

Rosanne Kennedy: AUTOBIOGRAPHY : The Narrator as Witness. Testimony, Trauma and Narrative Form in My Place

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SINCE SALLY Morgan's *My Place* was first published in 1987, it has typically been read as an autobiography or an autobiographical novel. In an early influential critique, Eric Michaels argued that Morgan's sense of having a 'problematic self was evidence that she wrote from the position of someone who had been raised in the paradigms of European culture. He criticized her for doing 'violence' to the Aboriginality of her kin by using the European genre of autobiography to represent their stories. In addition, he argued that her 'deceptively frank autobiographical style' implied that there are 'pre-existent truths' to be discovered, and that she could pass these truths on to the reader directly.¹ He objected to her use of a realist narrative mode because it encourages a popular readership to accept her story as the documentary truth, rather than to read it as one among many possible competing versions of the past. Although I disagree with much of Michaels's analysis, here I want to take issue with his assumption that *My Place* should be evaluated in terms of autobiography, a genre which stresses individualism.

A re-evaluation of *My Place* must start from the acknowledgment that it is a collective text: Morgan's autobiography, which constitutes the first half of the text, frames the transcribed oral testimonies of her great uncle Arthur, her mother Gladys, and her grandmother Daisy. In constructing a collective narrative, Morgan follows Aboriginal custom, which dictates that 'narrators are only ever the partial holders of traditions and are required to defer to the others who hold the rest of the sequence if they are available ...'.² As Muecke observes, '[h]er story creates the conditions for the other stories to appear in the appropriate sequence down a line which represents in a crucial way the *deferment of (narrative) authority*' (p. 134). Critics tend to read the testimonies as a means for Morgan to legitimate her claim to Aboriginality and thereby to authenticate her own discourse. In practice, however, the collective nature of the text produces a radically fragmented text. While Morgan's autobiography celebrates a continuous transcendent Aboriginal identity, the testimonies bear witness to assimilation as a violent historical process which has produced an irreparable rupture in Aboriginal culture. In an effort to reclaim the text's act of witnessing to the traumas of forced assimilation, I want to suggest, initially, that it should be read and evaluated as a '*testimonio*' rather than as a European-style autobiography.

Testimonio, a term that was developed to describe a new literary form that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s, has been described as a kind of literature which 'is produced by subaltern peoples on the periphery or the margin of the colonial situation. Thus the margins of empire are now "writing back" in an overdue attempt to correct the Western canon and its versions of "truth"'.³ Although *testimonio* usually takes the form of 'a novel or novella-length narrative ... told in the first-person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or a significant life experience', the aims of the narrator of a *testimonio* differ markedly from those of the autobiographer. Unlike autobiography, *testimonio* is not concerned with the development of the individual self, but with a 'problematic collective social situation ... [t]he situation of the narrator in *testimonio* is one that must be representative of a social class or group' (p. 14). By uncovering a history of oppression, *testimonio* challenges official history. Beverley argues that *testimonio* should be treated as a documentary genre, rather than read as fiction. He contends that '[w]e are meant to experience both the speaker and the situations and events recounted as real. The "legal" connotation implicit in its convention implies a pledge of honesty on the part of the narrator which the listener/reader is bound to respect' (p. 15).

My Place exemplifies many characteristics of *testimonio*. Like other texts in the emergent canon of new Aboriginal writing, it elaborates a counter-history of Australia, and a critique of the government policy of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families. It serves as the vehicle for restoring lost voices, and thereby making a silenced history speak, a project which grounds much feminist and ethnographic writing. When *My Place* was first published, however, it could not be read as a *testimonio* because non-indigenous Australians did not know enough about the treatment of Aborigines in Australian society to read Morgan's story as representative. The events of the past year, and in particular, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's inquiry into the Stolen Generations and the release of its controversial report, *Bringing Them Home*, have changed the conditions for the reception and reading of *My Place*. We can now read the text as a representative story—of children who have been removed, of parents who have had their children taken, of people who have been denied knowledge of Aboriginal culture.

Although I have described *My Place* in terms of the Latin-American genre of *testimonio*, I want to challenge the widespread critical assumption that *testimonio* is a simple, empirical, documentary form. In many ways, Shoshana Felman's recent analysis of testimony, based on a study of post-Holocaust literature, offers a useful framework for re-thinking this assumption. Like critics of *testimonio*, Felman defines the act of testifying in legal terms:

*To testify is always, metaphorically, to take the witness stand, or to take the position of the witness as the narrative account of the witness is at once engaged in an appeal and bound by an oath.*⁶

She objects, however, to the common assumption that testimony is an empirical description of reality. Rather, she argues that '[t]o testify—to vow to tell, to promise and produce one's own speech as material evidence for truth—is to accomplish a [performative] speech act, rather than to simply formulate a statement' (p. 5). In defining testimony as a performative speech act, she means that testifying is not simply a matter of telling a story, but of performing an act. In this case, the act is 'to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to take responsibility—in speech—for history or for the truth of an occurrence, for something which, by definition, goes beyond the personal, in having general (nonpersonal) validity and consequences' (p. 204) Testimony is a 'unique' and 'irreplaceable' performance, in that it cannot be performed by anyone but the witness. While Felman defines testimony as taking responsibility for the 'truth' of an event, she does not conceive of truth in empirical terms, but psychoanalytically.

Drawing on recent psychoanalytic work on trauma and memory, Felman argues that the 'testimony' that emerges in psychoanalysis does not take the empirical form of 'a completed statement, a totalizable account of... events' (p. 5). Instead, she proposes that:

As a relation to events, testimony seems to be composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference. (p. 5)

In one of her most innovative insights, she suggests that psychoanalysis makes available a new understanding of testimony:

[Psychoanalysis] profoundly rethinks and radically renews the very concept of the testimony... by recognizing... that one does not have to possess or own the truth, in order to effectively bear witness to it; that speech as such is unwittingly testimonial, and that the speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, not available to its own speaker. (p. 15)

Like psychoanalysis, testimony is not a *re-presentation* of knowledge; it is a *process* through which knowledge is discovered.

Although I have been suggesting that Felman provides a provocative re-thinking of testimony, it is difficult to use her framework to do a reading of *My Place* because she dismisses texts which take the form of a realist narrative as 'simpl[istic]' (p. 138), 'imitati[ve]' (p. 160), and 'confession[al]' (p. 160). She argues that the form of narrative realism renders traumatic events such as the Holocaust familiar, and thereby lessens their cognitive and affective shock. Thus, rather than use psychoanalysis to analyse testimonies that take a realist form, she instead argues that modernist texts such as Paul Celan's poetry, Claude Lanzmann's documentary film *Shoah*, and Albert Camus's modernist novels *The Plague* and *The Fall* can be read for their insights into witnessing and testimony, and that they constitute exemplary testimonies.

Felman's argument is grounded in the belief (shared by many contemporary critics) that a modernist anti-realist aesthetic offers the most effective textual form for representing traumatic events. The danger of this argument, which is grounded in élitist and Eurocentric assumptions about literary form, is that it potentially renders 'trauma' itself a high culture concept. It encourages critics to study high-culture texts for symptoms of trauma and for indirect testimony, rather than to study populist texts which, although they ostensibly bear witness to traumatic events, take familiar narrative forms. In my view, to reject documentary testimonies as 'simple' is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. This approach rejects a vast domain of testimonial literature—Holocaust testimonies, Latin American *testimonios* and Aboriginal narratives. It also assumes that testimonies that take the form of a realist narrative are simple. The challenge for psychoanalytic critics is not to dismiss such texts, but to show that using a psychoanalytic framework to read realist narratives produces novel insights that otherwise remain masked. In the following reading of *My Place*, I shall argue that Morgan's use of a realist narrative form is symptomatic, and that the text reveals insights into a history of which the narrator isn't in full possession.

In recent years, scholars from a range of disciplines have drawn on psychoanalysis to explore the implications that traumatic events (both personal and collective) have for individual and collective memory, and for practices of cultural and historical representation. A good deal of this work, developed by scholars working in the United States and Canada, focuses on the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima, the spread of AIDS, childhood sexual abuse, and the legacy of slavery in the United States. To date, however, there has been little work on trauma in the context of colonization and forced assimilation. In this paper, I draw on recent psychoanalytic theories of testimony and trauma to offer a re-assessment of *My Place*. I also use Morgan's text to challenge Felman's assumptions about the relationship between witnessing, trauma and textual form. I shall proceed by reading the text backwards, starting with the last testimony. This approach will allow me to follow the narrative of assimilation and rupture as it occurs over three generations; to consider the rhetorical work Morgan's autobiography does in framing the other testimonies, and to reflect upon the differences between testimony and so-called 'confessional autobiography'.

Daisy's Testimony: Portrait of a Survivor

BEFORE SHE dies, Sally's grandmother Daisy finally agrees to tell her something about her life, but only on the condition that she will keep her 'secrets'. Daisy's testimony is short—a mere twenty-five pages in a book of over 350—but powerful. In reading it, it's important to realize that like the other witnesses, Daisy gives her testimony in the absence of Sally's autobiography, which was written after Daisy died. Because she appears as a character in Sally's story before she speaks in her own voice, we inevitably read Daisy's testimony through Sally's representation of her. But here, I read her testimony as a text in its own right.

As if she were giving testimony in court, Daisy begins by naming herself: 'My name is Daisy Corunna... My Aboriginal name is Talahue. I can't tell you when I was born, but I feel old'.⁹ Identifying herself entails a splitting; it requires that she place herself in relation both to Anglo-Australian culture and Aboriginal culture. But the splitting does not stop there. She tells us that on the station where she grew up, she went by the name 'Daisy Brockman' and that her father was known to be Howden Drake-Brockman, the station owner, who, she alleges, disowned her and her brother Arthur after he married a white woman. In making this assertion, she refutes the Drake-Brockmans' claim that her father was someone named Maltese Sam. Within the first few paragraphs of her narrative, Daisy has demonstrated that she cannot be located in a single place; her place depends upon the community she inhabits, and how the community identifies her. As Daisy Brockman, she is the daughter of the station owner; as Daisy Corunna, she is the 'daughter of the

station', that is, the daughter of no-one in particular. Her white father's denial places her in the position of an illegitimate half-caste child. Her 'outlaw' status means that she has no security anywhere. Because she has white blood, she can be taken from the black community, but because she has black blood, she can be taken by whites on their terms rather than her own. Daisy bitterly remarks: 'that's the trouble with us blackfellas, we don't know who we belong to, no one'll own up' (*My Place*, p. 325).

Daisy follows this claim with the rhetorically puzzling admission: 'I got to be careful what I say. You can't put no lies in a book' (*My Place*, p. 325). Some critics read this statement as establishing a truth-contract with the reader, and a sign of the text's naivety—for Daisy, 'the book' is associated with the authority of white man's education and the law. I want to suggest that if we read her statement in conjunction with her insistence on keeping her secrets, we should understand that for her, the opposite of lying is not 'telling the truth' but remaining silent. Hence, we should expect that her testimony will have both deliberate and unconscious gaps, omissions and silences. She will satisfy the literal requirement to 'not lie', but she will not adopt a confessional mode.

By refusing to identify the father or fathers of her two children, Daisy perpetuates a system in which white men do not have to take responsibility for their actions—but she does so as a means of protecting herself, and her family, from shame and censure. With regard to her daughter Gladys, she simply says, '[e]veryone knew who the father was, but they all pretended they didn't know ... You didn't talk 'bout things, then. You hid the truth' (*My Place*, p. 340). She immediately remarks, however, that when she brought Gladys home from the hospital, right before Howden died, he asked to hold her, thereby implying that he was Gladys's father as well as her own. Of course, we don't know whether Daisy spoke these comments in this order, or whether this ordering was the result of Morgan's or an editor's editing. In any case, because of what Morgan has told us in her own autobiography, the text constructs Daisy's act of withholding as the shameful secret of incest. Alternatively, Daisy may not know who the father was: she makes it quite clear that she was forced to have sex against her will, commenting that '[w]e had no protection when we was in service. I knew a lot of native servants had kids to white men because they was forced. Makes you want to cry to think how black women have been treated in this country ...' (*My Place*, p. 337). Daisy's shift from 'we' to 'they'—'we'; had no protection but 'they' had kids—suggests that she cannot publicly own that she too had a child as a result of rape. As a narrator, Daisy refuses to occupy a stable place. As soon as she makes a critical statement about whites, for instance, she backs off from its implications, and leaves the reader uncertain of her meaning.¹⁰

Daisy describes her lived experience as one of being torn from her Aboriginal community, and of being marginalized by the Drake-Brockmans, despite their claim that she was 'one of the family'. When the Drake-Brockmans took her from Corunna Station to Perth when she was fourteen, she and her mother believed that she was going to be sent to school, and that she would return, but instead she was made a servant. She experiences the Drake-Brockmans' lie as a betrayal, which she nonetheless internalizes as a sign of her own inferiority: 'All the time, I kept wonderin' when they were goin' to send me to school. I saw some white kids goin' to school, but not me. I never asked them why they didn't send me. I was too 'shamed ...'. Her lack of education means that she cannot bear witness to this betrayal, and consequently, her humiliation intensifies: 'I kept thinkin' of my poor old mother and how she thought I was gettin' educated... I wanted to tell her all I was doin' was workin'. I wasn't gettin' no education. How could I tell her, I couldn't write. And I had no one to write for me'. (*My Place*, p. 333)

Daisy's testimony is haunted by loss, which is represented in the recurrent figure of the weeping mother. She first introduces the theme of maternal loss in relation to her mother:

*My poor mother lost a lot of babies. I had two sisters that lived, Lily and Rosie. They were, what do they call it? Full bloods, yes. I was the light one of the family ... Of course, there was Arthur, but they took him away when I was just a baby ... Old Pompee, he was the old boy that looked after the vegetable garden, he told me my mother cried and cried when they took Arthur. She kept callin' to him like. Callin' to him to come back ... My poor old mother never saw him again. (*My Place*, p. 326)*

Later, she refers to the loss of her own first child: 'Before I had Gladdie, I was carryin' another child, but I wasn't allowed to keep it. That was the way of it, then ... They took our children one way or another.

I never told anyone I was carrying Gladdie' (*My Place*, p. 340). Daisy never represents her loss as merely personal, but as representative of and shared by the entire Aboriginal community. Remembering how Alice (the woman she worked for) had sent Gladys to Parkerville when she was three, she draws an analogy between her own experience and her mother's: 'I cried and cried when Alice took her away ... How can a mother lose a child like that? How could she do that to me? I thought of my poor old mother then, they took her Arthur from her, and then they took me. She was broken-hearted' (*My Place*, p. 341). Loss creates a connection between herself and others, who she imagines suffer as she does. She draws her cousin Helen into this community of suffering, recalling that she was forced to leave her three children at Moore River Native Settlement when she was sent back to domestic service. Daisy comments: 'I think all those kids died. It was a terrible place ... Poor old Bunda. I knew how she felt, it was the same with all of us' (*My Place*, p. 341).¹¹

Understandably, Daisy appears to have experienced the taking of her children as one would the death of a child. In a study of human responses to death, psychoanalyst Louise Kaplan suggests why the loss of a child represents a tragedy for the parent: 'The urge to generate a new life that is a reflection of one's own life stems from a profound desire to extend one's own existence, to be and to become something more and better than one actually is. When a parent loses a child, this mirror of her own value and power is gone forever'.¹² She adds that '[t]here is a fundamental sense in which the loss of a child always represents the loss of the future' (p. 123). What the loss of her children may have represented, then, was the most serious threat to Daisy's sense of ever being able to change the conditions of her life, to live a life not solely defined in terms of the desires and demands of white people. In addition, Daisy would have experienced the loss of her children as a blow to her femininity, to her value and identity as a woman.

Since the children did not actually die but were 'taken', Aboriginal mothers like Daisy were not allowed to mourn their losses. But, for these 'stolen children', like children who died in concentration camps, 'there were no burials, no tombstones, no time allotted for saying farewell. If she chose to not-die, the mother had to resume her robotic existence immediately',¹³ Denied the opportunity to mourn, Daisy was thereby denied the opportunity to fully experience her loss as it occurred. Kaplan argues that when the mother is prevented from mourning, she remains 'locked in a frozen dialogue with her dead loved ones ... Not having been put to rest by a process of mourning, her dead ones remain alive, frozen in a state of potential animation' (p. 225). This inability to forget the ones who have been taken potentially damages the mother's relationships with the children who remain.

Although we don't have psychoanalytic case studies which analyse lives such as Daisy's, it does not seem far-fetched to suggest, from the evidence of her testimony and from what we know of Aboriginal lives at the time, that her lived existence as a black woman in a dominant white culture was a traumatized one. Daisy had little control over her life, and was repeatedly denied the power and liberty to form and maintain human relationships. First her brother Arthur was sent away when she was a baby. Then she was separated from her mother, sisters and kin when she worked in the station house. Later she was permanently separated from them when she was taken to Perth. Later still, her children were taken away from her. If she was Drake-Brockman's daughter (she was certainly some white man's daughter), the family never owned her; they simply treated her as their servant, all the while maintaining the fiction that she was one of the family. And if Drake-Brockman was the father of Gladys, then Daisy was sexually available to him on his terms, not her own. Finally, when she was no longer useful to the family, they sent her away, with no provision for her future. It is only when her daughter finally marries and assimilates into the margins of white culture that Daisy finally has a home.

To explain how the concept of trauma can aid us in reading Daisy's testimony, I will draw on the work of feminist psychoanalyst Laura S. Brown. For diagnostic purposes, trauma is defined as 'an event that is outside the range of human experience'.¹⁴ As Brown argues, however, many traumas that women and girls experience occur commonly in familiar surroundings, and therefore lack the requirement of exceptionality. She argues:

'Real' trauma is often only that form of trauma in which the dominant group can participate as a victim rather than as the perpetrator ... The private, secret, insidious traumata to which a feminist analysis draws attention are more often than not those events

in which dominant culture and its forms and institutions are expressed and perpetuated. (p. 102)

Brown contends that a feminist analysis of female experience ‘challenges us to examine our definitions of “human”, and to observe how our images of trauma have been narrow and construed within the experiences and realities of dominant groups in culture’ (pp. 101-102). Her comments are particularly relevant to an analysis of Daisy’s text, which reveals the trauma of events which have been invisible to the public eye.

While Brown’s attempt to expand the concept of trauma to ordinary events is useful for analysing Daisy’s story, the conditions of her oppression remind us, with particular force, that trauma must be analysed in terms of race and class as well as gender. Daisy experienced sexual abuse as a black woman who lived in the home of a white man on whom she was dependent, and from whom she had, as she puts it, ‘no protection’. Daisy uses the word ‘shame’ to characterize the feeling associated with the experience of being sexually taken by a white man outside of marriage. If she was subjected to incest, this would undoubtedly have increased her feeling of shame. The trauma of Daisy’s life cannot, however, be considered simply in terms of a female experience of sexual abuse; rather, sexual abuse must be seen as part of the lived conditions of ‘the colonial experience’, which dictated that poor black women were available to white men on their terms. Sexual abuse was simply one of the many forms racism took in the lives of black women.

An analysis of trauma in a life such as Daisy’s has to consider what Stuart Hall calls ‘the traumatic character of “the colonial experience”’, which he argues can only be properly analysed when identity is understood as a matter of becoming, rather than of being. Hall maintains that ‘[i]t is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that knowledge, not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, but by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm’.¹⁵ He argues that when black people take on as their own the dominant culture’s representation of them as other—when otherness becomes ‘an inner compulsion’—they can be said to be not only oppressed, but traumatized by the colonial experience.¹⁶ Daisy’s testimony, with its frequent references to shame, suggests that she has internalized the deceptive psychological structure of colonialism. Her response to this ‘delusional ideology’ was perfectly rational: to prevent the conditions of her own deprivation from being handed down to her daughter and grandchildren by denying her Aboriginality.

The unspeakable nature of the trauma Daisy suffered is indicated in the final chapter of the text, when Morgan makes one final effort to find out if Daisy knows the fate of her first child. In response to Morgan’s blunt question, ‘Has Mum got a sister somewhere?’, Daisy responds: ‘Don’t you understand, yet ... there are some things I just can’t talk ‘bout’ (*My Place*, p. 351). Daisy’s response suggests that what Morgan mistakes as the trauma of her grandmother’s life—the secret of incest—in fact covers over a much deeper, unspeakable trauma, the trauma of a loss of children, kin and culture. Despite Morgan’s desire to witness that loss, it is a past that can never be recovered, and from which Daisy never recovers.

Daisy’s testimony, which takes the episodic form of free association, is fragmentary. She does not tell a coherent, ordered story; rather, she recounts and reflects upon things that have been done to her, and how they made her feel. Her narrative is not an autobiography in the usual meaning of the genre, that is, a retrospective attempt to order events in one’s life so as to extract a coherent meaning from them. Daisy’s narrative is the testimony of a survivor: it dramatizes the impossibility of writing an autobiography from the position of victimization. What is striking about her testimony is the flat, emotionally understated voice in which she narrates a personal and collective history of extraordinary loss—the loss of family, culture, opportunity, self-esteem, and one’s own children. In the process of testifying, Daisy comes to view herself as a person to whom things have been done; the knowledge that emerges through the testimonial process is that she has been denied control over her life.

Gladys’s Testimony: Passing

WHEREAS DAISY’S self-consciousness is saturated by an internal sense of herself as other, her light-skinned daughter Gladys seems shocked when people see and treat her as different from white people. During her childhood and adolescence, she sees herself as racially other only when that designation is

violently forced upon her from outside. Decisions are made about her life that she cannot understand, but that she experiences as excluding her from the world she wants to belong to, the world of the rich white children for whom her mother cares. In response to her feeling of exclusion, she fantasizes about being white, and being adopted by a rich white family.

Gladys positions herself as an adult recalling her experience as a child; she conjures the past from the perspective of the present. Significantly, she begins from the place of a forgetting, which she candidly admits has been filled in by an imaginary picture:

I have no memory of being taken from my mother and placed in Parkerville Children's Home, but all my life, I've carried a mental picture of a little fat kid about three or four years old. She's sitting on the verandah of Babyland Nursery, her nose is running and she's crying. I think that was me when they first took me to Parkerville... (My Place, p. 241)

Gladys introduces herself in relation to her earliest and most deeply felt loss: the loss of the mother with whom she had lived since birth. Carolyn Steedman, a historian of childhood, observes that although children necessarily learn that they cannot always have what they want, they do not experience this lesson as the condition of entering culture. Rather, '[w]hat the child experiences is loss, the loss of something that she believed she possesses, or might possess someday, something she had a right to ...'.¹⁷ For white middle-class children the immediate experience of loss is the price to be paid for gaining a place and an identity within the dominant culture. Frantz Fanon argues that if the colonial experience entails traumatism, it occurs during the years of childhood, when the black child learns ways of seeing and thinking that are essentially white.¹⁸ Like many other missions, homes and settlements at the time, Parkerville, a home for white and half-caste children run by white sisters, was a place where Aboriginal children were assimilated into the norms of white culture, and trained to become productive members of white society, usually as domestics and farm hands. The condition of Gladys's entry into white culture was the denial of Aboriginal culture, of which she had no experience when she went to Parkerville. More crucially, however, assimilation entailed an inevitable distancing from her Aboriginal mother. She could imagine herself as white only to the extent that she did not identify with her mother; she could identify with her mother only to the extent that she did not imagine herself as white.

On her own account, Gladys experiences being sent to Parkerville not only as losing her mother, but as being excluded from Ivanhoe, the Drake-Brockman's family home: 'I couldn't understand why I couldn't live at Ivanhoe and go to school with Judy and June... I hadn't really worked out how things were when your mother was a servant. I knew the family liked me, so I couldn't understand why they didn't want me living there' (*My Place*, p. 263). Exclusion promotes envy, 'the social and subjective sense of the impossible unfairness of things'.¹⁹ Envy of rich white people and their possessions is an emotion that appears repeatedly in Gladys's and Daisy's testimonies, but which is entirely absent from Sally's story. At Parkerville, the children envy the house-mistress for 'real butter on her toast and plenty of scalded cream' (*My Place*, p. 247). Gladys enjoys the envy of the other children when the Drake-Brockmans come to visit in their car (without her mother):

I thought I'd burst for joy when I saw the black Chev creep up the hill ... All the other kids would crowd up close, hoping I'd take one of them with me ... I'd walk slowly towards the car. I felt very shy, but I was also conscious of the envy of the others still sitting on the fence behind me. It was a feeling of importance that would last me the whole of the following week. (My Place, p. 251)

The children have worked out an economy of envy: visitors who come in cars produce more envy, and thus provide a greater sense of importance for the chosen child, than those who simply bring cakes.

For children, toys are an important source of envy. As a child, Gladys understands her 'place' in the world in terms of the toys she has access to and those that are denied, and the terms on which she is allowed to play with toys. As with everything in Gladys's childhood world, June's toys set the standard for envy: June had 'dolls and a dolls' house. There were teddies and other toys and a china tea-set ... June's dolls were lovely, they were china and dressed in satin and lace' (*My Place*, p. 262). By contrast, at Parkerville,

'nobody owned a doll. There were a few broken ones kept in the cupboard, but when you asked to play with them, you had to play in the dining-room until you'd finished. You were never allowed to take one to bed' (*My Place*, p. 262). Ownership is what crucially differentiates June's relationship to toys from that of the Parkerville children. She has exclusive access to and control over the fate of her toys, which perhaps symbolizes, to a child's mind, her control over her own fate. Children at Parkerville did not own toys, and could not control objects in their daily lives.

Gladys's account of an incident that occurred during one of her holiday visits to Ivanhoe suggests that toys play an important symbolic role in assimilating children into the places that await them in the adult world. She describes the scene:

I was in the kitchen with my mother. She had her usual white apron on and was bustling around, when Alice came in with June. I couldn't take my eyes off June. She had the most beautiful doll in her arms. It had golden hair and blue eyes and was dressed in satin and lace. I was so envious, I wished it was mine. It reminded me of a princess.

June said to me, "You've got a doll, too. Mummy's got it." Then from behind her back, Alice pulled out a black topsy doll dressed like a servant. It had a red checked dress on and a white apron, just like Mum's. It had what they used to call a slave cap on its head ... My mother always wore one on washing day ...

I stared at this doll for a minute. I was completely stunned. That's me, I thought, I wanted to be a princess, not a servant. I was so upset that when Alice placed the black doll in my arms, I couldn't help flinging it onto the floor and screaming, "I don't want a black doll, I don't want a black doll". Alice just laughed and said to my mother, 'Fancy her not wanting a black doll' ...

They told the story of this often at Ivanhoe. They thought it was funny, (My Place, pp. 261-262)

As a means of instilling a consciousness of race and class into both her own daughter and Gladys, and symbolising the differences between them, Alice's choice of dolls could hardly have been more effective. Her act of giving Gladys a black doll *dressed like* her mother forces her to identify her mother as a servant, and herself as 'the maid's daughter': a servant-in-waiting. In addition, the doll's *blackness* forces upon Gladys an awareness of her own body as an object of sight for others; it reduces her to a self-negating third-person consciousness of her body.²¹ Gladys finds this perception of herself as 'other' alien and confusing, because she plays with the white children, and eats with the family in the dining room, while her mother eats in the kitchen. The 'gift' of the doll forcefully shatters Gladys's fragile fantasy that she really is like Dick, Judy and June, and has the same rights and prospects as them. Her violent response indicates that she experienced the incident as a severe wound to her self-esteem, which was repeated with every telling of the story.

While Gladys desperately looked forward to the holidays as a time to visit her mother at Ivanhoe, and enact her fantasy of being rich and white, these visits served as a painful reminder of her marginality in that world, and a reminder of the terms on which she was permitted to visit. She says that it is not until she's an adolescent that she begins to understand the reason for her exclusion. Once again, her sense of otherness is forced upon her from outside:

June had a friend who was always putting me in my place because I was only the maid's daughter. I was suddenly very unsure of my place in the world, I still ate with the family in the dining-room, but I felt like an outsider, especially when Alice would ring a little brass bell and my mother would come in and wait on us ... I suddenly realized that there hadn't been one Christmas dinner when Mum had eaten her meal with us ... (My Place. p. 270)

Gladys represents her adolescent sense of otherness and displacement in terms of her position as 'the maid's daughter', which suggests that she felt the injuries of class to be as great as those of race. As she gets older, she finds it harder and harder to leave Ivanhoe and return to Parkerville after the Christmas holidays. When she reaches fourteen, the age at which all the Aboriginal girls are sent out as domestics, she begs her

mother to take her back to Ivanhoe. Despite her dawning awareness that things have changed now that she and the Drake-Brockman children are older, she returns to Ivanhoe nourishing the fantasy that 'my childhood dream would come true and I'd be the same as Judy and June. Maybe we'd be one big, happy family, after all' (*My Place*, p. 271). Of course, her fantasy was again shattered: she was immediately fostered out to a Christian family.

By the time Alice Drake-Brockman finally tells her mother they don't need her any more, and mother and daughter are free to live together for the first time, Gladys is sixteen, and there is a great gulf between them. This gulf is in part the product of their separation, but also the product of differences in their positioning relative to the dominant white culture: whereas Daisy has lived in the shadows of white culture as an illiterate servant, Gladys has been educated to occupy the margins of European culture. While both mother and daughter can and do sell their labour, Gladys is young, pretty and light-skinned enough to pass, while Daisy is not. A woman she meets at a bus station comments on how beautiful she is, and asks her what nationality she is. When she replies that she is Aboriginal, the woman is horrified, and puts her arm around her to console her. When Gladys tells her mother about this incident, her mother says she must never tell anyone what she was. When Gladys asks what's wrong with being Aboriginal, her mother repeatedly says, 'Terrible things will happen to you if you tell people what you are' (*My Place*, p. 279). Gladys acknowledges her sense of an irrecoverable loss which is characteristic of stories told by children who were taken away: 'we'd been apart too long to get really close. I knew she loved me and I loved her, but, for all my childhood, she had been just a person I saw on holidays...' (*My Place*, p. 279). The damage and suffering do not end when mother and daughter are reunited after thirteen years. In these sad stories of forced separation, there are no happy endings.

When Gladys is twenty-one, she marries a white man, Bill. She marries into a precarious, marginalized existence: her husband drinks too much, abuses her, disappears for days on end, and cannot hold a job. Meanwhile, she has children year after year, and can barely feed them. She testifies that she didn't leave her husband for fear of losing custody of the children, but when he dies, she is finally free of him. The life she and her mother carve out with the children is marginal, but relatively undisturbed. There are occasional, humiliating visits from a snooty woman who represents the welfare service. This woman belittles Gladys's house-keeping methods, and particularly her failure to provide each child with his or her own bed. To avoid this censure from outside, Daisy insists on denying her Aboriginality and instead publicly identifies as a 'whitefella'. In passing as white, and in telling Gladys to lie about her Aboriginality, Daisy refuses to reproduce herself or the conditions of her own marginality. The legacy of this denial manifests itself in Sally, who experiences it as a symptom of her grandmother's humiliation.

Whereas Gladys feels uncertainty about where she belongs in the Drake-Brockman family, Daisy knows she belongs in the kitchen. Although Daisy is physically separated from her kin, she is able to imagine herself as part of a community of suffering, which is one way in which her testimony differs from Gladys's. What is striking in Gladys's testimony is the absence of Aboriginality as an articulated identity. Although there are children of Aboriginal descent at Parkerville, like her, they are all in the process of becoming assimilated. At Ivanhoe, her only contact with Aboriginality is with her mother, who wears the mask of the white-identified black person. Throughout Gladys's childhood, Aboriginality is figured as an absence, but an absence that is a structuring presence, a secret that must never be spoken. The testimonies suggest that by the time of Sally's childhood, her mother's and grandmother's lived experiences of Aboriginality, and their identity as Aboriginal, had become a carefully hidden secret that was nonetheless palpably present in the household.

Sally's Autobiography: The Identifying Witness

BECAUSE IT comes first in the text, Morgan's autobiography serves as the pre-text for the other testimonies and influences how we read them. I want to suggest that Morgan's autobiography can be most fruitfully read as the autobiography of a witness. That is, it can be read as an account of how she at first unconsciously and later consciously becomes a witness to the oppression of her kin. Morgan relates how, as a child growing up in a Perth suburb in the 1950s and 1960s, she was denied knowledge of her Aboriginal heritage by her mother and grandmother. After her white father committed suicide, her mother and grandmother feared that the children would be taken if they were discovered to be of Aboriginal descent.

They told the children they were Indian. As a teenager, Morgan realizes that her grandmother is Aboriginal. This, she believes, explains her own feelings of cultural displacement, and uncertainty about her identity. When she asks her mother and grandmother about the family's history, they say it would be best for everyone if she left the past buried. She becomes obsessed with the need to uncover this silenced past. Like children of Holocaust survivors, Morgan 'begins to know about the parent's past because she wants to know. She becomes a witness through her own efforts and initiative'.²² Over a ten-year period, she learns what she can, with the help of her grandmother's brother Arthur, who has identified and lived as an Aboriginal all his life. Eventually she travels to the north of the state, where her grandmother was raised. Although she meets people who knew her grandmother, she still does not know why she has chosen to silence the past and deny her Aboriginal identity. After years of refusing to talk about the past, her mother and grandmother finally agree to tell her their stories. Morgan's story of the development of her race consciousness is not significant because it tells us about her own unique identity; it is important because it enables her to take up the position of the witness to her mother and grandmother. She does not witness from an uninvested position. Rather, she is an identifying witness; her act of witnessing to her kin is bound up with claims about her own identity. As I will show, the position of the identifying witness is not without its hazards.

Morgan's autobiography takes a naive form, in that she presents events to us directly, rather than meditating on the problems of childhood memory. The autobiography opens with a portrait of herself as a six-year old, at the time the eldest of four children, visiting her father in a Veteran's hospital. Her father, a World War Two veteran of Scottish heritage, was severely tortured in a German camp during the war. He apparently suffered from alcoholism, depression and violent outbreaks. Today he would probably be diagnosed as suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. When he is at home, his wife and children often have to escape to the neighbour's house for fear of his violence, but mostly he lives at the hospital for long periods. The incidents Morgan describes, particularly pertaining to the period before her father's death, are often shocking, but the naive tone of the text screens this shock. Instead of being remembered as traumatic, these events are described simply as part of everyday life, rather than as anything out of the ordinary. The death of her father when Sally is nine is represented as the end of a period of fear and violence in the family's life, and particularly in her mother's life. But the death of her white father also introduces a new kind of fear and instability, because once the white father disappears from the domestic scene, the light-skinned children become vulnerable to being removed by welfare authorities.

In contrast to Daisy's self-representation, Morgan represents herself as a person who is able to find meaning in her experiences, and thereby to shape her identity. Her autobiography retrospectively selects and orders events from her childhood to reveal the difference of Aboriginality. In the chapters which chart her childhood, she anecdotally records a series of incidents which convey her sense that there is something 'different' about herself and her family, for which she cannot account. For instance, her style of drawing differs from her classmates; her pictures lack perspective, have 'no horizon line' and the 'people were flat and floating. You had to turn it on the side to see what half the picture was about' (*My Place*, p. 97). This can be recognized as the description of an Aboriginal style of painting. Eric Michaels argues that such incidents indicate that she believes she is heir to a genetically-transmitted Aboriginal heritage, but it is equally plausible to read such scenes as witnessing the impact of her grandmother's teaching on the child. She also remembers the teacher's assumption that she would not succeed in school, and her mother's insistence that she do well. The tone of these chapters fluctuates between bearing witness to the child's sense that the family is living outside the law, and taking pride in that difference. The child rarely remembers being the direct target of racism; rather, her sense of difference is less easily located.

Sally's search for the meaning of her family's difference gradually finds its target in her grandmother. When she is fifteen, Morgan has a transformative experience, an adolescent epiphany. She describes returning home from school to discover her grandmother crying. When she asks her grandmother what's wrong, she bursts out: 'You bloody kids don't want me, you want a bloody white grandmother. I'm black. Do you hear, black, black, black?' (*My Place*, p. 97). In calling attention to her blackness, Daisy forces Sally to bear witness to the pain caused by her sense of exclusion from the family. In response to her grandmother's outburst, Morgan begins to question her own identity:

For the first time in my fifteen years, I was conscious of Nan's colouring. She was right, she wasn't white. Well, I thought logically, if she wasn't white, then neither were we. What did

that make us, what did that make me? I had never thought of myself as being black before.
(*My Place*, p. 97)

After her grandmother's declaration, Morgan becomes obsessed with the family's past. Her mother and grandmother not only refuse to tell her anything; they become agitated and upset every time she asks, and she begins to realize that something is being hidden. First this secret seems to be related only to the issue of the family's Aboriginal heritage, but gradually Morgan realizes that there are other secrets too, concerning the identity of the missing men in the family—her mother's father and her grandmother's father—and concerning her mother's and grandmother's lives before she was born.

While Morgan continues, without success, to question her mother and grandmother about the past, she also begins to notice their fear of authority. 'I was often puzzled by the way Mum and Nan approached anyone in authority, it was [as] if they were frightened. I knew that couldn't be the reason, why on earth would anyone be frightened of the government?' (*My Place*, p. 96). She recounts an incident when she overheard her grandmother, in conversation with the rent collector, referring to herself as white. Morgan comments: 'I found myself coming back to the same old question: if Nan was Aboriginal, why didn't she just say so?' (*My Place*, p. 107). Although her mother and grandmother denounce her interest in the past, Sally is not easily dissuaded. As a university student, she desires to identify publicly as an Aboriginal, and applies for an Aboriginal scholarship. This act is based in her desire to identify with her grandmother's past and the painful nature of that past: 'I wanted to say "my grandmother's Aboriginal and it's a part of me, too"' (*My Place*, p. 137), and 'If I denied my tentative identification with the past now, I'd be denying her as well' (*My Place*, p. 141).

Unlike her grandmother, who adopts the rhetorical strategy of 'not lying', Morgan's autobiography is characterized by a rhetoric of truth. She goes to considerable lengths to collect evidence relating to the family's past, and the identity of her grandmother's father and her mother's father. She reads about policies pertaining to the control of Aborigines, she questions the Drake-Brockmans and other people who knew the family, and she travels to Marble Bar to talk to people who knew her grandmother as a child. She repeatedly insists that she does not want 'to say anything that is not true' and tells her witnesses they must 'tell the truth' in their testimonies. I want to suggest that Sally's use of a confessional mode of discourse must be understood as a means of producing a culturally-authoritative conception of truth. In her study of women's autobiographies, Leigh Gilmore argues that

*autobiography cannot be seen to draw its social authority simply from a privileged relation to real life. Rather, authority is derived through autobiography's proximity to the rhetoric of truth telling: the confession ... imports not only the spiritual but also the legal constraints of truth telling and potential punishment for error into the genre. The story of the self is constructed as one that must be sworn to and will be subject to verification.*²³

Morgan's primary aim is not to express a hidden truth of the self as a means of 'liberating' herself, as Muecke argues.²⁴ Rather, her act of bearing witness to a hidden past shares some of the motivations that psychotherapists have found in the children of Holocaust survivors:

*In all cases, the need to discover, to reenact, or to live the parents' past was a major issue in the lives of survivors' children ... These children feel they have a mission to live in the past and to change it so that their parents' humiliation, disgrace and guilt can be converted into victory over the oppressors, and the threat of genocide undone with a restitution of life and worth.*²⁵

*She attempts to redeem her grandmother's humiliation by putting the past on trial, and thereby achieving a victory over the oppressors. Thus, rather than view Morgan as an amateur anthropologist who treats her relatives as 'native informants', I suggest that we view her as an historian-cum-judge, who conceives of history as a trial to establish truth.*²⁶

To bring her case before the court of history, Morgan needs to provide proof of her mother's and particularly her grandmother's victimization. Her judicial approach to the past requires that her mother

and grandmother take up the burden of remembering the past. She does not always seem to appreciate the contradictions inherent in the position of prosecutor. As Kamala Visweswaran reminds us, ‘“Lies, secrets, and silences” are frequently strategies of resistance. Yet the ethnographer’s task is often to break such resistance ... The ethnographer finally arrives when she renders a people or person subject’.²⁷ Morgan’s aim, in seeking her grandmother’s testimony, is to show how her grandmother has been denied subjectivity by the dominant culture, and to restore her subjectivity. Until shortly before she dies, Daisy refuses to be Morgan’s subject. Morgan does not reflect on her grandmother’s resistance, except to read it as a sign of her shame and oppression. Daisy, who seems to realize that the cost of subjectivity is subjection, is far more cognisant of the perils entailed in claiming an identity than Sally. To identify oneself as an ‘Aboriginal’ is to risk inviting the interference of the law. During the colonial and post-colonial period, Aborigines were categorized by how much Aboriginal blood they had (full blood, half-caste, quadroon), or how visibly Aboriginal they looked. These categories were used to subject individuals to various interferences and restrictions. In questioning her grandmother, particularly regarding issues of identity and sexuality, Morgan subjects her to the kind of surveillance that she had always been subjected to by government officials and white people. It is therefore reasonable to speculate that Daisy hears Sally’s insistent questions very differently than Sally intends them.

Whenever memory is invoked, we have been cautioned to ask: ‘by whom, where, in which context, against what?’²⁸ We also need to add to this list the question: ‘for whom?’ Morgan believes that her demand that her grandmother publicly remember her victimization will enable her grandmother to overcome her sense of shame by seeing it as the product of historical forces rather than a personal failure. But it is ultimately Morgan’s identity, and not her grandmother’s, that is at stake. It is Morgan who demands that her grandmother remember her past in the name of an Aboriginality with which Morgan herself identifies, but her grandmother quite clearly does not.

Daisy exemplifies what Felman calls a ‘carnal knowledge of victimization’: she witnesses to the inside from the lived experience of bodily and psychological vulnerability. By contrast, Morgan is an identifying witness: she witnesses from a position that is simultaneously implicated in, and yet very different from, her grandmother and mother’s experiences. In her desire to identify with them, however, she ignores crucial differences of class, race, and embodied experience. Daisy is visibly black, which has shaped her lived experience, and her sense of herself as other. She is ‘overdetermined from without... a slave not to the “idea” others have of [her] but to [her] appearances’. In addition, psychological differences result from these different positionings: Daisy experiences herself as a black person among whites, whereas Morgan’s autobiography suggests that she does not.

The difference between them is played out in relation to the concept of ‘place’. Daisy refuses both literally and metaphorically to ‘go home’. Literally, she refuses to make the trip up north with Sally and Gladys. Metaphorically, she refuses to go ‘home’ by refusing to place herself and her children in a genealogy of bastardry. Her ‘home’ is her displacement, and she clings to it with a ferocity that Sally cannot understand. As Rey Chow observes and Daisy reminds us, ‘natives... become knowable only through routes that diverge from their original “homes”’.³⁰ The lesson that Daisy teaches—that there is no possible going home, that there are no authentic natives, that the past is not something to celebrate—is a sobering one, and one that Sally refuses to learn. While Sally views her grandmother’s psychology as a product of the social conditions in which she lived, she fails to articulate the conditions for her own psychological self-representation, what makes her desire to identify with her grandmother and with an idea of ‘Aboriginality’. Instead of ‘placing’ herself in relation to a post-colonial social and discursive context which gives meaning to particular representations of Aboriginality, she articulates her ‘place’ in terms of the fantasy of a return: to a physical place, to an intact community, to an image of Aboriginality that has withstood the ravages of history. Daisy’s testimony functions to disrupt Sally’s: the emotional flatness of Daisy’s narrative calls into question the triumphant, nostalgic tone of Sally’s autobiography. While at the level of content, Morgan attempts to produce an identification between Sally and Daisy, the linguistic and rhetorical differences in their texts performs the differences between their ‘identities’. Sally never really succeeds in making her grandmother proud to be ‘Aboriginal’; Daisy’s lived experience has left her too embittered for a recuperative approach to the past. By contrast, Morgan’s own narrative is written in the spirit of reconciliation, recovery and healing.

Notes

1 A few years later, cultural theorist Stephen Muecke, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, described the text as a 'confessional' autobiography which seeks to locate the truth of the self in a racially genetic inheritance, without acknowledging that the imperative to confess is a product of power relations, rather than an act of liberation. See Stephen Muecke, *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies*, Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 1992. See also analysis by Bain Attwood, 'Portrait of an Aboriginal as an Artist: Sally Morgan and the Construction of Aboriginality', *Australian Historical Studies*, 99 (1992), pp. 302-318; Jackie Huggins, 'Always Was Always Will Be', *Australian Historical Studies*, 99 (1992), pp. 302-318; and Tim Rowse, 'Sally Morgan's Kaftan', *Australian Historical Studies*, 99 (1992), pp. 465-468.

2 Muecke, p. 132.

3 Georg Gugelberger and Michael Kearney, 'Introduction: Voices for the Voiceless: Testimonial Literature in Latin America', *Latin American Perspectives, Special Issue: Voices of the Voiceless in Testimonial Literature, Part I*, 18, vol. 3, number 70 (1991), pp. 3-14, p. 4.

4 John Beverley, 'The Margin at the Centre: On *Testimonio* (Testimonial Narrative)', *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (Spring, 1989), pp. 11-28, p.p. 12-13.

5 See for instance Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

6 Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, New York and London, Routledge, 1992, p. 204.

7 Psychoanalytic critics such as Cathy Caruth have argued that traumatic experience requires us to re-think our notions of experience and memory. Unlike ordinary experience, which is presumed to be experienced when it occurs, the traumatic event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it'. (Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited C. Caruth, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1995, p. 5). Caruth contends that we experience traumatic events at the cost of not understanding them, and that we understand or 'possess' them at the cost of denying their traumatic nature. For additional readings on trauma and memory, see other essays in Caruth (above); also Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1996; Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (eds.), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, New York, Routledge, 1996; Michael S. Roth, *The Ironist's Cage: Memory, Trauma and the Construction of History*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995; and Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

8 See for instance Hayden White's essay 'The Modernist Event', in *The Persistence of History* (ed. Vivien Sobchak), New York, Routledge, 1996.

9. Sally Morgan, *My Place*, Perth, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987, p. 325. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text as *My Place* followed by a page number.

10 Daisy's desire to keep secret all the intimate details of her sexual life, including the possibility of sexual abuse, should be understood in the context of the prevailing view that Aboriginal women are always available for sex.

11 Daisy's repeated experience of permanent or long-term separation from family and kin was typical. In a testimonial from Susan Maushart's oral history, *Sort of a Place like Home: Remembering the Moore River Settlement* (Perth, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1993) an ex-inmate recounts being taken from her mother in terms very similar to Daisy's:

I was on the station when I was born until I was 'bout five ... they took me away ... the police from Norseman came there ... He took me to Norseman and then left me and I had to stay at the police station with them, him and his wife. Oh I felt awful. I cried all night. Tell you the truth, I cried and cried. I wanted to go back to my mother and I couldn't go back ... My mother, well, she stood there as they, as I got in the car and went and she just cried and cried, I can see her crying, you know. I can see her standing there crying and I just couldn't do nothing, just standing there, Nothing she could do, nothing at all. She just stand and watch me go away ... I never seen her again ...

Like this narrator, Daisy too expresses a feeling of hopelessness and lack of control over her daily life and her destiny. Commenting on Gladys's internment at Parkerville, Daisy says, 'I knew she didn't want to stay there, but what could I do? It wasn't like I had a place of my own. It wasn't like I had any say over my own life' (*My Place*, p. 341). Other texts which offer testimonies by stolen children include Coral Edwards and Peter Read, *The Lost Children: Thirteen Australians Taken From Their Aboriginal Families Tell of the Struggle to Find Their Natural Parents*, Sydney, Doubleday, 1989; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1997; Western Australia Aboriginal Legal Service, *Telling Our Story: A Report by the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia (Inc) on the Removal of Aboriginal Children from Their Families in Western Australia*, Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia (Inc). 1995. For an historical account of policies affecting Aborigines in Western Australia, see Anna Haebich, *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia, 1900-1940*, Nedlands, WA, University of Western Australia Press for the Charles and Joy Staples South West Region Publications Committee, 1988.

12 Louise J. Kaplan, *No Voice is Ever Wholly Lost*, New York, Simon and Schuster. 1995, p. 120.

13 Kaplan, p. 225.

14 Laura S. Brown, 'Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma', in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1995, pp. 100-112, p. 100.

15 Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds.), New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 295.

16 Likewise, psychoanalyst Dori Laub argues in a study of Holocaust survivors that it is the survivor's internalisation of such an 'inherently incomprehensible and deceptive psychological structure' as that of the Holocaust that produces an inability to bear witness to oneself (Felman and Laub, p. 80).

17 Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, London, 1986, p. 110.

18 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London and Sydney, Pluto Press, 1986.

19 Steedman, p. 114.

20 For a discussion of how toys construct gendered identities, see Willis, 1991.

21 See Fanon, *passim*.

22 Kaplan, p. 227.

23 Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 109.

24 See Muecke.

25 Kaplan, p. 229.

26 Carlo Ginzburg argues that in the tradition of judicial historiography which was dominant in nineteenth century France, historians sometimes abandoned objective detachment, and instead became advocates for a particular interpretation of history. See Carlo Ginzburg, 'Checking the Evidence: The Judge and the Historian', *Critical Inquiry*, volume 18 (Autumn, 1991), pp. 79-92.

27 See Visweswaran.

28 Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, 'Introduction: Memory and Counter-Memory', *Representations*, 26 (Spring, 1989), p. 2.

29 Fanon, p. 116.

30 Chow's statement in full reads: 'In the absence of that original witness of the native's destruction, and in the untranslatability of the native's discourse into imperialist discourse, natives, like commodities, become knowable only through routes that diverge from their original "homes"' (Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993, p. 42). Chow also contends that the native's silence is 'the most important clue to her displacement. That silence is at once the evidence of imperialist

oppression (the naked body, the defiled image) and what, in the absence of the original witness to that oppression, must act in its place by performing or feigning as the pre-imperialist gaze' (p. 38).

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