now? Still nakedness? Yes it is, but it lies suppressed beneath the covering layers of colonialism. The dominant colonising culture has covered our being with its rules and regulations. It imposed a system that violated the law, and its peoples and lands. This was more than an act of dispossession of land; it was a dispossession of law, and the disposal of nakedness. (Watson 1998: 2)

Indirectly, Mrs Chaine's description seems to imply such a dichotomous way of seeing

[66] Translation taken from: http://www.academia.edu/34189502/Kulturelle_Einflussangst_The_Anxiety_of_Cultural_Influence_Transcript_2006_Table_of_Contents_Introduction_and_Chapter_II_, last retrieved 2019-05-22. Original text: "kulturelle Einflussangst" (Frank 2006: 15).

Bobby's body. Her perspective incorporates her being unaccustomed to nakedness, which constitutes the very opposite of the European imperative of covering most parts of one's own body. From a (post-)colonial point of view, Mrs Chaine, in her conviction of being universally superior, thus does not even assume that Bobby and his people have their own cultures and traditions.

When Mrs Chaine takes over the role of the teacher for Bobby from Dr Cross, her husband declares his own opinion even more distinctly: "Mrs Chaine took over as Bobby's tutor. It is our moral duty to do so, her husband suggested, to help him move toward civilisation, and our friend Dr Cross established it as a priority, to help and save him" (*TDD*: 147). In addition to the bodily dimension, the cultural differences are also marked on the level of the non-indigenous way of approaching the Noongar standard of knowledge. In contrast to Dr Cross, most of the colonisers, among them the Chaines, deliberately employ hierarchisations and dichotomous practices on various levels in order to strengthen their own superiority and weaken the position of the Noongar. In connection with the analysed paragraphs of Scott's text, one can conclude that the borders – imaginary as well as material boundaries – serve as an instrument of displaying and negotiating cultural difference, especially in order to display European supremacy.

Border Crossings and the Friendship of Bobby Wabalanginy and Dr Cross

The next focus of this chapter is on Bobby, his friendship with the British settler Dr Cross and their spatial practices of border crossing, a concept that is applied in a metaphorical sense as well. To begin with, the name of the protagonist Bobby Wabalanginy already points to the multiplicity of relationships between the Europeans and the Noongar and to the overall crossing of borders, because Wabalanginy means "all of us playing together" (*TDD* 309). As this choice of name implies, Bobby is the central character attempting to establish a friendly cooperation between his people and the British settlers. Dr Cross is the first settler who applies for land at the new settlement named King George Town and he is known for his "acknowledged good relations with [the] natives" (*TDD* 29). Dr Cross "believed agricultural development was both inevitable and necessary, [but] could only be achieved with the assistance of the natives" (*TDD* 33). Although Dr Cross's colonial interests are clearly expressed, he seeks to cooperate with the Noongar instead of simply superimposing the terra nullius policy on their culture and regarding them as enemies or the inferior other.

In the course of the narrative, Dr Cross is asked by the Noongar to look after Bobby, because the latter is a young boy in the early days of the settlement (cf. *TDD* 36). It is

remarkable that the Noongar decide to let Dr Cross look after Bobby, because, although he has a lot of indigenous friends, he belongs to the group of the colonisers. He then teaches Bobby diverse things, for example the English language, how to read and write or how to eat with a knife and a fork. Cross more and more becomes Bobby's mentor and a highly significant figure in the boy's life. Although Dr Cross takes his own piece of land and is a supporter of colonisation, his overall intentions are revealed when he is sitting at the fire together with his Aboriginal friend Wunyeran: "We are two men of such different backgrounds, thought Cross and, attempting to fuse them, we are preparing for the birth of a new world" (*TDD* 115). This idea of an Australian continent without cultural or ethnic borders is endorsed and actively applied by Cross during his mentorship and teaching of Bobby, and it emphasises the former's own vision of Australia's future. Here, the narrative, and in particular Bobby and Dr Cross, serves as a medium for representing a potential historical alternative to the dichotomisation of indigenous and European interrelations and spatial practices. Not only does Bobby get in contact with European people, their cultures and habits, but also Dr Cross approaches the lifeworld of the Noongar. Both characters become mediators between the indigenous and non-indigenous worlds, weaken spatial and cultural differences and illustrate that coexistence and mutual support are possible.

Bobby's most remarkable combination of indigenous and non-indigenous cultures is the creation of his own dance, which he calls 'That Deadman Dance'. Having watched a military drill performed by British soldiers, Bobby turns their movements into his own indigenous dance. The name is derived from the initial appearance of the Europeans, because, from Bobby's point of view, they looked like creatures risen from the dead when they arrived at the Australian coast in their ships. In his dance, Bobby mixes the Noongar culture he knows with the new and very fixed combination of movements of the European soldiers and thus creates his own idiosyncratic and innovative form of bodily expression (cf. *TDD* 61-68). Kim Scott describes Bobby's 'Deadman Dance' as "a powerful act of appropriation" (Brewster 2012: 231) and, thus, as a way of bringing non-indigenous cultures closer to the protagonist's Aboriginal way of life and vice versa. The aspect of innovation is of special relevance at this point because the 'Deadman Dance' incorporates indigenous and non-indigenous movements that are not simply repeated but transformed into a hitherto unknown way of dancing.

Bobby's act of processing and reworking the military drill might be best described as a hybrid cultural and spatial practice in the sense of Homi K. Bhabha (1994), for whom

> [h]ybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). (Ibid. 159)

With his innovative way of way of blending European and Aboriginal cultures, Bobby playfully disrupts the colonial, military powers and turns their military choreography into his own hybrid bodily movement and cultural articulation. Because Bobby's creation does not rely solely on either Noongar or British movements but on both of them at the same time, he overcomes the assumption of non-indigenous and indigenous cultures that are diametrically opposed to each other. Bobby creates his idiosyncratic dance, thereby emphasising not only his own but also his people's capacity to create and construct their own lifeworlds, traditions and, finally, (spatial) practices. Simultaneously symbolising a prospect for the development of indigenous and non-indigenous relationships in Australia, "the fact that the Noongars appropriated the dance and the fact that you can write a novel as a Noongar person, is in itself expressive of continuity, in that the resolution of that novel – the end, the last page – is not the end. There are possibilities still" (Brewster 2012: 231-232).

Finally, it is indispensable to take a closer look at what finally happens to the various border transgressions and answer the questions of whether they lead to a new understanding of the spatial practices and interrelationships in the novel. In the end, Bobby is not able to maintain his affiliation to the settlers. The bigger King George Town grows, the more the interrelations between the Noongar and the British decrease, and the more the Aboriginal people are gradually excluded from the settlement. This strengthening of spatial and cultural differences is highlighted by taking a closer look at the perspective of Christine Chaine, the daughter of one of the settlers: "Laws were being enforced now, thankfully. Natives must be clothed and without spears if they were to enter town. It was only decent, and if we are to civilise them, as Papa said is the only way, then clothing is an important precursor" (*TDD* 325). At this point, it becomes evident that, although particularly Bobby and Dr Cross were able to combine indigenous and non-indigenous spatial and cultural practices topographically and metaphorically – i.e. both on the material and the imaginary level –, the final chapters of *That Deadman Dance* suggest an increase of limitations such as the regulations in King George Town.

Despite these developments and the ultimate failure of mutual spatial practices in the sense of finding a common way of spatially belonging to the Australian continent, Dr Cross, interestingly enough, is – in a certain way – capable of staying with the Noongar forever by means of his final metaphoric border crossing, because "as he lay dying, [he] had asked to be buried with Wunyeran in the same grave" (*TDD* 309). He shares a grave with one of his indigenous friends, transgresses and eventually dissolves the differences between his European and the Aboriginal culture. Bobby also suggests such a reading of the text, as he

states that their “spirits [are] fusing in the earth” (ibid.). This articulation of a coming together of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples even goes one step further because Bobby’s sentence integrates the idea of a place where both of his friends and their cultures are inseparably tied together on a spiritual level. In this way, border crossing becomes a material and imaginary spatial practice that leads to the transgression of real borders and cultural imaginations.

Nevertheless, only Dr Cross’s name is mentioned on the cross of the grave. When a new Governor, who is seen as the successor of Dr Cross and introduced as such, arrives with his family in the colony, a new era is announced indirectly when Geordie Chaine introduces the new Governor to King George Town and shows him the grave:

> The man you succeed, Mr Chaine said. […] Chaine did not say it was a shared grave. That the man had asked to be buried with a native, Wunyeran. They saw how the Governor had looked at Noongars, and stood away. How could they explain? Bobby, hardly noticed and with them again, realised Wunyeran’s name was not on the cross. Why? (*TDD*: 156)

While Chaine does not find a way to explain that the new Governor’s predecessor was an articulate friend of and interested in cooperation with the Noongar, Bobby does not yet seem to recognise the new hostility against the indigenous people. He knows that Dr Cross and Wunyeran are buried together, but it seems as if this fact is supposed to be kept secret in order to conceal their friendship that is not in line with the colonial endeavours of the new Governor. By not indicating both names on the cross, Dr Cross’s metaphorical spatial practice of transcending the border between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples is finally silenced. With its introduction as an exclusively European grave, Chaine pretends as if the friendly and cooperative phase in the early days of colonisation had never happened.

Finally, the Noongar are excluded completely from the settlement, and the white settlers perceive them as merely a burden in their newly established town. The indigenous people are, for instance, accused of crimes, and the white people do just blame the Noongar because they classify them as inferior and uncivilised people (cf. *TDD* 331). The most evident example of the contempt and the systematic oppression of the Noongar is the final criminalisation of Bobby, Wooral and Menak by the new Governor of King George Town, who calls them a “Native Gang” (*TDD*: 335). He accuses them of having committed several thefts on the basis of identified footmarks, and the Governor writes a letter to his superior in order to ask for more police that can solve the problem (cf. *TDD* 335-336). He seems to be especially afraid of Bobby, Wooral and Menak and thus wants to convince his superior of “how desirable it is this Gang of Natives should be broke up more especially as they are those who know our habits, and are more civilised for having been so much with the Europeans”

(*TDD*: 336). This part of his letter sounds like an inversion of the former cooperation between the Noongar and the colonialists, and the tone of the text clearly reveals the Governor's bias against the Aboriginal people. At the same time, he seems to be almost afraid of them precisely because they have gained knowledge of his people's way of life. Instead of appreciating this knowledge as a suitable framework for the establishment of further interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants of the area – and, in terms of spatial practices, further border crossings – the Governor re-establishes a monolithic perception of the Noongar as uncivilised and simply concentrates on the construction and expansion of the new settlement.

It is remarkable that – although the borders in *That Deadman Dance* are represented not only spatially but also mentally – in the end, the erection of spatial borders is the most evident symbol and spatial practice regarding the deliberate exclusion of the Noongar as well as their cultures and forms of belonging from King George Town. In his final speech, Bobby confesses to the above-mentioned thefts: "I'm guilty taking food from you but that's not stealing and I did no wrong" (*TDD*: 346). In order to underpin his last words, he clearly states that he and his people "[g]otta walk around fences and guns" (*TDD*: 347) and that "we now strangers to our special places" (*TDD*: 347). Bobby articulates the fact that the Noongar are no longer able to access their ancestral spaces due to the colonisers' visual signs of 'their' places. In this way, Bobby seeks to raise awareness of the colonisers' act of cutting through the connection between his peoples and their lands, and he accuses the colonisers of having separated the Noongar from their own land and the related traditions. He also attempts to re-establish his own and his peoples' belonging to their land by saying to the colonisers that "you need to be inside the sound and the spirit of it to live here properly. And how can that be, without we people who have been here for all time?" (*TDD*: 349). At the end of the novel, its protagonist, who was capable of transgressing the borders between the Noongar and the Europeans at least for a certain time, explicitly negates the possibility that the settlers will ever feel a sense of belonging to the country equal to that of its original population does. Influenced by his experiences with the new Governor, Bobby eventually gives up any hope that his people and the colonisers could live in harmony at King George's Sound.

Exploring, Naming and Mapping as Demonstrations of Spatial Power

In addition to the spatial practices analysed above, there is another way of utilising the ancestral spaces of the Noongar that is particularly relevant for (post-)colonial and spatial-narratological analyses – the exploration of the Australian continent. Also, Dr Cross is

involved in the inspection of the land around the newly established settlement: "Cross joined the commandant to talk with the little group of men who had arrived overland from Cygnet River. […] they said they'd made good time and come across excellent grazing country. The land awaits development; there is fine hinterland" (*TDD*: 127)[67]. Although he is the character that most distinctly works on the cooperation between indigenous and non-indigenous parties, Dr Cross is also presented as an ambivalent figure in terms of his ambitions to utilise the ancestral lands of the Noongar. Despite his willingness to cooperate and become friends with the indigenous population, his way of approaching the continent is nonetheless shaped by his European origin and colonial mindset.

The Noongar accompany Dr Cross and the explorers, because the latter would not be able to do the expedition on the alien continent on their own: "Several of the natives are quite experienced guides, having helped Cross. They know where the water is, can supply your meals" (*TDD*: 40). The colonisers reveal themselves to be incapable of finding food or their way through the unknown lands on their own, while they nevertheless seem to feel confident that the country must be 'developed'. Hence, the British settlers assume that the indigenous Australians have never taken care of their spaces regarding the cultivation or the grazing of animals, and their behaviour illustrates that "[i]n the early days the settlers were optimistic that they would be able to turn Australia into a replica of Europe" (Butcher/Turnbull 1988: 25). Although Killam and Skelly, two other settlers, notice the Noongars' fires that the latter use in order to actively cultivate their lands (cf. *TDD*: 51), the ongoing explorations of the area around King George Town highlight the Europeans' ignorance of the firestick farming and their lack of interest in the regionally-specific usage of the Australian spaces. This is again related to the British settlers' colonial hubris – i.e. to their general attitude of seeing themselves as superior and the indigenous peoples as inferior, uncivilised human beings – and their simple and unquestioned superimposition of European ways of cultivating the land on indigenous farming practices that have been developed and successfully made use of for centuries.

As a next step in the process of occupying Australia, there are the spatial practices of naming and mapping that are supposed to signify the newly established European settlements. The most evident act of naming in the novel is King George Town[68], the name of the new

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[67] For a detailed examination of this paragraph in terms of its relevance for the narrative's negotiation of spatial imaginations and the terra nullius policy, see the eponymous subchapter of this analysis.

[68] The occupation of Australia by one European nation and the standardisation of spatial names also affected indigenous peoples in relation to the designation of their own peoples: "'Aborigines' were created when then the colonizers used a Latin term meaning 'original habitants' to describe the peoples whose land they were stealing. More commonly used today is the term Indigenous, another Latin term meaning 'native to'" (Heiss

settlement, which emphasises that "[t]he way we name places reflects our land spirituality and the superficiality or depth of our relationship to the land and its narrative embedment" (Plumwood 2002: 365). With this name, the British seek to highlight their relationship to their mother country, while at the same time pointing to the newly constructed European domination. Australia is supposed to become part of a European, more specifically British, narrative of conquest and the civilisation even of remote parts of the world. In addition to underlining the overall narrativity of spatial constructions, the act of naming can be read as emphasising the processuality also of non-indigenous manifestations of belonging related to space. One step at a time, the new settlers implement their own spatial practices, such as naming, in order to be able to establish a *correct relation* with the unknown space and to gradually turn originally indigenous ancestral lands into their European version of Australia.

After his arrival in the colony, Dr Cross refers to another aspect of gaining spatial power over the new continent, the practice of mapping: "[He] imagined their military outpost as a dot on a map; although indeed any map of this part of the world was still most vague" (*TDD*: 81). In addition to further underlining his complex character and the various nuances that appear in between the dichotomy of coloniser and colonised, Dr Cross conflates the material and the imaginary claim of the Australian continent at this point. From his perspective, he sees the new settlement on a map and thus affiliated to Europe and the already mapped parts of the world. Nevertheless, the British colonial endeavours are not automatically successful, and the novel also illustrates the failure of Western spatial techniques such as mapping and exploring, for instance when Geordie Chaine is, with Bobby among others, searching for land:

> With no boat Chaine felt his loneliness; this despondency and being driven and led all at once. It was land he'd hoped for – pastoral country, with good water and close to a sheltered anchorage. But he had […] been disappointed. […] He ascertained their bearings. Soothed himself, as any observant bystander could see, in the handling of compass and paper. The oilskin wrapping and journal. (*TDD*: 211-212)

Although Chaine is equipped with the instruments of mapping and the intention to make use of the ancestral lands, he fails to explore and map the new country as easily as imagined. The land itself and the unfamiliarity of the unknown spaces prevent Chaine from finally fulfilling his plans although indigenous people who know the land accompany him.

2007b: 41). Nevertheless, the naming of Australia's cities and suburbs up to the present day highlights that not every indigenous name has been eradicated from the map but that, instead, the current names of various places in Australia reflect the country's indigenous and non-indigenous influences: "In settler colonies […] such as Australia […], place names such as […] Sydney […] indicate the concern to make the land familiar and to mark its ownership by the settlers. Yet these names will be found side by side with indigenous place names such as […] Wagga Wagga […] indicating a continuing consciousness of the connection between the land and the peoples who inhabited it before the settlers." (Innes 2007: 72)

This disappointment and simultaneous ambition in terms of exploring, naming and mapping – which fosters the reading of the colonial practices mentioned as being, in particular, spatially contingent – supports what Lesley Hawkes (2010) writes about the plans and intentions of the early colonisers:

> When a country is colonized, activities such as mapping, naming, and settling usually take place as quickly as possible. The desire to complete these activities in part stems from a fear of the unknown. Once these tasks were completed in Australia, it was thought that a sense of identity and belonging would begin to emerge. (Ibid. 95)

Chaine seems to search for hope while keeping his mapping instruments in his hands, but he ends up being unsatisfied because he is not able to find what he had hoped for. In this respect, he symbolises the fear outlined by Hawkes. What is even more relevant for the overall topic of belonging is the fact that the incongruity of Chaine's spatial plans and the realities he must face point to the difficulties of the new settlers to arrive in and eventually feel a sense of belonging to the Australian continent. The expectations of the colonisers settlers constantly articulated by the British settlers – to find and own farming and grazing country and to find a new home in Australia – collide with the foreignness of the colony's lands and the insight that colonial imagination and colonial realities are far from being congruous.

Eventually, Scott's novel clearly outlines that "[w]hatever the sense of inherent or cultural belonging to place which the indigenous occupants may have, it is clear that place may be controlled by being familiarized and domesticated through language" (Ashcroft 2010: 29) and its representation on maps, which finds its most powerful articulation in the spatial practices of exploration, mapping and naming – the observation, assessment and subsequent visualisation of land that symbolises the material occupation of a certain area of land. Not only is "naming […] fundamentally an act of power" (ibid.) that linguistically signifies the colonial taking over of indigenous lands, but it also superimposes and eventually wipes out Aboriginal cultures, values and traditions by creating a new material and imaginary version – in the form of maps – of Australia. At this point, it must nevertheless be mentioned that there never was and never will be only one indigenous Australia, one Aboriginal or Noongar culture or one way of carrying out practices of naming or exploring. In the novel, there are diverse standpoints and different characters, for instance Bobby and Dr Cross, who cope differently with the spatial occupation of Australia and who display different perspectives on space and spatial practices. This leads to a multiplication of spatial practices and narratives in the text and fosters a multi-dimensional and multi-perspectival perception of Aboriginal and colonial practices concerning their respective and culturally specific modes of establishing or maintaining their individual senses of belonging to the country.

Aboriginal Counter-Practices and the Diversification of Spatial Knowledge

While the acts of naming and exploring the land in the novel are the foremost non-indigenous approaches to the Australian lands, the Noongar characters, in turn, employ their own spatial practices in order to protect their ancestral spaces. Bobby tries to become an active representative in terms of articulating and carrying through the interests of his own people when, at the end of the narrative, he gradually realises that the initially friendly relations with the settlers will not last forever and when he starts to recognise their true intentions. When Menak asks Bobby to translate his words and tell the British settlers something about his own point of view on the latest development in King George Town, the end of the friendly interrelationships and of mutual support become evident:

> Bobby tried to translate: My people need their share of these sheep, too. We share the whales, you camp on our land and kill our kangaroos and tear up our trees and dirty our water and we forgive, but now you will not share your sheep and my people are hungry […] Bobby realised it was true what the old man said, it was all true. (*TDD*: 302)

What Menak, earlier in the text, calls "this womb of their home" (*TDD*: 135) is irretrievably altered due to the colonisation of Australia, and it becomes a space where the original people of the lands, here the Noongar, are no longer welcome. Interestingly enough, Bobby's act of translation is not only a linguistic transmission but also represents a spatial practice in terms of the transgression of cultural and social borders and an articulation of indigenous Australian spatial knowledge in non-indigenous terms. Menak's criticism therefore displays a diversification of spatial knowledge inasmuch as it expands the settlers' economically oriented concepts of space and belonging by meeting and coming into conflict with the Noongars' communal and sustainable utilisation of their lands. At the same time, Menak's efforts to preserve the country of his peoples represent a form of indigenous advocacy[69] because he directly communicates with the settlers and attempts to clearly point out that the colonisers exploit the ancestral lands of the Noongar instead of striving for collaboration[70].

Menak's observations and his expression of the colonial exploitation of indigenous Australian lands point to the destruction of the Noongars' ancestral lands as the foundation of their cultural traditions and, most of all, their source of food and, thus, their daily survival. Referring once again to the fact that this thesis is carried out from a non-indigenous, European

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[69] See Chapter 6 of this thesis and Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010) for more information on the term *advocacy* and its interrelationships with ecocriticism and Aboriginal cultures.

[70] Being another representative of the decline of the contact between the Noongar and the British settlers, Menak's observations point to the overall insight that "[i]n *That Deadman Dance* (2011), the initial optimism of First Contact in King George Town slowly deteriorates into an oppressive attempt to silence Noongar language and culture. The friendship of Cross and Wunyeran is literally displaced and written over in the settlement's historic and social memory. Their shared grave is dug up, Wunyeran's remains are smashed and moved to an unmarked grave while […] Cross has a tombstone erected in his honour" (Quinlivan 2014: 4).

point of view, I would like to offer a further analytical perspective on the text, which argues that "[a]nother way to decenter Europe is by attempting to acknowledge and present Indigenous people as legitimate historical actors and not merely victims of the colonial encounter, where action is interpreted as reaction" (Russell 2012: 20). In such an understanding of the novel, the Aboriginal advocacy represented by Menak and the related diversification of indigenous and non-indigenous forms of spatial knowledge in the text are turned into a de-hierarchisation of Western and non-Western, indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives on space and belonging. The Noongars' ways of life in harmony and balance with their spatial surroundings is thus situated on the same level as the settlers' ways of coping with space and land.

Despite these forms of Aboriginal advocacy and the mutual approximation of indigenous and non-indigenous characters, Scott's novel reveals that characters like Dr Cross, who are willing to cooperate with the Noongar, are nevertheless likewise permeated by a European mindset that they cannot give up completely. Dr Cross clearly articulates his Christian, non-indigenous heritage when he attempts to explain to his Aboriginal friend Wunyeran the Christian conception of the world with "a place in the sky, […] heaven, and chains-of-being, and of a place of constant suffering within the earth where a big spirit-man sent bad people" (*TDD*: 117). Wunyeran's answer – "You in the wrong port now, Doctor" (ibid.) – highlights their eventually different perspectives on the world, although they become friends and represent the closest form of cooperation within the novel. Strikingly, Wunyeran employs a spatial metaphor to underline his point of view. This not only underlines the spatial permeation of Aboriginal manifestations of space and belonging but could also be read, on a more general level, as a reference to the Noongars' overall perception of the arrival of British settlers in Australia. In their opinion, the Europeans land on their continent, take their ancestral lands and finally destroy their individual ways of belonging to this area of the world without having taken into consideration the original population of Australia.

Nevertheless, Dr Cross simultaneously aims at diversifying the spatial knowledge of the settlers by introducing them to the Noongars' way of dealing with their spatial surroundings and to their nomadic way of life: "They are a mobile people, Dr Cross tried to explain to the new settlers. And there is an order to their movements, according to season and the laws of their society. They do not yet need us" (*TDD*: 55). In these situations, Cross functions as a bridge between the Noongar and the settlers at King George's Sound. What is more, he also acts as a translator between indigenous and non-indigenous cultural and spatial concepts because he constantly moves between the worlds of the Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal population of the area. As pointed out earlier, Cross is, at the same time, aware of the fact that the colonisers need the indigenous knowledge in order to be able to occupy the continent at all due to its huge environmental differences to European landscapes. As a character fighting for indigenous as well as colonial interests, Cross is the most personal representation of the constant interactions and overlaps of European and Noongar spatial knowledge and the related perspectives on space and belonging. With his Christian background that he seeks to bring closer to indigenous people such as Wunyeran, Cross is furthermore a symbol of the numerous hierarchies of (spatial) knowledge and their (de-)constructions in Scott's novel. Therefore, Cross literally destroys binary, monolithic analyses of indigenous and non-indigenous narratives and thus highlights the need for a more diversified perspective on notions of space and belonging in contemporary Aboriginal and indigenous narratives.

There is a further diversification of perspectives on spatiality when the new Governor arrives and takes up residence in King George Town. His own point of view can be explained easily because he is a strong advocate of the colonial endeavours of the British and thus seeks to undermine and silence the Aboriginal population of his new area of governance: he "wanted them made useful, trained to be capable working men" and he said that "they are simply a burden upon me at present" (*TDD*: 161). Interestingly enough, his way of approaching the new continent is also received unfavourably by Mr Killam, one of the early European settlers, whose house is taken by the Governor:

> Mr Killam was learning what it was to have someone move in on what you thought was your very own home. […] He was back under canvas, and the Governor was planning the rooms he'd add to the main building; a building Cross had constructed especially for the Cygnet River's Governor's summer home, and which Killam had later claimed as his own. And now the new Governor's family was right there, watching the garden ripen. (*TDD*: 161)

This re-iteration of occupying land is, strikingly, carried out among the British and does not directly involve indigenous Australians. This, in turn, complicates the existing spatial hierarchies in *That Deadman Dance.* Nevertheless, Killam – who has already developed a sense of belonging to this specific place and who feels expelled from 'his' land – cannot protest against this taking away of his home space because the Governor is a politically superior person. These spatial changes of the settlement are accompanied by a change in the relationships between the indigenous population of the area and the colonisers. In other words, the arrival of the new Governor marks the beginning decline of the cooperation between the Noongar and the British, and, once again, overarching spatial changes seem to be the starting point for further changes in the narrative.

In a nutshell, *That Deadman Dance* represents indigenous advocacy as particularly related to issues of spatiality and belonging, which is especially mirrored in "the visions of Noongar sovereignty and the alternative contract of cross-cultural relationality that Cross and Bobby (and to a lesser extent, Wunyeran) exemplify" (Brewster 2011: 67). The relationship between Dr Cross and Bobby or Wunyeran is always – either directly or indirectly – characterised by discourses on spatiality, such as the shared grave on ancestral grounds or the explorations of the Noongars' country with the help of their spatial knowledge. Hence, the Aboriginal characters in the novel are turned into representatives of their culturally specific spatial interests, and they construct their own narrative of belonging, which means that finally

> the space of cultural contact and exchange is represented as a space of potential *agency* for Indigenous people and of *mutual* transformation rather than in the simpler binaristic terms of an exploitative encounter between colonizer and colonized with the weaker colonized culture being easily negated because of the perceived desirability of the colonizing and civilizing culture. (Kossew 2014: 175)

In particular, Bobby and Wunyeran represent this form of agency, and they not only challenge binary perceptions of the colonisation of the continent but also illustrate the opportunity for potential counter-narratives to the story of the European colonisers coming to Australia and simply taking and colonising the land of the Aboriginal peoples.

Kim Scott himself supports such a reading and classification of his novel with the following statement in an interview:

> [T]he possibility that I could finish it in a way that allowed it to resonate in really interesting ways with the overwhelming well-known narrative of defeat, and the discordances, means that it becomes political in a way that works with the strengths of story. That's the whole new bit for me you know. Can I do this? Can I make a positive yarn and still make it political? Using the stuff of fiction to do what nothing else can do. (Brewster 2012: 233)

From Scott's point of view, his support of Aboriginal agency also has a highly political overtone, which leads to the insight that belonging and having a *correction relation* to one's own lands turn into political actions. This is because the Noongars' belonging to their ancestral spaces is opposed to the colonial intention of the British and their occupation of the Australian continent. Accordingly, the indigenous people's environmental, social or historical senses of belonging to their ancestral spaces turn into anti-colonial action. With regard to the developed working definition of belonging, the Aboriginal peoples' idea of having a balanced interrelationship with their own lands is based on spatial practices and processes leading to a holistic equilibrium in every aspect of life, whereas the colonisers employ practices of utilisation in order to undermine this indigenous attitude and actively make use of space.

Combined with the historical focus of belonging in this chapter of the thesis, which points to the fact that the past and traditions – in more general terms, temporality and the

perception of time – are crucial for establishing a sense of belonging at all, Scott's novel becomes even more political with regard to the present. By considering Noongar agency and advocacy of their culturally specific spatial rights and practices, *That Deadman Dance* seeks to shed light on the Aboriginal activities that were carried out in order to maintain and keep alive their cultures, spaces and manifestations of belonging. Underlining the overall narrativity and narrative construction of spatiality, this novel does thus not intend to trace stories of colonisation or defeat but, instead, narratives of mutual indigenous and non-indigenous support, coming together and Noongar or Aboriginal agency.

Whaling and the Economisation of Indigenous Australian Spaces

If one perceives the gradual decrease of the initially good relations between the Noongar and the British as one key element of the coherence of the novel, the practice of whaling serves as another symbol of this development. The whaling industry changes the appearance of the landscape inasmuch as there are suddenly whales on the beaches (cf. *TDD* 225), there are more and more seasons of whaling and, in the course of the novel, an increasing number of foreign ships, also from North America, arrives at King George's Sound to hunt whales (cf. *TDD* 234-236). The initial phase of whaling – from the early nineteenth century to the twentieth century (cf. Russell 2012: 12) – is set in the years between 1836 and 1838 in the novel, and "[t]he bay full of whales!" (*TDD*: 220), once seen by an astonished Bobby, acquires great economic importance for the colonisers. Bobby is one of the witnesses of the massive whaling and the connected industry in the early times of colonisation (cf. *TDD* 220-222), and later, between 1841 and 1844, he even works as a steerer. Although Bobby cannot kill animals, he does not really call into question the consequences of whaling for his own lands, whereas Menak does again recognise the dangers of whaling for the ancestral lands and seas of his people (cf. *TDD*: 281). For the Noongar, as represented by Menak, whales are spiritually laden; what is more, they are even related to the maritime journeys of their ancestors and are animal representations of their interrelationship, as described by Bobby while whaling together with the colonisers: "A watery path that was hard to follow yet was that of their ancestors and his own, too, since he came from ocean and whales. That was why Menak gave him the story and the song that took the whale from east of King George Town along the coast to its very shore" (*TDD*: 31). Bobby's explications indicate that the ancestral lands of Aboriginal Australians such as the Noongar not only include the landscape of the continent as such but also consider the ocean. These waters are, just like songlines all over the country, part of the Noongars' ancestral narratives, and they make up another essential

element of their belonging to their spaces. Hence, Bobby sees his own origin as particularly related to the waters, which, once more, highlights the narrative entrenchment of indigenous Australian cultures, spaces and forms of belonging.

Directly connected to these narratives shaping indigenous Australian lifeworlds, oral storytelling forms the quintessential means of circulating Aboriginal narratives. The passing on of the whale's story from Menak to Bobby can be classified as an act of indigenous Australian story-telling because

> [t]elling stories within stories is the obvious reference to oral storytelling, and it is a frequently deployed method not only in indigenous texts. Stories within stories create story networks that connect the different places of their telling as well as the different places being told about in the stories: stories within stories thus not only create a spatially manifest narrative web, but also create spaces that bridge a number of places on different narrative levels. (Sarkowsky 2007: 51)

The story of the whale interlinks Bobby with the narratives of his ancestors and, thus, once more with their spaces of water and land, their overall framework of belonging. Furthermore, Menak conflates different levels of temporality and spatiality inasmuch as he makes Bobby aware of the spatial framework of Noongar cultural lifeworlds in the past, present and future at the same time. According to this understanding of Aboriginal storytelling, the circulation of indigenous narratives becomes one of the most important media for maintaining and passing on culturally specific forms of spatial belonging because these ancestral traditions are turned into a call for preserving indigenous Australian spaces at all.

Scott's integration of oral storytelling also underlines "[t]he present continuity and vigour of orality in post-colonial societies" (Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007 [2000]: 152); therefore, it can also be used productively within the overall approach to narratives as an instrument of worldmaking. Because *That Deadman Dance* itself is a narrative transporting knowledge about indigenous Australian cultures, the novel and the stories within this literary text are capable of creating unprecedented perspectives on the Noongar and their different ways of coping with the colonisation of their lands. This, in turn, leads to the necessary overall diversification of binary perspectives on the first encounters of European settlers and indigenous Australians. Hence, one inherent feature of this novel consists in the transformative potential of literary texts in terms of overcoming simplistic, dichotomous notions of processes of colonisation in favour of individual, subjective perspectives on the first encounter of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples on the coast of Western Australia and on its multifarious complexities.

Coming back to Menak's above-mentioned criticism, Bobby's skills as a steerer and, thus, his participation in the whaling industry point to what Sue Kossew (2014) noted

regarding the relationships between non-indigenous and indigenous whalers in those days:

> The whaling and sealing industry, which was indeed a global one involving French, British, Chinese, Spanish, German and many other nationalities, and one with vast global reach, forms the background for this encounter[71] and is represented as providing the possibility of a brief period of mutuality and reciprocity between Indigenous and European cultures. From the beginning of the sealing industry in 1798 to the late 1860s which marked the trailing off of the whaling industry, Aboriginal men and women were deeply involved in this maritime trade, often travelling vast distances from their homelands. (Ibid. 173-174)

According to this understanding of whaling, these interactions of indigenous Australians and European settlers are another representative feature of the initially friendly relationships mentioned in *That Deadman Dance*. In particular, Bobby becomes an integral part of the whaling industry and is, at least for a short time, able to work together with the men from faraway parts of the world.

Nevertheless, Scott's novel does not regard the killing of whales for economic purposes – which brings to the fore that "[c]apitalism is articulated most clearly in the colonising people's management of natural resources, specifically: whaling in *That Deadman Dance*" (Gleeson-White 2013a: 3) – as a benefit for the Noongar but clearly as a practice of violence and destruction concerning their spaces and the overall basis of their belonging to the land. This becomes evident in the following scene, in which Bobby is on one of the whaling boats: "Bobby groaned, thinking he heard a whale groan, too, and thick hot blood rained upon the boat and upon the men, and in the water a red stein grew larger. […] Sick men seemed well again, come alive with the whale blood" (*TDD*: 222). At first glance, the different reactions to the killing of the whale strike the eye: while most of the whalers seem to be coming to life again, Bobby seems to become one with the whale. Because whales are mentioned frequently in the text and because Bobby appears to have a close relationship to these animals, this kind of connection could be described as a totem-like relation in which the whale serves as a symbol of the centrality of the affiliation of indigenous Australians to their spatial surroundings. As Bobby is used to treating animals and nature in general like human beings, the bloody water and the killing of a whale signify the destruction and exploitation of indigenous seas as the foundation of the Noongars' form of spatial belonging.

In the end, the novel sketches an image of whaling that is characterised by many different points of view[72], which, after all, clearly stress the destruction of natural resources

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[71] The 'encounter' mentioned by Kossew refers to the 'friendly frontier', the good interrelations of settlers and Aboriginal people in the early days of the colonisation of King George's Sound (cf. Scott 2010). For more information on the term as well as its historical context, see the subchapter *That Deadman Dance as a Means of World-Making* of this analysis.

[72] Despite Bobby's participation in the whaling industry, the novel focuses mostly on the criticism of whaling from an indigenous point of view and on its results for the Noongar, their spaces and ways of life. In order to

and the Noongars' ancestral lands and waters rather than highlighting potential economic advantages for the indigenous population of King George's Sound. In such a perspective on Scott's narrative representation of whaling, "[t]he sea is also the location of disputes over resources and boundaries, over ownership and control" (Russell 2012: 7) on a more general level. For the Noongar, most strongly represented by Menak, whaling highlights a material disruption not only of his people's processes of negotiating an interrelated balance with their ancestral lands and waters but also of their subjective feelings of belonging, which is due to the European settlers' acceptance and deliberate implementation of spatial practices such as the exploitation of the ocean and its natural resources.

Bobby Wabalanginy Meets Jurij Lotman: Non-Indigenous Models of Narrative Space and Aboriginal Representations of Spatial Belonging

For the spatial narratologist, this chapter might have been a disappointment so far because it lacks the distinct integration of a classical model of narrative space. Up to this point and in its overall methodological design, the narratological element of this chapter lies in the examination of those practices related to the narratological category of space – either in the material or imaginary, literal or metaphorical sense – that support the indigenous and non-indigenous characters' aim of establishing a sense of belonging to the Australian continent. Hence, the selected title and focus of spatial narratology might be misleading inasmuch as this chapter offers a rather open and very flexible approach to the category of space, i.e. one that is not related to a fixed set of narratological tools but rather to the notion of *spatial practice* and its narrative representations in *That Deadman Dance.* In order to compensate for this exclusion, this subchapter seeks to investigate the ways in which a classical model of narrative space, here the concept introduced by Jurij Lotman, might fit the Aboriginal literary context.

According to Lotman[73], a narrative text is composed of two semantic fields opposed to one another. A border that usually cannot be crossed marks these areas. Nevertheless, the hero

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further diversify the overall image of whaling presented in this thesis, it is, at the same time, worth taking a look at the following statement: "There can be no denying that for most Australian Aboriginal people the impact of colonialism was blunt – dispossession, dislocation, disease, murder, and missionization. Yet there is another, largely untold story of Australian colonial history. It's a story of enterprise and entrepreneurship, of Aboriginal Australian people seizing the opportunity to profit from participation in the colonial economy and pursuing life at sea as sealers and whalers" (Russell 2012: 6). Russell's point of view offers a new perspective on this issue and highlights the fact that a binary perception of spatial forms of indigenous Australian belonging as the counterpart of European approaches to spatiality falls short of accurately describing historical reality and that only an analysis of the pluralised forms of belonging on both sides is capable of accounting for the overall complexity of belonging.

[73] For a more detailed explanation of Lotman's entire theoretical work, see Andrews (2002). For a comprehensive outline of Lotman's understanding of culture, see Zylko (2001).

of the respective text is able to move between these two semantic fields by crossing the border, which entails the recognition that every story requires a hero. Based on this binary structure of narrative space, Lotman defines the narrative as the hero's movement between these two areas precisely because this act fulfils a disruptive function with regard to the normative order of the opposed spaces (cf. Hallet/Neumann 2009b: 17-18). Lotman differentiates between two types of border crossings, which are called *restitutive* and *revolutionary* by Matias Martinez and Michael Scheffel[74]. The concept of revolutionary border crossings refers to a successful transgression, whereas restitutive border crossings eventually fail, which is either due to an immediate failure or to the cancellation of the former transgression. This fundamental dichotomy of two opposed semantic fields is reflected on three different levels of the story. On the topological level, there are distinctions such as inside – outside or left – right. They are further connected to semantic pairs such as good – bad or rich – poor. Finally, these binary opposites are represented topographically by spatial contrasts such as heaven – hell or city – countryside (cf. Martinez/Scheffel 2009 [1999]: 140-144). Lotman designed this methodology distinctly for literary spaces and their relation to the occurrence of narratives.

Although Lotman's theoretical approach is, due to its reduced structures and its comprehensibility, applicable to many contexts and literary texts at first glance, it exhibits several problematic aspects with regard to the analysis of indigenous Australian narratives[75]. First, Lotman's approach is structuralist, so his way of examining narrative spaces is clearly structured and always aims to fit the respective narrative spaces into this fixed model. As the analysis of Scott's text has shown, indigenous notions of spatiality and their literary representations are far more complex and multi-layered than Lotman's theoretical foundation would suggest. Second, there is no mentioning of the hierarchisation of space or of different notions of spatiality, which is crucial for the description of narrative representations of Aboriginal ancestral lands, specifically with regard to the encounter of indigenous Australians and European colonisers. Third, Lotman concentrates on only one protagonist who crosses the border, and there is no possible expansion of this basic theoretical element. *That Deadman Dance*, by contrast, features various protagonists or heroes such as Bobby or Dr Cross, who equally contribute to the spatial practices examined above. Finally, Lotman's model refrains almost completely from taking into account narrative temporalities (cf. Frank 2009: 68-71),

[74] The terms *restitutive* and *revolutionary* are translations by the author of this study (Lisa Bach). The original German versions are "restitutiv" and "revolutionär" (cf. Martinez/Scheffel 2009 [1999]: 142).

[75] Being aware of potential problems and limitations of his own theories, Lotman constantly refined his own concepts up to the 1990s (cf. Frank 2009: 68-71). Nevertheless, this subchapter is, for the sake of comprehensibility, solely based on Lotman's initial and basic concept of narrative space.

which is why Lotman's ideas fall short of grasping the holistic characteristics of Aboriginal manifestations of spatial belonging displayed in Scott's novel and the overall inseparability of indigenous notions of temporality and spatiality.

The results of the spatial-narratological reading of *That Deadman Dance*, with its explicit focus on spatial practices, reveal that Lotman's structuralist approach to narratives on the basis of their spaces cannot account for the diversity, flexibility and volatility of the negotiated processes of establishing a sense of spatial belonging to Australia, on both the indigenous and the non-indigenous sides. Scott's novel is characterised by a multiplicity of spatial practices and, in the sense of Lotman, border crossings that cannot be reduced to an elementary binary structure capturing the core of the entire narrative. With regard to Linn Miller's concept of belonging, it is justified to conclude that Scott's novel does not represent one *correct relation* or concept of belonging to the land but, instead, endless nuances of belonging that form conflicting and contradicting webs of different interrelationships between human beings and their spatial surroundings, which cannot be analysed by means of Lotman's structuralist concept of narrative space.

In a nutshell[76], Lotman's perception of narrative spatiality relies on fixity and exhibits product- rather than process-orientation. This is why his model is not capable of shedding light on the intersecting, challenging and even conflicting processes of negotiating diverse forms of *correct relations* between the indigenous and non-indigenous characters and their spatial surroundings in Scott's novel. Lotman's ideas are highly dependent on a stable and binary spatial order that is incompatible with the numerous confrontations and hybridisations of spatial practices discussed in *That Deadman Dance.* What is more, even a flexibilization or refinement of his ideas would hardly be able to grasp the overall diversity of manifestations of spatial belonging dealt with in Scott's narrative.

That Deadman Dance as a Means of Worldmaking

Referring Scott's *That Deadman Dance* to the overall theoretical and methodological framework of this thesis, I would like to point out that it constitutes, in particular, an instrument of bridging Noongar pasts, presents and futures in terms of their spatial belonging to the Australian continent. This reference to indigenous and non-indigenous temporalities

[76] Although this subchapter clearly argues for an omission of Lotman's structuralist ideas in the specific context of Scott's novel, this must, nevertheless, not be generalised for the use of non-indigenous concepts and models for approaching indigenous texts. As this thesis underlines in many of its chapters (cf. for instance Chapters 6 and 7), a dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures and methodologies can lead to new insights into contemporary indigenous texts and into the overall diversity of spatialities and their culturally-specific manifestations.

makes palpable the selected focus on historical belonging with regard to Linn Miller's conceptualisation again. Scott's narrative not only attempts to articulate his own belonging to his people and their ancestral lands, but it is probably also a way of coping with the colonial past of Australia in the twenty-first century in order to find a way to imagine and create a future for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians and their spatial belonging to the Australian continent together. The most pivotal topic with respect to this potential of *That Deadman Dance* thus is the relationship between non-indigenous and indigenous characters in the text and the different forms of their mutual cooperation throughout the novel.

At this point, it is worth highlighting the fact that Scott used original sources[77] dating back to the time of the colonisation of King George's Sound[78] for the design of his novel (cf. *TDD* 351). This probably testifies to Scotts's intention to connect the literary world he created with Australia's Aboriginal and colonial realities. An additional piece of evidence for this point of view is the fact that Scott refers to his home town of Albany at King George's Sound. Interpreting the novel, thus, as a means of worldmaking, one can justifiably argue that the short phase of the 'friendly frontier'[79] as enacted in *That Deadman Dance* and as represented, most prominently, by Dr Cross and his indigenous friend Bobby Wabalanginy, might serve as a historical example of mutual cooperation for the present and the future. Specifically, these two characters create something like a hybrid colonial space in which Noongar as well as non-indigenous cultures, concepts of life and processes of negotiating diverse forms of spatial belonging can co-exist side by side without conflict. This stands in stark contrast to the conflicting forms of European and Aboriginal forms of belonging that are also to be found in the narrative. Thus, Scott's novel becomes a means of past-, present- and future-making – by pointing to the single case of the early settlement of Australia at King George's Sound and to the overall possibility of living together and mutually belonging to the space of the Australian continent in a supportive way.

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[77] The original sources are to be found in various sources and collections (cf. Green 1979a, Green 1979b, Green 1984, Mulvaney/Green 1992). These texts particularly consider the 'friendly frontier', the above-mentioned phase of mutual cooperation and friendly contacts between Noongar and colonisers in the early days of the latter group's settlement. References to these sources include the explorations of the area (cf. Mulvaney/Green 1992) or friendships between Aboriginal people and settlers (cf. Green 1984: 45). Nevertheless, according to Green's (1984) understanding, the settlement at Albany represented an exception within Australia's colonial history, because the Europeans did not intend to exploit the Aboriginal peoples' resources and they did not expel them from their ancestral lands (cf. 45).

[78] For a detailed historical account of King George's Sound, the European settlement of the region as well as non-indigenous and indigenous interrelationships see Shellam (2009).

[79] Scott (2010) himself defines the 'friendly frontier' as follows: "The early history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interaction at my home town on the south coast, is sometimes referred to as the 'friendly frontier', the result of a set of unusual circumstances […]. There are examples of wit and remarkable cultural exchange between individuals and either side of that 'frontier'" (ibid. 61). Interestingly, he does not simply underline the activities of his own people but also highlights the efforts of the colonisers.

Nevertheless, Scott's novel must, first and foremost, be read as an instrument of worldmaking for his own people, the Noongar, and their decisive contribution to the friendly frontier. According to Anne Brewster (2011), Scott's "novel suggests that if the frontier was friendly for a time it was so largely because of Noongar hospitality, diplomacy and generosity in offering assistance and labour to the settlers, a diplomacy the settlers did not by and large reciprocate" (ibid. 60). While many Noongar characters in the novel support, for instance, the explorations of the area, it is mainly and (almost) exclusively Dr Cross who represents the will to cooperate on the side of the European settlers. Interestingly enough, the diverse, above-mentioned indigenous perceptions of the British colonisation of the area comprise, very early in the novel, distinct doubts as well, for instance when Menak's companion Manit articulates her thoughts on the future developments of the relationship between the colonisers and the Noongar while speaking to Bobby: "Your friends? […] These people chase us from our own country. They kill our animals and if we eat one of their sheep … they shoot us" (*TDD*: 23). Manit anticipates the ultimate failure of the phase of good relationships and interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures and forms of belonging.

Although Bobby and Dr Cross are able to develop a friendship that crosses the borders between indigenous and non-indigenous people and thus points to the possibility of creating hybrid cultural spaces of belonging, the conflict between territorialising, hierarchised European and nomadic, holistic Noongar spatial practices is finally preserved and even desired by the colonisers in order to expand their powers. Presenting a counterpoint to these historical circumstances, *That Deadman Dance* can be interpreted as a medium of worldmaking in terms of including, on the one hand, the need for diversifying monolithic perceptions of indigenous and non-indigenous manifestations of spatial belonging and the related negotiation processes of establishing culturally specific forms of spatial belonging. On the other hand, Scott's novel is an instrument outlining which clearly outlines that there was an opportunity of making a world of cooperation and collective forms of belonging on the Australian continent that, which, however, did not last for a very long time.

Drawing Conclusions and the Pluralisation of Spatial Belonging

Judged by the observation of conflicting notions of spatiality and belonging in *That Deadman Dance*, the title of this chapter might with regard to the analysis conducted therein, seem misleading at first glance, because it does not centre on the ideas of mutuality, support and recognition, which, as mentioned above, are the most crucial issues of Scott's novel. Hence, it makes sense to bring up the question of title selection here. Although the focus of the novel is

clearly on the representation of the 'friendly frontier', the idea of conflicted belonging implies, first and foremost, the pluralisation of concepts required in order to grasp the multiple layers of the indigenous and non-indigenous spatial practices discussed in the text as well as their intersections. As the subchapter dealing with Jurij Lotman's model of narrative space has outlined, binary perceptions of indigenous and non-indigenous notions of belonging would have been too simplistic to meet the requirements of Scott's text. Because it is the aim of both of the Noongar and the European settlers to maintain or establish their culturally specific processes of having a *correct relationship* to their direct spatial environments, the title underlines, second, the worldmaking potential of Scott's narrative inasmuch as it shows one possible way out of the clash of indigenous and non-indigenous cultures represented therein. The idea of conflicted forms of belonging points to the need for solutions to the problem of how it is possible to overcome such a conflict on the basis of a historical example, because, as this analysis has pointed out, a common feeling of belonging to the Australian continent calls for a recognition of the original peoples' ways of establishing an interrelated balance with their ancestral lands.

This analysis can neither justify the European act of taking possession of indigenous land in Australia nor do justice to what the Aboriginal population, in this case the Noongar, had to endure due to colonisation. However, the novel negotiates a moment in Australian history when indigenous and non-indigenous cultures were approaching each other. Thus, it is, in Kim Scott's words, "about creativity and spirit, about strength: strong Noongar characters. And about possibility being lost" (Brewster 2012: 231). Bobby and Dr Cross, but also other characters, not all of whom could be analysed in detail, represent the potential overcoming of binary mindsets in favour of respect, friendly relations, mutual support and the possibility of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people belonging to the space of Australia together. In an article on *That Deadman Dance* by Australian scholar Anne Brewster, she asserts that "[Bobby] has the capacity to promote a syncretic 'new world'" (Brewster 2011: 65), and she highlights the fact that there was indeed an opportunity of intercultural communication in the early days of the European colonisation of Australia.

Finally, and Scott's novel is a case in point here, literary texts do provide their readers with food for thought, in this case on the relationship between the non-indigenous and the indigenous population of the Australian continent. In Kim Scott's words, literary texts are also about "about provoking and trying to open doors to a much wider audience" (Brewster 2012: 229). From such a perspective on the text, reading *That Deadman Dance* – particularly from a non-indigenous, European perspective – turns an instrument of approaching Noongar

manifestations of spatial belonging and the endless nuances of manifestations of spatiality and belonging in the early days of colonisation.

Coming back, once again, to the interrelationship between theory and text in this thesis and their reciprocal dialogue as well as to the conclusion of the analysis of Scott's novel in terms of pointing to potential theoretical and methodological itineraries, I feel obliged to eventually highlight the fact that *That Deadman Dance* "moves beyond the notion of colonizer/colonized to take into account the more complex relations of that particular time in history" (Kossew 2014: 174). Binary opposites did not work anymore during the examination of this novel precisely because the indigenous and non-indigenous lifeworlds in the early days of colonisation were more complex than that. In the same vein, this also led to the insight that structuralist models of narrative space such as Lotman's fall short of capturing the intricate nature of the represented manifestations of spatial belonging. In its structuralist understanding of narratives and their spaces, Lotman's conception had to collapse because, in its basic arrangement, it was never able to pay attention to the endless and superimposed conceptions of space that are constructed and negotiated in *That Deadman Dance*, no matter whether presented from an indigenous or non-indigenous point of view.

Another concept[80] that is worth mentioning in this final stage of the analysis of *That Deadman Dance* is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the worlding, defined as a means "to describe the way in which colonized space is brought into the 'world', that is, made to exist as part of a world essentially constructed by Euro-centrism" (Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin 2007 [2000]: 225). In Anne Brewster's (2011) application of the concept to the novel, "the worlding of *That Deadman Dance* […] enables us to bear witness, I suggest, to (1) Noongar sovereignty and (2) another kind of intercultural intersubjectivity – a zone of mutual respect, curiosity, improvisation and exchange – which attests to the continuing connectivity of indigenous and non-indigenous people" (ibid. 63). The spatial approach to the selected novel here adds to Brewster's insights the observation of Noongar spatial advocacy in terms of fighting for spatial rights and struggling to maintain their individual forms of spatial belonging to the Australian continent.

With regard to Scott's text, narratives and storytelling themselves become the most effective ways of dealing with the complexities mentioned, particularly in view of the variety of spatial practices and forms of spatial belonging in the novel. In other words,

> Scott does not necessarily see Noongar and non-Noongar relationships creating possibilities through the resolution of difference, but rather through the exchange and appropriation of different, independent

[80] For a reading of the novel with a focus on the concept of mimicry, see Das (2016). This article is part of a collection about Kim Scott's works (cf. Wheeler 2016).

> and resilient languages and forms. Story, in its creation and sharing, blurs boundaries but also preserves them, creating a space that at once connects, creates a necessary distance and respects ownership. (Quinlivan 2014: 6)

Sharing knowledge and spatial concepts via stories makes it possible to approach each other, and, as a medium, narratives can turn into a means of mutual cultural and spatial convergence. This holds true not only for the characters in the novel, such as Dr Cross, Bobby or Wunyeran, and their individual narratives but also for *That Deadman Dance* as a whole. As Sue Kossew (2014) outlines, "[i]t is perhaps only in a space of sharing, where telling stories and listening to them coexist in a changed power relationship, that a process of recovery can begin to take place" (ibid. 173). Hierarchies thus changed would empower the narrative itself and make its contents the key aspect in bringing people more closely together, for instance with a Noongar novel like *That Deadman Dance*. Here again, the text reveals its worldmaking potential because the 'friendly frontier' might possibly serve as a viable example for overall cooperation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

Although the novel is, at first glance, an account of the past, *That Deadman Dance* finally also includes an assignment for the future, because Kim

> Scott emphasizes the conjunction of past and present, an aspect of Indigenous storytelling about the past that highlights the ongoing presence of the past. It is into this space of sharing that Australians are perhaps moving, as cultural forms work through the process of guilt and apology to, in more hopeful mode, recovery. (Kossew 2014: 180)

This is, first and foremost, in line with the fact that the Noongar consider themselves to be related to their ancestors, and, thus, also the past, through space and their natural surroundings. In addition to that, it is of great relevance with regard to the focus of this analysis on historical belonging. Combining past, present and future and thus shedding light on the importance of the past times for the understanding of the present and the creation and organisation of the future, Scott's narrative can be interpreted as an impulse for bringing indigenous and non-indigenous Australians more closely together in the future. In the novel, old Bobby Wabalanginy, who looks back upon his life in some passages of the text, draws his very own conclusion from the short phase of the 'friendly frontier':

> Me and my people … My people and I […] are not so good traders as we thought. We thought making friends was the best thing, and never knew that when we took your flour and sugar and tea and blankets that we'd lose everything of ours. We learned your words and songs and stories, and never knew you didn't want to hear ours … (*TDD*: 95)

Bobby once again highlights the failure of all friendly interactions and combined spatial practices and forms of belonging. Thus, he foregrounds the fact that the attempts of mutual approximation and impulses of bridging the gap between the Noongar and the European

settlers could not be maintained in the end. Nevertheless, approaching indigenous Australian cultures such as the Noongar could be a mode of changing traditional perspectives and creating new ones because "[t]o think differently about the past is to open up the ways in which we conceive of the future" (Brewster 2011: 69) – particularly through reading indigenous Australian narratives and thus coming into contact with Aboriginal forms of knowledge, cultural practices and their manifestations of spatial belonging.

6 Balanced Belonging: Reading Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* from an Ecocritical Perspective

Although it seems almost impossible to summarise the multiple layers and endless narrative strands of Alexis Wright's novel *Carpentaria* (*CAR*, 2009 [2006]), the alpha and omega of the text is the town Desperance in Australia's Northern Territory as well as its indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants and their interrelationships, most prominently Normal Phantom, his son Will Phantom and their friend Mozzie Fishman. Normal Phantom is the leader of the Aboriginal people living in the Eastside of Desperance, who are in conflict with the Westsiders of the town, while both groups live beyond the borders of the actual city. Nevertheless, *Carpentaria* is not only a narrative about the inhabitants of the area, but also a narrative account of the rise and fall of Desperance and the final destruction of the city and its mine by a cyclone. These two focal points – the indigenous and non-indigenous people living in Australia's North and the region itself – already embrace the issue of Aboriginal peoples and their various forms of spatial belonging to their lands, including a huge variety of different perspectives on the topic. Due to its distinct focus on the region at the Gulf of Carpentaria, the selection of this locality indicates that the novel "situates itself firmly within the local" (Ng 2013: 109) and that it refers particularly to those Aboriginal peoples who feel a sense of belonging to this area. In other words, *Carpentaria* deals, first and foremost, with local spaces and modes of spatial belonging as well as the connected forms of knowledge and, what is more, it sets out to tackle pan-Australian issues of space and indigenous lands from that particular angle. Interestingly, Alexis Wright herself is "a Waanji woman from the Gulf of Carpentaria" (Heiss 2007b: 42), which means that it can be assumed that the author herself feels – in one way or the other – related to the spaces and issues she negotiates in her novel.

These spatial links are reflected by the observation that in *Carpentaria*, Wright's "major theme is the dispossession of ancient Aboriginal lands by white newcomers, and in particular by an international mining company" (Perlez 2007: 31). This novel is particularly suitable a primary text for approaching Aboriginal manifestations of spatial belonging because it illustrates the coming into conflict of indigenous Australian forms of spatial belonging and non-indigenous, economic interests in land, while drawing attention to the resulting environmental damage as well. This raises the question of how these developments are negotiated and represented in *Carpentaria* and the concomitant questions of how these developments are perceived by Wright's characters and how they influence their modes of feeling a sense of belonging to the ancestral spaces represented in the novel.

6.1 Introducing the Methodological Framework

"There is much left to do in Australian ecocriticism. Please, go crazy."
(Hughes-d'Aeth 2009: 119)

Alexis Wright's novel *Carpentaria*, whose title is already spatially charged[81], provides an endless collection of references to Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging in contemporary Australia – from ancient paths on the continent to spiritual journeys on the ocean, from indigenous ancestors and their past to current spatial issues such as mining and from the Pricklebush people to the Uptown inhabitants of Desperance, each of which lives in different areas of the town. Wright herself encourages us to read her novel with a particular focus on narrative space by making the following statement in an interview: "I wanted to feel that when I was writing this book there was more happening in our world, and to bring the soul of our world into the book. And that's the Country, that's the land and it's the land I love" (O'Brien 2007: 218). These sentences resonate not only with the relational understanding of belonging that forms the heart of this study, but also with the overall urge to discuss Aboriginal spatial issues on a regional as well as national scale. This is even more striking in view of the fact that

> [t]he success of 'Carpentaria' comes at a particularly fraught moment in relations between Aborigines and the Australian government. On June 21, [2007] the day 'Carpentaria' was announced as the winner of the Miles Franklin, the conservative Prime Minister John Howard announced a ban on alcohol and pornography in the Northern Territory as part of an effort to combat child abuse, which a government report found to be widespread in Aboriginal communities. Soon thereafter, small groups of Australian soldiers were dispatched by the government to Aboriginal settlements to enforce the no-drinking edict. (Perlez 2007: 31)

Hence, the novel's publication and its award coincided with one of the most far-reaching political decisions for Australia's original population in the twenty-first century. As both events are inextricably intertwined with the representation of Aboriginal rights as well as with the politics of space in the continent's Northern Territory, *Carpentaria* can be regarded as a novel that negotiates regional, culturally specific facets of indigenous Australian peoples that are directly interrelated with current discourses about ancestral lands and belonging.

This conflation of politics, land and the concentration on regional, spatial issues exhibited by *Carpentaria* is mirrored by the main methodological approach selected for the

[81] The selection of the title of the novel refers to its inclusion of space as a central, particularly political, category of the narrative, since "Wright said she chose the title 'Carpentaria' as a celebration of the ancestral lands that her mother and grandmother, members of the Waanyi nation, were forced from" (Perlez 2007: 31). In addition to that, it is noteworthy that, in the case of *Carpentaria*, "[i]t was the first time a novel by an Aboriginal writer had won the Miles Franklin outright" (ibid.), because this circumstance underlines the huge influence of Wright's text within the indigenous Australian literary production of the past decades.

following analysis – ecocriticism. Due to the overall observation that "ecocriticism has caught on in Australia" (Hughes-d'Aeth 2009: 114) in the past years and that, thus, ecocritical issues are increasingly brought to the fore within the study of Australian literatures and cultures, this thesis likewise considers these scholarly developments by providing an ecocritical reading of Alexis Wright's novel. Although Jane Gleeson-White (2013a) has already provided an ecocritical reading of *Carpentaria* (as well as of *That Deadman Dance*), this study follows a similar methodological path for the examination of this novel. While Gleeson-White's focus[82] is clearly on place, the environment and human beings' position(s) in these entities, which are constitutive features of this study's analysis of the text as well, my examination of *Carpentaria* particularly sheds light on the interrelationships between space and belonging, an aspect that has not been integrated into any investigation of the novel yet. Because "engagement with the environment is a pervasive presence in Australian literature" and "discussions of landscape and place have for years informed critical debate" (Clark 2007: 429), such a perspective on the novel is also in line with contemporary, pan-Australian discourses about the importance of environmental topics for the future of the nation's indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and for their belonging to the continent.

Regarding the actual methodological design of ecocriticism within this study, the approach is, first and foremost, supposed to be a form of "literary criticism that seeks to read texts ecologically" and that "has its origins in the North American academy" (Hughes-d'Aeth 2009: 114). Because "[s]imply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment", which "takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty 1996: xviii), my ecocritical reading of *Carpentaria* centres mainly on the indigenous Australians represented and their interrelationships and various interactions with their ancestral lands. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that

> ecocriticism is an avowedly political mode of analysis, as the comparison with feminism and Marxism suggests. Ecocritics generally tie their cultural analyses explicitly to a 'green' moral and political agenda. In this respect, ecocriticism is closely related to environmentally orientated developments in philosophy and political theory. Developing the insights of earlier critical movements, ecofeminists, social ecologists and environmental justice advocates seek a synthesis of environmental and social concerns. (Garrard 2012: 3-4)

This dimension of ecocriticism ties in nicely with the omnipresence of politics when dealing with indigenous Australian manifestations of spatiality and belonging. As pointed out above,

[82] Gleeson-White (2013a) describes her way of approaching *Carpentaria* and *That Deadman Dance* as follows: "Through an ecocritical examination of the conflict between capitalism and regional Indigenous management embodied in these novels, I will argue that they rewrite Australia in the voice of the regional, and offer ways of reconsidering the relation of human and non-human which contest our prevailing economic models and their role in the ecological crisis" (ibid. 1).

the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and their land should never be analysed without taking into consideration they ways in which it is constructed, shaped and affected by indigenous and non-indigenous politics of space, possession and belonging. This means that an ecocritical investigation of the novel is able to bring together the socio-political facets of indigenous Australian spatialities with the historical, social and environmental parameters of belonging that form the theoretical basis of this study. What is more, working with the approach of ecocriticism[83] makes it possible to illuminate the values that are involved in the interrelationship between Aboriginal subjects and their spatial surroundings, because "[e]cocriticism, essentially, is the study of the relation between literature and nature: in particular, the literary *representation* of nature and, just as importantly, the power of literature to inspire its readers to act in *defence* of nature" (Coupe 2013 [2006]: 154). Therefore, the moral and ethical concepts or visions of literary characters and their attitudes towards their environment, which are pivotal elements of *Carpentaria* as well, are automatically taken into account in an ecocritical reading of the novel. Because mining and the economisation of indigenous Australian lands play a key role in Wright's narrative, the fact that "ecocriticism intends specifically to address the contemporary crises in the environment (in part caused by industrial and global capitalism) from a literary perspective" (Gleeson-White 2013a: 2) makes this approach to the novel even more adequate for an investigation into its representations of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging.

Zooming in on the relationship between (post-)colonial studies and ecocriticism, ecocritical examinations of non-Western forms of the relationship between human beings and their spatial surroundings have already been recognised as a crucial mode of investigation for indigenous lifeworlds as well. As Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010) outline,

> [p]ostcolonial studies has come to understand environmental issues not only as central to the projects of European conquest and global domination, but also as inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism on which those projects historically – and persistently – depend. Not only were other people often regarded as part of nature – and thus treated instrumentally as animals – but also they were forced or co-opted over time into western views of the environment, thereby rendering cultural and environmental restitution difficult if not impossible to achieve. (Ibid. 6)

In particular, the issue of mining, one of the central themes in Wright's text, points to the importance of regarding ecocriticism as inextricably linked with (post-)colonialism as well as the connections between Australia's colonial past and current post- and neo-colonial tendencies. Thus, *Carpentaria* enables a detailed exploration of how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal approaches to and economic interests in spatiality and belonging are interrelated or

[83] The following analysis represents only one possible form of employing ecocriticism for the analysis of literary texts. Garrard (2012) lists further positions that play a crucial role within ecocritical discourses (cf. 18-36).

even conflict with each other in contemporary Australia. Therefore, "postcolonial ecocriticism – like several other modes of ecocriticism – performs an *advocacy* function both in relation to the real world(s) it inhabits and to the imaginary spaces it opens up for contemplation of how the real world might be transformed" (ibid. 13). Additionally, while appreciating the aesthetic qualities of literary texts, (post-)colonial ecocriticism is also able to shed light on activist or even political functions of fictional narratives (cf. ibid. 14). Thus, ecocriticism can be brought in line with this study's perception of literary texts as a means of worldmaking as well, because it enables an integrated examination of Wright's literary representations of Aboriginal spatialities and spatial knowledge, her negotiations of indigenous Australian politics of space as well as their political, cultural and social implications for the narrative's extraliterary world.

The understanding of ecocriticism outlined is easily compatible with the conceptualisation of Aboriginal space as a form of belonging applied here, because it concentrates on the relationships between human beings and their natural environment. Nevertheless, the proposed separation of the human from the non-human must be slightly modified, because in indigenous Australian cultures human subjects and their environment cannot be separated from one another, but are inextricably linked and mutually dependent. As sketched earlier in this thesis, space is one of the foundations of Aboriginal existence and, thus, is not to be divided from the non-human part of existence, such as in the cases of indigenous Australian nations' ancestors or their merging of spiritual and material spheres in terms of totems. Nevertheless, *Carpentaria* also represents more Western-oriented perspectives on nature, which reiterate the division between the human and the non-human. For this reason, both manifestations of analysing these relationships must be considered from now on.

Here, narratology provides a viable solution, because the selected category of narrative characters makes it possible to shed light on their different perspectives, values and attitudes towards their spatial surroundings and their respective behaviour. Thus, not only Aboriginal but also non-Aboriginal notions of spatiality can be included within this study's reading of Wright's novel. Moreover, such a take on the narrative also accounts for the fact that "the appeal to ecology is ultimately a matter of ethics" (Coupe 2000: 4) and that ecocriticism cannot be thought without involving ethical perspectives on the way literary texts represent nature, space and its interrelationships with human beings. Because these perceptions are likely to be connected to narrative characters and their subjective ways of thinking about nature, ecology and spatial belonging, this thesis investigates these multi-faceted and

subjective points of view as presented by the characters in the novel. With regard to its narratological framing, the guiding question for the structure of the primary text analysis thus is the following: Which themes regarding spatial belonging and Aboriginal spatialities are discussed by the protagonists in the text? This can shed light on the question of how the diverse figures cope with current threats to their traditional ways of negotiating a *correct relation* to their spatial surroundings, for instance due to environmental destruction.

Regarding the overall perspective on nature within ecocritical strategies for the examination of literary texts, it is noteworthy that these viewpoints nicely tie in with current discourses about the significance of spatiality within the study of literature and culture as well. According to Laurence Coupe (2000), an ecocritical or green studies approach draws attention to the fact "that the non-human world matters, it challenges the complacent culturalism which renders other species, as well as flora and fauna, subordinate to the human capacity for signification. Thus, it queries the validity of treating nature as something which is 'produced' by language" (ibid. 4). As highlighted in Chapter 3 of this thesis, Aboriginal Australian peoples do not hierarchise the connections between themselves and their lands but see themselves as being in a reciprocal relationship with their natural environments. Hence, an ecocritical reading of Wright's novel is particularly able to reveal the balanced way of life of indigenous Australian peoples in terms of belonging to their ancestral lands, because the novel constructs such a perspective on spatiality constructed textually and, thus, via language.

Moreover, the heyday of space and place, which is particularly due to the so-called spatial turn in the literary and cultural disciplines, is inextricably intertwined with discussions about ecology and indigenous peoples, as Stephen Muecke (2005) outlines:

> [I]f it is true that place has a renewed significance in Western thought, it may be because this complex body of thought, without borders, has finally become aware of the survival of so-called traditional societies and that it is these very societies that have insisted, in arguments to Western powers, that their sustainability depends on retaining their places. Suddenly, we find place elevated to more universal significance, especially in a powerful combination with global indigenous and ecological movements. (Ibid. 14)

As Muecke explains, spatialities have recently been debated not only on a theoretical or philosophical level, but the novel interest in place also takes into consideration the intersections of land, sustainability, indigenous notions of country as well as their links with Western, non-indigenous perceptions of space. What is more, with respect to current trends in spatial and ecocritical studies, "researchers are actively creating a 'space' in academia that explores the many intersections between environment, natural resource management and justice" (Lukasiewicz/Dovers/Robin/McKay/Schilizzi/Graham 2017: vi). Against this backdrop, an ecocritical reading of *Carpentaria* that highlights the ways in which Aboriginal

Australians are in balance with their spatial surroundings seems to be an even more appropriate methodological framework for the proposed analysis, because it interweaves the abovementioned dimensions with literary representations of space and critically reflects on their ethical and ecological implications at the same time.

In this regard, ecocriticism is also, and very easily, compatible with this study's classification of narratives as a means of indigenous, spatial worldmaking, because ecocritical readings of literary texts may raise awareness for directional changes in terms of thinking about the relationships between human beings and their environments. By enacting and integrating repressed or marginalised perspectives, (post-)colonial and indigenous texts, such as the primary text corpus of this thesis, are capable of making cultural disequilibria visible and pointing to potential changes for the better (cf. Gymnich 2008: 107). As Marion Gymnich (2008) points out on the basis of indigenous literatures from New Zealand, such texts can, for instance, serve as a means of presenting, in an ecological and ecocritical sense, alternatives to exploitative and economised imaginations of nature and space mostly associated with Western, non-indigenous cultures by negotiating indigenous notions of spatiality, which focus on harmonious relationships between human beings and their spatial surroundings (cf. 113). Thus, indigenous literatures, their thematisation of ecocritical issues and their narrative negotiations of spatiality can draw attention to more conscious approaches to world- and, thus, environment-making, while simultaneously including the culturally specific, political dimension of indigenous Australian manifestations of spatiality and belonging.

Last but not least, this study's ecocritical take on *Carpentaria* aims to emphasise that the omission of indigenous and natural creativity and the related perceptions of nature leads to a "monoculture of knowledge" (Shiva 1997: 9). Therefore, the analysis of the novel works against this monoculture and the monocultures of narratively represented forms of knowledge by specifically discussing the complexity of spatial-indigenous forms of knowledge and their interrelationships with non-indigenous perspectives on spatiality. Along with that, *Carpentaria* is also examined in such a manner that the literary text forms the backdrop of a dialogue between text and selected methodology, which means that the contents of the novel and its negotiations of Aboriginal knowledge are constantly seen as a means of challenging the approach of ecocriticism. Thus, this thesis seeks to present an analysis of *Carpentaria* that stresses the text's *polyculture* of represented forms of knowledge and spatialities and its multifaceted discussions of Aboriginal Australian manifestations of balanced belonging.

As mentioned above, the structure of this chapter is based upon the diverse spatial themes of the novel that are mirrored in the respective headings, each of which refers to one

pivotal issue discussed in the narrative. Because the novel represents indigenous Australian spatialities from their very beginnings up to the destruction of the town of Desperance and potential futures of the area and, thus, supports the idea of temporality as being circular rather than linear, this chapter also follows such a temporal axis in terms of the order of the themes analysed. Beginning with the overall creation of the local peoples' ancestral lands that later become Desperance and its surrounding spaces including the mine, the examination of *Carpentaria* follows this spatio-temporal path and introduces the numerous and highly different manifestations of belonging in relation to this cycle of events and its representation through the eyes and minds of its most important characters and their subjective perceptions of space.

6.2 Reading Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* from an Ecocritical Perspective

Spatial and Temporal Evolutions: The Rainbow Serpent and the Narrative Creation of the Omnipresence of Spatiality in Wright's Fictional Aboriginal Lifeworlds

Alexis Wright's novel *Carpentaria* is one of the most powerful, contemporary accounts of the complexity of Aboriginal spatial knowledge and places, because it places specific emphasis on "the innately fluid, flexible, and vibrant qualities of indigenous culture" (Ng 2013: 110). This becomes evident at the very beginning of Wright's novel, when she refers to the creation of the overall setting of her narrative world – the area of Desperance and the spatial surroundings of the town in Australia's north – and thus introduces the topics of space and belonging as central themes of her story:

> When it [the ancestral serpent] finished creating the many rivers in its wake, it created one last river, no larger or smaller than the others, a river which offers no apologies for its discontent with people who do not know it. This is where the giant serpent continues to live deep down under the ground in a vast network of limestone aquifers. They say its being is porous; it permeates everything. It is all around in the atmosphere and is attached to the lives of the river people like skin. (*CAR* 2)

Just as this literary representation of a serpent is a multidimensional entity that exists spiritually, materially and mentally for the indigenous peoples living at the Gulf of Carpentaria, spatiality and belonging are omnipresent elements of the novel. In this passage, Wright refers to the rainbow serpent, "which is found in most Aboriginal mythologies" and "is a symbol of water and life; sometimes […] also an ancestral being" (Rickard 1988: 3). In the passage above, the serpent fulfils all of these functions and is marked, from the very beginning of the text, as a means of establishing a sense of belonging to the spaces and places represented in the novel.

Interestingly, this literary representation of the rainbow serpent combines, as early as in the first chapter of the narrative, the most pivotal issues for this study's reading of *Carpentaria*, beginning with the overall significance of spatiality for the Aboriginal cultures with a particular focus on Northern Australia. Just as the ancestral animal "permeates everything" (*CAR* 2), spatiality permeates all aspects of the indigenous Australians characters' lives in the novel. In addition to that, the serpent symbolises, in Linn Miller's understanding, the foundation of the characters' environmental belonging to space in the novel, because it formed the landscape at the Gulf of Carpentaria and is still to be found there today as a preserver of the land. As it also bodily interlinks the people with their spatial surroundings and because it is presented as an integral facet of the local indigenous Australians' lives, the serpent highlights the overlap of Aboriginal spatiality and social formations of belonging as well.

The most striking example of this spatial contingency of social structures of belonging in *Carpentaria* is probably the separation of the indigenous population into Eastsiders and Westsiders because of a dispute between the two groups. Due to this situation, the white people of Desperance "were being sandwiched between Aboriginal people" (*CAR* 30), and the social structures of the city's indigenous manifestations of belonging are visible. Because the ancestral snake "came down those billions of years ago, to crawl on its heavy belly, all around the wet clay soils in the Gulf of Carpentaria" (*CAR* 1), it finally also mirrors the Aboriginal people's historical belonging to the land. The serpent links indigenous pasts, presents and futures, and it manifests the everlasting, spiritual belonging of the Aboriginal communities of Desperance to their spatial surroundings and the omnipresent relationships with their ancestors, because it metaphorically unearths space and the lives of indigenous Australian people as indivisible spheres. For these reasons, the rainbow serpent exhibits an inherently ambiguous, multi-layered nature as the creator of spatial forms of belonging and, in that sense, functions as a means of literary worldmaking in Wright's narrative as well. This influential status of the rainbow serpent is further corroborated by its positioning in the very first paragraphs of the text. Just as it created the landscapes and rivers at the Gulf of Carpentaria, the serpent seems to initiate and form the contents, structures and storylines of the novel and the narrative world of its Aboriginal characters.

The serpent also gains importance with regard to the narrative dimension of time in the text. What holds true for space – the fact that the serpent permeates all aspects of the spatial lifeworlds of the illustrated indigenous Australian peoples represented and highlights their inseparable relationship with and omnipresent belonging to their lands – applies to time as

well. As Elizabeth Lowry (2008) underlines, "[j]ust as the serpent is both the region's river system and the totemic Rainbow Serpent of Aboriginal creation stories, so the novel occupies two parallel time zones, or streams of activity, one linear and the other part of an infinite spiritual cycle" (ibid. 26). This means that two very different perspectives constitute the temporal level of the narrative. On the one hand, there is the presence of the Aboriginal ancestors within an everlasting temporal spiral, while on the other hand, there is a linear temporality, which seems to be more oriented towards non-indigenous conceptions that clearly distinguish between past, present and future. Once again, Wright's text does not offer a simple or one-dimensional notion of time, but an irresolvable overlap of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal lifeworlds. Thus, the novel is, in terms of its function as a means of worldmaking, a constructor of a (post-)colonial narrative world that blurs the boundaries between past, present and future and offers a multi-dimensional and more inclusive viewpoint regarding different perceptions of temporality and their hierarchisations instead.

From an ecocritical perspective, another facet of the rainbow serpent is of particular interest as well: its rootedness in local Aboriginal stories and spaces. As, within the narrative, the animal is inextricably linked with the region around the Gulf of Carpentaria, it is marked as a creature of precisely this area, not of any other state or space on the Australian continent. Due to its role as a guardian of the country, it is thus endowed with spatial agency and the power to take care of the ancestral lands of the local indigenous peoples. This is further emphasised by the fact that the animal is illustrated as still living in the riverbeds it created in order to watch over the near human beings nearby as well. Nevertheless, the initial passage of the novel also points to the peoples' responsibility for the river and space in general, because the water "offers no apologies for its discontent with people who do not know it" (*CAR* 2). From the very beginning, the relationship between Aboriginal beings and the country is framed as a reciprocal one that is dependent on mutual attention. As long as this balance between the land and its indigenous population, which is inherent in its creation and symbolised by the rainbow serpent, is kept alive by taking care of each other, it is very likely that an undisturbed environmental, historical and social connection between the Aboriginal characters and their country can be maintained.

History and Space: The Novel as a Repository of Local Historical Knowledge

In Wright's narrative, the establishment and maintenance of a balanced relationship between the novel's indigenous characters and their country is inextricably linked with local, culturally specific knowledge of Australia's north. Hence, from the very beginning of the text, Wright's

novel aims to highlight, for instance with the help of the rainbow serpent as a local manifestation of Aboriginal, ancestral creatures, the fact that only those who are endowed with and actively apply the spatial knowledge of the region are also capable of belonging to the land in a balanced way. Thus, *Carpentaria* introduces one of its central issues, the promotion of belonging to the local rather than the global, already in its opening pages by conceptualising belonging as the result of the construction, circulation and passing on of local Dreaming narratives, traditions and spatial knowledge. Such a reading of the text is also encouraged by what Mozzie Fishman, one of the Aboriginal characters from Desperance postulates in relation to the town's mine:

> 'You know who we all hear about all the time now?' he asked us. 'International mining company. Look how we got to suit international mining people. Rich people. How we going to do that?' […] 'I says,' he says like he is singing, 'we mobs got to start acting locally. Show whose got the Dreaming. The Laaaw.' He liked to empathise 'The Laaaaw' whenever he was heating up around the ears on the subject of globalisation. (*CAR* 392)

In his statement, Mozzie conflates the abovementioned strands of the spatial knowledge represented in the text with the importance of the Dreaming narratives as well as the distinct setting of the novel in order to lay the foundations for fighting off the power of a globalised economy and the affiliated companies. In ecocritical terms, Fishman marks globalisation and the related destruction of Aboriginal lands as one of the main threats to indigenous Australian forms of belonging and highlights the empowerment of culturally specific, local knowledge as a potential means for newly strengthening Aboriginal communities and lifeworlds.

This is also in line with what Alexis Wright indicated as one of the aims of her novel in an interview, where she stated that "[f]rom an Indigenous writer's viewpoint, I am trying to bring out the way that we think as people, and something of our humanity, something of our character, something of our soul. That's what I've tried to do in *Carpentaria*" (O'Brien 2007: 217). Creating a specifically Aboriginal perspective on belonging, land and country with narrative representations of local knowledge, such as the rainbow serpent or the inclusion of spatial attitudes such as Mozzie Fishman's perception of North Australia, the novel accomplishes, from the very first chapter, what Wright intends to achieve: it conceptualises its narrative setting as the ultimate and only source of the local indigenous peoples' belonging to their communities, their ancestors and their surroundings. *Carpentaria* highlights the centrality of (spatial) knowledge for contemporary Aboriginal literatures on two different levels: fictional narratives are not only a means of storing, negotiating and circulating information about indigenous Australian spatialities and belonging, but they are also a medium for representing culturally specific, local and individual perspectives on land and, in

the case of *Carpentaria*, their interrelationships with intra- and extraliterary discourses on topics such as globalisation or the economisation of land.

In the passage quoted above, there is another relevant aspect that seems to have influenced the relationships between the Pricklebush and the Uptown people since the latter have come to the area of the Gulf of Carpentaria: the colonisation of the Australian continent and its consequences for the country's original population. The non-indigenous people justify their taking possession of the land with their mapping of the area, probably during the colonisation of Australia, and with the fact that the resulting papers exactly demarcate the area of Desperance from their point of view. In contrast to that, the indigenous inhabitants of the Pricklebush do not map their lands but employ their spiritual creatures and oral narratives that have been passed on from generation to generation as the legitimation for their being on their ancestral lands.

What is more, these observations are again reminiscent of the Aboriginal time cycle and the linear, non-indigenous perception of time, respectively, as well as the differentiation between oral and written cultures and their hierarchisation. On the basis of their papers, the non-Aboriginal people classify their justification and methods as being of greater value than the stories of the Pricklebush groups. Additionally, the "Uptown people said all people were born without lands and came to the new world of Desperance carrying no baggage" (*CAR* 59). In this sentence, it becomes evident that the white people who came to the area during or after the colonisation of Australia do not acknowledge the spiritual grounding and presence of the Aboriginal population at the Gulf of Carpentaria ever since the rainbow serpent has shaped the continent. They deny the indigenous traditions by imposing their colonial ideology of discovering, occupying and taking possession of spaces over the ancestral interrelationships with the land. Taking into consideration that Wright's narrative takes place a long time after the arrival and actual colonisation of Australia, the Uptown characters of the text showcase distinctly neo-colonial tendencies. They clearly relate themselves to the first white settlers in Australia and use their colonial history as the legitimation of their property of ancestral lands.

Mining: The Economisation of Indigenous Australian Spatial Belonging

These differences in perceiving and interacting with space are further thematised in relation to the most crucial issue in *Carpentaria* from an ecocritical angle: mining and its connections with Aboriginal approaches to spatiality and belonging. In the novel, many of the people living in Desperance work at the mine and live on the active exploitation of ancestral lands. These people do not seem to scrutinise the consequences of their activities but are rather

interested in the growth of the town and the protection and maintenance of their own financial situation:

> Desperance had become a boom town with a more sophisticated outlook now, because it belonged totally to the big mine. When the mine came along with all of its big equipment, big ideas, big dollars from the bank – Well! Why not? Every bit of Uptown humanity went for it – lock, stock and barrel. The mine bought off the lot of them, including those dogs over Eastside. […] They were all doing deals. (*CAR* 94-95)

The inhabitants do not perceive or question their dependence the mine and its operators; the people believe in the promises of the company and are happy to receive lots of money for their cooperation. Nevertheless, the most crucial aspect of the passage above is the mentioning of the fact that Aboriginal people, here the families living in the Eastside of Desperance, are likewise to be found among those who support the mine. This is remarkable because this attitude does not seem to be compatible with an environmental, historical or social way of belonging to ancestral spaces, inasmuch as working at the mine means promoting the destruction of these lands. In the novel, there are various Aboriginal inhabitants of Desperance who work at the mine, for instance Inso and Donny Phantom, "the two oldest Phantom brothers. Everybody in town said these boys did nothing for anybody except for money. They worked in the mine from day one" (*CAR* 104). Another example is Joseph Midnight, a member of the Aboriginal people living in the Eastside of the town. Since he agreed to be supportive of the mine, he has been living with his family in a new house financed by the government (cf. *CAR* 357). Still, Joseph clearly regrets his decision, as "[h]e spat towards the new house whenever it caught his eye. He was suffering the unrelenting pain of a wrong decision" (*CAR* 358). Compared with Donny and Inso Phantom, there are various nuances of indigenous Australian reactions to the mine. Apart from those who distinctly distance themselves from the big company, its supporters are diverse and sometimes even ambivalent in their responses to mining. Although they all have been lured by money alone, Aboriginal people such as Joseph Midnight seem to recognise their belonging to their country again and are not happy with their decision.

Ecocritically speaking, the opening of the mine and the resulting attempts to convince the indigenous Australians living in Desperance of the mining intentions signify an economisation of Aboriginal lands and the related indigenous Australian forms of belonging. The company that opens the mine does not take the positive reactions of the indigenous population of the town in terms of the destruction of their ancestral lands for granted but spends money to satisfy the Aboriginal people instead. The land itself becomes the pivotal point of discussion because the mine can only be established successfully if at least some of

the indigenous peoples of the town agree with the plans of the company. Thus, the ancestral areas of the Eastside and the Westside people of Desperance undergo a politicisation of space as well, and the maintenance of the traditions of the land's original inhabitants is dependent on the economic development of the region.

From an ecocritical point of view, it is remarkable that not only the land but also its ancestral laws are destroyed during the process of mining because the functioning of indigenous Australian lifeworlds and the belonging to their environment is inextricably linked with the preservation of spatial intactness. The novel makes this aspect a subject of discussion once again in relation to Joseph Midnight, whose financial deal is also seen as an "extortion racket with the government" (*CAR* 51) by other indigenous inhabitants of Desperance. Referring to the laws of their own people, they phrase their opinion as follows: "Money talks. This was what he got for his Native title rights" (ibid.). Instead of keeping alive his own traditions, Joseph has decided to take the money. Thus, they consider Joseph's money a definite substitute for his own rights in terms of his ancestral lands and think of him as an avaricious man solely interested in the financial survival of his own family. With this sentence, they clearly state that they classify his behaviour as a destruction of their own belonging to the indigenous spaces of Australia's north – the mine visibly eliminates their environmental belonging to the land and thus also the social and historical bonds within the Aboriginal groups of Desperance. Regarding the ecocritical reading of the novel, it is mandatory to point out that the mining company ultimately changes the ancestral grounds for economic and financial purposes only – one the one hand, is does change the natural, spatial capacities of the region by polluting the environment and modifying the landscape; on the other hand, it does change the cultural capacities by destroying the most crucial element of indigenous Australian lifeworlds.

Carpentaria not only addresses the diverse perspectives on the overall changes of ancestral spaces due to mining but also sheds light on the overall damage caused by the big mine. Mozzie Fishman takes a very striking perspective in this case. Mozzie calls those who foster or work at the mine "men who disturbed the earth" (*CAR* 168), which simultaneously refers to the cultural and environmental consequences these people are responsible for. Mozzie seems to perceive these people as active agents that disrupt the inseparability between Aboriginal people and their land established by their ancestors. Such an interpretation of *Carpentaria* is also promoted by the text itself, which offers a literal painting of the consequences of the mining processes for the people living in the area and its indigenous inhabitants:

> The whole oceanic world seemed to be occupied in the Gulf. It was a grey painter's palette of tankers exchanging mining equipment for mined ore that came to the coast, after the flesh of the earth had been shunted there by pipelines, tying up the country with new Dreaming tracks cutting through the old. (*CAR* 372-373)

Although the novel represents the pipelines as new 'Dreaming tracks' and, thus, as a potential element of indigenous Australian lifeworlds, the changes of the landscape imply a re-organisation of the ancestral spaces that can never be undone. From a narratological angle, it is worth noticing that the construction and representation of narrative space at this point of the novel seems to be conducted from a distinctly indigenous Australian point of view because the land is seen as the 'flesh of the earth' and the new developments as a violation of this flesh. At this point of the narrative, the ancestral areas of the Desperance region are humanised and put on one level with human beings in general. This way of proceeding that involves a clear de-hierarchisation of space and the people that live in it is more in line with Aboriginal notions of spatiality that seek to perceive space in its entirety than with non-indigenous conceptions of space that subordinate space to human beings and exploit its natural resources without thinking of the long-term consequences. Ecocritically speaking, the indigenous Australian politics of land do seek to maintain the land as the foundation of all human existence, whereas those supporting the mine advocate a perception of space as the foundation of economic success and wealth.

In line with his reading of the text, *Carpentaria* directly addresses the environmental pollution that is caused by the mine[84] as well. In the novel, Joseph Midnight and Will Phantom, one of Normal's sons, "had sat in the hills and watched the water birds flock to the chemical-ridden tailings dams, where the water was highly concentrated with lead" (*CAR* 379). In this passage, the catastrophic consequences for nature and the ancestral surroundings of the indigenous population of Desperance become palpable. The work at the mine leads to an intoxication of the river and the animals of the area. Taking into consideration the significance of the river for the Aboriginal peoples of the region and their rainbow snake, it becomes even more evident that the contamination of the water is tantamount to the destruction of the foundation of all forms of life – without the rainbow serpent and, thus, the ancestral Dreaming narratives, the foundation of the town's indigenous Australians in terms of belonging socially, historically and environmentally to their spatial surroundings is gone. Because the above-mentioned birds from the text later "bred a mutation" (ibid.), the

[84] Frances Devlin-Glass (2007) further underlines the worldmaking potential and political implications of Wright's narrative by stating that "[i]n a period when another great tropical river (the McArthur south of Borroloola, Northern Territory) is about to be diverted for silver, lead and zinc (by Xstrata), regardless of the ecological consequences and indigenous resistance, mobilizing indigenous ecological knowledge via traditional narratives could not be a more important political use for a work of literature" (ibid. 83).

chemicals gradually damage the future and the whole life cycle of nature and, in the end, the space that is the alpha and omega for Aboriginal ways of belonging to their cultures.

Among the characters of *Carpentaria* and their individual perspectives on indigenous Australian spatial belonging and mining, the most striking figure is probably Will Phantom. Because "[t]he snake he once saw was the living atmosphere" and "[i]ts body stretched from horizon to horizon, covering each point of a compass, and encasing them all" (*CAR* 193), he is – just like his father Normal – introduced as a person who relates to nature and space and, interestingly, to the image of the snake. In the course of the novel, he then becomes the indigenous character that most distinctly rebels against the mine: "The whole world had turned upside down two years ago when Will Phantom had blocked Gurfurritt's pipeline in a dozen different places along the 150-kilometre stretch, when it was being built to carry the ore from the mine to the coastline" (*CAR* 351-352). After this incident, Will leaves the area of the Gulf of Carpentaria. When he returns to the region with the convoy of Mozzie Fishman, he stays at a lagoon right before Desperance and is hunted by a helicopter of the mine and two of its workers who intend to shoot him (cf. *CAR* 166). Will is then kidnapped and brought to the mine by a helicopter but is later freed by members of Mozzie Fishman's convoy (cf. *CAR* 387). Hence, the conflict with the mine remains and, upon his return, Will is still accused of having blocked the pipeline – even after two years, the company running the mine is still interested in catching Will.

This conflict highlights the fact that the company considers the value of their economic aims to be more important than the life of a human being or the spatial rights of the original peoples of the land they ruin. They solely intend to earn money and are willing to approve the demolition of the indigenous peoples' lands and traditions. Will's overall attitude towards spatial belonging, the mining company and the destruction of the ancestral lands of his peoples becomes even more palpable when one takes a closer look at his perspective on the meetings of the mine with the indigenous and non-indigenous population of Desperance: "Will did not underestimate those innocent friendly meetings where the mining representatives claimed not to know what was required from Native title claims. He believed the company knew government legislation and procedures related to Indigenous rights like the back of its hand" (*CAR* 376). In contrast to many others, Will does not trust the company; he is aware of their financial and economic goals that cannot be brought in line with Aboriginal interests, and he actively attempts to protect his ancestral spaces. He is one of the few characters in the narrative that emerge as a political agent conducting distinct protest actions aimed at damaging the mine. Thus, he politicises his indigenous surroundings on the basis of

his own convictions – his belonging to the land, his ancestors and his social bonds with his Aboriginal peoples. From an ecocritical point of view, Will just cannot passively endure the destruction of the literal ground of his belonging to Australia's north, which is why he employs his indigenous beliefs in order to secure the prospective source of life of the town's Aboriginal population in terms of keeping alive their cultural and spatial lifeworlds.

Destruction: The End of Desperance, Mining and Aboriginal Spatial Belonging

Before a cyclone finally destroys the whole town of Desperance, a fire breaks out in the area, which later blows up the whole mine (cf. *CAR* 386). With regard to the ecocritical analysis of the text, it is worth taking a look at the final blowing up of the mine as described from an Aboriginal perspective:

> The finale was majestical. Dearo, dearie, the explosion was holy in its glory. All of it was gone. The whole mine, pride of the banana state, ended up looking like a big panorama of burnt chop suey. On a grand scale of course because our country is a very big story. Wonderment, was the ear on the ground listening to the great murmuring ancestor, and the earth shook the bodies of those ones lying flat on the ground in the hills. Then, it was dark with smoke and dust and everything turned silent for a long time. (*CAR* 395)

In addition to the use of superlatives to illustrate the burning down of the mine, the word choice and representation of the scene likewise add to the supportive and sometimes even sacral undertone of the passage. At this point, the narrative perspective is created in such a way that it takes the position of a supporter of those Aboriginal people who seek to eliminate the mine. In such an understanding of the text, the communication with the 'great murmuring ancestor' and the following silence seem to turn into indicators for the re-established balance between the indigenous Australians that blow up the mine and their spatial surroundings. The mine seems to be a means of disrupting the process of keeping alive the social, environmental and historical belonging to the ancestral lands that must be removed.

The final silence supports the reading of the passage as a restoration of the spatial belonging to the indigenous spaces. From a literary studies perspective, the narrative foundation of Aboriginal lifeworlds that is mentioned is worth noticing as well. In an interview, Alexis Wright said the following about her novel: "We come from a long history […] in this country, we have got ancient epical stories that tell about how the land has been created, and that is still very important to Aboriginal people whether they live in urban areas of the country or remote areas" (O'Brien 2007: 216). Wright herself closes the gap between the narratives of her people and their forms of spatial belonging inasmuch as ancestral narratives about the creation and perpetuation of space are the framework of belonging and draw a line from the medial form of her novel to the lifeworlds her characters inhabit.

In the end, Wright's narrative continuation of Aboriginal spatial belonging in *Carpentaria* represents, within the framework of an ecocritical analysis of the novel, a conceptualisation that is diametrically opposed to the non-indigenous economisation of space, which is represented in the novel by the mining company. In the context of discourses of spatiality and belonging, such an economisation of space poses nothing less than a threat to the maintenance of indigenous Australian spatial belonging because the exploitation of natural resources renders an environmental way of belonging to one's own spaces impossible. In other words,

> structural obstacles to belonging include also the constituents of modern capitalism that envisage the earth in terms of private property, so that places become interchangeable units of the underlying economic substratum of property. This is a framework that envisages place in instrumental terms, reduces attachment to profitability or other market benefits and reduces the value of land to a potential for accruing these benefits. (Plumwood 2002: 363)

While indigenous Australian cultures do not see their ancestral lands as the property of individual human beings, particularly (post-)colonial and non-indigenous perceptions of land are based on the idea of spatial units that are possessed either by one person or collectives and that can be exploited in order to earn money. In *Carpentaria*, these spatial conceptualisations are, on the one hand, always linked with one another in a narrative representation of present-day Australia in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal lifeworlds are reciprocal influencing factors in the creation of twenty-first-century realities. On the other hand, the divergent perspectives on spatiality finally lead to the blowing up of the mine, because characters such as Will Phantom do not believe in the promises of the mining company and are not willing to accept the resulting destruction of space.

To sum up the insights gained about the mine and its company in the course of this ecocritical reading of Wright's text, it becomes more and more evident that mining can be seen as a post- and even a neo-colonial practice, especially in relation to the history of the Australian continent. No matter where mining endeavours take place, there will always be indigenous people who constitute the original population of this area. Hence, mining in Australia cannot be thought of without taking into consideration Aboriginal manifestations of spatial belonging and the spatial traditions that are inextricably linked with their spaces and lifeworlds. At the same time, the economic purposes of mining lay bare the existing power relations inherent in non-indigenous conceptions of spatiality in terms of categorising space not as an equal partner and as a source of life but simply as a means of creating and maintaining financial and economic stability.

For these reasons, it must be acknowledged that "to deny colonial and environmental histories as mutually constitutive misses the central role the exploitation of natural resources

plays in any imperial project" (DeLoughrey/Handley 2011: 10). This means that, in addition to the above-mentioned aspects, the hierarchisation of space as being subordinate in relation to human beings serves as a means of securing power on the basis of a functioning economy. Thus, mining in the twenty-first century is a continuation of the spatial interests of the early settlers and, thus, a neocolonial manifestation of early colonial, spatial practices. This viewpoint is supported by Stephen Muecke (2005) who clearly states that

> from those early days when whites and blacks, separately or together, made their lives nomadic in search of sudden wealth or, more likely, bare subsistence on the prospecting trails, we can shoot forwards […] to the situation where the big businesses of extraction of mineral wealth still depend on indigenous cooperation. (Ibid. 101)

Muecke's statement reveals another very important point that Wright's text deals with as well and that is part of all colonial spatial practices in Australia: the dependence on Aboriginal Australians. From the colonial occupation of the continent up to the present day, spatial practices in Australia cannot be thought without the country's indigenous population and their individual rights. In *Carpentaria*, the mining company attempts to convince the inhabitants of Desperance of their good intentions by paying huge amounts of money, but in the end, those indigenous people who, like Will Phantom, do not believe in the promises of the company destroy the mine. For these reasons, the text emphasises the recognition that cooperation with Aboriginal peoples regarding their ancestral lands does not mean silencing potential opponents with financial aids but establishing a mutual dialogue in order to protect indigenous spaces and the unique forms of belonging of their respective peoples. Only if cooperation takes into consideration Aboriginal interests – and not, as Wright's text illustrates, merely those of big companies – a permanent re-iteration of colonial, spatial practices can be prevented in the long run.

Because this chapter focuses on an ecocritical examination of indigenous Australian manifestations of spatial belonging, it is useful to analyse the narrative negotiation of mining and the re-establishment of the balanced belonging of indigenous peoples and their lands by agents such as winds or the rainbow serpent in more detail. When the inhabitants of Desperance leave the town because a cyclone has been announced (cf. *CAR* 449), Will Phantom returns to the area although he knows that a cyclone will be coming soon. At this point of the narrative, his individual relationship with and his unique way of belonging to his country in a spatial way are emphasised once again: "Will believed this. Everyone clearly saw what the spirits saw. The country looked dirty from mining, shipping, barges spilling ore and waste. Something had to run a rake across the lot" (*CAR* 385). In addition to the interrelationship between Will and the country, this passage is probably one of the most

striking in the novel in terms of its distinct articulation of an existing imbalance between the land and its indigenous peoples. The consequences of the mining in the area pollute the Aboriginal areas, which must be cleaned from everything that disturbs the interrelationships between the indigenous inhabitants and their ancestral spaces.

Because the novel particularly focuses on the northern part of Australia and its local manifestations of the Dreaming, the rainbow serpent plays – once again – a crucial role when it comes to the spatial recovery of the region: "The earth murmured, the underground serpent, living in the underground river that was kilometres wide, responded with hostile growls. This was the old war of the ancestors making cyclones grow to use against one another" (*CAR* 453). In order to bring the land back to its original condition, the ancestors and their spaces become active spatial agents at this point of the narrative and use a cyclone for their purposes. Due to the mining and the destruction of the region, the ancestral powers seem to communicate with each other in order to plan their own recovery. In ecocritical terms, this passage appears to highlight the fact that the earth and the land are not able to bear the violations of the mine any more, which is why they aim to combine their strengths and take care of their own existence.

When Will is back in Desperance, he experiences the powers of the cyclone and witnesses of the destruction of the town and the powers of his ancestors:

> This new reality had nothing to do with the order of man. There was no town of Desperance. It was gone. A monster followed him instead. The houses, the loading port, the boats and cars, every bit of every so-and-so's this or that, along with the remains of the pipeline for the ore from the mine, and even the barges and cargo snatched up by the cyclone had travelled inland, and were coming back. Every bit of it had been crushed into a rolling mountainous wall that now included the hotel where only moments ago, Will Phantom had been standing. It was at this point he realised how history could be obliterated when the Gods move the country. He saw history rolled, reshaped, undone and mauled as the great creators of the natural world engineered the bounty of everything man had ever done into something more of their own making. […] The bulwark of the spirits rose from the waters, and he saw nothing monstrous or hideous in this new creation taking shape, moving, rolling, changing appearance, and beauty in its strident crashing back into the water. (*CAR* 473)

In this narrative account of the final spatial re-establishment of the Desperance region, the regularities of space and time seem to be destroyed – the ancestral energies make a clean sweep in order to start afresh and without the destructive forces of the mine. The cyclone not only destroys the pipelines and the mine, but it also literally takes away everything that disrupts the spatial belonging of the local indigenous people and their relationships with their ancestors. Interestingly, Will's representation of the events has a spiritual, even religious, undertone. Because, from his point of view this moment appears like the beginning of a new era, the integral nature of indigenous Australian notions of spatiality and temporality are highlighted by the initiation of a new time on the basis of a restructuring of space. This image

of a temporal and spatial tabula rasa is solely the result of non-human, Aboriginal forces. The passage and the destruction of Desperance render the non-indigenous, neo-colonial spatial logic of the mining company pretentious and illogical with regard to the indigenous Australian land laws.

The superimposition of the merely economic purposes on the Aboriginal ways of belonging to their spatial surroundings in a balanced way and the non-indigenous hierarchisation of space as being subordinate to human beings are turned upside down as soon as the cyclone hits the town of Desperance and the mine. In this situation, the local laws of the Dreaming – with the rainbow serpent as one of its central figures – unfold their spiritual strength and emphasise that no human being can finally cut through the spatially grounded belonging of indigenous Australians to their cultures. Because it is not only the ancestral forces that seek to damage the mine but also some of the Aboriginal people of Desperance, the above-quoted passage from the novel underlines that the

> ontological account of the relation between person and place is nowhere more poetically expressed than in Aboriginal Dreaming stories. These mythic narratives clearly articulate the very porous existential relation that indigenous Australians have with country. In these accounts the idea that person and place profoundly influence each other can also be seen as taking this idea one step further – Aboriginal persons and their country are ontologically indivisible. The idea of 'spiritual' procreation has profound implications in this regard. Each Aboriginal person is directly linked to a particular conception or birthplace, ancestral being and totem. This, more than their biological heritage, determines who they are in relation to the land and other beings. (Miller 2006: 214)

In Wright's text, this ontological interrelationship between the town's Aboriginal peoples and their spatial surroundings and ways of belonging, respectively, are nowhere more clearly articulated than in Will Phantom's perception of the cyclone arriving in Desperance. The timeless spatial powers of the ancestors are ultimately combined with the knowledge of the present-day Aboriginal people in order to newly confirm their indivisibility that marks the pivotal element of constructing and maintaining the local indigenous inhabitants' sense of belonging – environmentally to their spatial surroundings, socially to their indigenous collective and historically to their ancestors and traditions on the basis of the Dreaming as the framework for the spatial contingence of their individual form of belonging.

Concluding *Carpentaria's* discussions of spatial destructions, the spirit of optimism and renewal that is inherent in the wiping out of the town culminates in the end of Will's travelling back to Desperance: "It was there, during the night, that Will was washed onto a wet, slippery object. […] Relieved for such an absolution of light, he looked down to find he had been dumped onto an extraordinary floating island of rubbish" (*CAR* 475). In addition to the obvious ecocritical stance of this passage, which is due to its criticism of oceanic pollution and overconsumption leading to non-manageable amounts of waste, it seems almost ironic

that Will, who fought for the maintenance of his peoples' spatial traditions and stories, ends up on remains symbolising the inability of coping with space in the twenty-first century. The fact that Will lands on an island in the ocean also refers to the spatial knowledge of his father Normal Phantom, whose totemic relationship with the sea finds a novel expression in his son's return to his home lands. After his years away from this region and the destruction of the town, Will is capable of creating a revived sense of belonging to the ancestral spaces of his people on the rubbish island and "[t]he journey Will takes on the floating island of rubbish is a journey of self-awareness; towards reconnecting with community but also re-imagining the parameters of home, nation and identity" (Hall 2012: 3). Already pointing to the issue of the future of the area, Will realigns his life with his ancestral space, and he re-creates a new sense of belonging to his homelands on the basis of something old, more specifically the remains of a way of life that is not in balance with nature and that is the direct opposite of the Aboriginal way of belonging to their country.

Spatial Futures: Disruptive Means for Restoring Ends?

At the end of the novel, Normal Phantom walks with Will's son Bala back to his homelands – across what he sees as an "empty land" (*CAR* 497) due to the destruction of Desperance by a cyclone – after they have returned from their search for Will from the sea. In the novel, the two characters' spatial surroundings and their atmosphere are represented as follows: "It was a mystery, but there was so much song wafting off the watery land, singing the country afresh as they walked hand in hand out of town, down the road, Westside, to home" (*CAR* 499). Although the country has been changed entirely, the narrative design of the passage rather introduces a recommencement than a final destruction of the landscape.

With regard to indigenous Australian lifeworlds and the ecocritical approach of this analysis, the balance between the ancestral lands and its Aboriginal peoples of the Gulf of Carpentaria seems to be re-established. Interestingly, the rainbow serpent brings the text full circle – not only Will Phantom refers the rainbow snake to the cyclone, but also in the beginning of the novel, it holds responsible for the changing course of the town's river and the resulting drying out of the port of Desperance (cf. *CAR* 3). The rainbow serpent, an ancestral creature of the Dreaming narratives, is endowed with ecological and spatial power, and it becomes the guard of the balanced belonging between the Aboriginal peoples of the town and their ancestral lands. Finally, the serpent possesses the agency to cure the indigenous Australian historical, social and environmental belonging to their spaces destroyed by the company and their mine by means of the natural force of a cyclone. From an ecocritical

perspective, the rainbow serpent represents the urgency to sustain our own spatial surroundings as the basis of any form of life as well as the perpetual permeation of spatial belonging in all aspects of the novel and, thus, Aboriginal cultures with spatial belonging.

Putting the overall conceptualisation of culture and spatiality in a nutshell, "[t]he novel privileges a notion of culture as living and evolving, a palimpsest in continual flux" (Molloy 2012: 2). *Carpentaria* does not bring to the fore a notion of Aboriginal, spatial lifeworlds as set or secluded but as dynamic and ever changing spheres. Thus, belonging to the narratively constructed spaces in Wright's novel is always dependent on volatile environmental, historical and social factors that are – and this seems to be the most essential insight gained from the ecocritical reading of the text – invariably bound to their ancestral lands and the maintenance of indigenous Australian spatial knowledge. Because the preservation of belonging to one's own Aboriginal surroundings is, as *Carpentaria* clearly illustrates, always inextricably linked with keeping alive the balance[85] between human beings and their spatial environment, the novel also conveys a distinct message with regard to its own narrative positioning vis-à-vis indigenous Australian politics of space and the destruction of ancestral lands, which is appropriately summarised by Deborah Bird Rose (1996): "The interdependence of all life within country constitutes a hard but essential lesson – those who destroy their country ultimately destroy themselves" (ibid. 10). In the case of Wright's novel, this lesson is taught by means of a cyclone and the destruction of Desperance as a consequence of the mining in the region. The economic and financial objectives of the mining company eventually lead to the coming into effect of ancestral forces such as the rainbow serpent and the re-establishment of a balanced relationship between the area's indigenous peoples and their spaces. In the end,

> it is through the agency of this specific world of the Gulf country, this particular ecosystem, that the novel argues against the forces of mining and global capitalism. In *Carpentaria* the fate of capitalist exploitation of local resources is reversed: here the introduced industry, the mine, is destroyed by an improvised contingent of local saboteurs led by Will Phantom – assisted by the non-human world. (Gleeson-White 2013a: 9)

[85] At this point, it must be mentioned that the overall idea of connecting indigenous Australian cultures with the notion of balance is based on Deborah Bird Rose's perspective on Aboriginal Dreaming Law (cf. ibid. 1998 [1987]) as mentioned in Linn Miller's (2006) book on belonging: "Dreaming Law generates demands on these various agents to hold the synthesis of landscape and Aboriginal being together. The principles that underpin these laws are, according to Bird Rose, 'autonomy', 'balance', 'symmetry' and 'response'. Each mode of being is responsible for maintaining its own integrity and well-being, and thus ensuring its own continuity as an autonomous unit. However, each element must balance and be balanced by the others. Balance requires symmetry or parity. To achieve parity and, therefore, equilibrium, there must be dialogue between the elements. Each must consciously respond to the others' needs in order to achieve the greater good, and secure the harmony and continuity of the whole. It is implicit that these principles of Law relate just as much to *intra*-elemental relations as to *inter*-elemental ones. Aboriginal being, like land and nature, *is called upon* to fulfil both its personal and relational responsibilities" (ibid. 22-23).

In other words, the novel represents indigenous environmental knowledge always in relation to the imperative of finding and keeping alive a balanced way of belonging to one's own cultural and spatial surroundings as a deliberate counterpoint to the exploitation of nature – here on the basis of mining – merely for economic purposes. This point of view is particularly fostered by the ecocritical approach of this analysis because this methodological approach enables an intersection of spatiality, belonging and the connected indigenous values and traditions.

In its integration of a huge variety of manifestations of spatiality, *Carpentaria* is also an important contribution to contemporary Aboriginal spatial worldmaking and a means of storing culturally specific, local knowledge by means of a complex narrative conflating indigenous and non-indigenous cultures and, thus, representing the current complexity of Aboriginal Australian lifeworlds and discourses. The text's sophisticated narrative and formal design symbolises these multiple layers as well, because its

> hybrid, challenging form and style, its foregrounding of Country from the first page and the agency with which it endows the non-human world are part of a deliberate strategy on Wright's part to embody in a Western literary form her contemporary Indigenous cosmology – with serious political intent and real world implications. (Gleeson-White 2013a: 8)

Carpentaria clearly reveals, content-wise as well as on the level of its narrative style, that the contemporary living environments and realities of all Australians – indigenous and non-indigenous – are a volatile assemblage of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal elements forming a great diversity of different manifestations of belonging to the Australian continent. Taking into consideration that mining is still one of the central sources of income particularly in Australia's Northern Territory[86], it must be recognised that these forms of belonging are automatically bound up with economic interests and power relations. As Wright's text highlights, political implications are thus always inherent in the ways Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people negotiate their belonging to their (ancestral) lands. In this way, *Carpentaria* becomes a worldmaking instrument that underlines the necessity of recognising the significance of spatial belonging for indigenous Australian peoples on all levels of their diverse lifeworlds. On the one hand, this applies to pan-Australian spatial debates in general, but on the other hand, it is of particular significance for Aboriginal discourses and their individual perspectives on the futures of their ancestral lands.

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[86] Cf. Central Land Council, http://www.clc.org.au/articles/cat/mining/, last retrieved 2019-05-22.

Spatial Multivocality: The (De)Construction of Balanced Indigenous Australian Spatial Belonging

As a conclusion before the conclusion – representing an initial means of collecting the multiple insights gained in this chapter – it makes sense to focus on the diverse perspectives on indigenous and non-indigenous forms of belonging in *Carpentaria* in order to unearth the spatial multivocality of the text. Although this penultimate step comprises the analysis of characters from the novel that have already been dealt with earlier, including some of their points of view, the decision to present the overall multiperspectivity and multidimensionality of the novel at this point is due to the fact that the latter imply a kind of summary in terms of completing the representation of indigenous Australian forms of spatial belonging in *Carpentaria*. This is particularly due to the fact that the examination of the numerous perspectives dealt with in the novel is not only a way of consolidating the themes of the preceding subchapters but also an instrument for grasping the diversity of the negotiation processes related to Aboriginal spatial belonging and their constant deconstruction and construction. Because these processes are multi-layered, ever-changing and highly individual and subjective, they help to reveal monolithic conceptualisations of indigenous Australian spatialities and belonging as being too simplistic and bring to the fore their local specificities. This also means that there is no absolute balance or *correct relation* concerning the overall interrelatedness between Aboriginal peoples and their spatial surroundings but that there is – just as there are different narrative perceptions – a relative equilibrium that is balanced in terms of not being dogmatic, exclusive or homogenous.

One of the most powerful characters in terms of spatial knowledge and belonging in the novel is Normal Phantom. He "was like ebbing water, he came and went on the flowing waters of the river right out to the sea. He stayed away on the water as long as he pleased" (*CAR* 6). Interestingly, this initial characterisation of Normal puts him on one level with the sea, one crucial element[87] of Aboriginal Australian spatialities, and thus almost unites him with the water that surrounds him and, hence, also with his ancestral lands. The ocean and the river can also be interpreted as the totems (cf. Ashcroft/Devlin-Glass/McCredden 2009: 239) of Normal due to the omnipresence of his interrelationship with the water in the novel. Hence, he even bodily represents the inseparability of Aboriginal peoples from their spatial

[87] The focus not only on the land but also on the sea as a major part of Aboriginal Australian spaces is crucial for the ecocritical analysis of the text, because "[m]ore than any novel to date in Australian literature, this one elaborates the links between the sea (with its Groper dreaming) and the land with its Rainbows, and a sense of the intimacy of relationships possible not only with the land but also with the sea" (Ashcroft/Devlin-Glass/McCredden 2009: 239). Therefore, *Carpentaria* contains an unprecedented range of narrative representations of space that support an ecocritical reading of the novel by dealing with the entirety of indigenous Australian forms of belonging.

surroundings and symbolises what environmental belonging means: an understanding of indigenous Australian lands not as mere surroundings of human beings but as an integral part of them. Because Normal is able to spend time on the water as long as he intends to, he also seems to have access to a huge body of ancestral knowledge in terms of the water and the ocean, which is likewise treated in the novel in more detail:

> The inside knowledge about this river and coastal region is the Aboriginal Law handed down through the ages since time began. […] It takes a particular kind of knowledge to go with the river, whatever its mood. It is about there being no difference between you and the movement of water as it seasonally shifts its tracks according to its own mood. (*CAR* 3)

In tandem with his characterisation in the text, Normal becomes a carrier of indigenous, spatial knowledge. Due to this knowledge, he is connected with his ancestors, also in a spatial sense. In addition to that, the passage highlights that such knowledge is a necessary prerequisite for the understanding and right treatment of space, in that case the water of the river, and that a balanced belonging to the ancestral lands is only possible with ancestral knowledge. Thus, Normal underlines that a *correct relation* to indigenous Australian lands holds true for the sea and the river as well and cannot be reduced to the land and the ground.

Due to his inseparability from the water, Normal also points to the historical dimension of belonging to his ancestral lands. He himself articulates his interdependence with the ancestors by "declaring it was his natural-born right to pluck history at random from any era of the time immemorial of the black man's existence on his own land" (*CAR* 99). In this passage, he links the ancestors, their lands, his personal lifeworld and the space surrounding him. From Normal's point of view, he is able to establish such a connection because he sees himself in a position that allows him to do so. Therefore, this passage supports the view that Normal's perception of indigenous Australian spatialities and temporalities reflects not only the overall complexity of Aboriginal lifeworlds and manifestations of belonging represented in the novel but also the omnipresence of the spatial category within indigenous perceptions of (environmental) belonging. From an ecocritical perspective, Normal represents a character that lives in harmony with his surroundings. He is aware of the importance of the ancestors and their lands for himself and his people, and he applies knowledge about the indigenous Australian spaces that he lives in, particularly the river and the ocean. In this sense, he can be described as having a *correct relation* with his spatial surroundings. Normal's approach to the ancestral lands of his people is always characterised by balance, because he knows that his way of life is a continuation of his ancestors' spatial practices on their own Aboriginal lands.

In addition to the fact that Normal himself is worth analysing within an ecocritical reading of the text, his also family provides insights into the variety of indigenous Australian

forms of belonging. The family of the Phantoms lives on what Normal's wife Angel Day considers a "rubbish damp palace where her seagull sentinels sat in the thousands on dead foliage, cardboard boxes, rusted iron, slashed tyres, pink plastic purses and cheap whatnot, guarding for nothing a humpteen amount of untold treasure" (*CAR* 17). What might appear like a multitude of waste to the reader of the novel is Angel's most valuable possession. Different forms of rubbish visually mark where she lives and, thus, her way of belonging to her ancestors' land. Because this place is also the home of her family, the belonging to this specific location gains an even greater importance because her 'rubbish damp palace' automatically becomes socially significant and turns into a symbol of her whole family's affiliation with this site. This waste seems to be of such great value for Angel that it is even guarded. Interestingly, her guards are not human beings but animals, more precisely seagulls. This literary representation of this place leads to an appreciation and even recycling of rubbish as well as animals and birds as an integral part of the spaces occupied by human beings. At this point, the novel seems to take a particularly ecocritical stance, because the narrative turns the logic of getting rid of things that are not needed anymore instead of aiming to live in balance with nature, its creatures and resources upside down. Angel's rubbish is not the end of whatever kind of process, but the beginning and literal ground of her family's home. She takes the remains of others in order to create a home space for herself, her husband and her children. Thus, the Angel symbolises a balanced belonging to the ancestral spaces of her people and the nature surrounding her.

Another striking character in the text is Mozzie Fishman, who celebrates his belonging to the indigenous lands by travelling across the country with a convoy comprising many indigenous Australians:

> Their convoy continued an ancient religious crusade along the spiritual travelling road of the great ancestor, whose journey continues to span the entire continent and is older than time itself. […] The long dusty convoy, passing through the pristine environment of the northern interior, seemed to have risen out of the earth. There it goes. A simple other-worldly in appearance crusade, that looked as though it belonged to some enchanted agelessness touched by a holy land. (*CAR* 114)

This narrative account of a journey across the Australian continent evokes various references to an environmental, historical and social belonging to the Aboriginal lands of Australia's north. First of all, Mozzie follows ancient indigenous routes, which directly links him and the people that accompany him to their ancestral traditions and reveals their historical belonging to their lands. Due to their reiteration and, thus, also commemoration of their ancestors' paths, they bring themselves in line with their indigenous roots and conceive of themselves as being inextricably linked with their ancestral lands.

Together with the ‘agelessness’ of their travelling, Mozzie’s group also represents the intertwining of different notions of temporality that have already been mentioned earlier. Although they travel in cars (cf. ibid) – an indication for their belonging to a modern, not an ancient, era – their journeys are part of an everlasting cycle of journeys across the Australian continent, which is why they belong to this Aboriginal time spiral as well. The groups’ historical belonging to their peoples is further underlined by the description of Mozzie and his companions as “religious zealots” (ibid.). They are turned into a group of people that seems to possess spiritual qualities, thus enthusiastically moving on their ancestors’ lines throughout their indigenous lands. Since Mozzie does not travel on his own but as part of a whole “procession” (ibid.), the cooperative celebration of ancestral traditions results in a social belonging to their spaces in the northern part of the Australian continent as well. Finally, Mozzie and his convoy environmentally belong to the spaces they are travelling through due to their ongoing connection to the ancestral routes. They are even characterised as beings born out of the land, so they could be perceived as human or material manifestations of their indigenous countries. Continuing an ancient spatial practice, Mozzie and his followers reveal a way of belonging and a *correct relation* to their ancestral surroundings that once again, unveils the inseparability of spatiality from all aspects of Aboriginal lifeworlds and the overall superimposition of indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives on time and space.

According to such a reading of the narrative, Mozzie is not only a pivotal figure as the most prominent member of his group, but also his individual characteristics are noteworthy for an analysis of Aboriginal concepts of belonging. Remarkably, his distinct skills in terms of his relationship with his ancestral surroundings are introduced on the basis of a comparison with Normal: “Everyone knew in the Pricklebush camps that Norm Phantom was a follower of spirits out in the sea. The Fishman, on the other hand, was a failure as a water man. […] But Norm could not deny Fishman his unbeaten title of water divining” (*CAR* 124). Just like Normal, Mozzie is endowed with spatial indigenous knowledge that seems to be worth noticing and, hence, special. The comparison puts Mozzie on one level with Normal and further underlines the uniqueness of his competence. As Mozzie is able to perform his “miracle” of water divining and because he “never used a forked stick either” (ibid.), he visibly displays that he is able to communicate with the land and its resources. Mozzie even seems to be capable of feeling or talking to the land because he does not need any supportive instruments to find water. The water divining is his way of perpetuating his peoples’ social belonging to their ancestors, their environment and their history by establishing a dialogue between the indigenous Australian continent and its peoples.

In the end, both Mozzie and Normal and their individual relationships with their Aboriginal surroundings that are deeply entrenched in the traditions and spirits of their ancestors emphasise the complexity of spatialities and Aboriginalities that are narratively constructed by the novel. As Cornelis Martin Renes (2011) outlines, "Wright experiment[s] with Indigenous and non-Indigenous form and content to create an Aboriginal way of story-telling adapted to the new times and its hybrid Indigeneities through the Dreaming or Dreamtime" (ibid. 103). In this sense, *Carpentaria* does not offer a one-dimensional examination of contemporary indigenous Australian lifeworlds but highlights their inner complexity and volatility as well as their multi-layered interrelationships and overlapping with non-indigenous spatialities and forms of belonging. Wright's text does not represent indigenous Australians living in the continent's north in an isolated manner but as being in a constant engagement with the spatial and cultural developments within their own groups and those of others.

Apart from the introduction of various characters and their individual forms of belonging to the land of their ancestors – as indicated by Martin Renes' quotation, the mentioned complexity of the novel also includes a thematisation of different perceptions of spatiality, particularly in relation to the indigenous and non-indigenous population of Desperance. Not all characters exhibit a deep connection to their spatial surroundings in the way Normal or Mozzie do, but there are different nuances of belonging to the region of Desperance with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal characters of the novel as well:

> The Pricklebush mob saw huge, powerful, ancestral creation spirits occupying the land and sea moving through the town, even inside other folk's houses, right across any piece of the country. […] Then the folk Uptown showed their boundaries which they said had been created at the beginning of their time. The town boundary they showed the Pricklebush mob was there and there, on paper. To prove what they were saying, they said it was invisibly defined on the surface of the earth by old surveying methods, methods long in the grave with the original surveyors, when the original pioneers came along and developed the town. (*CAR* 57-58)

The constitutive difference between indigenous and non-indigenous spatialities here is the definition of borders[88]. While the Aboriginal peoples see their lands as an entity that is permeated by their spiritual creatures, the non-Aboriginal inhabitants of Desperance, also called the Uptown folk, apply boundaries and divides the space they inhabit into small sections of land each of which belongs to a certain person, not to everyone. This means that the indigenous characters of the novel base their notion of spatiality on spirituality and their

[88] An interesting correlation with the previous analysis of Kim Scott's *That Deadman Dance* consists in the fact that Wright's text also brings borders and spatial limitations to the fore when it comes to essential differences between indigenous and non-indigenous conceptions of space and belonging. For further details, see Chapter 5.

interrelation with their ancestors, whereas the people of Uptown take property and division of land as their starting points for developing a perception of space.

Therefore, Wright's narrative constructs an Aboriginal notion of spatiality that is characterised by a collective belonging to the lands that have belonged to the indigenous peoples since the times of their ancestors. In such an understanding of space, Miller's three dimensions of belonging – environmental, historical and social – are automatically inherent because the land can be interpreted as the initial as well as terminal point of Aboriginal manifestations of belonging: a social group feels collectively connected to their environment or lands, respectively, on the foundation of their ancestral traditions and relationships. In contrast to that, individual interests guide the Uptown people of Desperance because they aim to possess a piece of land that does not belong to a group of people but only to one single person or a small group of people. The interests of the town's non-Aboriginal inhabitants are, hence, always diverse, and there is not one collective perception of space but many points of view based on the spatial borders instead. Their sense of belonging to their own country is not based on ancient narratives but solely on the feeling that they legally possess their ground. In narrative terms, the indigenous inhabitants refer to one narrative of spatial belonging they relate themselves to, whereas the non-indigenous residents of the town all try to construct their individual spatial narratives based on their plot of land.

Drawing Conclusions: Aboriginal Spatial Belonging, its Inherent Inconceivability and the Relevance of Indigenous Narratives for Australia's Spatial Futures

Taking a look at the intended dialogical principle of this project, it must be said that in the case of Wright's text and the selected ecocritical approach, the methodological instruments themselves do not underline the limitations of non-indigenous perspectives on indigenous narratives. *Carpentaria* can be analysed in ecocritical terms and, as the previous analysis highlights, such an examination of the novel can make use of all the introduced facets of ecocriticism. Nevertheless, the design and structure of the novel, as a whole, with its integration of multi-layered Aboriginal Dreaming stories and local forms of indigenous knowledge from Australia's North, makes non-Aboriginal readers aware of their limited understanding and conceivability of indigenous Australian lifeworlds, cultures, spatialities and the endless and ever-changing manifestations of belonging to their ancestral lands. Thus, the dialogical principle does not serve as a means of questioning or adapting the overall methodological approach of ecocriticism but of revealing and further emphasising the complexity and the polymorphic nature of indigenous Australian narratives as well as their

individual representation of the great diversity of Aboriginal cultures and their respective manifestations of spatial forms of belonging and negotiating a balanced interrelationship with their spatial surroundings. Referring to Frances Devlin-Glass' (2008) analysis of the text and her suggestion to read it as "a powerful contribution to understanding of Indigenous knowledge" (ibid. 392), Ravenscroft (2010) suggests the following:

> Rather than reading *Carpentaria* as a resource from which we can know others – as ethnography purports to be, for instance – we might read it as a novel that presents a white reader with its own quite specific qualities of unknowability, and undecidability. (Ibid. 214)

As Ravenscroft suggests, the novel is not only a narrative storage of spatial knowledge but also a medium of negotiating the pointlessness of a hierarchisation of indigenous and non-indigenous manifestations of spatial knowledge, also with regard to the literary representations of Aboriginal notions of belonging and spatiality. Such an understanding of the novel fosters the need for an overall dialogic approach to analysing indigenous Australian cultures from a non-indigenous point of view. It points out that there can be no reading of the novel without taking into consideration one's own positioning within a multi-layered world of endless forms of spatial belonging.

Additionally, the process of detecting one's own limitations in terms of understanding and approaching every aspect of Aboriginal cultures while reading *Carpentaria* from a non-indigenous perspective tells every reader a lot about the interrelationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures. One possible conclusion of this insight could be that "Wright creates characters and scenarios which cross the race divide and point the way to alternative hybridised understandings of the world" (Ashcroft/Devlin-Glass/McCredden 2009: 235). In her text, there is, for instance, not one coherent reaction to the mine, but there are diverse ways of coping with the economisation of the ancestral lands. As a narrative of ever-changing, complex and volatile notions of Aboriginalities and their individual forms of negotiating a *correct relation* with one's own ancestral lands, *Carpentaria* takes a stand against binary, exclusive perceptions of indigenous and non-indigenous Australian lifeworlds and promotes flexible and dynamic conceptualisations of cultures and their spatialities instead. This approach is also represented by the Western genre of the novel that incorporates indigenous contents and forms. Wright's novel transcends monolithic definitions of Aboriginal modes of belonging to their ancestral lands and represents a highly unique and unprecedented perspective on indigenous spatial knowledge:

> Wright engages with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing to produce, not a synthesis, but rather a constant sparring unresolvedness, which encourages the reader to adopt an attitude that is both critical and open. She offers no resolute solutions or concrete hope for the future of reconciliation; she merely hints on occasion that reconciliation may be possible only through a change in attitude

towards Aboriginality, Aboriginal politics, and engagement with Australia's brutal history. (Valenta 2012: 57)

Bringing together these final insights with Miller's tripartite model of belonging, I would like to point out that her concept makes it possible to approach the complexity of indigenous Australian manifestations of belonging on the basis of a narrative storage of spatial knowledge. Nevertheless, it remains an approach and, hence, can never be regarded as an all-purpose tool able to fully examine the multiple layers of Aboriginal modes of negotiating a balanced interrelationship with space. Summarising the ecocritical reading of *Carpentaria*, I would like to highlight the fact that Miller's *correct relation* can also be understood in ethical terms, that is to say, as a way of life that takes care of one's individual spatial surroundings and that preconceives the consequences of the behaviour of human beings for nature or, more specifically, ancestral Aboriginal lands. In the case of Wright's novel, the example of mining serves as a means of pointing to the possible consequences of an imbalance between human beings and their spaces due to the former's exclusive pursuit of economic aims. In such an understanding of belonging, *correct* implies interacting within one's own spatial surroundings while simultaneously anticipating the direct and indirect consequences of these actions for the earth.

Finally, *Carpentaria* tells all its readers that "anyone can find hope in the stories: the big stories and the little ones in between" (*CAR* 12). The novel is a narrative account of how not only indigenous and non-indigenous ideas of spatial belonging could be brought together in terms of creating a balanced way of belonging to ancestral lands but also of creating an innovative understanding of how all Australians are supposed to keep their continent alive. The above-quoted passage from the novel could even be read as a programmatic statement about both Wright's writing and the classification and placement of her narratives within current Aboriginal, spatial-political and ecocritical discourses: stories and writing turn out to be a means of pointing to alternative ways of placing Aboriginal peoples within the Australian society and within pan-Australian debates about indigeneity. Furthermore, stories are capable of hinting at alternative ways of approaching and negotiating interrelations with space. In an interview, Alexis Wright supports such a reading of her novel by making the following statement: "It's about weaving history and myth into the present situation, and that's what I've tried to do, and through the narration of the novel" (O'Brien 2007: 216). *Carpentaria* is an active agent of narratively making a world in which indigenous and non-indigenous Australians live together on the basis of an Aboriginal, balanced way of belonging to the Australian continent. As Wright herself states, the narrative seeks to present a way in which all people living in this one country can find a way of life that takes into consideration its

original population and their unique, spatial manifestations of belonging to the land. In the end, the following quotation adequately summarises what the ecocritical reading of *Carpentaria* brought to the fore:

> Wright suggests the Dreaming may be a flexible framework that is capable of incorporating various discourses of identity and belonging. It shows us how the translocal can absorb foreign influences and reconceptualize them to assert the cultural specificity of a distinctive locale. (Ng 2013: 121)

In this way, the novel does not deny the ancestral traditions and the spatial way in which indigenous peoples belong to their lands, but underlines on the one hand, the need for a mutual and balanced relationship with one's spatial surroundings, regardless of whether one is an indigenous or a non-indigenous human being. On the other hand, *Carpentaria* demonstrates the flexibility of Aboriginal manifestations of belonging with regard to creating a better future for Australia by raising awareness for the significance of taking responsibility for the human interactions with the ancestral lands of the original population of the continent.

7 Urban Belonging: Reading Anita Heiss's *Not Meeting Mr Right* from an Intersectional Perspective

Summarising Anita Heiss's (2007a) novel *Not Meeting Mr Right (NMMR)*, briefly summarised, is the story of Aboriginal heroine Alice Aigner living in Sydney and searching for, as the title already suggests, the man of her dreams. After having been to a class reunion and having met women who were only able to talk about their (future) husbands, children or their wedding plans, 28-year-old Alice decides that she wants to find the perfect man and marry by her thirtieth birthday. Together with her best friends, Alice then creates a plan of blind-dating, networking and meeting men to finally get to know her Mr Right.

Taking a closer look at the composition of the narrative, things are not as simple as one might expect to the reader of a chick lit novel. Certainly, *Not Meeting Mr Right* at first glance fulfils the requirements for what is called a typical chick lit novel[89] according to Juliette Wells (2006) – a type of women's fiction that "centers on a love plot, although the nature of that plot varies according to its heroine's age and marital status" as well featuring "the heroine's search for an ideal romantic partner; her maturation and growth in self-knowledge, often aided by friends and mentors; and her relationship to conventions of beauty" (ibid. 49). Nevertheless, Heiss's novel contains characteristic elements that are not to be found in other chick lit texts. Most obviously and importantly for this thesis, her main character Alice and also some of her best friends are indigenous. All of the main characters in the text live in Sydney and the Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal women clearly define themselves as belonging to and happily living in Australia's biggest city.

These distinctive features of Heiss's text make it particularly relevant for literary research, as literary "critics have made the argument that chick lit has failed to offer true diversity" (Ferriss/Young 2006: 7). While this might hold true for the classical chick lit novels such as *Sex and the City* (Bushnell 1997), it does not for Heiss's fiction. Her novels broaden the genre's horizon, introduce unprecedented issues and political characters and transfer particularly the world of non-indigenous, white urban women to Sydney's urban context and its female Aboriginal inhabitants. Within this identitary changeableness of the genre created by indigenous authors such as Anita Heiss, intersectionality, which will be further conceptualised in the following paragraphs, becomes the most adequate tool for grasping the different manifestations of the genre and the diversity actually available.

[89] The most prominent and famous examples of chick lit texts are *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding (1996) and Candace Bushnell's (1997) *Sex and the City*, which are also considered as two of the founding texts of the genre (cf. Mazza 2006) and both cover the elements mentioned by Wells.

7.1 Introducing the Methodological Framework

In a thesis focusing on spatiality and belonging in Aboriginal texts, it might be confusing to start a chapter without taking a look at spatial belonging at all but rather concentrating on the literary genre at hand. The first bridge between both topics – the literary negotiation of urban, female Aboriginal lifeworlds and spatial belonging – is provided by a historical view on indigenous peoples' lives in Australian cities. As early as the 1970s, Fay Gale (1972) pointed to the increasing number of Aboriginal people who live in Australian cities. Despite such accentuations of the spatial diversity of the different urban and non-urban surroundings of indigenous Australian peoples and their belonging not only to rural areas, "[t]he stereotypical representation of the city as the dichotomized opposite of the bush has been shaped during the entire course of Australian literary history" (Armellino 2009: 189) and influences stereotypical images of the continent's original population up to the present day.

In order to overcome this binary perception of (indigenous) Australian lifeworlds and to particularly underline the diversity of Aboriginal ways of belonging to a huge variety of spaces[90] in the twenty-first century, Anita Heiss's (2012) self-definition as "an urban, beachside Blackfella, a concrete Koori with Westfield Dreaming" (ibid. 1) paves the way for a novel perception of the relationship between indigenous Australians and their belonging to urban spaces such as Sydney. Referring again to Gale's previously mentioned observations of more and more Aboriginal people living in the continent's cities, Heiss herself takes up stereotypical images of indigenous peoples living in the bush and counteracts these conceptions by linking the latter with her own biography:

> This is *my* story: it is a story about *not* being from the desert, *not* speaking my traditional language and *not* wearing ochre. I'm not very good at playing the clap sticks either, and I *loathe* sleeping outdoors. But my story is of the journey of being a proud Wiradjuri woman, just not necessarily being the Blackfella – the so-called 'real Aborigine' – some people, perhaps even *you*, expect me to be. (Ibid. 2)

Heiss presents her own life as evidence for the fact that the idea of the nomadic indigenous Australian living in the bush does not apply to the twenty-first century. This overall idea also resonates in Heiss's texts, as she wants her "readers to have an insight into just *some* of the realities of just *some* of the Aboriginal women" by especially taking into consideration "issues around personal relationships" thereby alluding to her "world as an urban Koori woman" (Heiss 2012: 216) and the related, individual processes of negotiating a balanced interrelationship with this distinct kind of spatial surrounding.

[90] With reference to the aforementioned dichotomisation of urban and rural space in Australian literary history, it must be mentioned at this point that this thesis only focuses on contemporary urban spaces. Nevertheless, this is not supposed to exclude rural space or re-iterate such binaries, but is simply due to the choice of Heiss's text that concentrates on Sydney as an urban area.

Being, first of all, a link to the overall methodology of this thesis in terms of seeing contemporary Aboriginal narratives as the starting point of every approach to spatial belonging, Heiss's statements are linked to two other essential topics. As social issues are one of her topical subjects, Heiss's novels offer themselves to taking a closer look at social forms of belonging to urban space with reference to Linn Miller's notion of belonging – particularly how the female indigenous protagonists and her Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal friends establish and maintain a balanced interrelatedness with their non-rural surroundings. Apart from that, Heiss conceives herself as being connected to three different categories of identity and belonging: femininity, (urban) spatiality and indigeneity. In this way, she defines herself intersectionally[91] and, by referring to central elements of chick lit[92] as well as her Aboriginal identity by using the term Koori[93], Heiss establishes space as an intersectional category that shapes the belonging of contemporary indigenous Australian women. Although this underlines the interrelationship between *Not Meeting Mr Right* and Heiss's personal background and convictions, this thesis is not in favour of a biographical reading of the novel. Instead, this chapter considers these links as a means of conceptualising a way of approaching the diversity of contemporary Aboriginal lifeworlds on the basis of their own indigenous narratives constituting and maintaining the *correct relation* between indigenous Australians and their lands also in urban spatial contexts.

Based on these observations, the central methodological instrument to be applied in this chapter is intersectionality[94], which "refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (Davis 2008: 68). The concept was labelled by legal American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991,

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[91] By taking Heiss's own categories as the framework for analysing *Not Meeting Mr Right*, their selection is in line with what Katharina Luh (2013) describes as a prominent aspect of intersectional narrative analyses: "In order to avoid […] [categorical] arbitrariness, categorical selection is deduced from prominence in local discourses – fictional and factual" (ibid. 37).

[92] The huge Westfield shopping centres, which belong to the Scentre Group, can be found all over Australia and New Zealand (cf. https://www.scentregroup.com/about-us/about-page/, last retrieved 2019-05-22).

[93] The Australian National Dictionary Centre provides the following description of the term *koori*: "The word koori is now well established in Australian English, but it continues to cause confusion and misunderstanding. […] In order to understand the history of the word koori we need to bear in mind the fact that when the Europeans arrived here there were about 250 languages spoken in Australia. Way back in the past, they were no doubt related, but most of them were as different from one another as English is different from Italian or Hindi. Some languages of south-east Australia (parts of New South Wales and Victoria) had a word - coorie, kory, kuri, kooli, koole - which meant 'person' or 'people'. In the 1960s, in the form koori, it came to be used by Aborigines of these areas to mean 'Aboriginal people' or 'Aboriginal person'. It was a means of identification. But because of the wide variety of Aboriginal languages and cultures, koori has not gained Australia-wide acceptance, being confined to most of New South Wales and to Victoria" (http://slll.cass.anu.edu.au/centres/andc/meanings-origins/k, last retrieved 2019-05-22).

[94] For current readings of diverse chick lit novels from all over the world, also in relation to intersectional feminism, see Hurt (2019).

2011 [1989]) and has, since the end of the 1980s, experienced implementation and further enhancement within various disciplines and research contexts[95]. Following Luh's (2013) positioning of the concept, this study employs intersectionality as a research perspective, meaning that it analyses the narrative representations of space, indigeneity and femininity in *Not Meeting Mr Right* from an intersectional point of view (cf. 174-186). Apart from its applicability within indigenous narratives of female urban spaces, intersectionality is capable of providing counter-images to one-dimensional notions of Aboriginal lifeworlds as it is

> deconstructing simplistic notions of national and ethnic collectivities and their boundaries and interrogating some of the differential effects that different political projects of belonging have on different members of these collectivities who are differentially located socially, economically and politically. (Yuval-Davis 2011: 2)

With this delineation of intersectionality, Yuval-Davis conflates intersectionality with the politics of belonging and highlights the ability of intersectional analyses to diversify conceptions of belonging, here the perspective on contemporary urban Aboriginal lifeworlds.

Regarding the implementation of intersectionality, Leslie McCall's (2005) intra- and intercategorical analyses provide the framework for reading Heiss's novel. Intracategorical examinations "focus on particular social groups at neglected points of intersection [...] in order to reveal the complexity of lived experience within such groups" (ibid. 1774), while intercategorical analyses "document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions" (ibid. 1773). Concerning the methodological progression of this chapter, this study follows Luh's (2013) approach and examine the representations of indigeneities, femininities and urbanities in Heiss's text "in separation before actually intersecting them" (ibid. 37). This approach has been chosen due to the fact that

> these categories will be clarified in their intracategorical complexities and their manifold variations of meaning and use in an aim to heterogenise and pluralise the identitary strands in question before actually analysing their various intersections; an undertaking that demonstrates how social categories are internally heterogenous and mutually intersecting at the same time. (Ibid. 38)

Since Heiss's characters present different ways of living in Sydney, this way of proceeding makes it possible to zoom in on the narrative compositions of femininities as well as

[95] The collection *Framing Intersectionality. Debates on Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies* edited by Helma Lutz, Maria Teresa Herrera Vivar and Linda Supik (2011) provides a comprehensive overview of the development of intersectionality especially in Europe and contains articles dealing with the overall situation of intersectional studies (cf. Hearn 2011) as well as critical voices discussing potential difficulties of the intersectional research paradigm (cf. Lykke 2011). The collection by Hess, Langreiter and Timm (2011) comprises texts from social sciences that discuss for instance the identitary category of masculinity (cf. Scheibelhofer 2011). More recently, there have been publications focusing on the history of intersectionality (cf. Hancock 2016) and an overview and introduction of the concept (cf. Collins/Bilge 2016).

indigeneities in this urban surrounding in order to unearth their multi-layered connections[96] in a second step.

Forming the framework for the intra- and intercategorical approaches to the text, the selected categories have to be defined in more detail before applying them to the narrative in an intersectional way. Indigeneity, more specifically Aboriginality[97], will be conceptualised as "mutually defining and born of a constitutive relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It is the product of a particular colonial past and a neocolonial present. This means that the word is in a constant state of de- and re-construction" (Baker/Worby 2007: 25). This volatility of the concept matches the intersectional approach of this chapter – it underlines that, although clearly labelled categories are employed, these definitions are never fixed and permanent ascriptions but fluid and ever-changing constructions of complex social and cultural realities.

The same goes for the second category of femininities or female representations of gender respectively because "gender is a categorisation based on social attributes, [whereas] female and male sex are physiological attributes which, for the vast majority of the population, can be ascertained by observing the nature of individuals' reproductive sex characteristics" (Luh 2013: 96). Therefore, Heiss's text will be particularly analysed in terms of its diverse and intersecting illustrations of female gender, not sex, as these representations shed light on the lives of the different characters being part of a social urban microstructure of indigenous and non-indigenous men and women in contemporary Australia. Matching the working definition of belonging conceptualised in this study, both the definitions of indigeneity and gender imply, with their overall volatility, processuality and constant acts of (re-)negotiation within the selected intersectional context.

In contrast to the previous categories, spatiality cannot yet be classified as a well-established category of intersectional analyses of narrative texts. Nevertheless, and especially in the case of indigenous Australian texts, spatial matters are – as the previous chapters have pointed out – central for understanding indigenous Australian forms of belonging and, thus, for approaching various constructions of the individual self and its relationship with collective

[96] Regarding genre-specificity, an intersectional approach is also recommended since chick lit "[s]tories are constructed around a series of obstacles that must be overcome in order for the hero and the heroine to fall in love – these include class, national, or racial differences" (Gill/Herdieckerhoff 2006: 490). Intersectional readings of chick lit texts spot exactly these elements and can highlight their intra- as well as intercategorical complexities, also in relationship to further categories such as indigeneity.

[97] As already mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, according to Marcia Langton (1993) "'Aboriginality' arises from the subjective experience of both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people who engage in any intercultural dialogue, whether in actual lived experience or through a mediated experience such as a white person watching a program about Aboriginal people on television or reading a book. Moreover, the creation of 'Aboriginality' is not a fixed *thing*. It is created from our histories. It arises from the intersubjectivity of black and white in a dialogue" (ibid. 31).

Aboriginal notions of belonging. This novel focus on spatiality is in line with James Clifford's (2013) diagnosis of contemporary manifestations of self and belonging:

> In the early twenty-first century we confront a proliferation of cultures and identities. People claim membership and distinguish themselves by a seemingly endless array of markers that are both crosscutting and productive. They locate themselves by place, nationality, culture, race, gender, sexuality, generation, or disability. (Ibid. 29)

With such an understanding of how human beings belong and make themselves a part of the world, space becomes a central category next to many other parameters and offers itself as a literary object of study, for example, in relation to femininities and indigeneities. Also, from a culturally specific point of view, such a conflation does make sense since "[r]elationships to place are strongly affected not only by gender but also by class and colonial status" and "Aboriginal people as colonial subjects lost their power to maintain their relationships to place and were required to relocate to the places their colonial masters specified, in ways which did not recognise their traditional tribal or place relationships" (Plumwood 2002: 362). Due to this fact, indigenous Australian forms of belonging, in their relation to gender and indigeneity, have had to be constantly re-defined since the colonial occupation of indigenous lands in Australia. Texts such as Heiss's novel present current perspectives on how Aboriginal people belong to the space of their peoples in specific spatial surroundings[98] such as cities, marking a diversification of Aboriginal forms of belonging to Australia in the twenty-first century and bring to the fore specifically female indigenous characters and their processes of negotiating and maintaining their sense of belonging to this distinct and non-rural spatial manifestation.

Intersectionality and urban indigenous spaces are also and easily compatible with the examination of literary narratives. Intersectionality has already been successfully employed within literary studies, also from a spatial point of view (cf. Bach 2014, Bach/Luh/Schult 2011, Luh 2013), and, moreover, "narratives are at work in processes such as identity formation, ordering experiences, remembering and negotiating values, and fabricating storied versions of 'the world'" (Nünning/Nünning 2010a: 6). In this respect, indigenous Australian literary narratives introduce culturally specific perspectives on diverse Aboriginal lifeworlds such as the living conditions of women in contemporary Sydney. Presenting subjective versions of spatial surroundings from an indigenous point of view, Heiss's (2007a) *Not*

[98] Although this thesis concentrates on contemporary urban Aboriginal spatialities, this does not mean that intersectional analyses of narrative spaces are only applicable to this specific form of space or belonging or that the concept of spatiality employed in this chapter essentialises the notion of space in terms of merely referring to urban spaces. Of course, there are diverse forms of settlement that lead to different social and cultural experiences and, thus, to different senses of belonging for human subjects in various manifestations of spatial surroundings. The focus of this chapter is due to Heiss's particular dealing with urban spatiality.

Meeting Mr Right, due to its dealing with different female characters, creates its own spatial narrative incorporating the overall complexity of indigenous and non-indigenous women's lives in twenty-first-century Sydney. This also signifies the worldmaking potential of the text as it implies insights into the literary and distinctly narrative construction of spatial knowledge in terms of indigenous urban belonging in today's Australia and, on the basis of intersectionality, a pluralisation of perspectives concerning the spatial situatedness especially of indigenous Australian women.

Taking into consideration the literary illustration of contemporary Aboriginal politics of space and belonging, it is crucial to note that, with reference to the intersectional approach,

> constructions of gender and ethnicity have a fundamental effect on the construction of spaces in literary texts. But they do so not only as 'realistic' reflections of the hegemonic constructions of these categories: the intersecting inscriptions of gender and ethnicity are part of textual agendas and of spatial politics and thus present consciously deployed strategies in literature. (Sarkowsky 2007: 62)

This not only demonstrates the necessity of establishing spatiality as an intersectional category for narrative approaches to (indigenous) texts once more but also highlights that the literary representation of spatiality cannot be separated from the textual construction of categories such as gender or ethnicity. As Sarkowsky underlines, the spatial politics represented in narratives are inextricably linked with the way gender and ethnic identities and forms of belonging are illustrated, which means that an intersectional approach to the complex conflations of these parameters can shed light on how indigenous women come to terms with Australia's colonial history in combination with present politics of space in an urban area.

In a final step, the theoretical conception of this chapter pays attention to the overall inclusion of the concept of belonging. Referring to Miller's notion, the social aspect of belonging is of the utmost importance here, since the intersectional approach particularly sheds light on the (inter-)subjective compositions of female indigenous forms of belonging to twenty-first century Australia, more specifically Sydney. As intersectionality particularly deals with the composition of identities, there needs to be a further delineation of the concepts of identity and belonging. Although this thesis centres on the idea of belonging, the definition employed by Linn Miller (2006, see Chapter 3) includes the term of identity. Miller names, as already mentioned, "[t]hree primary 'senses' of belonging and identity" (ibid. 6), which means that in her model there is an overall connection of both, which will be transferred to the analysis of *Not Meeting Mr Right*.

Due to the fact that "[i]dentity designates the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions such as gender, age, race,

occupation, gangs, socio-economic status, ethnicity, class, nation states, or regional territory" (Bamberg 2009: 132), identity is understood as an individual construction of the self, comprising different identitary elements such as femininities, spatialities and indigeneities whose literary representations can be analysed with the instrument of intersectionality. These various elements form the framework of belonging, i.e. a *correct relation* of the self to the outer world with its social, environmental and geographical dimensions. Hence, identity becomes a construction of the self, which is influenced by human individuals themselves but also, to a lesser extent, by the social contexts these individuals live in (cf. Schürmann-Zeggel 1999: 71). Narratives then also serve as a means of self-making, constructing and circulating subjective perspectives on urban Aboriginal women and their identitary complexities.

7.2 Reading Anita Heiss's *Not Meeting Mr Right* from an Intersectional Perspective

Intracategorical Perspectives in Not Meeting Mr Right: Indigeneities

Beginning the analysis of Heiss's text with the represented indigeneities, it is first of all necessary to introduce the protagonist of the text, Alice. She works as a teacher at a private school and is the head of the history department (cf. *NMMR* 2). At first glance, she seems to be the typical chick lit heroine – a girl searching for Mr Right together with her best friends. This plan is initiated by a class reunion, where Alice meets only mothers and married women and decides that she wants to find a man and marry by her 30th birthday (cf. *NMMR* 26). At second glance, something strikes the eye compared to non-indigenous chick lit narratives: firstly, Alice has a Koori mother and her father migrated from Austria to Australia (cf. *NMMR* 52). Secondly, the selection criteria for Mr Right – highlighting that the perfect match must be "non-racist, non-fascist, non-homophobic" (*NMMR* 37) – demonstrate political consciousness. Alice does not want to have a partner who is unaware of social inequalities or the equal treatment of people of different colours or sexualities. On her list, Alice also mentions that Mr Right should always be on time, whereas she allows herself to "be on Koori time" (ibid.). With these remarks, indigeneity is, from the very beginning of the novel, brought to the fore, in this case combined with political consciousness.

Alice openly refers to herself as a Koori and, more specifically, a Wiradjuri woman (cf. *NMMR* 34) and makes this element of her identity an essential aspect within the search for a perfect partner. Alice's consciousness in terms of her own Aboriginal identity plays a major role in many instances on the way to Mr Right and influences her actions and decisions. Instead of calling it a *mission*, Alice talks about her *goal* when speaking about her project

because of the “missions many Aboriginal people had lived on under the Protection Acts” (*NMMR* 65). At this point, she is turned into a heroine displaying historical awareness of the past, present and future of her own peoples and their belonging to Australia – a feature that is, particularly with its indirect references to indigenous politics – highly unlikely in the chick lit genre. This is once more palpable when Alice links her project with (post-)colonial issues stating the following about her potential Mr Right: “I don’t want him to adore me because I’m Black. I don’t want to be someone’s ‘exotic other’” (*NMMR* 34). Alice does not only want to be ‘othered’, meaning that men perceive her simply via the category of indigeneity, she wants potential partners to see her as a heterosexual woman, too. Intersectionally speaking, Alice prefers to be perceived on the basis of all her categories of identity and belonging and not merely on the basis of one, here her indigeneity.

Alice’s friends are also of diverse backgrounds, they are indigenous and non-indigenous women. Peta is Aboriginal as well (cf. *NMMR* 39) and has made her “career in policy furthered Indigenous education” (*NMMR* 39). Like Alice, Peta is interested in indigenous issues and both share a consciousness for the lives of Aboriginal people in contemporary Australia, which forms a strong bond within their friendship. Alice’s friend Liza “is white like Dannie, but with Italian heritage. I [Alice] call them my token white friends; I reckon everyone should have at least one or two. It’s politically correct” (*NMMR* 30). Again, Alice clearly articulates her political views, which integrate an indirect hint concerning her own ideal of pan-Australian society – she hopes that there could be a living together of Australians beyond the borders of being indigenous or non-indigenous. This is furthermore represented by Alice’s white friend Liza, who is a lawyer working for the Aboriginal Legal Service and fond of social justice (cf. *NMMR* 30-31), which is why Alice calls her one of her closest friends. The diversity of indigenous Australian peoples is further enhanced when Alice meets Jim, an actor from the Torres Strait Islands (cf. *NMMR* 105). This means that Heiss is interested in presenting a diverse range of indigenous identities in today’s Australia, not just Koori women. Alice, her friends and the indigenous people she meets are not excluded from the rest of the society but Heiss introduces all of them as a part of Sydney that belong to the city like every other citizen. These Aboriginal women each present their highly individual processes of negotiating their *correct relation* and their sense of belonging to Sydney and contribute their very own facets of belonging to Heiss’s narrative.

This intracategorical complexity of indigenous identities and belonging becomes even more palpable when taking a closer look at the heroine, Alice, and her family. While her friends have diverse indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds, this also holds true for

Alice herself. Not only does she have a father who once migrated from Austria to Australia, but also her socialisation was influenced by various factors, not only Aboriginal traditions. Alice explains that, due to having been raised in a Christian household, "Christian values worked for me in a very general sense", but that she also "tried to live by the Aboriginal value systems of the past – community benefits over individual gain, cooperation over competition, responsibility over rights" (*NMMR* 17). Alice relates herself to both Christian and Aboriginal values[99], even though the indigenous Australian elements seem to have been more influential. Nevertheless, this mixture of Aboriginal and Christian values and beliefs brings to the fore that binary perceptions of indigenous and non-indigenous Australian lifeworlds are nothing but socio-cultural constructions that do not bear any resemblance to the diversity of contemporary Aboriginal identities and the related forms of life. Heiss's narrative postulates the giving up of binary notions of belonging to Australia's Aboriginal peoples in favour of underlining its complexity and the multi-layered processes connected to the spatially-based construction and maintenance of indigenous Australian manifestations of belonging.

At this point, it might be required to ask whether the novel also gives reasons for its narrative conception of indigenous identities as being inextricably linked with a politically and historically conscious mindset. As the central character within the text, Alice is introduced – on the very first page of the text – as an indigenous woman that remembers herself as feeling like a "triangular peg in a round hole" (*NMMR* 1) at school since she was the only Aboriginal girl among white fellow students. This means that the feeling of belonging, in this case not-belonging, has influenced Alice very early in her life. She has already had to experience and understand during her childhood that the indigenous parameter of her identity is responsible for this feeling and that it makes her different from others, in this case the non-indigenous children. Another issue referred to in the text is the representation of indigenous Australians in the media, for instance in the following passage:

> Real news and issues of importance never even ranked in these tabloids. God knows Blackfellas only made the pages if they were throwing rocks at cops or fulfilling negative stereotypes that soothed the consciences of ignorant racist whites. I declared out loud that I would never buy another paper. (*NMMR* 169-170)

Alice clearly speaks of racism and classifies, again, the fact of being indigenous as the main reason for the one-directional selection. Instead of considering the entire diversity of

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[99] Evidence demonstrating that Alice seeks to live according to these Christian and Aboriginal values including the keeping alive of the urban indigenous community she belongs to becomes palpable when she meets Tufu for a blind date: "Liza had given him my number instantly, telling him I was a Blackfella who lived round the corner and could introduce him to some of the local Indigenous community" (*NMMR* 113). Being connected by their indigenous identities, Alice feels in a way responsible for Tufu and aims to make him part of the urban community she has been part of for a very long time.

indigenous Australian peoples, the media only deal with those events and actions that automatically result in a degradation and marginalisation of Australia's Aboriginal population, which further supports Alice's way of thinking. In a nutshell, it seems as if the permanent demonstration and the resulting feeling of difference, meaning the medial and social construction and circulation of Aboriginal people as being different, is the main reason for Alice's mindset. In other words, the experience of not belonging leads to, in Alice's case, becoming an advocate for Aboriginal rights and the articulation of Australia's indigenous peoples as the first inhabitants of the continent and, with relation to the past, present and future of the country, a part of its society just like every non-indigenous person.

As part of her belonging to Australia's indigenous population and her political consciousness, Alice directly addresses stereotypes about her own peoples and talks about problems of Aboriginal Australians that she considers as prevalent issues. This becomes palpable when Alice recalls a conversation with a former schoolmate at the class reunion:

> Debra was wrong about me being the first pregnant, but she was right about Koori women and kids generally. Fact was, most of the Koori women I knew had squeezed their kids out in their early twenties, some even before that, and none of them had blokes around now. […] Many of the young girls I knew now were still doing it. (*NMMR* 16)

Alice does not deny the problems of early pregnancies and resulting single mothers but describes them critically and as a part of female Aboriginal lifeworlds, even in the twenty-first century. With her own life, which is far more independent and self-determined than the lives of the mothers mentioned, Alice provides the readers of the text with an alternative and the general possibility of overcoming not only seemingly predetermined biographies but also stereotypical images of Aboriginal women – whose still-existing prevalence is represented by Alice's former schoolmate Debra.

Summarising the previous paragraphs, Alice has a strong feeling of belonging to Australia's indigenous peoples and her way of living and thinking are highly influenced by her Aboriginal identity. Apart from the aspects already mentioned, Alice's everyday life, including the meeting of potential partners, is also permeated by her being a Koori woman. When Alice decides to try online dating, she chooses "Koori Rose" as her nickname because she "wanted to be up-front about [her] identity right from the start" (*NMMR* 295). Intersectionally speaking, she emphasises the indigenous parameter of her identity in order to not hide her belonging to Australia's Aboriginal peoples but presents it as one integral part of herself, especially with prospective husbands in mind. Alice's straightforward introduction and her legitimation of this approach to online dating also contain an indirect criticism of the public concealment of indigenous identities. It seems as if Alice's decision is not a common

one but rather unusual. Taking these thoughts a step further, this incident in the text might be read as being significantly political, since, within Alice's actions, there resonates the existence of colonial binaries and modes of behaviour in a society that is basically seen as a (post-)colonial one. Coming back to Alice's online dating, she makes an interesting observation with respect to the intersectional approach of this chapter: "It disturbed me that many of the men indicated in their profiles that they didn't have strong political views and they didn't mind the political views of their women" (*NMMR* 294). Joining the existence of a political consciousness with the element of femininity, Alice's explications even gain a feminist stance at this point. Being an indigenous woman and political at the same time are connected again, which is why Alice herself suggests an intersectional reading of the novel.

Alice's strong identification with being Koori and her belonging to her indigenous peoples is also emphasised when she is on a date with a man who seeks to belong to Australia's indigenous community, too: "'I only found out six months ago that my great-great-grandmother was Aboriginal. […] So, I'm Koori too, like you eh?'" (*NMMR* 163). Not only does he want to find a link between himself and Alice on the basis of their being indigenous but he also aims to show that he is proud of his allegedly Aboriginal ancestors. Probably expecting an enthusiastic reaction, his date Alice reacts in the following way:

> 'And what do you know about being part of an Aboriginal community, Simon? […] Aboriginality is spiritual, and it's a lived experience – not something you find by accident and then attach its name to yourself. I'm sick of white people deciding they're Black so they have some sense of belonging, or worse still, so they can exploit our culture.' (*NMMR* 165)

Alice is upset because there is a big disparity in terms of her own and Simon's way of constituting their individual belonging to Australia's indigenous peoples. While Simon interprets the discovery of familial relationships as a legitimate way of becoming Aboriginal, Alice clearly states that belonging to Australia's indigenous population is related to a certain way of living and thinking. In Alice's understanding, an indigenous human being has to be part of an Aboriginal community and develop a sense of belonging to this community via his or her actions in everyday life – meaning on the basis of spiritual and ancestral ties to these peoples – which is diametrically opposed to Simon's biological justification.

The exact opposite happens when Alice meets Paul, an engineer. She immediately falls in love with him because of his perspective on his indigenous identity that he reveals when describing his job: "'That's right, with the city council. First Blackfella they've ever had as an engineer. Actually, I'm the only Blackfella on indoor staff. You'd think a big city council like ours would have heaps of Kooris on staff. I mean, with so many living in Sydney'" (*NMMR* 206). Alice's highly emotional and enthusiastic reaction – she sees him as

"Mr Perfect, [because he] had something intelligent to say about the lack of Blackfellas at the local council" (*NMMR* 206) – represents a contrary reaction compared to her date with Simon. Nevertheless, both reactions were triggered by the same reason, Alice's belonging to Australia's indigenous population. Her reactions to both men substantiate Alice's awareness of indigenous political issues in her everyday life, her commitment to her own Aboriginal community and additionally unearth the strong emotional tie to her indigenous identity.

The strength of this bond also holds true for spatial indigenous matters. On a flight to Wellington, Alice talks to the man sitting next to her, who travelled through Australia and also climbed Uluru. He calls Uluru "Ayers Rock" and loved climbing it, which upsets Alice and she answers: "'Do you think you could climb St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney? Do you think you'd get anywhere near the top of the Vatican? They're a couple of "spiritual experiences" worth climbing for, don't you think? Or do you really respect the Catholic faith?'" (*NMMR* 310). Alice's juxtaposition of indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives unmasks the unequal recognition of spatial rights, here in terms of respecting ancestral and spiritual places of indigenous Australians. With reference to her Christian socialisation, Alice's comparison and questions expose their viability and functionality in an even more powerful way, since they unearth a neo-colonial reiteration of colonial patterns in terms of constructing a spatial hierarchy in which the non-indigenous spirit of discovery and exploration is more important than the indigenous Australians' spiritual belonging to their ancestral lands.

Probably the most important passage of the novel in terms of indigenous matters as well as spatial belonging – and another incident that emphasises belonging to Australia's original population as a pivotal aspect of her life – is when Alice attends a "function celebrating a local historian's forty years of service in the eastern suburbs" (*NMMR* 278-279). An attentive reader might ask him- or herself what the term *local* might imply, either an Aboriginal Australian or a non-indigenous person that is related, in whatever way, to this specific area of Sydney. When Alice talks to two non-indigenous men at this event, one of them "described himself as 'a descendant of the first people of the area'" and Alice is "fairly sure he didn't mean he was Gadigal" (*NMMR* 280). Her doubts point to the fact that the function seems to celebrate a non-indigenous personality, which is why Alice goes on saying:

> So you're a descendant of the first family who were *given* a land grant after the local Aboriginal clan, the Gadigal, were *dispossessed* of their land, then?' […] 'Aboriginal people didn't dispossess themselves, they didn't poison their own watering holes or place themselves on government-run reserves and church-run missions. The colonisers and settlers – the so-called *Australians* – did that. (*NMMR* 281)

Alice's engagement with Aboriginal political issues becomes highly diversified here. Her dialogue with the other, non-indigenous visitor to the festivity introduces two very different histories of the Australian continent and its settlement, a colonial and an indigenous one, and raises inherent questions of spatial belonging as well as the spatial practices of the occupation and possession of ancestral lands. This juxtaposition also alludes to (post-)colonial discourses of naming and terra nullius and the colonial construction of Australia as an uninhabited continent that influences, as the novel illustrates, the relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians up to the present day. As an alternative to the Aboriginal peoples' stories of belonging to their ancestral lands and as a means of legitimating their own inhabitation of these indigenous places, the colonisers privileged their non-indigenous narratives of belonging to the country and, as the passage underlines, not only took away the spaces of the original population of the continent but also disturbed their processes of spatially negotiating their culturally specific manifestations of belonging.

Nevertheless, the most essential issue underlying the dialogue is what Wenche Ommundsen (2011) labels as "white guilt" (ibid. 117-118). Alice and her dialogue partner represent two conflicting positions concerning their own legitimation of belonging to Australia. The man's point of view is in Alice's eyes an affront as it ignores the history of her peoples and their belonging to their ancestral lands long before the days of colonisation, which mark from his perspective the initial days of the Australian nation. Alice states that she holds white Australians responsible for the spatial dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and the taking away of their children, the so-called stolen generations. This assignment of guilt is not only an assignment of responsibility but there is another, crucial aspect that seems to be of even greater importance for Alice. In her eyes, her dialogue partner – as a representative of non-indigenous Australia – does not seem to be willing to acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's original population or any kind of responsibility for what happened to them.

Dissolving monolithic perceptions of contemporary Aboriginal Australian identities and forms of belonging to an indigenous community, *Not Meeting Mr Right* contributes to numerous contemporary Aboriginal discourses on space and enhances the genre-specific scope of chick lit novels by presenting characters that actively engage in these debates and demonstrate a specific interest and awareness of indigenous Australian politics of belonging. With respect to the urban surroundings of the novel,

> Heiss's chick-lit plots mask a serious intervention into the social and cultural debates of the cities – and countries – their young heroines inhabit. […] Heiss's novels are not translations from other languages, and her cultural setting is sufficiently similar to New York and London to present few problems of cultural translation. Her primary concerns, however, are local. (Ommundsen 2011: 117-118)

Heiss employs the genre of chick lit, including its central characteristics mentioned above but adds a culturally specific aspect that is only to be found in Australia – female Aboriginal characters living in Sydney. As the intersectional analysis of the Aboriginal characters has pointed out, Heiss presents a diversity of indigenous identities and forms of belonging to Sydney's Aboriginal communities that are, nevertheless, related by their consciousness of indigenous rights as well as politics of space and belonging. Especially the heroine of the narrative, Alice, but also the people closely connected to her, embody the inextricable linkage between her Koori identity and an awareness of the past, present and future of her own peoples living in Australia's biggest city. In this way, they emphasise the narrative contingency of their spatial sense of belonging once more, because they constantly relate themselves to the indigenous stories of their communities and ancestors in order to negotiate their individual ways of belonging to a specifically urban area, thereby underlining the sustainability of these narratives also for novel spatial formations and practices.

Intracategorical Perspectives in Not Meeting Mr Right: Urban Spatialities

As most of the novel is set in Australia's biggest city, Sydney, the urban environment heavily influences the characters' ways of life and their individual belonging to their spatial surroundings. Hence, it is worth taking a look at narrative spatiality as one category of identity that shapes particularly Alice's sense of belonging and, moreover, her identity as an indigenous Australian woman. In the first pages of the text, Alice describes where she lives, a "funky two-bedroom flat, full of sunlight and right on Coogee Beach" (*NMMR* 2). Alice herself employs the central concept of this thesis when she describes her feelings on her way home from Sydney's western suburbs: "I finally felt a sense of peace and belonging as I caught view of the ocean and a glimpse of Wedding Cake Island in the distance" (*NMMR* 144). Although Alice loves living in the eastern suburbs and appreciates the related advantages such as the proximity to the beach, she also takes a critical stance when it comes to spatial topics such as gentrification. During her school reunion, she describes the location as follows: "I looked around the pub. Jack's had been gentrified, like all the pubs in the eastern suburbs had been in the past five years" (*NMMR* 13-14). Again, Alice's perceptions, in this case of her place of residence, accentuate what has already become palpable within the intracategorical analysis of the indigeneities portrayed in the novel, her awareness of issues of belonging currently being debated. Alice emphasises her affiliation with the eastern suburbs yet outlines potential problems posing a threat to her own and everyone else's processes of negotiating a sense of belonging to this space.

The combination sketched in the previous paragraph underlines the importance of her direct spatial surroundings and the continuity of their existence for Alice's sense of belonging to Sydney and its indigenous communities, thereby illustrating that "when contemporary Aboriginal authors talk of space, and consider our sense of place and our connections to country, we often do so in terms of the environments we live in in the twenty-first century, especially as many of us are urban dwellers" (Heiss 2006: 68). Alice does not talk about the rural areas of Australia, often referred to as the 'outback' and seen as the stereotypical habitat of Aboriginal peoples, but she introduces Sydney as her living space and the place she belongs to. In Anita Heiss's (2006) words, her "experiences and everyday live belong to a land whose sacred sites are now covered in tar and concrete" (ibid. 68). With respect to the country's colonial history, Heiss takes a critical stance in terms of the belonging of her own peoples to urban areas like Sydney simultaneously presenting these spaces as the everyday surroundings of young women such as Alice and her friends. *Not Meeting Mr Right* does not dissolve this assumed contradiction – similar to the combination of the chick lit genre with Aboriginal characters – but presents Sydney as one common indigenous Australian place of belonging within the huge diversity of Aboriginal places of living in the twenty-first century.

As outlined above, the actually infinite forms of indigenous Australian forms of belonging to their ancestral and contemporary spaces portrayed in the novel are often seen alongside spatial stereotypes. In many cases, they are related to the colonial history and development of the Australian continent including the Sydney area:

> The exile of Aboriginal people from the Sydney area began in 1788, with colonization and settlement. Nearly two centuries later, the act of handing land 'back' to Aboriginal Australia within the largest and most international Australian city, remains a paradox for many non-Aboriginal people. Indigeneity, for many, seems almost antithetical to the notion of progressive globalization – it is largely associated with isolated and disconnected 'outback' locations, which are not far removed from the harshness of nature. (Shaw 2007: 46)

Representing one of its most pivotal contributions to contemporary discourses on Aboriginal belonging to Australia, Heiss's narrative is able to bring together indigenous characters who consider Sydney as their place of living and who can be rendered as counterdrafts to these stereotypes yet critically perceiving the outcomes of the urbanisation of former ancestral lands and the consequences of the colonisation of these spaces up to the present day.

On New Year's Eve, Alice and her date Paul are on a ship in Sydney Harbour watching the fireworks all over the city, when Alice has the following thoughts in this seemingly perfect moment:

> At midnight the fireworks went off over the bridge. They were beautiful, but I couldn't help thinking that they had cost $2 million, and yet there were people living in the streets of Sydney, Aboriginal communities without decent facilities, and soup kitchens that could use that kind of funding. I hesitated,

> but then voiced my concern to Paul. He agreed, adding, 'And what about what it does to the environment?' I hadn't spoiled the moment – he felt the same way! (*NMMR* 225)

In this situation, Alice's awareness for indigenous issues becomes linked with spatial matters – proving that an intersectional approach matches the diversity of indigenous manifestations of belonging discussed in the text. Alice sees Sydney as a space that is related to multiple, in this case even conflicting layers and processes of negotiating belonging, on the one hand the dazzling and cosmopolitan city, on the other hand a place of homelessness, poverty and environmental destruction. With her consciousness of these problems and her affiliation to the city, Alice's way of life mirrors these discrepancies concerning her own sense of belonging to the city. At the same time, the passage highlights the significance of a critical way of thinking in Alice's search for Mr Right. She feels a strong connection with Paul as soon as he utters his environmental concerns and unveils his interest in (indigenous) politics of space.

The criticism inherent in the passage above, regarding the unequal living conditions in Sydney, indirectly points to the existence of neo-colonial structures in the city and raises the question of whether there are also forms of not-belonging to these urban surroundings, meaning that indigenous Australians might not be able to establish a sense of belonging to the city due to their poor living conditions. This observation leads once more to the insight that monolithic perspectives on indigenous, urban ways of life do not meet the actual diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their processes of establishing or not establishing a balanced interrelatedness with cities such as Sydney. In an indirect manner, Alice also tackles this issue when, after a night out, she finds herself waking up in Blacktown, far away from Sydney's city centre. She describes the building that she stayed in in the following way:

> It was grouped with five or six more exactly like it alongside, all seventies designs, and depressing. I gathered they were housing commission. Shopping trolleys littered the front entrances, and laundry was draped from one balcony to the next, with the odd body passed out on the front doorsteps. No-one can tell me there's no correlation between money and happiness. The high rates of suicide and depression among people living in public housing are a perfect illustration of how socio-economic status affects self-esteem, the way we live and interact and essentially, how happy we are. No-one could be happy having to sleep on steps." (*NMMR* 139)

Alice draws an inseparable connection between spatiality, the living conditions of human beings and the construction of their identities. Although she refers to the categories of wealth and mental health in particular, Alice's insights rest upon the observation of the spatial surroundings she finds herself in. Compared to Coogee in the eastern suburbs, her own place of living, Blacktown in "Western Sydney [which] has the highest population of urban Aboriginal people in the country" (*NMMR* 141) seems to be the opposite, a poor suburb far away from the famous, cosmopolitan areas of Sydney.

Interestingly, Alice admits that her analysis of this specific place and the conclusion she draws regarding those people living in Blacktown are shaped by her own space-related stereotypes: "I'd been influenced by all the stories on the news about gang violence in the western suburbs and assaults on trains. My motto had always been 'If I can't drive there, I don't go'" (*NMMR* 140-141). Alice is aware of her own bias but recognises that her point of view has been formed by outer forces such as the media. Although she demonstrates a critical way of thinking about herself and the world she lives in, Alice is prone to believe in what the news circulates, also in terms of her own peoples and their different places and ways of life. Alice's insights bring to the fore that spatiality is able to be, in terms of places of residence and individual living environment, an active agent of constructing and maintaining difference. With regard to literary texts, it is noteworthy that "[postcolonial works of literature in Australia] have impelled the consideration of suburbanization as a process of ongoing colonization – of land and of difference – as well as the means by which particular identities are constituted" (Johnson 1994: 163). In intersectional terms, Alice's explications in *Not Meeting Mr Right* do not simply diversify and deconstruct one-dimensional perceptions of indigenous Australian lifeworlds by presenting the complexity of Aboriginal spaces of living and the space-related identities and forms of belonging such as the eastern and western suburbs. Her reflections upon her own space-related stereotypes point to the reiteration of colonial patterns mentioned above concerning the overall potential of space to create difference, since they uncover that different spatial surroundings and forms of belonging can lead to unequal living conditions.

Spatial stereotypes are also prevalent in other situations in the novel, particularly with reference to the difference between Sydney's western and eastern suburbs. Despite her overall awareness of (indigenous) politics of space and belonging, a stereotypical way of thinking sometimes also permeates Alice's thoughts and actions. At the wedding of their friends Bianca and Ben in the western suburbs, Alice and Liza talk about that area of Sydney:

> Liza and I carried on bitching about the appalling decorations, the cheapness of things and the lack of class we saw as inherent in the western suburbs. Dannie was disgusted. She was always telling us about the snobbery in her Paddington street, and now she became a vocal advocate for the 'down-to-earth suburbanites', Bianca and Ben. 'For someone who works in community law, Liza, you can be incredibly bourgeois and pretentious when you want to be.' (*NMMR* 235-236)

The most crucial aspect of this passage is not the girls' stereotypes but rather the fact that they are pointed to their preconception by a person listening to them instead of becoming aware of that themselves. Nevertheless, Dannie's statement and her being upset triggers a process of self-reflection and Alice thinks about her behaviour: "Maybe I had been at St Christina's [her

school] too long, maybe Dannie was right. I was a bourgeois Black, and so was Peta. (It wasn't hard to be in the Aboriginal community – you just had to have a job and own your own car and you were regarded as middle class)" (*NMMR* 237). With her statement, Alice conflates her belonging to Sydney's indigenous community with the identitary parameter of class based on financial well-being and, indirectly referring to her dialogue with Liza mentioned above, with spatial differences as one of the reasons of overall difference, particularly in relation to living conditions. In the view of Alice and Liza, the place of living – east or west – seems to influence even the taste of people. In intersectional terms, Dannie, by contrast, expects both Liza and Alice to overcome their spatial and class-related stereotypes in favour of accepting difference in general and demonstrating awareness for the different forms of belonging to various areas of Sydney.

Taking finally a more historically-oriented perspective on the spaces represented in the novel, Heiss also takes into consideration the question of how spatiality might form the basis for a sense of belonging to particular places and its communities. In the view of Louise Johnson (1994), "any […] urban development must recognize the significance of its prior occupancy and revisit the colonial past to retell some of the histories of initial dispossession of the land involved" (ibid. 146). This means that, for areas such as the urban space of Sydney, there should be a visibility of the original population that has inhabited these places prior to Australia's colonisation. In Heiss's narrative, Alice's description of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative unearths the significance of urban Aboriginal public spaces for establishing an overall sense of belonging to the city:

> Harry Wedge's paintings still added colour to the street. I'd always found his work eerie, and could never imagine one hanging in my little flat, but Harry was a Wiradjuri man, and I was proud of all his success in recent years, and glad that the new tenants hadn't sacrificed his political statements with the mission brown paint that covered the rest of the building. (*NMMR* 133)

Although Alice does not explain the political message of the painting in detail, its mere existence and the fact that it has not been substituted by another painting or been painted over underline its significance. The visibility of an Aboriginal artist in a public area and Alice's pride stress the necessity for taking into consideration indigenous Australian peoples, their histories and current politics of space and belonging within the development of cities such as Sydney. Only if the original population of urban areas, whose ancestors have inhabited these ancestral lands for thousands of years, become an active part of their urban surroundings, will they be enabled to establish a balanced interrelatedness to these spaces and a sense of belonging and community – such as Alice and her friends in *Not Meeting Mr Right* – in a spatial formation created by the colonisers and their occupation of Aboriginal spaces.

Ultimately, it is useful to bring together the urban space as such with Aboriginal and pan-Australian lifeworlds and their developments. In order to carry out this endeavour, it can help to take another look at the continent's colonial history and the development of the cities that are today the most the essential areas of settlement in Australia and to remind oneself that

> Aborigines were not city builders. The story of urbanisation down under commences with British colonisation. […] The […] dominance of the metropolitan cities over regional towns and rural districts that characterises Australia today is a pattern formed early in European settlement. (Hogan 2006: 9)

Having these historical conditions in mind, it might seem like a contradiction that Anita Heiss presents indigenous women who enjoy, sometimes even celebrate, their lives in a spatial formation whose creation has particularly benefited from the colonisation of the continent. With her novel, Heiss attempts to write a narrative focusing on female indigenous urbanity and a story of how belonging to colonially established places can be possible, despite the discrepancies and the unequal living conditions of Aboriginal Australians mentioned above. *Not Meeting Mr Right* foregrounds the complexity and diverse forms of belonging to a space like Sydney and that spatiality is pivotal for the construction of a feeling of belonging to an urban indigenous space and community and that it is itself a means of (de-)constructing and negotiating various manifestations of identitary difference, especially in terms of finding an appropriate space in the city for oneself such as Alice. Regarding the worldmaking potential of the novel, Alice as the heroine of the text but also her indigenous friends illustrate with their ways of life that a successful and happy life in an urban area as an indigenous person is not a contradiction to critically perceiving and taking care of urban Aboriginal issues but that both can co-exist.

Intracategorical Perspectives in Not Meeting Mr Right: Femininities

Searching for a perfect male partner, Heiss's narrative centres on Alice, her mostly female friends and their subjective perspectives on their indigenous and non-indigenous surroundings. Therefore, the identitary category of femininity is one of the keys to understanding and approaching the novel. The protagonist, Alice, defines femininity particularly via having a man or not and, thus, as being directly interrelated with her heterosexuality. Alice is single in the beginning of the novel and sees her status of herself as an ambivalent situation, since she has loved being single for a very long time (cf. *NMMR* 4) but clearly states that she dreams of her wedding day and that "[a]ll I really wanted was a man. A wedding would be fun too. But married life? Not for me" (*NMMR* 6). Alice wants to marry but still keep her femininity and her own life alive instead of becoming merely the woman living alongside her husband and taking care of him and their household.

Interestingly, Alice's former school mates, especially the female ones, mirror the traditional and conformist image of femininity that Alice does not strive for. First of all, her way of life is not seen as age-appropriate during her class reunion and she is not perceived as a mature woman due to her being single (cf. *NMMR* 1-2). When Alice meets Jen and hopes to have the first political discussion with her former school mate, in lieu of talking about family and children, her hopes are destroyed when Jen tells her that she joined a new party that is an advocate for traditional family life on the basis of the Bible: "It seemed even the political conversations tonight would be hijacked by notions motherhood and womanhood and narrow definitions of family" (*NMMR* 7). Although Alice attempts to talk about political issues on that evening, it seems as if the traditional roles as mother and wife are the most crucial subjects of conversation. Alice, by contrast, neither fulfils nor seeks to fulfil such a role model and feels excluded due to her current status as single woman who is able to take care of her life herself: "I looked around the table […] and all I saw was a group of women who had lost their own sense of identity. They were all now known as Mrs Joe Bloggs or Mrs Sue Jones-Bloggs or Emily Bloggs's mother" (*NMMR* 8). Although Alice searches for the partner of her dreams and would love to marry, she still wants to keep her independent way of life and does not want to be seen simply as the attachment of her husband. Alice's open and flexible definition of femininity and of being a wife is furthermore enhanced when she adds her perspective on motherhood that seems to be, in the case of her former school mates, inextricably linked with being a married woman: "There's an unrealistic expectation that every woman is maternal and is born to breed. Not me. I wasn't maternal at all" (*NMMR* 9). Alice argues against a naturalisation of female maternity and cuts the connection between femininity and becoming a mother. Instead, Alice favours female autonomy that does not end with the day a woman marries a man. With these characteristics, Heiss's heroine turns out to be an advocate of indigenous and non-indigenous feminine diversity and a dissemination of definitions of femininity and heterosexual marital lives. Alice does not want to accomplish the traditional role of a wife simply supporting her husband and bearing children but to keep her independence and self-reliance whether married or not.

The perspectives on femininities sketched in the previous paragraph clearly reveal another facet of Alice's political consciousness and resonate with feminist positions that she refers herself to as well: "I was a feminist, but I was also quite comfortable with not having to swing a hammer or turn a screwdriver" (*NMMR* 52). Although Alice distinctly claims to belong to this group of women, she represents a moderate manifestation of a feminist as she does not insist on this standpoint in every situation of her life. During her search for the

perfect partner and her constant wish to marry, Alice's behaviour also mirrors rather stereotypical, traditional elements of femininities, particularly in terms of her wish to have a perfect wedding: "I […] had all the other elements of the big day organised – the only thing I needed to worry about was finding someone to fit into the suit. How difficult could it be?" (*NMMR* 62). In that way, Alice presents a novel kind of indigenous chick lit heroine, combining feminist perceptions on women's lives with traditional notions of femininity, most essentially the related search for a husband and the wish to marry. Most notably, Heiss does not present this circumstance as an ambivalence but as being compatible with an autonomous life as an indigenous urban woman in the twenty-first century who nevertheless seeks to have a husband. With this perception, the text renders femininity and the feeling of belonging to a female community as being a flexible and volatile concept that is, like the establishment of a *correct relation* with one's own spatial surroundings, permanently (de-)constructed on the foundation of diverse processes of negotiation.

In the final part of the narrative, the interrelationship between Alice's femininity and her independence is once again of great importance when she decides that "'[b]eing single isn't the end of the world'" (*NMMR* 328) and stops her extensive search for Mr Right. Alice makes that decision at a party with Peta, reclaiming strength concerning her status as a single woman, which means that finding a husband does not determine Alice's entire life anymore. Of course – and somehow constituting the expected happy ending of a novel from the chick lit genre – Alice finally finds her Mr Right when she is no longer looking for him. Nevertheless, she adheres to her decision, stating that she "had no concerns about being married by [her] thirtieth" (*NMMR* 340) and confirms her position as a feminist in the end. In intersectional terms, Alice diversifies conformist notions of femininities and creates an image of women who can be autonomous but still do not want to be single for all of their lives. With this conceptualisation of her female protagonist, Heiss also refines the selected genre by smoothly integrating feminist positions that do not yet go beyond the scope of a classical chick lit text.

This unprecedented conceptualisation of indigenous femininities in Heiss's chick lit text eventually expands the genre and powerfully underlines that "[c]ontrary to claims that chick lit has run its course, the genre still has room to grow, to enhance its cultural relevance and acknowledge the complexities of women's changing lives and experiences" (Benstock 2006: 256). The location of Sydney and its specific integration of indigenous femininities and their belonging to their Aboriginal communities adds an indigenous perspective on women to a genre that has been coined by non-indigenous, mostly white protagonists and their lives in cities like New York or London. What is more, *Not Meeting Mr Right* not only brings in these

distinctly Aboriginal perspectives but also deconstructs monolithic notions of indigenous Australian femininities by displaying diverse women and their individual ways of life. This is in line with Heiss's (2012) statement about her own narratives: "I have never tried to define any one kind of Aboriginal woman in my books. […] I admit, though, that all my female protagonists are very politicised, because most of the Aboriginal women I know are on boards and committees of community organisations" (ibid. 217). Alice and her friends clearly correspond with Heiss's conception of Aboriginal women, although they simultaneously display the diversity of indigenous Australian femininities in the twenty-first century, ranging from mother and wife to independent single woman in the search for a partner. This intracategorical complexity the novel negotiates might be seen as the most pivotal contribution to contemporary indigenous discourses on femininities – widening both one-dimensional perspectives on how Aboriginal women belong to their urban surroundings and communities far away from the so-called 'outback' and broadening the scope of the genre of chick lit that has often been accused of introducing exclusively white women's ways of life.

This establishment of the city of Sydney as a distinct space of Aboriginal women is, from a more historical point of view, interesting, as it brings to mind the fact that indigenous Australian women have always played a crucial role within their own communities' social structures and hierarchies:

> Our tribes of people formed a land council of both men and women on their own land which is still our land in a traditional sense. Both men and women each had special responsibilities and Aboriginal women knew their place. Aboriginal men accepted and recognised women's rights to country and for indigenous women to hold responsibility to forbidden women's areas such as sacred sites and story places on land as well as sea. (Magulagi Yarmirr 1997: 81)

Although Alice and the other indigenous characters in the text neither call Sydney nor their favourite places sacred sites, their belonging to these areas is of crucial importance for the definition of who they are and how they see themselves, for instance, Alice's repeated labelling of Coogee as her individual home space. In this respect, Alice's story of aiming to find Mr Right is also turned into a narrative unveiling the process of establishing a sense of belonging to one's own ancestral spaces and communities by creating strong female bonds and particularly female spaces. Neither Alice nor her friends would be fond of the urban space of Sydney in such a way without sharing their everyday lives with their best indigenous and non-indigenous female friends – meeting at their favourite bars and restaurants or spending time together at the beach or in each other's apartments.

Taking another look at the connections between the negotiated concepts of Aboriginal femininities and the issue of belonging, Lisa A. Guerrero (2006) states, in her article on chick

lit by and about African American women, that in these novels about women, "[t]he appeal, and the power, […] was, and is, the remarkable ability to make the reading experience nearly indistinguishable from a conversation with our best girlfriends. It isn't fiction as much as it is the comfort of community" (ibid. 91). Within such a perspective, chick lit novels, particularly their potential to create a sense of belonging to a feminine community is centred on and, in the novel, mirrored by Alice and her best friends, who support her during her search for Mr Right. Due to its focus on female indigenous characters and their relationships to other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women, *Not Meeting Mr Right* represents the existence of complex and ever-changing forms and processes of female belonging to an urban community and the women's intersubjective negotiation of topics such as marriage, motherhood or the search for a partner. Intersectionally speaking, the text offers multiple layers of the contemporary lives of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in Sydney pointing to the intracategorical complexity of indigenous Australian femininities in particular. With such an approach to the text, Heiss's text can then be seen as de-essentialising and deconstructing not only the genre of chick lit itself but also monolithic conceptions of indigenous Australian femininities and female forms of belonging to the continent's Aboriginal community.

Intercategorical Perspectives on Urban Aboriginal Spaces

From an intracategorical point of view, femininities, spatialities and indigeneities form the essential intersections within the spatial approach to the novel set out in this thesis. Nevertheless, this subchapter is dedicated to presenting a perspective on the interrelationships of the previously mentioned categories of identity and belonging already pointed to in the paragraphs above and unearthing their inextricable connections. Again, Alice herself delivers a suitable starting point for the intercategorical examination of the narrative whilst explicating her motivation for searching for Mr Right at the very beginning of the novel:

> I was part of the Koori community, my local community in Coogee, and the school community […] – but I'd never been a member of the 'married with children community'. Now I wanted in. I wanted more than that, though. I wanted to prove it was possible to maintain your identity and keep up to date with current affairs even while changing nappies and doing tuckshop. (*NMMR* 21)

Forming the backdrop to Alice's explanations and her search for a partner, the issue of belonging is central to her endeavour. Alice seeks to belong or already belongs to different communities that are connected with the selected categories of identity at the same time; firstly, she sees herself related to the indigenous community being, secondly, located in the Sydney area. Thirdly, and this part forms her future plans in the novel, Alice aims at getting married as a heterosexual woman and becoming a wife. Belonging, in this understanding and

linked with Linn Miller's concept, is then turned into establishing and constantly negotiating a *correct relation* or balanced interrelatedness with one's social and spatial surroundings, meaning diverse collectives and communities such as the inhabitants of Coogee or the Aboriginal population of Sydney, as an individual human being.

In her everyday life, Alice herself articulates that such a sense of belonging in terms of feeling included in indigenous, local or feminine communities can function as a means of overcoming stereotypes and constructing a communal spirit blending the borders of indigeneities, spaces of living or other categories of difference:

> I often wondered what the checkout chicks thought as I went through the register with roo kebabs, mince and steaks alongside Lindt chocolate, cottage cheese, strawberries, ice-cream, tampons and Pantene. Did they see that women of all colours are united be the need for beauty products, good chocolate and high-protein foods? (*NMMR* 194)

On the basis of the ordinary action of shopping for groceries, Alice initiates a cognitive process leading to the insight that these activities might be more unifying than any debate about identitary differences or similarities in the category of femininity. From her point of view, women from all over the world have similar necessities and are related to similar processes of negotiating their own versions of femininity that can make them feel a sense of belonging to an imaginary feminine collective, no matter whether they are indigenous or not. Alice's way of acting and thinking can be rendered as a superimposition of a typical chick lit character enjoying consumption and a politically conscious woman advocating feminine equality. Going one step further, these observations have to be conflated with spatialities:

> In the global cit[y] depicted by […] Anita Heiss, consumer goods, romantic entanglements, and calorie consciousness co-exist with an awareness of the way gender, race, or cultural difference affects young women as they go about their daily lives and negotiate relationships with family, friends, lovers, colleagues, and their own bodies. (Ommundsen 2011: 122)

Offering a framework for an intersectional reading of the passage above, Wenche Ommundsen marks the city of Sydney as the spatial and content-related foundation for Heiss's narrative negotiations of femininities and indigeneities. In that way, the protagonist's and her friends' dealing with belonging to Sydney as indigenous women would not be possible without the urban surroundings in the novel. Sydney, the global and cosmopolitan city, then becomes the irreplaceable home space of Alice and her friends whose identifications with femininities and indigeneities are highly influenced by the Aboriginal communities of this area and the consumption available only in an urban area.

Nevertheless, Alice is also aware of the fact that Sydney as an urban space today has been founded on ancestral lands of more than two centuries ago. When Alice meets Malcolm as one of her dates – "the most attractive man I'd ever met. Healthy, fit, working with kids.

Young. Black. In Sydney and knowing only me!" (*NMMR* 121) – she sees herself as "[t]he woman who gave him his connections in Gadigal country" (*NMMR* 124), since he is new in the city. Apart from the fact that Malcolm, as an indigenous man, seems to be the perfect match for Alice, she makes the Gadigal spaces of Sydney an essential indigenous linkage between herself and her date. This act of initiation in terms of welcoming Malcolm to his new place of living is, interestingly, also an act of attempting to establish a sense of spatial belonging to a place that he has not belonged to before.

During another date, one of Alice's perfect moments with Paul the engineer, who she immediately falls in love with, is permeated by her spatial, indigenous and gender identity. This incident is located at a special point in terms of indigenous Australian history in Sydney, since Alice and Paul "walked around Bennelong Point, wondering out loud what the corroborees were like there before invasion, when all the local clans would gather for their bush opera. The past and the present blended into one as we shared a moment that only Kooris could" (*NMMR* 210). Apart from the fact that this situation is unique for Alice as a woman due to her emotional connection to a potential partner, her and Paul's spatial belonging to the ancestral lands in the area of Sydney permeates their walk. Alice and Paul feel a strong bond because of their belonging to the Koori community and, at the same time, important places of their own peoples. As Bennelong Point is today the location of Sydney's Opera House, one of the city's most famous landmarks, Alice and Paul also share a consciousness for the simultaneity of their own pasts, presents and futures – they are, in a critical way, aware of the original population of the place and area now called Sydney but they are also able to establish a sense of belonging to the urban surroundings of the present and future.

This seemingly ambivalent combination – keeping in mind the original peoples of the Sydney area and belonging to today's city – is one of the most remarkable achievements represented by Heiss's novel and her Aboriginal protagonists. Linked under the methodological umbrella of intersectionality, particularly Alice's way of life as an urban indigenous woman resolves this seeming contradiction. Such a diversified negotiation of female indigenous Australian identities in an urban surrounding is also a necessary contribution to contemporary Aboriginal discourses since

> it is noticeable that there is a greater willingness to include Aboriginal people in to the "nature" and "environment" aspects of planning and land management than there is in the planning of urban spaces and communities. It is hard to ignore the "noble savage" romanticism in this preference for Indigenous involvement with plants, trees and animals over involvement with town planning, infrastructure and housing. (Behrendt 2006a: unpaginated)

With the selected intersectional approach as a means of approaching indigenous Australian urbanities, Alice's life as an independent woman living in Sydney is especially able to pave the way for a novel perception of Aboriginal identities and their inextricable links with urban spaces as well as the overcoming of stereotypical images of indigenous Australians only living in the 'bush' and being only connected with nature or non-urban areas. Alice highlights that the diverse indigenous Australian manifestations of belonging and the spatial narratives of Aboriginal peoples, with their inherent flexibility and volatility, are also capable of being referred to cityscapes and not only to rural areas.

Although Alice is, throughout the novel, a politically conscious person and articulates her subjective views on indigenous matters clearly, she is also a stereotypical heterosexual woman when it comes to relationships and men, besides her wish to become married, the inception of the narrative. This is due to the fact that Alice, for instance, describes herself as having an "obsession with Valentine's Day" (*NMMR* 249). This is then, nevertheless, directly conflated with her belonging to the Koori community, which becomes palpable when she receives roses on Valentine's Day at school and she describes the roses that are sent to her teacher's office: The roses "looked a little out of place with the NAIDOC[100] posters on the wall and the Aboriginal flag draped on the door as a claim of place. The pretty and the political didn't seem to blend well, but there was no reason why they shouldn't" (*NMMR* 252-253). The final sentence is most significant here, as it can be read as a programmatic statement about Heiss's text and her conceptualisation of contemporary Aboriginal Australian identities. Alice's identity as an indigenous urban woman accompanies a strong political consciousness such as her celebrating NAIDOC week, the search for a perfect partner and a critical sense of belonging to Sydney but she also provides a meta-statement about the genre in terms of underlining that politically conscious characters and chick lit plots are compatible.

Intercategorically speaking, the parameters of Alice's identity inform each other and form her unique and individual perception of Sydney and the basis for her way of life as an independent Koori woman who nevertheless enjoys the conveniences of an urban lifestyle such as shopping or going out with friends. For Wenche Ommundsen (2011) "[i]n Anita Heiss's novels, Indigenous politics is debated" but "[t]here are limits, however: for the heroines, Indigeneity has to be compatible with the pleasures of modern, cosmopolitan life" (ibid. 119). Such an understanding of the novel would lead to the insight that Alice and her friends – of whom "Alice and Peta are not without social prejudices of their own" (ibid. 116)

[100] The "NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples" (https://www.naidoc.org.au/about/naidoc-week, last retrieved 2019-05-23).

– are political and advocate indigenous Australian rights and traditions but that they would not accept any limitations within their ways of life, which is certainly a reasonable point of criticism. Nevertheless, the intersectional approach and the establishment of spatiality as a category of difference unearth that "Heiss's characters serve to counteract stereotypes of Indigenous people as disadvantaged and dysfunctional" (ibid.) and that specifically urban Aboriginal femininity presents an alternative draft to stereotypical images of indigenous Australians living a nomadic life in remote places. In intersectional terms, the strength of Heiss's text is the availability of a diversity of indigenous Australian life designs in an urban surrounding presenting a contemporary perspective on the pluralisation of processes of negotiating and maintaining Aboriginal manifestations of spatial belonging and femininities.

Ultimately, the novel itself becomes a means of spatial worldmaking and of constructing contemporary indigenous Australian forms of spatial belonging as it does not negotiate female Aboriginal identities and urban spatialities as incongruous but as being consistent with one another. In this way, *Not Meeting Mr Right* initiates debates about the (in)compatibility of urban spaces and ways of life, ancestral lands and indigenous identities in the twenty-first century and furthermore is an indicator for the fact that

> [l]ike these diverse categories – 'gender,' 'ethnicity,' 'sexuality,' and 'class' – 'space' is a construct, is produced socially, economically, politically, culturally, but also aesthetically in literature and art. And like these categories, space as a construct is not stable but in process. (Sarkowsky 2007: 12)

Heiss's text itself is part of these processes and, as the intersectional approach has clearly pointed out, always relates to various forms of social belonging and diverse categories of identities. With its integrated and inseparable discussion of indigeneities, femininities and urban spatialities, the novel makes an urban, feminine and Aboriginal world and takes a stand for perceiving urban areas also as indigenous Australian areas that are inextricably linked with other identitary parameters such femininities and that must not be seen as a contradiction to advocating indigenous peoples and their spatial belonging but as being compatible.

Urban Aboriginal Spaces and Cosmopolitan Difference

The representation of indigenous Australian forms of spatial belonging in an urban surrounding as presented by Heiss and its compatibility with the support of Aboriginal politics as well as the genre of chick lit further raises the question of how it can be combined with (post-)colonial discourses as such. In order to do so, it is worth taking a look at the concept of cosmopolitanism[101], which was shaped particularly by Homi K. Bhabha (1996)

[101] For a cosmopolitan analysis of Anita Heiss's chick lit novels with a focus on indigeneity and cultural politics, see O'Mahony (2019).

under the umbrella term ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ (cf. ibid.). The “notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism has been used to refer to alternative, particularly non-Western, forms of cosmopolitanism, the latter defined broadly as an openness to difference, whether of other ethnic groups, cultures, religions or nations” and “[a]s a concept […] joins contradictory notions of local specificity and universal enlightenment” (Werbner 2011: 108). With its focus on non-Western manifestations, this conceptualisation of the broader idea of cosmopolitanism[102] is particularly suitable for approaching *Not Meeting Mr Right* (cf. Ommundsen 2011). What is more, it implies those ambivalences inherent in Heiss’s text such as the negotiation of indigenous lifeworlds in a non-indigenous genre and an indigenous and politically conscious protagonist who simultaneously enjoys the life of an independent woman in contemporary and cosmopolitan Sydney. From an intersectional viewpoint, it is of specific relevance that the definition mentioned above includes diverse categories of identities and an overall open-mindedness towards difference.

On the basis of these observations, it is advisable to question more closely how vernacular cosmopolitanism is mirrored in Heiss’s narrative. With regard to the issues of spatiality, Aboriginal spatial belonging and its representation in contemporary narratives, it is worthwhile to notice that cosmopolitanism

> suggests that people, including writers, are now more used to mixing with different cultures and races and that we are all influenced by this mixing, citizens of a kind of global city, neither insisting on our specific cultural difference nor being assimilated and pretending we are all the same. (Wisker 2007: 179)

This spatially-based category enhances the concept of spatial belonging in terms of relating it to a global dimension and making it possible to develop a sense of belonging that reaches beyond the borders of a single urban area such as Sydney. It means that feeling a sense of belonging to an urban place can also be shaped by individual experiences or distinct conditions that transgress the limitations of only one urban area. Referring to intersectionality, particularly the fact that those experiences are seen as unique, it plays a significant role as it leads to the insight that there are endless forms of spatial belonging and spatial identities interrelated with cities as such as well as the idea of a global cosmopolitan community – neither of which cannot be separated but are reciprocally dependent on one another.

Zooming in on the Australian context and its interrelationships with the concept of cosmopolitanism, it is noticeable that “Australians frequently comment on the difference

[102] For the sake of clarity and readability, the following paragraphs simply make use of the term ‘cosmopolitanism’ instead of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’. Nevertheless, the overall basis for the cosmopolitan reading of *Not Meeting Mr Right* is the conceptualisation of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ mentioned above.

between the city and the country when it comes to national […] identity. Australian cities are seen as far more cosmopolitan, far more multicultural, and less distinctively Australian than rural and regional areas" (Moran 2005: 50). In other words, cities seem to be the centres of global, cosmopolitan action on the Australian continent, whereas the rural areas seem to determine the characteristics of local identities and senses of belonging. Although it might hold true that the divide between the urban and the rural is still a benchmark for many Australians in terms of developing an individual sense of belonging to the country, this binary perception needs to be opened up for bringing it together with *Not Meeting Mr Right* in order to grasp its narrative diversity of manifestations of spatial belonging. A viable means for this endeavour is the idea that "[c]osmopolitanism as a set of attitudes […] signalled a loosening of national identifications and a positive engagement with difference" (Nava 2007: 5). Together with the observations mentioned above, Australian cities such as Sydney become – in intersectional terms – an agglomeration of a huge variety of categories of difference and forms of spatial belonging so that urban spaces are not characterised by ethnic, gender, religious or sexual sameness but by difference. These differences are not, with relation to the initial definition of cosmopolitanism, hierarchically structured but simply constitute an ever-changing set of intersectional relationships and notions of spatial belonging.

Heiss's novel is, with relation to cosmopolitanism, in particular a narrative encounter with difference and the meeting of indigenous and indigenous femininities in Sydney's urban surroundings. Alice and her indigenous and non-indigenous friends form a group of highly different women who all have their individual senses and processes of negotiating their forms of belonging to Sydney and their spatial surroundings that is shaped by their female and also their (non-)Aboriginal identities. Taking a closer look at the indigeneities dealt with in the text, it becomes palpable that

> the Mr. Right novels juxtapose the vernacular and the cosmopolitan, but they do more than that. Their cosmopolitanism is inflected by vernacular practice and vice versa: the two seemingly contrasting sides to the everyday lives of the young heroines are […] interdependent. (Ommundsen 2011: 121)

Especially Alice – who loves living in Coogee but also feels closely connected to her Koori community and the ancestral lands of the city, who advocates Aboriginal rights but also enjoys urban pleasures with her indigenous and non-indigenous friends – combines local Aboriginal issues with the enjoyments of a global city. Alice and her friends dissolve these seemingly ambivalent or contradictory ideas of life, take their differences for granted and thus present cosmopolitan characters. Alice's mindset and her way of life and belonging also expose the representative purpose literature has in a globalised and cosmopolitan world since "[t]he challenge […] is to take minds and hearts formed over the long millennia of living in

local troops and equip them with ideas and institutions that will allow us to live together as the global tribe we have become" (Appiah 2007 [2006]: xiii). Narrative texts such as *Not Meeting Mr Right* are one of these institutions that are capable of illustrating the functioning of cosmopolitanism – Heiss's text shows urban female difference and manifestations of spatial belonging and the intersections of indigenous and non-indigenous women. In that way, the novel can be seen as a means of furnishing its readers with a cosmopolitan vision that embraces urban Aboriginal belonging as an integral element of global cities such as Sydney.

The issue of cosmopolitanism and the blending of indigenous and non-indigenous lifeworlds under this conceptual umbrella can also be related to the negotiation of urban Aboriginal spaces in a traditionally non-indigenous genre. Unlike classic chick lit texts such as *Sex and the City*, whose protagonists are mainly concerned with the search for the perfect partner or outfit, Anita Heiss expands the scope of the genre by blending urban femininities with indigenous identities and a related political awareness of her Aboriginal characters. Instead of classifying these elements of her texts as not being consistent with a chick lit novel and, thus, having to find another label for her texts, Heiss (2012) herself brings her texts in line with the genre: "My strategy in choosing to write commercial women's fiction is to reach audiences that weren't previously engaging with Aboriginal Australia in any format, either personally, professionally or subconsciously" (ibid. 214). The aim of this deliberate choice of associating herself[103] and indigenous Australian debates with the non-indigenous genre of chick lit is, therefore, to bring together non-indigenous and indigenous lifeworlds as well as Aboriginal politics of space and belonging. Urban femininities and spaces form the most essential tie between Heiss's protagonists and narratives like *Sex and the City* and not only point to the potential pluralisation of the genre itself but also to the proximity and diverse intersections of urban female ways of life all over the world.

Aboriginal Women and the City: Drawing Conclusions or Updating Monolithic Perceptions of Indigenous Australian Lifeworlds in the Twenty-First Century

Thinking of the diverse perspectives on urban spatiality and the city of Sydney represented in *Not Meeting Mr Right* – and the undoubted plethora of other fictional or non-fictional texts about the city – it must be stated that, with reference to the city dealt with in this chapter,

[103] Anita Heiss even goes a step further and refers herself and her own life to Candace Bushnell's (1997) protagonist Carrie Bradshaw from her novel *Sex and the City*. Heiss (2012) calls one of the subchapters of her book *Am I Black Enough For You?* 'On Being Koori Bradshaw' (ibid. 211). Although this thesis is clearly not in favour of merely biographical readings of fictional texts, this title further supports an intersectional reading of *Not Meeting Mr Right* as it points to the overall interrelationship between indigenous identities, femininities and urban spatialities.

“there are countless Sydneys, both real and imaginary” (Watson 1996: 205). There is, of course, not only one way of spatial belonging to this urban area, but there are endless processes and ways related to an endless number of categories of identities and their unique intersections with space. Hence, indigenous manifestations rank equally among the multi-layered phenomenon of urban spatial belonging with their non-indigenous counterparts. In a first step, updating monolithic perceptions of indigenous Australian lifeworlds in the twenty-first century particularly means, with regard to city spaces, to comprehend urban areas such as Sydney as a cosmopolitan place that is open to difference in general and automatically includes indigenous and non-indigenous forms of urban belonging in particular in a first step. In a second step, such a perception needs to be circulated, for instance through the instrument[104] of literary narratives such as *Not Meeting Mr Right*, that bear the worldmaking potential to construct and shape unprecedented perspectives on urban habitats and spatial belonging and contribute indigenous perspectives to pan-Australian discourses on urban spatialities.

These discourses are, notwithstanding, not only one-directional in terms of leading to more diversified images of indigenous and non-indigenous manifestations of urban spatial belonging but there are also voices that seem to contest this overall idea. According to Larissa Behrendt (2006b)

> [t]here is also a view that those Aboriginal people who live within a metropolis such as Sydney are displaced, and therefore do not have special ties there. This view can persist even if the Aboriginal families concerned have been living there longer than the observer’s family. While it is true that an Aboriginal person’s traditional land has fundamental importance, it is also true that post-invasion history and experience have created additional layers of memory and significance that relate to other parts of the country. (Ibid. 6)

Although spatial belonging and the interrelationship with ancestral lands are the benchmark for perceiving Aboriginal peoples in contemporary Australia, urban surroundings still seem to be incompatible with indigenous Australian lifeworlds. Within such a way of thinking, Heiss’s novel seems to represent an immediate realisation of Behrendt’s last sentence by actively illustrating unprecedented patterns of spatial belonging and integrating urban spaces into the diverse catalogue of Aboriginal modes of establishing a sense of belonging to one’s

[104] Other instruments are for instance the *70% Urban* exhibition in the National Museum of Australia in Canberra that took place from 2007 to 2008. It centred on urban Aboriginal experiences and in that way highlighted the variety of discourses focusing on this topic and, as the title indicated, the high percentage of indigenous Australians living in urban areas (cf. http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/70percent_urban/home, last retrieved 2014-08-15). Another example is the fact that many cities promote their Aboriginal histories, sights and events. There are celebrations of the diversity of urban lifeworlds and cultural landscapes such as the *Living in Harmony Festival* in Sydney (cf. http://whatson.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/system/datas/39/original/sml7439_Living_in_Harmony_Festival_2014_-_A6_Booklet_FA3.pdf?1391556927, last retrieved 2014-08-23), which features diverse events with a focus on Aboriginal cultures in an urban environment.

own surroundings. With an especially female point of view, Anita Heiss thus updates perspectives on urban indigenous Australia in the twenty-first century and seeks to convey that the interdependent categories of urban spatiality, femininity and indigeneity are not contradictory but match and enrich each other.

Referring at the end of this chapter once again to Linn Miller (2006) and her concept of belonging, it is noteworthy that she herself has observed that "[s]o powerful was the Australian desire to distinguish itself by reference to the rural landscape that defining features of Australian urban culture were, for a long time, excluded from the catalogue of quintessential national characteristics" (ibid. 48). In other words, belonging to Australia has always and particularly been characterised by spatiality but has, for a very long time, been mostly determined by the rural, non-urban areas of the continent – excluding the possibility of urban belonging and the consequent establishment of a *correct relation* to a city, no matter whether indigenous or non-indigenous. If the aim of the intersectional reading of Heiss's text was the "transformation of indigenous otherness into positive 'difference'" (Knudsen 2004: 20-21), then *Not Meeting Mr Right* would present a viable means for bringing together urban forms of belonging and Australian identities in two different ways – first of all, the novel puts the overall topic of indigenous urban belonging on the map of pan-Australian spatial discourses. Secondly, with its focus on social belonging in a cosmopolitan urban surrounding, the narrative deals with the question of how the huge diversity of indigenous and non-indigenous modes of spatial urban belonging can be addressed. This eventually means, that although Australia might be "a country, that is to say, internally *disharmonious* and culturally contradictory" (Jones 2006: 13), the simultaneous acceptance of this circumstance and the insight that there are multiple layers of indigenous and non-indigenous manifestations of spatial belonging can, with the help of literary texts, lead to new ways of approaching the actual diversity of non-rural, urban senses of belonging to Australia as an indigenous country.

Following this methodological pathway, the novel finally has two functions in relation to the selected worldmaking approach – it creates distinctly urban Aboriginal lifeworlds and numerous processes of negotiating a sense spatial belonging and attempts to capture the existing realities of Aboriginal people, here especially women, living in urban environments. With the tool of intersectionality, this chapter was able to unearth the volatility of (urban) Aboriginal belonging while at the same time deconstructing monolithic perspectives on indigenous peoples as not belonging to these spaces at all. Despite the criticism[105] that "[t]he

[105] Wenche Ommundsen (2011) not only criticises the texts but also states that "Heiss's main point, it seems, is to defy stereotypes, including that of the 'angry' activist: it is possible, her books suggest, to be committed to Aboriginal politics without giving up on the pleasures of romance and consumer culture. It is a message to

political messages of the Mr. Right books have been tailored to suit the overall tone of cheerful banter" or that it is "reducing debates about both race and gender to relatively 'safe' issues related to lifestyle and identity" (Ommundsen 2011: 119), the specific achievement of the novel lies in the way that it takes in order to fulfil the functions mentioned above. The text dissolves apparent contradictions – indigenous Australian contents in the non-indigenous genre of chick lit, indigenous spatial belonging in an urban surrounding, politically conscious femininities coupled with enjoying urban pleasures such as shopping or going out with friends – and in that way forms the seemingly trivial genre of chick lit into a text format that is capable of negotiating urban Aboriginal issues and their related politics of space.

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which her target readership – presumably less accustomed to, and less tolerant of, a more activist style of writing – is likely to be receptive" (ibid. 119).

8 Conclusion: Sketching the Future Relevance of Aboriginal Australian Spatial Belonging for Literary and Indigenous Research

In order to bring the issue of academic perspectives full circle at the end of this thesis, I would like to start this final chapter with a quotation by indigenous Australian writer Anita Heiss (2006):

> And so, you have travelled with Aboriginal writers across the land mass many here today call home. I hope it inspires you to read the words of those who have walked the walk lived, the experience of being Aboriginal in Australia, a country where we do not figure on the national identity radar. I hope you are motivated to use the writings of Indigenous peoples, as opposed to the copious amounts of non-Indigenous research done on us, to learn more about your own sense of place. (Ibid. 83)

Of course, this thesis belongs to the kind of non-Aboriginal research about indigenous Australian peoples and their cultures that Anita Heiss criticises in her text. It has been carried out from a European perspective and by a non-indigenous author who is not part of Australia's indigenous peoples or communities and does not live on ancestral lands. Therefore, this thesis as a whole is not to be seen as an analysis of contemporary Aboriginal narratives but, as its title indicates, as an approach to these texts and their negotiation of indigenous Australian manifestations of spatial belonging. Due to this particular idea of an approach, not an examination, the journey Heiss refers to – in the case of this study across narratives, novels, and texts rather than actual lands – has been designed on the basis of what the three selected literary works offered and demanded at the same time. Thus, Aboriginal spatialities and their function as a constitutive feature of indigenous Australian constructions of belonging have become the focal points of this study and have been approached against the backdrop of three highly different contemporary narratives.

Concerning the substantial results of this thesis, the essential outcome of the seven previous chapters is, then, first and foremost the confirmation of the central hypothesis set up in the introduction, namely the spatial contingency of Aboriginal manifestations of spatial belonging and their diverse representations in contemporary indigenous Australian narrative texts. The thematised historical, social and environmental aspects of belonging – based on the concept of belonging by Linn Miller (2006) – are all in one way or the other permeated by space. In addition, this thesis has shown that these culturally specific forms of indigenous Australian spatialities and spatial belonging are not homogenous and, hence, cannot be reduced to a common denominator or a list of fixed characteristics. They are volatile, ever-changing, and, in view of the huge diversity of Aboriginal peoples and communities all over the Australian continent, they differ and refer to an endless variety of rural, urban or even

maritime spaces. Nevertheless, in the selected novels, which deal with different facets of space, spatiality marks the common thread in terms of the construction of belonging.

The theoretical and methodological design of this study has finally shown that it was able to simultaneously grasp spatiality as the most prevalent intersection of indigenous Australian forms of belonging and to highlight the local, culturally specific diversity of spatial belonging represented by three highly different authors and their distinct manifestations of belonging to local Aboriginal communities and spaces. More specifically, Linn Miller's (2006) conceptualisation of belonging as a *correct relation* to one's own surroundings offered an adequate basis for conflating her idea of belonging with the diversity of indigenous Australian modes of belonging to space and land. Miller's tripartite differentiation between social, historical and environmental senses of belonging was able to account for the omnipresence of spatiality in all aspects of Aboriginal lifeworlds and to grasp the different levels of indigenous Australian cultures and communities permeated by space, such as spirituality, individual relationships to ancestral lands and nature, diverse perspectives on coping with issues like mining and environmental pollution or the exploration and occupation of Aboriginal lands in the early days of colonisation.

On a more epistemological level, the multi-layered complexity of indigenous Australian modes of spatial belonging and their resulting inconceivability – as two major insights gained in the course of this thesis – reveal the need to scrutinise standard, non-indigenous definitions of narrative spatiality and belonging. What is more, these insights also highlight the need to tackle the question of whether these definitions are sufficient for analysing indigenous texts and narratives and, if so, how they can be applied to these texts. In other words, non-indigenous approaches to narrative spatialities and belonging need to be broadened and include the fact that space, for example, has a constitutive function for Aboriginal Australian lifeworlds and their peoples' texts. Regarding narrative spatiality in particular, what is required is a conceptual expansion, for example in terms of incorporating non-material, in the case of Aboriginal texts and cultures, spiritual or ancestral manifestations of space and land.

In addition to that, probably the most valuable outcome of this study consists in the recognition that it is not possible to ultimately combine or bring together non-indigenous and indigenous concepts of spatiality and belonging. There will always be contradictions, methodological incompatibilities and the overall fundamental difference of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures and lifeworlds. Nevertheless, it is precisely these contradictions, frictions and endless ambivalencies that could be the source or even the topic of inter-cultural

communication and of overcoming one-dimensional ways of thinking as an obstacle to approaching and discussing epistemologies or ways of life that are not one's own – an aim that this thesis has hopefully contributed to. In this way, the acceptance of the inherent limitations of Western, non-indigenous epistemologies does not represent a potential surrender to the challenge of dealing with indigenous cultures but rather the first step of an approximation – which will be further conceptualised at the very end of this chapter.

Regarding the selected diversity of Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging and its overall situation represented in the selected texts, it must, despite the many positive outcomes of the study mentioned above, be clearly stated that "[f]or the status of Indigenous peoples in Australia to change *we will all need to change*" (Maddison 2011: 9). No matter whether the word 'we' simply refers to all non-indigenous Australians, all non-Aboriginal people all over the world or the rest of humanity, there is a general need for putting indigenous (Australian) peoples and their ways of spatial belonging to their lands on the map of cultural, political and social debates. As the three novels have clearly pointed out, there are various *incorrect* spatial relations in Aboriginal cultures because of colonisation and the continuous dispossession and occupation of ancestral lands due to, for instance, explorations in the early days of British settlement, mining, or the construction of big cities such as Sydney. With their worldmaking potential, which each of the narratives approached incorporates in its very own fashion, these literary works could represent a viable means of initiating and pointing to possible starting points for processes of change.

One interesting thought that might lead to novel perceptions of indigenous manifestations of spatial belonging in general and, more specifically, their Aboriginal forms as well as their status on the Australian continent is the concept of

> experimenting with the idea of global literary studies (primarily) in English that are *trans*-Indigenous. The point is not to displace the necessary, invigorating study of specific traditions […] but rather to complement these by augmenting and expanding broader, globally Indigenous fields of inquiry. The point is to invite specific studies into different kinds of conversations, and to acknowledge the mobility and multiple interactions of Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories and texts. […] Scholarship outside established formulas embraces difficulty and assumes risk, but these projects will be more productive within an academic field that increasingly defines itself as sovereign from the obsessions of orthodox studies of literatures in English. (Chadwick 2012: xiv-xv)

With regard to this thesis, the most essential question is whether trans-indigenous spatial studies could be regarded as a possible future perspective for approaching Aboriginal narratives or even present a link between literary studies and other disciplines under the umbrella of global indigenous research questions. This could also result in new strategies for overcoming the prevalence of non-indigenous methodologies within many indigenous fields of research by substituting these instruments with (trans)indigenous concepts or tools that

could be applied to various contexts and disciplines. Of course, these ideas are not supposed to make local and culturally specific notions of spatiality, for instance, less useful or less important, but they should rather be seen as one possible addition to or advancement of the catalogue of already existing approaches to indigenous cultures and literatures.

Such a broader approach to indigenous cultures as a global phenomenon – as one idea out of many – could then also generate unprecedented insights into Aboriginal forms of spatial belonging that could not have been dealt with in this thesis. Other relevant research questions and fields of study which simultaneously and metaphorically represent the non-visited spaces and places this thesis has to leave behind include the interrelationship between spatial belonging and Aboriginal temporalities, approaching the topic within other literary genres such as poetry or dramatic texts or broadening the intersectional scope of spatial belonging by analysing its interrelationships with further parameters such as, for instance, the body, spirituality, age or sexuality. Within the study of narrative theory, there is still the need for challenging established concepts and models of literary spatiality in terms of their compatibility with indigenous texts and, subsequently, for developing appropriate and new narratological approaches. Eventually, very recent publications are capable of pointing to hitherto neglected objects of research within contemporary Aboriginal narratives and lifeworlds such as the conflation of ecocriticism, feminism and intersectionality (cf. Vakoch/Mickey 2018), the links between indigeneity and performing arts (cf. Gilbert/Phillipson/Raheja 2017), the interrelationships of spatial belonging with migration and identity and their impact on conceptions of spatiality (cf. Linhard/Parsons 2019) or the connections between concepts of belonging, spatialities and race within an Australian context (cf. Slater 2019).

In order to actively make use of the worldmaking potential of the three novels and to bridge the gap between fictional negotiations of spatial belonging and the extraliterary world, empirical studies dealing with the factual dimension of spatial belonging are required as well. Thus, this study does accept the fact that – just as many Aboriginal writers such as Kim Scott or Alexis Wright "acknowledge the fragmentariness of their heritage at the same time as they insist on its potency" (Ashcroft/Devlin-Glass/McCredden 2009: 24) – its focus on spatial belonging leaves behind blind spots on the huge map of indigenous Australian literary studies that are hopefully capable of inspiring future research projects and objects of study in a variety of disciplines.

In addition to its goal of informing future works about Aboriginal cultures, there are implications of this thesis that reach beyond the scope of literary studies and the academic

debate on indigenous and non-indigenous literatures and cultures in general. Kim Scott (2008) nicely frames how linguistic ambiguity can be used in order to mirror social and cultural change[106] and the ways people interact with each other:

> In Noongar […] the word for 'island' often translates as 'heart' or even, sometimes, 'knee'. Similarly, a hill is 'head'. This suggests that potential in this instance, expressed in roughly human form, is implicit in the landscape. It's a potentiality, awaiting a catalyst. And I reckon the catalyst is language. What better way to appreciate the deeply human heritage of a place than by the language indigenous to it, the words and stories of its first society? Such words might even help a young, immigrant nation graft itself to the many older nations and older histories above which it shimmers. (Ibid. 155)

Just as one word in Noongar can have diverse meanings and is, as Scott clearly highlights, constitutive for the construction of Noongar spatial belonging, he regards language as the foundation of disseminating the spatial belonging of Australia's original population to their ancestral continent. Implicitly pointing to the worldmaking capacities of his own texts such as *That Deadman Dance* or those of other Aboriginal writers, Scott's words imply social and cultural processes of change based on sharing indigenous knowledge, for example via contemporary novels or any other form of text. What is more, Scott distinctly mentions the interrelationships between language, spatialities and human beings, thus marking space, once again, as a potential ground for establishing a sense of social, environmental and historical belonging to Australia and, in his final sentence, as a possible force enabling non-indigenous Australians to perceive the country's first peoples and their lands in unprecedented ways.

Complementing Scott's general call for developing novel perspectives on indigenous Australian cultures and lifeworlds by using language, Alexis Wright (2006) articulates the need for transformation in an even more concrete fashion:

> Indigenous culture – our ancient tradition of songs and myths, laws and language – will die if we cannot withstand the imposition of control that is based on resentment towards the will of Indigenous people to maintain what is rightfully theirs. The need for Australians to come to terms with what is happening in Indigenous Australia has never been more urgent. It is also necessary for Indigenous people to be able to define an appropriate response and to build a framework for a future. This is what is meant by Aboriginal government, as understood by the terms of what other Indigenous peoples have achieved in Canada and the USA. Now do not jump to conclusions that the only solution to all of our problems is for all Indigenous communities to have the same laws as all Australians. (Ibid. 107)

Wright's claims can, in the end, only lead to actual change if such developments are based on

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[106] In his article on "Land Rights and Social Justice", Michael Dodson (1997) suggests three major strategies for gaining justice for Australia's indigenous population: first, "[r]egional agreements", meaning that "we [Aboriginal communities] would organise ourselves to support our cultural and political systems, rather than being broken up to suit the three tiers of government and umpteen departments"; second, "[f]unding agreements", referring to the fact that "funding from all sources should be pooled and provided directly to the regional or local indigenous authority, which would then spend it according to locally determined priorities. This will allow the people and not the programme specifications to decide where and how the money is to be spent"; third, "[c]onstitutional reform", meaning the design of "a constitutional and legal framework that fully recognises the rights of indigenous Australians. In the original drafting of the Constitution we were left out of the debate all together. This time around processes must be set up so that we can participate in the debate and shape what is the foundational defining document of the nation" (ibid. 48-49).

the specific needs of Aboriginal communities and on the cooperation with and active interest in the rights of indigenous peoples, possibly on the basis of their own words and texts. Comparing Australia to other countries, Write also highlights the fact that changes involve many agents and that it can take a long time until 'a framework for a future' is designed and can be put into action.

As Kim Scott's quotation above indicates, many indigenous Australian authors themselves as well as their novels stress the strength and power of localities and local manifestations of Aboriginal spatial belonging. Local forms of knowledge, which were inherent in all three of the approached narratives, reveal that "an explicit focus on the localness of knowledge production provides the possibility of a fully-fledged comparison between the ways in which understandings of the natural world have been produced by different cultures and at different times" (Turnbull 2003 [2000]: 19). Literature can meet this requirement and thus enable – as a key for opening the doors to the diversity of local knowledge – valuable insights into local indigenous Australian spatialities and forms of spatial belonging as well as their social, environmental and historical developments. In this way, literature can serve as an instrument for reaching people and readers from all kinds of cultural and social backgrounds and familiarise them with culturally specific, indigenous worlds and conceptions of space, land and belonging. The spreading of local narratives, an essential aspect of all analysed texts, is then also "important for historical, cultural, political and personal reasons. Each act of creation or re-creation adds to a store of precious resources which contributes to well-being, healing and the capacity to imagine change. Stories sustain communities" (Worby/Tur/Blanch 2014: 1). Hence, the function of Aboriginal literatures as a means of constructing, maintaining and circulating local modes of establishing diverse senses of belonging to one's own surroundings should not be underestimated and must be appreciated as a treasure of indigenous Australian spatial knowledge. Referring to its initial words, I would like to emphasise that spatial knowledge is and will remain the alpha and omega of this thesis and finally brings together indigenous and non-indigenous cultures and their culturally specific manifestations of spatiality and belonging.

Having already integrated the voices of Alexis Wright, Kim Scott and Anita Heiss into this final chapter, I want to conclude this study with the voice of Bobby Wabalanginy, the protagonist of Scott's (2012 [2010]) novel *That Deadman Dance*. Although the following passage has already been examined in Chapter 5, it finally enables a yet broader perspective on the results of this thesis on a more general level:

> Me and my people … My people and I […] are not so good traders as we thought. We thought making friends was the best thing, and never knew that when we took your flour and sugar and tea and blankets

> that we'd lose everything of ours. We learned your words and songs and stories, and never knew you didn't want to hear ours … (Ibid. 95)

With its reminiscence to the dialogical approach this thesis has adopted on the methodological and structural level, Bobby's words show that this study represents, in particular, a coming together and a dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures and the question of what the consequences of the encounter between these two groups in Australia were and still are, particularly for the continent's original population.

The answer to this last question and to the concomitant question of what the communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians could look like might be given by Torres Strait Islander Martin Nakata (2007a), whose following statement from his *Disciplining the Savages. Savaging the Disciplines* has been also addressed in Chapter 3 and with regard to the developed working definition of spatial belonging: "The lived space of Indigenous people in colonial regimes is the most complex of spaces and one of the goals of this book is to persuade the reader that understandings of the Indigenous position must be 'complicated' rather than simplified through any theoretical framing" (ibid. 12). The keyword here is clearly the term complication because it points to the possibility of perceiving the dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living in Australia in a different and innovative way. Rather than searching for simple solutions, Nakata's description implies that there are no simple and final answers, that there is no clear yes or no but only maybes, in-betweens and constant change. Based on these insights and in lieu of essentialising or hierarchising Aboriginal Australian lifeworlds, the dialogue between Australia's original population and its non-indigenous people could also become a process of approaching each other while accepting and perhaps even appreciating diversity, contradictions and the overall complexity of such processes. These dynamics and volatilities are also mirrored in the research findings of the analysis chapters and the adjustment of existing literary studies methods and tools – *Carpentaria* and the limits for non-indigenous readers to comprehend the text, the non-suitability of Western models of space such as the one elaborated by Lotman and the spatial parameter as an adequate addition to existing categories of difference for intersectional analyses.

The final implications of Bobby's words, also for Aboriginal people living in 21st-century Australia, are articulated by Michael Dodson (2003), whose words eventually signify the universal importance of culturally specific narratives for the circulation and consideration of Aboriginal (spatial) knowledge and manifestations of spatial belonging as a constitutive feature of indigenous Australian lifeworlds and cultures: "Nearly suffocated with imposed labels and structures, Aboriginal peoples have had no other choice than to insist on our right

to speak back, to do as the old man said: to build and represent our own world of meaning and significance" (ibid. 28). This world might be represented by the contemporary literary narratives analysed above, which are capable of contributing to a *complication* – in the sense of a valuable input – to manifold dialogues between indigenous and non-indigenous Australian cultures that are both, dialogues and cultures, part of permanent and ever-changing processes of negotiation and (de-)construction and of establishing an interrelated balance between their constantly varying elements of definition, just like spatial belonging.

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