

**Intergenerational Autobiography, Historical
Narrative And Trauma: Maternal Life Stories
In Postcolonial Women's Writing**

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Abstract

Focusing on works published in the late twentieth century by three contemporary postcolonial women writers, Sindiwe Magona, Sally Morgan and Janet Campbell Hale, this thesis explores their use of a hybrid generic form I term 'intergenerational autobiography'. Originating from South Africa, Australia and North America respectively, each text engages with the legacy of colonialism in a different settler society. The authors interweave personal narratives with the life stories of mothers and grandmothers, and engage with the perspectives of future generations, incorporating familial subjectivities within autobiography in response to traumatic colonial pasts.

Despite the widely disparate political and cultural contexts, detailed comparisons demonstrate how attacks on indigenous families function as key mechanisms of colonial control and oppression. Attention to the specificity of traumatic experience in each narrative necessitates a re-examination of models of trauma in non-Western contexts. Magona explores both everyday violence in apartheid South Africa, and the communal and generational impacts of individual 'spectacular' traumatic events. Morgan's work foregrounds the vital collaborative role of the listener in trauma testimony, and highlights the significance of silences or gaps in testimonies about the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children in Australia. Hale vividly demonstrates the intergenerational transmission of trauma through maternal abuse in her Native American family, and throws into question the rebuilding of familial relationships as a discourse of healing.

Each text is situated in relation to the historical narratives produced by truth and reconciliation commissions and other official testimony-gathering projects, exploring the freedom that intergenerational autobiography offers to address a broader spectrum of cross-generational experiences than is possible under the restrictive political objectives and mandates of TRCs. This literary form enables Magona, Morgan and Hale to produce politically nuanced narratives of the colonial past, accessing alternatives to 'mainstream' historical narratives through a generational approach that highlights the continuing traumatic impact of both spectacular and insidious forms of colonial violence.

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Table of Contents

Thesis Introduction	1
i. Functions of Autobiography	4
ii. Postcolonial Contexts	7
iii. Intergenerational and Maternal Relationships	12
iv. Historical Narrative	15
v. Rethinking Models of Trauma	23
Chapter 1. Histories Of Apartheid: Reading Sindiwe Magona's <i>To My Children's Children And Forced To Grow In Relation To The Truth And Reconciliation Commission Of South Africa</i>	28
Introduction	28
i. <i>Magona's narratives</i>	28
ii. <i>The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa</i>	35
1.1 Magona's Representation Of Family	39
1.1.1 <i>The addressee in Magona's autobiographies</i>	39
1.1.2 <i>Traditional family and community</i>	45
1.1.3 <i>Intergenerational experiences of apartheid</i>	47
1.2 Impact Of Apartheid On The Black South African Family	52
1.2.1 <i>Separation of black families</i>	52
1.2.2 <i>Impact of apartheid on black motherhood</i>	55
1.2.3 <i>Impact of apartheid on black fatherhood</i>	60
1.2.4 <i>Legacy to future generations</i>	64
1.3 Portrayals of Apartheid History in Magona's Autobiographies and The Truth And Reconciliation Commission	66
1.3.1 <i>Historical time frames</i>	68
1.3.2 <i>Framing of testimony</i>	71

1.4 Definitions of Violence and Trauma in Apartheid Narratives	77
1.4.1 <i>'Spectacular' versus systemic violence</i>	77
1.4.2 <i>Definitions of trauma</i>	84
1.4.3 <i>Determining who is a 'victim'</i>	87
1.4.4 <i>Silences and gaps</i>	90
Conclusion	97
Chapter 2. Trauma Testimony and the Listener in the Stolen Generations: Sally Morgan's <i>My Place</i>	99
Introduction	99
i. <i>Context of publication</i>	100
ii. <i>Stolen Generations trauma testimony</i>	106
iii. <i>Bringing Them Home</i>	108
2.1 Stolen Generations Legacy	115
2.1.1 <i>Context of removals</i>	115
2.1.2 <i>Hidden traumatic past</i>	121
2.1.3 <i>Intergenerational impact of the Stolen Generations</i>	124
2.2 Conflict Between Speaking and Silence	128
2.2.1 <i>Political need to speak out</i>	128
2.2.2 <i>Personal motivations for breaking silence</i>	132
2.2.3 <i>Morgan's ethical dilemma</i>	133
2.3 Significance of Giving Testimony	140
2.3.1 <i>New knowledge from trauma testimony</i>	142
2.3.2 <i>Defining traumatic experience</i>	148
2.4 Listening to Familial Trauma Testimony	152
2.4.1 <i>Boundaries between survivor and listener</i>	152
2.4.2 <i>Morgan as an 'identifying witness'</i>	155

2.5 Testimony in the Context of the Stolen Generations	159
2.5.1 <i>The Stolen Generations as contested history</i>	159
2.5.2 <i>Judith Drake-Brockman's response to My Place</i>	164
2.5.3 <i>The addressee in Stolen Generations testimony</i>	167
Conclusion	170
Chapter 3. Trauma and Haunting in Native American Autobiography: Janet Campbell Hale's <i>Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter</i>	172
Introduction	172
i. <i>Introducing Bloodlines</i>	172
ii. <i>Contextualising the narrative</i>	176
iii. <i>The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada</i>	182
3.1 Intergenerational Haunting in 'Daughter of Winter'	188
3.1.1 <i>Damaging maternal relationships</i>	188
3.1.2 <i>The transgenerational phantom</i>	190
3.1.3 <i>Margaret's trauma</i>	193
3.1.4 <i>Traumatised culture</i>	196
3.2 Retelling Familial History in 'The Only Good Indian'	199
3.2.1 <i>Uncovering Gram's story</i>	200
3.2.2 <i>Postmemory</i>	204
3.2.3 <i>Gram's racial self-hatred</i>	208
3.2.4 <i>'I remind her of someone she hates'</i>	211
3.3 Bloodline and Blood Memory in 'Return to Bear Paw'	217
3.3.1 <i>Defining blood memory</i>	217
3.3.2 <i>The Battle at the Bear Paw</i>	219
3.3.3 <i>Reconnecting to Native American heritage</i>	223
3.3.4 <i>Future generations and Hale's legacy</i>	228

3.4 Functions of Intergenerational Autobiography in <i>Bloodlines</i>	230
3.4.1 <i>Hale's ambivalent familial relationships</i>	230
3.4.2 <i>Contemporary Native American identities</i>	234
3.4.3 <i>Historical functions of Bloodlines</i>	236
3.4.4 <i>Comparison with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada</i>	239
Conclusion	245
Thesis Conclusion	247
Appendices	
Appendix A. Rebecca Gill and Claire Irving, Transcript of 'Interview with Sindiwe Magona', Newcastle University, 25 March 2010	251
Appendix B. Email from Sindiwe Magona, 17 June 2011	268
Bibliography	269

Introduction

Focusing on works published in the late twentieth century by three contemporary postcolonial women writers, Sindiwe Magona, Sally Morgan and Janet Campbell Hale, this thesis explores their use of a hybrid generic form I term 'intergenerational autobiography'. Originating from South Africa, Australia, and North America (including both the USA and Canada) respectively, each author uses autobiographical writing to engage with the legacy of colonialism in a different settler society. The two volumes of Sindiwe Magona's autobiography, *To My Children's Children* (1991) and *Forced to Grow* (1992), recount her experiences as a black South African woman living under the increasingly oppressive legal and social restrictions of the apartheid regime.¹ Sally Morgan's text *My Place* (1987) depicts her discovery and exploration of her Aboriginal heritage, and follows the gradual emergence of the traumatic stories of her mother's and grandmother's experiences as members of the 'Stolen Generations' of Aboriginal children who were removed from their families by the Australian government.² In her collection of autobiographical essays *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter* (1993) Janet Campbell Hale presents an ambivalent picture of maternal relationships, as she records the childhood abuse she endured in her mixed-race Native American family, and engages with the perspectives of her mother and grandmothers in an attempt to understand the traumatic past manifested by their destructive familial relationships.³ While the work of these authors might be read in terms of traditional individualistic autobiography, or as the more overtly communal form of the family memoir, I argue that Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's framing of familial stories within the narratives of their individual lives represent important generic innovations. I explore how they expand the conventions of autobiography, analysing how each author engages with familial subjectivities of

¹ Sindiwe Magona, *To My Children's Children* (London: The Women's Press, 1991), and Sindiwe Magona, *Forced to Grow* (London: The Women's Press, 1992). Further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text, using the short-title forms *Children* and *Forced* for clarity where necessary.

² Sally Morgan, *My Place* (Freemantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

³ Janet Campbell Hale, *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1993). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

past as well as future generations within the story of her own life, to produce intergenerational narratives that respond to traumatic colonial pasts.⁴

Despite the widely disparate political and cultural contexts of Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's intergenerational autobiographies, each author demonstrates how, in their respective social environments, attacks on indigenous families function as key mechanisms of colonial control and oppression. Attention to the specificity of these traumatic experiences and their impact on the family in each narrative necessitates a re-examination of models of trauma in non-Western contexts. Each author's work is addressed in a separate chapter to facilitate examination of the particular political, social and cultural circumstances in which these texts are written, and the specific functions of intergenerational autobiography in each context. In *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* Magona explores both everyday systemic violence in apartheid South Africa, and the wide-reaching communal and generational impacts of individual 'spectacular' traumatic events. *My Place* foregrounds the vital collaborative role that Morgan plays as listener to familial trauma testimonies, highlighting the significance of silences or gaps, and illustrating the specific challenges of giving testimony about the colonial past in a political context where such narratives have frequently been contested or denied. *Bloodlines* vividly demonstrates the intergenerational transmission of trauma through maternal abuse in Hale's Native American family, and throws into question the rebuilding of familial relationships as a discourse of healing. My examination of these issues highlights the limitations of conventional approaches to trauma, testimony, and healing, and suggests ways of expanding

⁴ A small number of scholars have employed the term 'intergenerational autobiography' in their work, including John D. Barbour, 'Judging and Not Judging Parents', in *The Ethics of Life Writing*, ed. by Paul John Eakin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 73-98; Jill Golden, 'Ethical Bearings in an Inter-generational Auto/biography: Writing in My Mother's Voice', *Life Writing*, 2:1 (2005), 97-107; and Kate Douglas *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma, and Memory* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010). My own use of 'intergenerational autobiography' to describe Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's work differs from these forerunners, emphasising the autobiographical focus of their narratives, and examining the uses they make of familial life stories to shed light on their personal experiences within the political and social histories of indigenous people in their respective national contexts. Barbour's and Douglas' work on narratives of abuse bears some relation to Hale's *Bloodlines* but, as my reading of her text demonstrates, Hale uses intergenerational autobiography not only to produce an introspective insight into the abuse she suffers, but also to develop a more outward-looking exploration of the historical context in which this familial abuse takes place. My study examines how Magona, Morgan and Hale use intergenerational autobiography as a politically inflected response to the particular historical and political circumstances of their families' lives in the diverse postcolonial contexts from which they write.

these models to address the diversity of indigenous people's experiences of colonial oppression.

Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's intergenerational autobiographies create detailed pictures of colonial pasts, engaging with familial voices and experiences to demonstrate the long-term impact of restrictive legal policies and systemic racial discrimination against indigenous people in South Africa, Australia and North America. This thesis examines the political roles that *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* can play in voicing black South African, Aboriginal and Native American experiences, attesting to colonial oppression, and writing the stories of indigenous people back into the national records of their countries. I situate each author's work in relation to the historical narratives produced by truth and reconciliation commissions (or in the case of *My Place* in relation to the equivalent official testimony-gathering work of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families).⁵ These comparisons shed light on the freedom that intergenerational autobiography offers to address a broader spectrum of cross-generational experiences than is possible under the restrictive political objectives and mandates of TRCs, highlighting one reason for Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's use of this innovative narrative form. My detailed examination of each author's work seeks to demonstrate the politically nuanced narratives of the colonial past that intergenerational autobiographies can produce by accessing alternatives to 'mainstream' historical narratives that draw attention to the continuing traumatic effects of both spectacular and insidious forms of colonial violence. By framing the stories of earlier generations of their families within their autobiographies, each author attests to the ongoing traumatic impact of the colonial past, and simultaneously draws on intergenerational connections that demonstrate the survival of indigenous cultural communities. I explore how intergenerational autobiography can thus function both as a testament to the damage done to colonised peoples, and as a way of rebuilding and asserting the endurance of ancestral bonds and indigenous cultural heritage.

⁵ In this thesis I abbreviate the title Truth and Reconciliation Commission to 'TRC'. Unless otherwise specified, where TRC is used in Chapter One it refers to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, and where it is used in Chapter Three it refers to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

i. Functions of Autobiography

The genre of autobiography can perform important cultural functions, which Magona, Morgan and Hale draw on both as part of their political aims of voicing the suppressed histories of their families, and to contribute to the literary cultures of their respective communities and nations. Writing from a personal experiential perspective that incorporates intergenerational voices asserts the veracity of stories that are narrated, situating these texts as records of events and situations either directly experienced or witnessed at first hand. Whilst first person narrative offers rhetorical strength to the truth claims made in these intergenerational autobiographies, it also invites critical examination on the grounds of authenticity, a particular concern in relation to the texts' engagement with contested histories. In addition to these 'documentary' functions of autobiography, the literary possibilities of the narrative form also enable these texts to intervene in debates about the authors' cultural and national histories, and to explore the issues surrounding contemporary indigenous identities. As my analysis will demonstrate, each text examined in this study contributes to new understandings of the colonial past, while exploring the legacy of this past in the narrative present, and addressing its possible impact on future generations. By expanding the time span of autobiography beyond the duration of an individual life, Magona, Morgan and Hale use intergenerational autobiography to explore colonial histories that reach back before their own births. This allows them both to examine the effects of changing political policies over time, particularly relevant to Magona's depiction of the increasingly restrictive legislation imposed by the apartheid government over the course of the twentieth century, and the longstanding impact of many decades of racial discrimination, illustrated by the parallel traumatic experiences of multiple generations in both Morgan's and Hale's families.

A range of literary tropes employed in the intergenerational autobiographies analysed here enable the authors to explore the legacy of the traumatic familial experiences that they uncover, examining how the effects of racism and oppression may reach forward to impact on the generations that follow. This is exemplified by Magona's use of her maternal subject position to address her narrative to the imagined perspective of her future great grandchild in *To My*

Children's Children, which I discuss in Chapter One. Magona's framing of the narrative in this way draws on the Xhosa cultural tradition of instructive oral storytelling, which she uses both to reflect on the extent of damage caused to traditional familial relationships, and as a method of rebuilding her connection to future generations through the form of the narrative. In Chapter Three I examine Hale's use of a similarly innovative literary technique in *Bloodlines*, exploring the trope of 'blood memory' which she uses to imaginatively access, identify with, and recreate the lost experiences of her paternal grandmother. These explicitly literary aspects of the narratives demonstrate how intergenerational autobiography can allow authors like Magona, Morgan and Hale to write about colonial pasts in ways that extend the possibilities of conventional scholarly historical narratives.

Another vital aspect of the cultural value of intergenerational autobiographies as narratives of the colonial past is the access that the generic form offers to the intimate details of daily life. By narrating their own and their families' experiences of living with the diverse mechanisms of oppression to which they are subjected, Magona, Morgan and Hale demonstrate how colonial violence is experienced at the level of the ordinary and everyday as well as through instances of extreme violence. The intimacy of their experiential stories highlights the personal impacts of discrimination and harm, recording emotional and psychological responses that encourage the reader to identify and empathise with these experiences. This is powerfully demonstrated in *My Place*, in which Morgan self-consciously foregrounds her discovery of her family's traumatic pasts, and records the difficult process of persuading her mother and grandmother to talk about experiences they have suppressed in an attempt to protect Morgan and her siblings. The reader's perspective is aligned with Morgan, who shares our ignorance of her family's past at the beginning of the narrative, and narrates her anguished discovery of their traumatic experiences alongside her own exploration of what it means to be Aboriginal in contemporary Australia.

The example of *My Place* also highlights the use of non-linear chronology that literary autobiography facilitates, since although Morgan's own experiences are recorded chronologically, the emerging stories of her mother and grandmother

interject into this frame narrative in the order that they collaboratively begin to piece them together. The functions and effects of this narrative technique are examined in detail in Chapter Two. Magona's and Hale's narratives also incorporate interjections of personal and inherited memories into the linear chronology of their life narratives, and the use of this technique enables each author to emphasise links between experiences separated across time and over generations. In this way intergenerational autobiography offers the writer scope to explore parallels between individual experiences and examine links between historical moments that demonstrate continuity and emphasise causality, again using literary techniques to create a different picture of the past than conventional chronological historical narrative allows.

Magona, Morgan and Hale employ the literary features of intergenerational autobiography to produce narratives that are simultaneously creatively nuanced, accessible to a wide readership, and politically significant. As I demonstrate through detailed textual analysis, each narrative bears an important relation to debates about the representation of the colonial past in its specific cultural location, prompting the use of the label 'postcolonial' to describe this body of work. The study of postcolonial autobiography as a distinct genre is an emerging field, as Bart Moore-Gilbert highlights in the introduction to his monograph *Postcolonial Life-Writing*. He observes that 'much remains to be done to provide a convincing general account of postcolonial life-writing as well as to effect a satisfactory dialogue between the sub-fields of Postcolonial and Auto/biography Studies,' an undertaking that he seeks to initiate in his text.⁶ Moore-Gilbert offers an extensive survey of key concerns in a range of postcolonial life writing, contributing to a body of work that he suggests should 'support convincing generalisation about the distinctive attributes of postcolonial life-writing as a specific sub-genre of auto/biographical writing', while recognising 'the heterogeneity of contexts and cultures from which postcolonial life-writing has emerged, not to mention the range of sub-forms it operates within'.⁷ In my opinion this heterogeneity precludes the kind of generalising that Moore-Gilbert suggests is possible, and a detailed examination of political and cultural context is necessary in order to understand

⁶ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-Representation* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. xiv.

⁷ Moore-Gilbert, p. xiv.

the specific nature of a particular postcolonial autobiography. Consequently this thesis does not attempt to produce a definition of intergenerational autobiography that would be applicable to all manifestations of the genre; rather my aim is to examine selected examples with a view to understanding how Magona, Morgan and Hale employ generic innovations to produce life narratives that respond to the specific political and cultural circumstances in which they write.

Gillian Whitlock's comparative study of autobiographies by women from across the former British colonies in *The Intimate Empire* provides productive insights into the political resistance work that life writing can perform in postcolonial contexts, which inform my discussions of the intergenerational autobiographies analysed here. Whitlock's attention to the role of the reader is particularly helpful to understanding both the importance of the historical moments when these intergenerational autobiographies are written and published, and the kind of stories that Magona, Morgan and Hale are able to tell. As Whitlock observes, 'autobiographers manoeuvre for their public; for the privilege of addressing the reader about her life. What can be said, what must be omitted, and how these parameters shift over time is fundamental to critical reading'.⁸ My work explores how these political concerns identified by Whitlock intersect with the representation of traumatic experience and the centrality of intergenerational narratives in the texts studied. I examine these multiple dimensions of Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's narratives, seeking to offer further insight into the generic experimentation and functions of these intergenerational autobiographies.

ii. Postcolonial Contexts

Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's intergenerational autobiographies are each written and published during a period of political transition. All three authors' work can be read in terms of their contributions to cultural understandings of the transformation from colonial to postcolonial status in their respective national

⁸ Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (New York and London: Cassell, 2000), p. 3.

contexts. Whilst the relationships between colonial settlers and indigenous people are clearly distinct in the different political locations from which each author writes, there are nonetheless parallels between the mechanisms of oppression employed by colonial governments to control the populations who originally occupied the land they have appropriated. Theorist Robert Young identifies two distinct types of practice employed by colonising empires, which he labels as 'the settled and the exploited, the white and the black'.⁹ South Africa, Australia, the USA and Canada can all be categorised as what Young describes as 'settler' colonies where, he argues, 'those who descend from European settlers' hold an 'ambivalent position' in terms of their (post)colonial status.¹⁰ He asserts that 'on the one hand' these countries 'are colonies who have freed themselves from the colonial rule of the mother country', whilst 'at the same time, the settlers who went to those regions [...] themselves became the oppressors of the indigenous peoples who already occupied the land'.¹¹ This ambiguous status has clear implications for the position of indigenous people in former settler colonies, and Young argues that these groups 'remain colonized peoples' so that as a result 'the postcolonial operates simultaneously as the colonial'.¹² Understood in these terms, the positions of Magona as a black South African, Morgan as an Aboriginal Australian, and Hale as a Native American might all be understood as to some extent still subject to the social structures of colonialism, despite the fact that South Africa, Australia, the USA and Canada are all officially decolonised in the sense that they are politically autonomous nations.

In terms of political transition, the context in which Magona's *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* are published is undergoing perhaps the most dramatically visible political change of the different postcolonial locations explored by the texts this thesis analyses. Magona's autobiographies emerge

⁹ Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 19.

¹⁰ Young, p. 19. Young references further discussion of this issue in A. Mukherjee, 'Whose Post-colonialism and Whose Postmodernism?', *World Literature Written in English*, 30:2 (1990), 1-9.

¹¹ Young, pp. 19-20. Young cites Jane Jacobs, 'Resisting Reconciliation: The Secret Geographies of (Post)colonial Australia', in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. by Steve Pile and Michael Keith (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 201-18; and Lester Irabinna Rigney, 'Native Title, The Stolen Generation and Reconciliation: The Struggle Facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 1:1 (1998), 125-30.

¹² Young, p. 20.

at the beginning of the 1990s, on the eve of the first universal democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. In her narratives Magona records the daily reality of black South African people's lives under the apartheid regime, highlighting the effects of the segregation policies that would be abolished following the historic election. The official end of apartheid marks a distinct watershed moment when the oppression that characterised the former regime can be understood to have ended, and South Africa is seen to move into a postcolonial era. By contrast, there is no clearly identifiable moment of political transition in the Australian context of *My Place's* publication in 1987. Instead, as the introduction to Chapter Two will elaborate, Morgan's text can be seen as contributing to a more gradual process of change prompted by activism about Aboriginal rights during the 1980s and 90s. Similarly Hale's text *Bloodlines*, which was published in 1993, can be situated in the context of civil rights campaigns about the position of Native American people in both Canadian and US societies which began in the 1960s, and is also part of a growing body of distinctly Native American literature. The lack of a clear watershed moment of political transformation in the Australian and North American contexts determines the ambiguous position of indigenous people like Morgan and Hale, whose narratives demonstrate that they and their families continue to experience many of the enduring social structures of colonialism.

The contrasting political circumstances of decolonisation in South Africa, Australia, the USA and Canada might seem to suggest that as a black South African citizen Magona is a fully postcolonial subject, in contrast to Morgan and Hale's ambiguous political statuses. However, as Magona explores in her intergenerational narratives, the legacy of inequalities caused by the oppressive apartheid past will continue to affect future generations of her family beyond the official end of the regime, meaning that as black South Africans they too remain subject to some of the mechanisms of colonial oppression. As my analysis will illustrate, through their use of intergenerational autobiography Magona, Morgan and Hale all demonstrate the ongoing impact of colonial pasts on the lives of indigenous people in the contemporary era. Through attention to these narratives I seek to complicate the clear distinction drawn between colonial and postcolonial societies, and explore how Magona, Morgan and Hale use intergenerational autobiography to contribute to more nuanced understandings

of the political statuses of indigenous people in South Africa, Australia and North America.

To My Children's Children and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* are all written in English, an important consideration in the light of the texts' engagement in debates surrounding the (post)colonial status of the individuals, families and communities whose experiences they narrate. For Magona, whose mother tongue is the Xhosa language of her native culture, the choice to write in English is a deliberate response to the demands of the literary marketplace, intended to reach as broad a readership as possible both within and beyond South Africa. Magona assumes that there would be no readership for her work if she wrote in Xhosa, asserting that 'black people, especially those whose mother tongue is not English, tend not to read. And those who do, do not do so in their mother tongue'.¹³ In addition, as is also the case for Morgan and Hale's texts, writing in English ensures the accessibility of Magona's work to an international English-speaking readership. This consideration is important for the cultural dissemination of all three authors' autobiographies, and also supports their political commitments to give voice to the stories of indigenous people whose experiences are suppressed in traditional colonial histories. Unlike Magona, Morgan and Hale write in English as a given, since both authors were educated in English and have never learnt to speak or write in the indigenous languages of their ancestors. The fact that neither Morgan nor Hale has to make a conscious decision about the language of her text is significant in itself, indicative of the contrast between the minority cultural positions of Aboriginal people in Australia and Native American people in North America, in comparison to Magona's status as a member of the black majority in the South African population. Ultimately, however, writing in their native languages is perhaps equally unthinkable for Morgan, Hale, or Magona, since using English represents the opportunity to disseminate their stories to the widest possible readership.

In addition to the practical concerns surrounding publication and readership, the language in which each of these authors chooses to write also carries important political implications. The fact that neither Magona, Morgan nor Hale write in

¹³ Sindiwe Magona, Personal email communication, 17 June 2011. Provided in Appendix B.

their native languages signifies a loss of their indigenous cultures, and attests to the dominance of English as the language of both everyday communication and literary production in each of their nations. In Australia, Canada and the USA, English was the language of the colonial powers, and its use was forced on the indigenous children who were separated from their families to be educated in state institutions. In South Africa the implications of using English are somewhat different, since it was Afrikaans, not English, which was most explicitly associated with the oppressive control exerted by the colonising settlers. Nonetheless, the decision that all three authors make to write in English highlights the ways that their indigenous languages have been superseded by the dominance of English language cultural production. The absence of written literary traditions in the native languages of Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's ancestors suggests that the cultural survival of their indigenous communities is under threat.

Arguably the loss of indigenous languages attested to by Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's uses of English to write their intergenerational autobiographies is symptomatic of the very cultural oppression that they are attempting to redress by writing the voices and experiences of their indigenous ancestors back into narratives of the colonial past. All three writers completed their English language education in Western academic institutions, a factor which might be seen to align their perspectives more closely with the culturally dominant centre than the marginalised indigenous peoples that their texts seek to represent. This issue raises the question of whether Magona, Morgan and Hale have the authority to speak on behalf of their foremothers, or whether they risk appropriating their stories for their own political ends. These concerns are related to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's seminal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', suggesting that by adopting a language associated with colonial oppression in order to make indigenous voices intelligible to dominant settler society, they risk distorting the meaning of their foremothers' stories.¹⁴ Conversely, however, the use of English in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* may be interpreted as an act of re-appropriation, of indigenous writers adopting the language of colonial power

¹⁴ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271-313.

and using it to assert control over the ways that the meaning of their families' experiences is determined. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue in their work on postcolonial literatures, the 'hierarchical structure of power' perpetuated through the control of language in colonial society is 'rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice.'¹⁵ They assert that by using English postcolonial writers engage in 'the abrogation or denial of the privilege of "English"', by rejecting 'the metropolitan power over the means of communication.'¹⁶ This is combined with the act of 'appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre', which is achieved by 'capturing and remoulding the language to new usages', thereby 'mark[ing] a separation from the site of colonial privilege.'¹⁷ Consideration of the debates surrounding the political implications of language use informs my analysis of Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's intergenerational autobiographies in this thesis.

iii. Intergenerational and Maternal Relationships

The parallels between Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's foci on intergenerational relationships in their postcolonial autobiographies highlight the interrelation of cultural identity with the ideas of family and ancestral ties, a connection that becomes central to each author's narrative of her own life. As my analysis of each text will demonstrate, traditional indigenous parenting practices, and the relationships between mothers and their children, are profoundly affected by the legal and social restrictions imposed by colonial rule in South Africa, Australia and North America. Morgan's portrayal of the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families in *My Place* demonstrates how the white Australian authorities intervened in traditional child-rearing practices, deeming Aboriginal parents unfit to care for their children if they failed to conform to Western models of parenting. In *Bloodlines* Hale attests to the similar practice of placing Native American children in state- or church- run residential schools, which

¹⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 7.

¹⁶ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p. 38. Note that the writers draw a distinction between the capitalised term 'English' as 'the language of the erstwhile imperial centre', and 'the linguistic code, English, which has been transformed and subverted into several distinctive varieties throughout the world' (p. 8).

¹⁷ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, p. 38.

existed both in Canada and the USA. As an institution, the Indian Residential Schools system aimed to separate children from their Native American languages, beliefs and cultural practices, in order to 'assimilate' them into white settler culture. As chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate, in both Australia and North America state intervention in indigenous families has had profound long-term effects both on the survivors of these practices and on subsequent generations. Morgan and Hale both emphasise the fragility of indigenous maternity in these contexts, each recording the surveillance to which their own mothers were subjected, and the constant fear of separation that their families were forced to live with.

As a black South African woman Magona also endures the impact of colonial oppression directed at indigenous families on a number of levels, as both *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* demonstrate. Whilst the apartheid government did not undertake the removal of black children from their families in the ways seen in Australia and North America, Magona traces the multiple effects of legal restrictions and social deprivation on the ability of black parents to provide and care for their children. Chapter One explores Magona's detailed discussion of the economic constraints that circumscribe her capacity to support both the material and emotional needs of her children, and her examination of the restrictions that influx legislation place on traditional extended family networks. Through their explorations of the interconnected life stories of multiple generations, Magona, Morgan and Hale all emphasise how indigenous families in these disparate colonial environments become a focal point for state intervention and oppressive cultural control. My textual analysis explores each author's representation of how, by undermining traditional communities founded on networks of extended family members, the colonial powers in their respective nations interrupted the intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages, cultural practices and life skills. Magona and Morgan also foreground the role of families as a source of support in their resistance to oppression, which is continuously challenged by the separation of parents and children, and by attacks on traditional generational bonds.

As women, Magona, Morgan and Hale, and their mothers and grandmothers whose stories they tell, carry responsibility for the majority of caregiving work

within their families, and as such are particularly affected by the controls and limitations imposed on the everyday lives of indigenous people. Each author uses autobiographical narrative and intergenerational storytelling to give voice to these experiences, which have been suppressed or ignored in conventional historical narratives. *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* record the profound damage caused to indigenous families and wider communities by the legacy of colonialism. Simultaneously, intergenerational autobiography also enables Magona, Morgan and Hale to assert the continuation of their indigenous identities through ancestral inheritance. The hybrid generic form becomes a means of rebuilding generational connections through narrative, and attesting to the survival of their cultural communities despite sustained attacks from the colonial authorities. It is perhaps significant that all three authors are mothers themselves when they write their intergenerational autobiographies, suggesting that one of the motivations for writing may be a sense of their own positions in the generational lineage. As chapters 1 and 3 will discuss, both Magona and Hale explicitly link their decisions to write about their lives in intergenerational terms with a sense of their maternal responsibilities to the following generations (see *Children* p. 1, and Hale p. 103). Similarly, although she does not foreground this aspect in the same way, the pride that Morgan expresses when her children identify as Aboriginal (pp. 397-99) suggests that the desire to transmit a sense of her family's cultural heritage to the next generation is also one of her motivations for adopting this genre.

The position of each author within her family's generational lineage is not only significant in terms of their uses of maternal subject positions, but also sheds light on their ability to tell the traumatic stories that earlier generations of their families have been unable to voice. This is most clearly illustrated by Morgan's uncovering of her mother's and grandmother's Stolen Generations stories in *My Place*, addressed in Chapter Two. Since the earlier generations of her family lived with the constant fear that they would be separated by the authorities, they learned to silence their opposition to mistreatment and to hide their Aboriginal identities under the cover story that the family are immigrants from India. Morgan is able to break the family's silences in part because of the changing political position of Aboriginal people during the 1970s and 80s, which

begins to allow such stories to be told, but also simply because she is of a different generation. Coming of age in this era, she has been spared the severe discrimination and racial denigration to which her mother and grandmother were subjected, and has no direct personal experience of familial separation. As a result Morgan is able to speak and write about the traumatic past in ways that her foremothers find impossible. As discussed above, Magona and Hale also write their intergenerational autobiographies during periods of political transition and activism in relation to indigenous people's rights, meaning that they too can access ways of talking about the colonial past that are unavailable to earlier generations of their families. The political moments at which all three authors write enable them to contextualise narratives of the traumatic past within cultural movements that demand social change, contributing to the rewriting of conventional colonial histories in order to make space for the suppressed and silenced voices of their foremothers.

iv. Historical Narrative

A key focus in my analysis of Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's intergenerational autobiographies is the contribution that these texts can make to the historical records of their nations' pasts. I explore how they use personal experiential narrative to relate the experiences of indigenous people that have been overlooked by more conventional forms of history writing. Comparing these contrasting ways of writing about the past necessitates an examination of how historical narratives are constructed, and an interrogation of the ostensible objectivity and truth claims that they make. Theorist Hayden White's work on historical discourse offers useful insights into the ways in which representations of the past as history impose order and construct meaning from the events they narrate. White analyses what, by 'common consent', constitutes 'proper history', arguing that

The events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, that they do not possess as mere sequence.¹⁸

¹⁸ White, Hayden, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 4-5.

He goes on to explain that there is a 'value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events' in historical discourse, which 'arises out of a desire to have real events display a coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary.'¹⁹ White proposes a model of historical discourse as performance, arguing that

The production of meaning in this case can be regarded as a performance, because any given set of real events can be emplotted in a number of ways, can bear the weight of being told as any number of different kinds of stories.²⁰

Understood in these terms, he explains, 'a discourse is regarded as an apparatus for the production of meaning rather than as only a vehicle for the transmission of information about an extrinsic referent', meaning that 'the content of the discourse consists as much of its form as it does of whatever information might be extracted from a reading of it.'²¹ These observations have important implications for the comparison of historical and literary narratives of the past. As White points out,

In its origins, historical discourse differentiates itself from literary discourse by virtue of its subject matter ('real' rather than 'imaginary' events) rather than its form. But form here is ambiguous, for it refers not only to the manifest appearance of historical discourses (their appearance as stories) but also to the systems of meaning production (the modes of emplotment) that historiography shared with literature and myth.²²

These observations highlight the parallels between historical and literary texts, both of which produce meaning by constructing particular kinds of plots. Understood in this way, it becomes possible to use the tools of literary analysis to interrogate the ways that different kinds of historical texts produce meaning.

The role of historical writing in determining the meaning attributed to events has clear political implications, which are central to my analysis of the roles that *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* can play as alternatives to conventional narratives about the South African, Australian and North American pasts. In his work on postcolonial histories of India, Dipesh Chakrabarty examines the dominance of European perspectives, arguing that

¹⁹ White, p. 24.

²⁰ White, p. 44.

²¹ White, p. 42.

²² White, p. 44.

in so far as the academic discourse of history [...] is concerned, 'Europe' remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call 'Indian,' 'Chinese,' 'Kenyan,' and so on.²³

Chakrabarty explains that 'all these other histories tend to become variations on the master narrative that could be called "the history of Europe"', based on a universal transition narrative that condemns 'third-world' historians 'to knowing "Europe" as the original home of the "modern"'.²⁴ He asserts that 'most modern third-world histories are written within problematics posed by this transition narrative', which has become the dominant way of ordering and determining the meaning of past events in order to construct widely accepted historical narratives.²⁵ As a result, Chakrabarty explains, the subject who does not fit within this definition of modernity, 'much like Spivak's "subaltern" (or the anthropologist's peasant who can only have a quoted existence in a larger statement that belongs to the anthropologist alone)', is unable to articulate history from their own perspective, and 'can only be spoken of by the transition narrative that will always ultimately privilege the modern (i.e., "Europe")'.²⁶ The dominance of the 'European' model of history consequently suppresses the experiences of colonised people that do not fit within the narrative model of national progression towards a state of modernity.

Whilst the focus of Chakrabarty's analysis is on histories of India, he emphasises that the phenomenon he identifies is discernible in all 'third-world' or 'non-Western' histories. He argues that "'we" all do "European" history with our different and often non-European archives', founded on a concept of 'Europe' 'that modern imperialism and (third-world) nationalism have, by their collaborative venture and violence, made universal'.²⁷ As each chapter will explore, the dominance of this model of European history can be identified in the (post)colonial settings of South Africa, Australia, the USA and Canada. In each of these nations conventional historical narratives have privileged the perspectives of the colonial settlers, and justified the control of indigenous peoples under the ethos of 'protecting' them and improving their lives through a

²³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?', in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Padmini Mongia (London: Arnold, 1996), pp. 223-47 (p. 223).

²⁴ Chakrabarty, p. 223.

²⁵ Chakrabarty, p. 226.

²⁶ Chakrabarty, p. 240. Chakrabarty cites Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'

²⁷ Chakrabarty, pp. 240-41.

transition into 'modern' society. In this sense the intergenerational stories told in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place* and *Bloodlines* are potentially lost histories, experiential narratives that risk erasure in the face of mainstream colonial histories. Magona, Morgan and Hale each use intergenerational narrative to contribute to alternate views of the colonial past in their respective nations, reinserting the voices and perspectives of their indigenous families into new forms of historical writing.

As Chapter Three will discuss, Hale explicitly situates *Bloodlines* as a counter-narrative to the representation of Native American people in Hubert Howe Bancroft's *The History of Oregon*, a text that exemplifies the 'master narrative' of colonial history that Chakrabarty identifies.²⁸ Another powerful example of the suppression of indigenous voices is examined in Chapter Two, in the form of a memoir published by Judith Drake-Brockman, daughter of the family that employed Sally Morgan's grandmother.²⁹ Published after *My Place*, Drake-Brockman's text attempts to retell the story of Daisy's life, in order to justify her family's actions within the discourse of the 'protection' of Aboriginal people by settler Australians. This example demonstrates that even in the contemporary postcolonial era, certain groups in Australian society continue to promote the 'European' master narrative and discredit indigenous perspectives on the colonial past. While *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* do not enter into a dialogue with specific texts in the same way as Hale and Morgan's narratives, as Chapter One will discuss Magona positions her autobiographies as responses to the exclusion of black perspectives from the South African history books that she and her own children studied at school. Each of these examples highlights the issue of cultural denial that Magona, Morgan and Hale write against, as they voice the experiences of their indigenous families that do not fit within the master narratives of colonial history. In the absence of official histories that acknowledge these stories, their intergenerational autobiographies have great cultural significance, preserving indigenous voices and experiences that may be forgotten and ignored if they are not recorded.

²⁸ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: History of Oregon 1834-1848* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), XXIX.

²⁹ Judith Drake-Brockman, *Wongi Wongi: To Speak* (Carlisle, Western Australia: Hesperian Press, 2001).

In each chapter of this thesis I explore the relationship between the pictures of the colonial past presented by intergenerational autobiography, and the historical narratives produced by official government projects established to gather testimonies about the mistreatment of indigenous people. In her comparative study of truth and reconciliation commissions across the globe, Priscilla Hayner explains the widespread use of the label 'truth commission', observing that it 'has now become a term with a generally understood meaning: an official investigation into a past pattern of abuses.'³⁰ Chapter One compares Magona's autobiographies to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, which was established to investigate gross violations of human rights committed under apartheid. The South African TRC carried out its investigations from 1996 to 1998, and published a report summarising its findings at the end of this period.³¹ In Chapter Two I situate *My Place* in relation to the Australian government's National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, which published its report, entitled *Bringing Them Home*, in 1997.³² Although the National Inquiry's work is not officially labelled a truth and reconciliation commission, it nonetheless performs a comparable function of investigating past human rights abuses through attention to the personal testimonies of Stolen Generations survivors and their families. In Chapter Three Hale's intergenerational autobiography is examined alongside the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which was established in 2008 to investigate the effects of the Indian Residential Schools system, and is currently ongoing.³³ As explained above, the familial and personal experiences Hale

³⁰ Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 2011).

³¹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, 5 vols (London: MacMillan, 1999).

³² 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* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).

³³ At the time of writing in September 2012 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's statement gathering work is still in progress (due to be completed in 2014), and it has yet to publish any of the testimonies collected to date. In February 2012 it published a summary of its findings so far, in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Interim Report* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012) http://www.attendancemarketing.com/~attmk/TRC_jd/Interim_report_English_electronic_copy.pdf [accessed 14 April 2012]. At the same time the TRC also produced the historical study *They Came for the Children*, 'as a part of its mandate to educate the Canadian public about residential schools and their place in Canadian history.' See Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *They Came for the Children: Canada, Aboriginal Peoples, and Residential Schools* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,

recounts in *Bloodlines* cross the border between Canada and the USA. There has been no equivalent project to the Canadian TRC in the United States, where the experiences of Native American children who were removed from their families and placed in residential schools has not been officially addressed in the same way. These circumstances mean that the comparison between the Canadian TRC and Hale's intergenerational narrative does not play as great a role in my analysis in Chapter Three as the examination of the South African TRC and the Australian National Inquiry in relation to Magona and Morgan's texts in the two preceding chapters. The lack of attention to the experiences of Native American people by official government enquiries is significant in itself, a fact that will be examined further in my discussion of the role that Hale's work plays in relation to this history.

Although the importance of the interrelation between intergenerational autobiography and the truth and reconciliation commissions carries different weight in the three postcolonial situations on which I focus, attention to these official collective narratives of the colonial pasts in South Africa, Australia and Canada is nonetheless an important focus of discussion. As projects established by national governments with the specific aims of determining the truth about abuses committed under colonialism, TRCs offer official recognition for the previously silenced stories of the suffering endured by indigenous people. While colonial histories were traditionally written by a single author and reflected the dominant perspective of European settlers, the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa and Canada, and the National Inquiry in Australia all invite testimonies from large numbers of people who have experienced colonial oppression. In this respect, these official projects have the potential to fulfil similar political functions to Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's intergenerational autobiographies by reinserting indigenous voices into national historical narratives.

Although the South African and Canadian TRCs and the Australian National Inquiry can be seen as significant steps in the transitional process towards

2012)
http://www.attendancemarketing.com/~attmk/TRC_jd/ResSchoolHistory_2012_02_24_Webposting.pdf [accessed 14 April 2012], Preface.

equality for indigenous peoples, each is subject to a number of constraints that limit the type of narratives they are able to produce. As Hayner emphasises,

Truth commissions are difficult and controversial entities; they are given a mammoth, almost impossible task with usually insufficient time and resources to complete it; they must struggle with rampant lies and denials to uncover still-dangerous truths that many in power may resist. At the end of a commission's work, a country may well find the past still unsettled and some key questions still unresolved.³⁴

Whilst their potential to represent and give voice to the experiences of large numbers of individuals whose stories have traditionally been overlooked can be seen as ground-breaking, it is important to recognise that the ultimate aim of these projects is to achieve consensus concerning the 'truth' about their nations' histories. In this respect, the TRCs and the National Inquiry are engaged in writing historical discourses in the ways that White identifies, particularly in terms of their use of closure as a strategy for determining the meaning of past events. White observes that

I cannot think of any other way of 'concluding' an account of real events, for we cannot say, surely, that any sequence of real events actually comes to an end [...] Such events could only seem to have ceased to happen when meaning is shifted, and shifted by narrative means, from one physical or social space to another.³⁵

These observations are central to understanding the function of narratives produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and the Australian National Inquiry, which are heavily invested in differentiating the contemporary era in which they work from the period of past abuses under investigation, in order to demonstrate 'the passage from one moral order to another' that White defines as narrative closure.³⁶ Chapter One employs detailed analysis of examples from the South African TRC to examine how the emphasis on closure influences the picture of the apartheid past that it produces. As I will demonstrate, the political need to reach consensus about the 'truth' of South Africa's past influences the type of stories that the TRC is able to tell. This results in a narrow focus that excludes the voices of many other black South Africans whose experiences do not fall within the range of abuses under investigation. A number of interlinked factors determine the type of historical narratives that these official testimony gathering projects can produce in the South African, Australian, and Canadian contexts, influenced both by their

³⁴ Hayner, p. 18.

³⁵ White, p. 23.

³⁶ White, p. 23.

political aims and material constraints on their work. As a result, although the TRCs and National Inquiry play vital roles in redefining the ways that the colonial past is understood in each of these political settings, there nonetheless remain stories that are omitted, overlooked or downplayed by their work.

In comparing the South African and Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and the Australian National Inquiry, to Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's intergenerational autobiographies, I seek to demonstrate the ways that literary narratives can add to cultural understandings of colonial pasts. *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* were all published several years before the government testimony gathering projects in their respective nations began their work. This means that the authors all write in the absence of any official acknowledgement of the experiences they record, a fact that highlights the important political work that these intergenerational autobiographies can perform. Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's narratives nonetheless remain politically and culturally valuable after the findings of the TRCs and National Inquiry have been published, due to the freedom that the overtly subjective literary form offers them to explore and represent the past in different ways than are possible within the constraints of the official government projects.

Moore-Gilbert examines conventional assumptions about the contrasting roles of life-writing and historical narrative, observing that 'throughout its existence, critics have insisted that History focuses on collective experience, often in time-frames which exceed individual life-spans, while autobiography is regarded as the record of more private domains of self-reflexive analysis and feeling.'³⁷ This distinction is challenged by Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's experimentations with intergenerational autobiography, which enable them to produce experiential narratives of historical periods that pre-date their own lives, and to explore the long-term implications of specific events and political transitions. As Moore-Gilbert points out, countering conventional assumptions about the distinction between autobiography and history, 'feminist Auto/biography critics have widely [...] propos[ed] that women's life-writing should be considered not just as legitimate historical evidence but also as a form of (counter-) History,' a

³⁷ Moore-Gilbert, p. 77.

discourse that Magona, Morgan and Hale all engage with in their texts.³⁸ In addition, as discussed above, the cultural worth of these texts is founded not only on the new insights into the colonial past that they can offer, but also on their capacity to address and invite the empathy of a wide readership both within their specific national contexts, and in the international literary marketplace. As a literary form, intergenerational autobiography enables the authors studied to embed the voices and stories of multiple people within a web of interconnected experiences, and to narrate their entire texts from the perspectives of the indigenous people whose lives they represent. These factors enable Magona, Morgan and Hale to build beyond the work carried out by the South African and Canadian TRCs and the Australian National Inquiry, contributing to a broader cultural understanding of indigenous people's experiences in their nations' colonial pasts.

v. Rethinking Models of Trauma

As intergenerational autobiographies, *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* not only intervene in debates about writing colonial histories, but also shed light on discussions of how trauma functions in (post)colonial contexts. Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's texts engage with traumatic familial experiences, using the interconnected stories from their own lives and those of their foremothers to explore how violence, racism and oppression impact not only on the individuals who suffer them directly, but also on their families and communities. Attention to Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's use of this innovative literary form contributes to a re-examination of trauma narratives, suggesting new ways of understanding who experiences trauma and how, as well as exploring the mechanisms and functions of trauma testimony.

In her work on postcolonial trauma literature Rosanne Kennedy explores some of the ways that narratives of colonial pasts challenge the conventional models developed by Western trauma studies. She highlights how one of the key assumptions in this field is problematised by the circumstances of racial oppression in colonial contexts, explaining that

³⁸ Moore-Gilbert, p. 78.

Although traumatic memory is atemporal in its structure, the concept of 'event' presumes a temporality of 'before' and 'after.' That very temporality, however, tends to obscure those ongoing investments in racialized discourses and positioning that are constitutive of identity and of a social and political environment.³⁹

These observations highlight the need for a different understanding of trauma in (post)colonial contexts, where traumatic circumstances such as discrimination, oppression and systemic violence exist over extended periods of time, affecting the daily lives of those who are subjected to them. This is particularly relevant to the experiences of indigenous people in the former settler colonies of South Africa, Australia and North America, where such circumstances were not only an everyday reality under the colonial governments, but also persist in many respects beyond the official end of colonial rule into the contemporary era. In these contexts, Magona, Morgan and Hale use the representational possibilities of intergenerational autobiography to examine the long-term impact of colonial traumas that they and their families experience. By embedding familial stories within the narratives of their own lives, these authors use a range of strategies to explore the collective and intergenerational effects both of instances of extreme violence, and of long-term everyday traumatic experience.

Through detailed examination of *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, Chapter One explores how Magona uses intergenerational narratives to demonstrate the diverse ways that trauma is experienced by black South Africans living under apartheid. Through her representation of the hardships and psychological pain of her own and her family's everyday lives, and her focus on contextualising instances of extreme violence, Magona engages explicitly with the issues of temporality discussed above. My reading of Magona's narratives is informed by the concept of 'insidious trauma' introduced by feminist scholar Laura Brown, building on her ideas to examine how repeated experiences of systemic violence combine in the traumatic

³⁹ Rosanne Kennedy, 'Mortgaged Futures: Trauma, Subjectivity, and the Legacies of Colonialism in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*', *Studies in the Novel*, 40:1 (2008), 86-107 (p. 104). Kennedy refers here in particular to Dominick LaCapra's work in the field of Western trauma studies on trauma and loss, which is founded on the notion of trauma as an 'event.' See Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

experiences Magona depicts among members of her family and community.⁴⁰ Discussion of the ways that Magona's texts engage with these issues is central to my comparison of her work with the narratives of the apartheid past produced by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As Stef Craps observes in his work on literary interventions in debates about the Commission, 'insofar as the TRC mapped Euro-American concepts of trauma and recovery onto an apartheid-colonial situation, it is subject to the same problems and limitations faced by trauma theory'.⁴¹ This insight sheds light on Magona's use of intergenerational autobiography in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, despite the fact that her texts are published a number of years before the TRC was established. As my analysis will demonstrate, Magona develops the intergenerational form of her narratives as a strategy to address a diverse range of traumatic experiences, and illustrate how the effects of apartheid legislation and oppression build over time to impact on the lives of her black South African family and community. Through her address to her imagined great grandchild Magona also throws into question the TRC's political aim of producing closure in relation to the apartheid past, by exploring how the material and psychological effects of her family's traumatic experiences may impact on the generations that follow.

My discussion of *My Place* in Chapter Two explores how Morgan foregrounds the process of giving trauma testimony, through her representation of listening to her mother's and grandmother's stories of their experiences in the Stolen Generations. Using her intergenerational autobiography to record her discovery of the family's Aboriginal heritage, Morgan incorporates self-conscious discussion of the role that her familial narrative can play in producing a picture of Aboriginal lives in Australia's past. By analysing Morgan's narrative alongside the *Bringing Them Home* report produced by the Australian government's National Inquiry, I explore the mechanisms and functions of trauma testimony, and examine the vital role played by the listener or witness to such testimonies. This work necessitates a re-examination of established

⁴⁰ Laura S. Brown, 'Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 100-112.

⁴¹ Stef Craps, 'Wor(l)ds of Grief: Traumatic Memory and Literary Witnessing in Cross-Cultural Perspective', *Textual Practice*, 24:1 (2010), 51-68 (p. 51).

models of testimony, taking into account the intimate personal relationship Morgan has with the family members whose stories she listens to, as well as the political context in which Stolen Generations testimonies are given. I draw on Kennedy's work to explore the importance of the addressee of trauma testimony in postcolonial contexts, and analyse the issues Morgan and her foremothers face in order to tell stories about a historical period that remains culturally contested in Australia.⁴² By recording the process of giving testimony *My Place* throws into relief the challenges that Gladys and Daisy face to tell their stories, and raises questions about the silences and gaps that are left in their narratives. This aspect of Morgan's work prompts a re-evaluation of the emphasis on giving testimony as a route to healing from trauma, and demands new strategies for 'reading' or interpreting silences.

Chapter Three explores the varied literary techniques that Hale experiments with as ways to incorporate intergenerational stories into her collection of autobiographical essays. Hale's engagement with the traumatic experiences of her foremothers in *Bloodlines* is read in terms of the concepts of haunting and inherited trauma, demonstrating how the damage caused by shame and psychological pain that her mother and maternal grandmother experience as Native American women in a racist society impacts on her own life story. The narratives collected in Hale's text throw into question conventional understandings of trauma as an individual experience, demonstrating the intergenerational and communal transmission of the effects of the traumatic past. While, as discussed above, the comparison of Hale's literary text with the picture of the colonial past being produced by the Canadian TRC does not play as central a role in Chapter Three as the official government narratives do in relation to Magona and Morgan's work, *Bloodlines* nonetheless does important work in representing Canadian and US histories from the perspectives of Native American people. The text engages with discourses of healing, although unlike

⁴² Rosanne Kennedy, 'Autobiography: the Narrator as Witness: Testimony, Trauma and Narrative Form in *My Place*', *Meridian*, 12 (1997), 235-60; and 'The Affective Work of Stolen Generations Testimony: From the Archives to the Classroom', *Biography*, 27:1 (2004), 48-77. See also the collaborative essay: Rosanne Kennedy and Tikka Jan Wilson, 'Constructing Shared Histories: Stolen Generations Testimony, Narrative Therapy and Address', in *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, ed. by Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 119-39.

Magona and Morgan's texts, Hale throws into question the redemptive possibilities of rebuilding the connections between the generations of her family that have been undermined by the colonial past. Reconciliation with her abusive mother and older sisters remains unresolved for Hale, a vital factor in the narrative that attests to the extent of damage caused to their familial bonds by the traumatic experiences of racial denigration and shame. I explore the variety of narrative strategies Hale employs within the literary text to recreate the experiences of earlier generations, which offer her alternative ways of rebuilding connections to her Native American ancestry and cultural heritage. Adapting intergenerational autobiography in this way enables Hale to re-interpret her mother and grandmothers' actions, and establish new ways of relating ancestral stories to her own life through the concept of 'blood memory'.

Chapter 1: South African Histories Of Apartheid: Reading Sindiwe Magona's *To My Children's Children And Forced To Grow In Relation To The Truth And Reconciliation Commission*

Introduction

i. *Magona's narratives*

This chapter examines black South African writer Sindiwe Magona's two volumes of autobiography *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, exploring how these experiential narratives relate to the history of apartheid. Published in 1991 and 1992 respectively, the autobiographies are positioned not only as the stories of an individual life, but also as a record of the everyday lives of Magona's family and members of her community as black South Africans in the apartheid era.⁴³ Magona traces the long-term impact of political and social segregation by contextualising her personal experience in relation to stories of earlier generations of her family in an intergenerational narrative. In an interview, Magona explains that she views her autobiographical writing as a historical record, describing her work as a 'supplement to the history' she read in white-authored textbooks as a schoolchild.⁴⁴ She observes that

when I was in school [...] the history books, and all non-fiction really [...] was from the one viewpoint, the white viewpoint [...] And I felt there was value in adding my little voice. Not as an expert about apartheid [...] but as somebody who lived the experience.⁴⁵

These statements reveal that Magona envisages her autobiographies as playing a vital political role by reinserting black perspectives into her nation's

⁴³ In this chapter I discuss the experiences of 'black' South Africans, referring to black people, black families, black mothers, and so on, as distinct groups. In using these labels I do not wish to imply that the members of the many tribes who make up the black population of South Africa form a homogenous group, or share identical experiences. Nonetheless, it is productive to discuss black people's experiences in twentieth century South Africa in these terms, since the racial segregation imposed by the apartheid regime enforced specific restrictions and created circumstances that were unique to the experiences of people whose racial identity it defined as 'black'. Resistance to apartheid has also coalesced around the concept of black identities and experiences, and autobiographers including Magona write about the lives of individual black people as examples of experiences shared by large numbers of people from South Africa's diverse tribal groups.

⁴⁴ Rebecca Gill and Claire Irving, 'Interview with Sindiwe Magona', (unpublished transcript: Newcastle University, 25 March 2010), p. 2. Provided in Appendix A.

⁴⁵ Gill and Irving, p. 2.

history. Writing intergenerational autobiography offers a means to address the white bias of existing historical narratives, by giving voice to her own experiences as well as those of her family and community. The centrality of personal experience in autobiography enables Magona to foreground this source of knowledge to make truth claims about the past, redressing the erasure of black perspectives from narratives about South African history produced by the dominant white minority in the apartheid era.

To My Children's Children and *Forced to Grow* vividly record Magona's and her family's lives under the increasingly restrictive government legislation in South Africa between the 1940s and 1980s. *To My Children's Children* depicts the family's migration away from the rural village and the traditional amaXhosa community of her birth to live permanently near her father's place of work in Cape Town, in 1948 when Magona is five years old. Her father, who has been working away from the family home for several years, brings his wife and children to live with him in Blaauvlei Location, a vast settlement of makeshift and temporary homes in the town of Retreat. The family's relocation is part of the mass economic migration of black workers to South African cities in the 1940s. The later restrictions on the residence of black people and their freedom of movement cause further upheaval to Magona's daily life in 1961, when their urban community is destroyed as a result of government slum clearance measures and the family is forced to move again, to the designated black township Guguletu, outside the city. This double displacement, firstly for economic reasons and then as the result of forced removals, permanently undermines the supportive community and extended family network that protects Magona's wellbeing during her early childhood. Magona's personal narrative continues in the second volume of her autobiography, *Forced to Grow*, recounting the challenges she faces as she brings up her own children. As an adult Magona, her family and community are subject to myriad deprivations forced on them by the economic, social and political conditions of apartheid, and she comes to see the government's destruction of black families as fundamental to maintaining the oppressive divisions of apartheid society. The struggle to provide for the wellbeing of her young family becomes not only a financial necessity, but is also the catalyst for Magona's political involvement in a number of resistance organisations in the 1970s. The two volumes illustrate

how the chronology of Magona's own life is interconnected with events in South Africa's past, and her autobiographies can be read as a narrative of black people's everyday lives in the apartheid state.

Magona uses the generic form of intergenerational autobiography for both texts, which allows her to frame her personal history within the web of interrelated lives of her family and community, contextualising her identity alongside others whose experiences connect with and affect her own life. Structuring her life story in this way enables Magona to present a broad view of black South African history, by providing a forum through which she can give voice to many people's stories of hardship and trauma under apartheid. Through their connected life stories she presents parallels and explores causality in ways that draw out the political significance of individual experiences. Section 1.1 explores how Magona positions herself along a generational continuum that connects her life story to those of past and future generations, drawing on her own subject position as a mother. The literary form of the narrative enables Magona to use her maternal role as a rhetorical position from which she addresses future generations, and explores the ongoing impact that the apartheid past will have for black South Africans even beyond its official end. Through this technique she emphasises the rift between the traditional rural African life that predates her own birth, and the world of deprivation and social upheaval into which her children are born. Magona's portrayal of the impact of apartheid policies on black families is examined in section 1.2. The interrelation between her life story and the experiences of others around her enables Magona to contextualise individual instances of oppression and violence by portraying their impact on family and community networks. By using this approach, together with the intergenerational form of her narratives, Magona responds to and contests existing views of South African history, using the literary form of autobiography to produce an overtly subjective narrative that presents the apartheid past from her perspective as a black woman. Sections 1.3 and 1.4 examine in detail the scope that intergenerational autobiography affords Magona to tell particular stories about South African history, comparing the inclusivity and personal insights her narratives offer to the historical picture produced through the testimonies gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa.

Although the portrayal of twentieth century South Africa from a black perspective in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* can be seen in many ways as breaking new ground, Magona also builds on foundations established by a handful of black South African women's life stories published during the 1980s. A considerable barrier to the voicing of these stories was presented by government censorship of literary publications under the 1974 New Publications Act, described by Peter McDonald as 'the beginning of the most repressive era in the history of the system'.⁴⁶ McDonald records how the Nationalist government

orchestrated a programme of massive state intervention by listing particular writers, by intensively regulating the distribution of imported books, by refusing to grant literature unqualified legal protection, and by appointing a partisan group of literary guardians as censors.⁴⁷

This legislation helped to maintain the cultural divisions in South African society, and as McDonald observes, censorship on political, moral or religious grounds was all 'intended to shore up apartheid'.⁴⁸ In this context black women autobiographers faced stumbling blocks at every turn in the struggle to make their voices and experiences heard, restricted not only by the difficulty of finding a sympathetic readership in the cultural climate established by apartheid, but also by legislation designed to quash the publication of any works that were critical of the Nationalist government.

Despite the repressive literary climate, McDonald highlights a number of publishers within and outside of South Africa that attempted to challenge the status quo by 'determining for themselves, sometimes at considerable risk, what books were worth being produced "for the thinking public"'.⁴⁹ One of the first black women's life stories to be published during this period was Afrikaans writer Elsa Joubert's ostensibly fictional 1980 text *Poppie*.⁵⁰ Marketed as a novel, Joubert's text nonetheless opens with an explanatory note which asserts

⁴⁶ Peter D. McDonald, *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and its Cultural Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 61.

⁴⁷ McDonald, p. 85.

⁴⁸ McDonald, pp. 61-62.

⁴⁹ McDonald, p. 83. McDonald lists among this group 'internal publishers from Julian Rollnick, who launched the pioneering African Bookman imprint in the 1940s, to [...] Dinah Lefakane, who founded the black feminist press Seriti sa Sechaba (Spirit of the Nation) in the late 1980s, as well as a number of external, principally British publishers,' (p. 83).

⁵⁰ Elsa Joubert, *Poppie*, trans. by Elsa Joubert (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981). First published in Afrikaans 1978. First English edition 1980.

that it 'is based on the actual life story of a black woman living in South Africa today', and that only Poppie's name has been changed.⁵¹ Gillian Whitlock, in her study of postcolonial women's autobiographies, discusses the reasons why this text escaped censorship, suggesting that

since it could be read as a simple story about a black woman and her life, the problems of her children and how the family was affected by apartheid, as seen through the eyes of an Afrikaaner woman, it was acceptable even to National Party supporters.⁵²

Following Joubert's novel, black anti-apartheid activists like Ellen Kuzwayo and Emma Mashinini wrote and published their own life stories later in the 1980s. Kuzwayo's 1985 autobiography *Call Me Woman*, and Mashinini's *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life* published in 1989, were not met with the same supportive response among the white South African reading public.⁵³ For these writers the decision to use English, rather than their African mother tongues or the official national language Afrikaans, to tell their life stories was a key political strategy. McDonald notes that writing in English granted South African authors 'access to a global literary marketplace'.⁵⁴

In writing her own autobiographies for international publication, Magona can be seen as following in the footsteps of these literary forerunners, demonstrated by the fact that *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* were published simultaneously by David Philip Publishers in South Africa, and The Women's Press in the UK.⁵⁵ However, while Kuzwayo's and Mashinini's narratives focus on the authors' political activism and their resulting experiences of detention by the government authorities, Magona's texts produce a different kind of black South African woman's life story. Although she works within the generic framework established by these writers in the 1980s, Magona also builds beyond the genre of protest literature used in *Call Me Woman* and *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life*. As my analysis below will demonstrate, unlike Kuzwayo's and Mashinini's texts, Magona's narratives foreground the

⁵¹ Joubert, 'To the reader', unnumbered page.

⁵² Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 146.

⁵³ Ellen Kuzwayo, *Call Me Woman* (London: The Women's Press, 1985); Emma Mashinini, *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life: a South African Autobiography* (London: The Women's Press, 1989). For discussion of the responses to these texts see Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, pp. 146-47.

⁵⁴ McDonald, p. 103. This is borne out by the fact that both Kuzwayo's and Mashinini's autobiographies were published in London by The Women's Press.

⁵⁵ Magona, Personal email communication.

experiences of daily life that motivate her political engagement, thus introducing new facets to the picture of black women's experiences of apartheid. The literary genre of autobiography enables Magona to reach a broad readership both within and outside South Africa. By foregrounding everyday happenings, such as going to work and caring for her children, she appeals to readers' sense of identification with her life, even if they have no previous knowledge of apartheid history. By adopting an intergenerational narrative structure Magona demonstrates both the damaging changes to the lives of her family and community, and the long-term impacts of these changes. The detailed portrayal of Magona's personal relationships and experiences contextualises the political work she does, emphasising how the impact of the apartheid regime permeates every aspect of her life, and arguably promoting a greater sense of empathy from the reader.

In order to explore the significance of *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* as experiential narratives of the apartheid past it is important to understand the political as well as the literary contexts of their publication. Both volumes were published in the early 1990s, pre-dating the first universal democratic election in South Africa in 1994. Although this dates them officially as written during the apartheid era, at this time the dismantling of the legal structures that maintained the economic, social and political divisions between the different racially-defined groups was being negotiated. Whitlock observes that 'in both Australian and South African contemporary writing there have been clear thresholds where black women negotiated the authority to speak autobiographically.'⁵⁶ The similarities between the Australian and South African contexts at the end of the twentieth century mean that many of these issues are also relevant to analysis of Magona's intergenerational autobiography *My Place*, as Chapter Two will discuss. Whitlock defines these 'threshold' historical moments as 'episode[s] where quantities of autobiographic work, oral and written, by black and indigenous women find an editor, a publisher and a readership, and become active in identity politics.'⁵⁷ She explains that threshold moments are sometimes prompted by a 'catalyst', such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, 'which invite[s] testimony and

⁵⁶ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 156.

⁵⁷ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 144.

narration specifically about racial oppression.⁵⁸ However, in Magona's case both the writing and acceptance of her autobiographies for publication took place several years before the 1995 Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act that established the TRC. The chronology of Magona's publication before the founding of the Commission means that in the case of her work, the 'threshold' moment is less easily defined. It is an example of an occasion when, Whitlock explains, quite simply 'things fall apart, and contestation within the African and Aboriginal communities erupts around and through autobiographic writing'.⁵⁹ She charts this process in the South African context by tracing 'links between black women's autobiographical writing in the 1980s, woman-centred campaigns, the anti-apartheid movement both within and outside of South Africa and the beginnings of the reform movement'.⁶⁰ Following the protest narratives of writers like Kuzwayo and Mashinini, Magona's autobiographies emerge at a critical moment in the early 1990s, when her writing has the potential to play a key role in speaking out about the reality of black South Africans' experiences under apartheid.

The publication of Magona's autobiographies pre-dates the official government sanctioned testimony gathering work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which did not begin until 1996. Consequently, Magona's development of intergenerational autobiography as a generic form grows out of a political need to break silences and tell stories of racial oppression in South Africa, during a historical period when official recognition of such experiences had not yet been established. In this context *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* have the potential to play important political roles by revealing to a reading public the reality of black women's lives under apartheid. As my analysis will demonstrate, even after the publication of the TRC's report in 1998 Magona's autobiographies make a significant contribution to understanding the apartheid past. Her intergenerational narratives offer a more complete picture of the impact of systemic economic and social oppression, contextualising the instances of extreme violence that form the focus of the TRC's work. As literary narratives, Magona's autobiographies also have a significant cultural function, able to reach a broad

⁵⁸ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 146.

⁵⁹ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 146.

⁶⁰ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 147.

readership of both black and white South Africans, as well as readers outside of her country's borders. This chapter will examine the literary techniques Magona draws on, which encourage the reader to empathise with the experiences she describes in ways that contrast to the careful official language within which the TRC frames the testimonies it records.

ii. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*

In examining the political context and the aims of Magona's autobiographical writing in this chapter I draw key comparisons with the testimonies of violence committed under apartheid, collected between 1996 and 1998 by the South African TRC. Reading this officially compiled narrative of violence and trauma in dialogue with Magona's life writing sheds light on the role of individual voices and personal testimonies in the negotiation of historical 'truth' about South African history. The Commission was established in 1995, and was mandated by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act to investigate gross human rights violations committed between 1960 and 1994. It received statements from over 21,000 South Africans, 2,000 of whom testified publically at formal hearings in towns and cities across South Africa.⁶¹ The five volume TRC report includes overviews of the statements and testimonies of gross human rights violations that it received. The written statements and full transcripts of the public TRC hearings have been placed in the National Archives of South Africa, forming part of the documentary history of the nation. The collection of testimonies under the TRC takes place as part of its nation building mandate, which states that the Commission's objectives are 'to promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past'.⁶² In order to achieve this, the Commission aimed to establish 'as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights which were committed during the period from 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date'.⁶³ Thus the

⁶¹ *TRC Report*, II, p. 1.

⁶² Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995, 3.(1) a, in *TRC Report*, I, p. 55.

⁶³ Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 3.(1) a, in *TRC Report*, I, p. 55. When the Act was passed in 1995 the cut-off date was still under debate; the final cut-off date was established as 10 May 1994.

TRC had a specific focus on recovering the stories of gross violations of human rights, with a view to promoting reconciliation between the different racial populations in order to build a unified democratic South Africa.

Clearly there is a vast difference in scope between the individual stories told in Magona's autobiographies, and the many hundreds of personal testimonies that were collated by the TRC over the two year period of its hearings and in the compilation of its report. Nonetheless, the use of personal stories detailing the impact of apartheid on individual people is a key parallel between each narrative's approach to South Africa's past. Part of the Commission's mandate in establishing a picture of past gross human rights violations was to include 'the perspectives of the victims and the perspectives of the persons responsible for the commission of the violations, by conducting investigations and holding hearings.'⁶⁴ The South African TRC has been viewed as a model for subsequent truth commissions, and the way that it engages with individual testimonies is seen as ground-breaking. Women's autobiography specialist Linda Anderson emphasises the importance of the TRC's use of 'not only official documents but the unofficial testimony of citizens, previously disenfranchised or dismissed, who were invited to give their accounts of those years.'⁶⁵ Significantly, one of the Commission's objectives is to restore 'the human and civil dignity of such victims by granting them an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violations of which they are the victims'.⁶⁶ This statement demonstrates the TRC's recognition of the stories of victims whose experiences were suppressed under the apartheid regime and who were prevented from testifying to acts committed against them, indicating a commitment to hearing the multiple perspectives of South African citizens on the 'truth' about apartheid. The context in which testimony is given and the purpose for which it is used have significant impacts on the way that traumatic experiences are understood, a factor which has implications for my analysis of the pictures of the apartheid past produced by both Magona's autobiographies and the TRC report. Sections 1.3 and 1.4 explore the insights that Magona's intergenerational narratives offer into the trauma of apartheid, through her interrelation of individual and collective experience, and the cross-generational

⁶⁴ Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 3. (1) a, in *TRC Report*, I, p. 55.

⁶⁵ Linda Anderson, *Autobiography*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 136.

⁶⁶ Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 3.(1) c, in *TRC Report*, I, p. 55

view of the past that her narrative enables. As literary texts *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* have the freedom to examine the past in different ways than are possible within the structure of the TRC, arguably addressing a greater range of traumatic experiences.

Although published during the same decade, Magona's autobiographies and the TRC report are written at vastly different historical moments, on either side of the 1994 elections that marked the end of the apartheid era. This difference in the specific political contexts in which Magona's literary texts and the TRC's government sanctioned testimonies emerge points to a key ideological distinction between the approaches that each takes to the history of apartheid. As Mark Sanders observes in his study of the Commission, 'the essence of what apartheid is has been derived from an activity of remembering that is historically contingent.'⁶⁷ Sanders emphasises that 'no claim about the nature of apartheid can be untouched by the affective demands of those who bear the burden of remembering', a factor that has significant implications for any assessment of the 'truth' that emerges from testimonies about apartheid.⁶⁸ In the light of these considerations, it is clear that the political context in which a narrative about apartheid is told is vital to understanding its full implications.

For the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, written after the official demise of the apartheid regime and designed to promote a unified South African nation through reconciliation, there is an obvious political investment in depicting the events it records as part of a time period that is definitively in the past. In contrast, Magona's two volumes of autobiography are written and published during the apartheid era, and consequently her narratives present a view of apartheid history as ongoing, both part of a past that has shaped her own and her ancestors' lives, and as a phenomenon that will reach forward to have a continuing impact on future generations. Examined from this perspective, the importance of the intergenerational approach that Magona takes in her autobiographies is emphasised, as it allows her to present a long view of South African history. To borrow Sanders' phrase, in a sense her narratives 'bear the burden of remembering' experiences of oppression that are

⁶⁷ Mark Sanders, *Ambiguities of Witnessing: Law and Literature in the Time of a Truth Commission* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 34.

⁶⁸ Sanders, p. 35.

in fact ongoing, as she demonstrates how their impact continues in the narrative present, and explores how the legacy of harm may continue to affect future generations of her family even after apartheid's official demise. The contrasting approaches to history taken by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and by Magona's autobiographies give rise to significant differences in the narratives they produce, and it is important to remember that both are written for a specific purpose and may be subject to certain limitations. It is precisely because of these differences that it is productive to read *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* in dialogue with the TRC report, to explore the contribution that Magona's literary narratives can make to a fuller and more nuanced understanding of South African history.

1.1 Magona's Representation Of Family

1.1.1 *The addressee in Magona's autobiographies*

In both *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* Magona explores the significance of a network of family relationships, both to chart the impact of apartheid on black communities, and as the foundation of her struggle to overcome the damage this does to herself and her family. Recalling her own childhood in the opening chapters of *To My Children's Children*, she writes of how she was mothered by extended family and the neighbouring community, and highlights the importance of this supportive network in establishing the secure sense of self that she draws on in later life. As Magona's adult consciousness develops in this volume and *Forced to Grow*, she becomes aware of how the mechanisms of apartheid undermine the supportive function of the traditional family environment, and of the amaXhosa community to which her family belongs. As I will demonstrate, Magona uses the intergenerational form of her narrative, together with her exploration of the meaning of black parenthood, as key strategies in her attempt to overcome the damage to black families caused by the social conditions of apartheid. Intergenerational autobiography enables her both to highlight the long-term impact of this harm, and to envisage familial and generational bonds in new ways that attest to the endurance and survival of black communities.

The significance of Magona's maternal subject position is established from the first page of *To My Children's Children*, which she opens with an address to the 'Child of the Child of My Child' (p. 1). This opening line positions Magona's narrative voice in dialogue with the imagined perspective of her great-grandchild, demonstrating that she conceives of her autobiography not simply as an individual life story, but also as a record for future generations. Introducing the narrative in this way allows her to adopt an instructive maternal voice, using her role as a mother to frame her story as an experiential history of life as a black woman under the apartheid government. Addressing the narrative to her imagined great-grandchild equates it with the oral storytelling practices of mothers and grandmothers in Xhosa tradition, producing what Siphokazi Koyana describes as 'an "oral" account framed or preserved in

written form'.⁶⁹ The opening address thus situates Magona's life story along a generational continuum that reaches back to her ancestors and simultaneously forward to the following generations.

In this opening passage Magona writes that 'I would like you to hear from my own lips what it was like living in the 1940s onwards', describing this as an attempt to fulfil her ancestral duty 'to let you know who you are and whence you came' (p. 1). She explains the decision to record the story in writing as a result of the 'fear I may not live long enough to do my duty to you', stating that 'my people no longer live long lives. Generations no longer set eyes on one another' (p. 1). This statement illustrates Magona's concern with the continuing impact of social problems caused by racial segregation, suggesting that perhaps not only her own life, but also the lives of future generations, may be circumscribed even after the official end of apartheid. The opening of *To My Children's Children* is echoed by the conclusion of the two volumes at the end of *Forced to Grow*, in which Magona describes herself 'thousands of miles from home [...] among strangers', having left South Africa with her children, hoping to improve the material conditions of their lives in the United States (p. 231). Although distanced now in space rather than time from her addressee the great-grandchild, Magona reasserts 'that is the only way I can fulfil my duty to you', again equating her writing to oral storytelling by instructing her addressee to 'listen, for my spirit, if not my flesh, is there with you' (pp. 231-32). Framing the narrative in this way highlights how the traditional links between generations that establish stability in black families are undermined by the conditions of their lives in the second half of the twentieth century, creating a discontinuity between Magona's own childhood experiences of extended family and community, and those of following generations.

Situating her autobiography within the context of maternal storytelling allows Magona to frame her life story as an instructive address to future generations, and by invoking the concept of ancestral 'duty' she emphasises the importance of such stories for teaching children about their relationships to family and community. Koyana describes Magona's narrative form as 'epistolary

⁶⁹ Siphokazi Koyana, "Why Are You Carrying Books? Don't You Have Children?": Revisiting Motherhood in Sindiwe Magona's Autobiographies', *English Studies in Africa*, 45:1 (2002), 45-55 (p. 51).

autobiography', asserting that it 'present[s] Magona with an opportunity to mother the entire nation'.⁷⁰ While this suggestion may be hyperbolic, Koyana's interpretation does highlight the rhetorical weight that Magona's adoption of the maternal storytelling role carries, and draws attention to the fact that her autobiographies address all South Africans, white as well as black. The significance of storytelling for personal identity is emphasised in the preface to *To My Children's Children*, subtitled 'From a Xhosa Grandmother', when Magona asks 'how will you know who you are if I do not or cannot tell you the story of your past?' (unnumbered page). She describes the traditional storytelling she hears from older women in the village during her childhood, recalling that

Central to the stories in which people featured, was the bond of love with the concomitants: duty, obedience, responsibility, honour, and orderliness [...] Like the seasons of the year, life was depicted full of cause and effect, predictability and order, connectedness and oneness. (p. 6)

Critic Eleonora Chiavetta suggests that Magona's autobiographical texts can be interpreted as a continuation of this traditional form of instructive storytelling, observing that 'Magona's narrative shows life as a series of causes and effects', in which 'every action carries its own consequences'.⁷¹ Situating her autobiographical narratives within this framework enables Magona to teach her reader about the daily reality of black people's lives under apartheid, and allows her to expand the individual voice of the autobiographer to perform a communal role by telling the stories of many other people whose lives come into contact with her own.

Magona has discussed the addressee of her autobiographies in a number of interviews, explaining her use of the instructive maternal subject position to create a historical record for future generations. She states

It's addressed to posterity; not necessarily [...] my own biological offspring but to the future, to the people who would be there, in South Africa as well as elsewhere, long after apartheid [...] was dead. That

⁷⁰ Koyana, "Why Are You Carrying Books?", p. 51.

⁷¹ Eleonora Chiavetta, "Through Your Eyes Instead of Your Ears": Orature in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, in *Sindiwe Magona: The First Decade*, ed. by Siphokazi Koyana (South Africa: University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2004), pp. 67-81 (p. 74).

was my idea, that in future people will wonder, and this will be a reflection, a record, of how our lives were.⁷²

Magona perceives her autobiographies as representative of her community, asserting that 'I write so that we leave footprints, tell the story of our oppression, our living through the dark days of apartheid, in our own words.'⁷³ She emphasises the importance of black South Africans recording personal experiences of the apartheid past, explaining that under the regime 'the country was so successfully divided that I later on found that [...] even South Africans didn't really know how we lived.'⁷⁴ The disparity between the partisan white and black understandings of events during the apartheid era is illustrated by Magona's personal experience of working as a teacher at the elite white Herschel School, recorded in *Forced to Grow*. She observes that at the school 'I learned how differently we view certain events, crucial events in our country' (p. 183). This contrast is revealed when 'the guerrilla fighter Solomon Mahlangu was hanged' on 6 April 1979, prompting 'a pall of sadness and palpable gloom' that 'enveloped the African townships' (p. 183). In contrast to this response among black communities, Magona is shocked to discover the complete silence in the white school about the hanging, stating that 'if anyone knew the import of that day where I worked, they certainly kept it to themselves' (p. 183). The revelation that white South Africans are ignorant of something that has such a devastating impact on black communities prompts Magona to begin writing 'furious responses that I poured onto paper', which she describes as 'my feelings, my truth' (p. 183). This experience is the catalyst for Magona's development as a writer, highlighting the political importance she attaches to recording her own perspective as a black woman on the events of the apartheid era.

It is significant that Magona's political discussion about responses to Mahlangu's hanging is embedded within the framework of her intergenerational autobiography, contextualised within her personal experiential narrative in order to show how it affects her emotionally and psychologically as a member of the black community. This personalisation of Magona's political message ensures

⁷² Gill and Irving, p. 1. See also David Atwell and Barbara Harlow, with Joan Attwell, 'Interview with Sindiwe Magona', *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 46:1 (2000), 282-95 (pp. 282-83).

⁷³ Magona, Personal email communication.

⁷⁴ Gill and Irving, p. 2.

the accessibility of her narratives, and encourages the reader to identify with the experiences she recounts. Magona has described her motivation for writing to ensure that 'our point of view is also represented in this form of memory conservation. Otherwise, history is only seen through one prism, that of the oppressor or representative of same.'⁷⁵ These reflections illustrate her awareness of a broader readership of her autobiographies, which allows her to use the maternal ancestral voice to speak not only to future generations from her family and community, but also to white South Africans and an international readership in the post-apartheid era.

The combined narratives of personal experience and stories from the closely connected networks of family and community in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* allow Magona both to tell her own and her family's individual stories, and to situate her life in the context of collective black South African experience. Koyana argues that for Magona, 'the autobiographical form [is] a convenient vehicle for using her personal experiences as a basis for her commentary on social arrangements and institutions governing familial relationships and the practice of mothering.'⁷⁶ She interprets this as proof 'that instead of autobiography being a model for imperialising the consciousness of colonised people [...] autobiography is a medium of resistance and counterdiscourse,' echoing Whitlock's analysis of the role of South African women's autobiographies in resisting the oppression of apartheid.⁷⁷ Critic Meg Samuelson has argued that Magona is compelled to adopt the relational subject position associated with the Black Consciousness Movement in order to justify 'the "private" act of autobiography (writing the self) by turning it into a communal act, locating it within a culturally ordained, "authentic" sphere: orally transmitted cultural values.'⁷⁸ However, as my analysis will illustrate, Magona's use of the maternal voice to demonstrate the interrelation of the voices and experiences of members of her family and community is an integral part of both the picture she creates of her personal experiences of apartheid, and the contribution she makes to a broader understanding of black South African lives in this era.

⁷⁵ Magona, Personal email communication.

⁷⁶ Koyana, "Why Are You Carrying Books?", p. 52.

⁷⁷ Koyana, "Why Are You Carrying Books?", p. 52; Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, pp. 146-47.

⁷⁸ Meg Samuelson, 'Reading the Maternal Voice in Sindiwe Magona's *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*', *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 46:1 (2000), 227-45 (p. 228).

Magona draws on the traditional view of self and community as interrelated which, Koyana points out, 'has always been central to African philosophy,' innovating on the conventionally individualistic form of autobiography to incorporate collective and intergenerational storytelling.⁷⁹

Magona uses the trope of ancestral duty and the interconnection of the generations not only to establish the addressee of her narrative, but also to situate her own identity in relation to her family. The continuity between her life and those of previous generations is emphasised by the conclusion of *To My Children's Children*, when Magona reflects on the lessons she learns from her family's lives. She writes, 'by now I understood also that I was part of the stream of life – a continuous flow of those who are still alive, and the spirits, our ancestors' (p. 183). She affirms her own position and those of future generations within this chain of interconnected lives, asserting that 'I knew I would never be alone. Know this too, child of the child of my child ... *you* are not alone' (p. 183). These words conclude an instructive story for the great-grandchild, in which Magona recalls the moment when she first recognises her responsibilities to the next generation. The realisation is forced upon her by the desertion of her husband and her return to her parental home with her three infant children, who 'depended, desperately and solely, on me' (p. 182). At this point in time her own parents, on whom she herself has relied until this point, are temporarily absent from Guguletu for several months. While the story highlights the importance of familial support, it also demonstrates how the changing circumstances of black families give rise to Magona's predicament and her need for self-reliance at this moment. Her husband's desertion, as section 1.2 will explore, is the result of restrictions imposed on black people's rights to work in particular areas of the country. Meanwhile Magona's father is absent due to financial necessity, working on a deep-sea fishing trawler, and her mother is away tending to her own father in his final illness in the ancestral village that Magona's parents were forced to leave in search of employment in the cities.

In order to meet her responsibility to care for the children, Magona draws inspiration from the role models provided by her parents and older brother

⁷⁹ Koyana, "Why Are You Carrying Books?", p. 48.

Jongi. She explains, 'I did what they did. Father worked: I worked. Mother had done business at home: I did that too. Jongi had studied: I embarked on a correspondence course. I became them' (*Children*, p. 182). Thus her family's lives become practical models that help her to respond to the challenges of maternal responsibility. This story from Magona's personal experience illustrates her reliance on the experiences of earlier generations to know 'who she is and whence she came', through stories of survival like those she offers to her great-grandchild addressee. By linking this story about her own interconnected identity with her instructive address to the great-grandchild at the end of *To My Children's Children*, Magona reiterates the importance of family histories and maternal storytelling for the creation of a stable foundation for the next generation. From the first lines of her narrative Magona situates her life story as a dialogue that takes place within a generational continuum, connecting her to both earlier and future generations of her family. She highlights the importance of intergenerational connections, demonstrating how the past experiences of her parents, and her own life story in the narrative present, extend forwards to affect the generations who will come after. This feature of the narrative is vital to the long view of history that Magona creates in her autobiographies, allowing her to explore the interconnection and long-term effects of the experiences of her family in apartheid South Africa.

1.1.2 Traditional family and community

The interrelation of her identity within the family is established early in the narrative of Magona's life, during the childhood years she spends in her ancestral village of Gungululu. *To My Children's Children* records how, as a child, Magona lived for a period of time in the home of her maternal grandparents, explaining that 'it is customary among amaXhosa, my people, for the eldest child or the elder children of a marriage to live with one or the other set of grandparents' (p. 3). Magona elaborates on this practice in *Forced to Grow*:

grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives have access to our children – as help in the home, as company and to enable us to cope better by having fewer children actually living with us. Or for no

reason at all except that the child would like to go and live with them or they would like to have the child living with them. (pp. 88-89)

Magona celebrates this aspect of family life, stating that 'such arrangements are an integral aspect of our wholeness. We are a family-oriented people and our families are gloriously more inclusive than those of white South Africa' (*Forced*, p. 89). This custom illustrates the importance of the network of familial relationships in Magona's childhood community. Cherryl Walker, in her study of the discourses of motherhood in black African women's resistance, observes that 'the practice of motherhood in precolonial society was very different from that operating in European society', meaning that in communities like Magona's 'the responsibilities of childcare were dispersed across a number of female kin.'⁸⁰ Magona describes the importance of extended family for amaXhosa communities, noting that 'the intricate ways in which relationships are drawn among us make it almost impossible for an individual to be destitute in the sense of having connections with no living soul' (*Children*, p. 3). The closely bonded familial foundation is deeply important to her as a child, and she recalls inhabiting 'a people-world, filled with a real, immediate, and tangible sense of belongingness' (*Children*, p. 3), establishing 'total immersion into a group where my own place in it was clearly defined' (*Children*, p. 7).

The contrast between her childhood environment, and the disrupted and dispersed family of Magona's teenage years and early adulthood, clearly illustrates the effect that the conditions of apartheid society have had on the traditional black community founded on the extended family. Whitlock analyses Magona's representation of her childhood, comparing it to the similarly 'utopian' depiction of Kuzwayo's early life in her autobiography *Call Me Woman*.⁸¹ The idyllic picture that both authors construct, Whitlock argues,

is strategic rather than heroic. It suggests [...] that within living memory the black community possessed a 'moral coherence', an integrity which it was to lose in the 1930s and 1940s. Like Sindiwe Magona, Kuzwayo's representation of childhood is shaped to highlight the trauma of the recent past for black Africans under apartheid.⁸²

⁸⁰ Cherryl Walker, 'Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21:3 (1995), 417-37 (p. 430).

⁸¹ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 150.

⁸² Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 150.

By presenting the pre-history of the apartheid era in this way, both Kuzwayo and Magona highlight the extent to which black families and communities are undermined by the restrictive legislation, political, and economic hardships in the years that follow. In *To My Children's Children* Magona extends her depiction of the interrelation of self and community beyond her personal experience, observing 'there was nothing peculiar or particularly noteworthy' about her upbringing, and affirming that 'it was how things were in the late forties among amaXhosa in the Transkeian region' (p. 7). Thus Magona locates the individual story of her own childhood within the history of her people and community as a whole.

1.1.3 Intergenerational experiences of apartheid

Reflecting on her upbringing, Magona demonstrates how the supportive environment created by her parents and their village community protected her during her childhood from fully experiencing the deprivations caused by apartheid. In *To My Children's Children* she poses the questions: 'what then, of my childhood [...]? Was it happy? Poverty ridden? Or plagued with trauma, crime, illness, or some other malady?' and triumphantly answers 'No! To my child eyes, my childhood was stable and happy' (p. 23). It is only with hindsight that Magona recognises that 'our parents had faced a grim reality we knew nothing about' (p. 28). As Koyana and Gray point out, her social environment is the key to Magona's early sense of stability, because 'in the secure, pastoral setting of her early childhood, evidence of white intrusion is minimal.'⁸³ Once the family migrate from rural Gungululu to urban Blaauvlei, Magona gradually becomes more aware of the economic deprivation and racial discrimination they are forced to endure. Here, despite her parents' efforts to maintain the strong family network that supports her developing sense of self, over time Magona begins to experience the trauma of apartheid through the lens of their experiences. At one point she describes 'a more than usual stint of austerity' for the family, 'during the only period I recall of father being out of a job' (*Children*, p. 43). Her parents shield the children from this fact, but Magona

⁸³ Siphokazi Koyana and Rosemary Gray, 'Growing Up With Maya Angelou and Sindiwe Magona', *Safundi*, 2:4 (2001), 1-14 (p. 8).

observes that although ‘they never saddled us with whatever pain they were under going’, she is nonetheless aware of their concerns because ‘their anxiety seeped through their pores and covered us like the scab of a wound, ugly; hiding raw hurt’ (pp. 43-44). This instance illustrates that Magona first becomes aware of the fragility of her stable and happy childhood through the behaviour and emotions of her parents.

Sharing her parents’ anxiety and pain can be interpreted as a manifestation of inherited trauma, whereby the child Magona unconsciously experiences their traumatic symptoms without being aware of the circumstances that give rise to them. The intergenerational transmission of trauma is discussed in detail with regard to *Bloodlines* in Chapter Three, demonstrating its role as a catalyst for Hale’s engagement with inherited stories from earlier generations of her family. However, whereas this phenomenon plays a central role in the interrelation of Hale’s life story with the lives of mother and maternal grandmother, in *To My Children’s Children* it plays only a small part in Magona’s portrayal of the collective traumatic experiences of her family and community. The incident from her childhood examined here is the first step in Magona’s gradual recognition of how the economic and social constraints imposed by the South African government affect her family’s lives. Her understanding of these issues evolves through the intergenerational form of the narrative, as she first becomes aware of them through her parents’ stories and experiences, later coming to recognise the collective effects of trauma again through its impacts on her own children.

The intrusion of such periods of intense anxiety into Magona’s depiction of her stable and happy childhood creates a series of powerful juxtapositions that highlight the impact of increasingly restrictive legislation, and more entrenched social discrimination, on the lives of black South Africans during the period from the 1940s to 1960s. A particularly poignant example of learning through the experiences of her parents occurs in *To My Children’s Children* when Magona is walking with her mother in the street in Blaauwlei, and a passing coloured man hurls the racist slur “‘*Ukafile ngunykok!*’ (“Your mother is a kaffir!”)’ at them

(p. 37).⁸⁴ She does not fully understand the implications of his words, but clearly recognises her mother's emotional response. Magona recalls that

my whole being sensed her changed mood: Anger? Pain? Hatred? Or frustration? Something, I didn't know what, flowed wordlessly from her: I did not know all these words then, but I knew she was a different person from the one with whom I had stepped out of the house such a short while ago. (p. 37)

This is the first incident of racism recorded in the text, and it is significant that Magona recognises the traumatic nature of this encounter through observing her mother's response. The encounter illustrates that despite growing up surrounded by the supportive family network, Magona cannot be protected by her parents from the changing social conditions of the 1940s.

Magona's narrative demonstrates how her awareness of the racist discrimination her family are subject to develops over time. An incident that takes place on the eve of her traditional coming of age ceremony demonstrates this. Magona's father takes her with him to a white-owned farm to buy the cow that they will slaughter to feed their guests. After they have negotiated the purchase, the farmer allows Magona and her father to ride in the back of the delivery van, saving them from making the long journey home on foot and by bus. She is angered at being forced to ride with the animals, asking 'how dare this boer make us sit at the back? How dare he hog the front compartment, clearly roomy enough for three?' (*Children*, p. 69). However, Magona's most incensed reaction is reserved for her father, and she demands 'why was he thanking the boer for humiliating him? Father, my father, sharing the back of the van with a beast. I seethed, not at the farmer. Father should have refused the ride, I felt' (p. 68). This frustrated response highlights Magona's confusion on discovering that the authority and respect that her parents possess in her eyes is not recognised by the white people who are situated above them in the racial hierarchy of apartheid. The fact that these feelings are concurrent with her coming-of-age ceremony suggests that this is an ironic rite of passage, teaching the teenage Magona about the distressing reality of her family's social status in apartheid South Africa. Significantly it is once again by observing how

⁸⁴ Magona explains that the term 'coloured' refers to 'a person of mixed descent', one of the racial categories applied 'according to government classification and labelling in South Africa' (*Children*, p. 119). 'Coloured' people had more freedom and were considered superior to black people, although they did not benefit from the economic and social advantages afforded to white people. 'Kaffir' is a derogatory term for a black person.

her parents are treated by South Africans from other racial groups that Magona learns to recognise the injustices of racism.

Magona's recollection of her reaction to seeing her father humiliated by the white farmer is echoed in *Forced to Grow*, when two decades later her own child witnesses her being accosted by security guards while they are shopping in a department store. In describing this incident, Magona states with conviction that 'racism was the reason' that she is singled out as a suspected shoplifter and forced to have her bags searched (p. 119). Throughout the encounter, her son Sandile 'was standing near me with a look on his face of confusion, anger, and something else I couldn't lay my finger on' (p. 116). The parallel between this incident, and Magona's response to witnessing her father treated disrespectfully by the white farmer, suggests that the unnamed emotion may be a similar sense of humiliation to the one she experienced as an adolescent. The parallel experiences in Magona's and Sandile's early lives link their stories, although there is a vital difference between these two episodes. While Magona was protected by the supportive extended family environment from the pain of racial discrimination during her early childhood, she has been unable to keep Sandile from experiencing the hardships of life under apartheid in the segregated township of Guguletu.

In each of these three episodes from Magona's life, two of which centre on experiences she shares with her parents, and the third of which concerns her relationship with her own son, the black child is forced to witness the shame and humiliation of racist discrimination directed at her or his parents. These events demonstrate that the sense of security that family provides, and the authority and respect that children are expected to afford their parents, are undermined by the social climate created under apartheid. Magona's use of the intergenerational narrative to record these episodes emphasises the impact of racial discrimination not only on the individual at which it is directed, but also on the family and community that both support and rely on that individual. In this respect Magona's depiction of the impact of racial discrimination problematises the strict distinction drawn in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission between direct and indirect victims of harm. The limitations of this approach mean that the Commission's work privileges the testimonies of people

with personal experiences of gross human rights violations, while overlooking the ways that their families and communities are affected by such traumatic events. The implications of these contrasting approaches to trauma in Magona's autobiographies and the TRC report are addressed below in section 1.4.

In contextualising her own and her family's life experiences within the history of apartheid, Magona emphasises the impact that the displacement of traditional communities has on the lives of black South Africans, the disruptive effects of which can be traced in each of the three incidents explored above. Magona describes the family's forced removal and relocation to Guguletu in 1961 as a 'massive dislocation' (*Children*, p. 92). Lyn Graybill's study of the TRC offers an insight into the political and social contexts in which removals took place. She explains:

The 1960s was the decade of entrenchment of separate development. Forced removals (to remove 'black spots' from white areas) proceeded apace, and many blacks were 'endorsed' out to the homelands under the government's influx control system. Families were torn apart under the migrant labour system, because women along with their children were prevented from joining their husbands in the towns.⁸⁵

Whitlock points out the significance of the 'series of legislative changes *within living memory* (that is, within the reach of contemporary autobiography)' in South Africa, which she states 'produced an ongoing process of government interventions on the basis of race.'⁸⁶ Through her use of the intergenerational narrative form in her autobiography Magona is able to access her parents' adult memories of forced removals and other changes caused by the new apartheid legislation. By embedding their experiences of these changes within her life story she highlights the destruction of traditional black family and community networks.

⁸⁵ Lyn Graybill, 'The Contribution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Towards the Promotion of Women's Rights in South Africa', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 24:1 (2001), 1-10 (p. 2).

⁸⁶ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 155.

1.2 Impact Of Apartheid On The Black South African Family

1.2.1 *Separation of black families*

One of the most profound effects of apartheid legislation that Magona explores in her autobiographies is the disruption of traditional family relationships, as the preceding section has demonstrated. In *To My Children's Children* Magona points out the irony of the government's choice of the name Guguletu, which she translates as 'Our Pride', for the township her family are forced to move to (p. 92). She views this naming as 'openly declaring to all sceptics their unwavering pursuit; the destruction of African family life, communal life, and all those factors that go toward the knitting of the very fabric of a people' (p. 92). With this observation Magona asserts her belief that the apartheid government deliberately attacked the traditional structures of black families, in order to better control this oppressed group by undermining a key source of support and strength. In *Forced to Grow* she records how, in the South Africa of the 1960s and 70s, families like hers are hopelessly torn apart by government policies that take no account of the social structures and child-rearing practices of black communities.

While working as a social worker in the early 1970s, Magona encounters an 18-year-old boy who is made homeless because he has 'broken the requirement of continuous residence in the Western Cape and therefore could no longer legally live with his parents' (*Forced*, p. 88). The boy had been sent to live with his grandmother at the age of ten, following the common practice of children living with members of their extended family. However, upon his grandmother's death eight years later, the boy's parents discover that he is no longer allowed to live with them in the city of his birth, because he has not been issued with the requisite pass. Magona contextualises this incident by detailing the stringent process that each black child must follow at the age of sixteen to apply for the right to live and work in one of the designated 'African' areas of the Western Cape. Describing the pass, Magona states that a 'more hated document was hard to find. People sold their very souls to obtain one endorsed for an urban area where they wanted to work and where, according to the law, they had no right to be' (*Forced*, p. 86). The story of the boy separated from his family

parallels the period of residence with her own grandmother that Magona enjoys as a child. The passage recalls her observation in *To My Children's Children* that the family 'were very lucky that Makhulu MaMkwayi [her maternal grandmother] died when she did', because in the following year, 1948, 'the Boers came into power' and passed new legislation which would have made it 'extremely difficult, if not impossible, for us to join our parents' (p. 16). Despite her gratitude that she and her own parents avoided being separated in this way, by recounting the story of the boy Magona clearly shows how, by preventing black people's freedom of movement between different areas of the country, government legislation under apartheid undermines the vital support networks of families and communities.

The above story is one example of how Magona uses recollections from the different jobs she has held as a frame through which to introduce the experiences of other black families. Drawing on her professional experience here enables her to explore the ways that the apartheid government's influx legislation undermines intergenerational relationships in her community. Magona uses stories from other families to put her own experiences in context, demonstrating the widespread impacts of the strict legislation brought in by the Nationalist government. Samuelson observes that

The pressing need to adopt this communally oriented, maternal voice is highlighted when we are shown that this 'place' – the extended family – is a site of fragility, a haven under siege, effectively undermined and destroyed by apartheid machinery in the form of the migrant labour system and internal 'influx control'.⁸⁷

The story of the son separated from his parents thus performs a double function: it both demonstrates the need to record the experiences of black families in the apartheid era, and becomes part of Magona's project to fulfil that need. Magona uses her position within her community as a lens through which to represent the experiences of other black South Africans, using her experiential voice to produce a history of everyday black life under apartheid. In this section I examine how Magona uses these stories to demonstrate the full extent of the apartheid government's measures to undermine traditional black South African families.

⁸⁷ Samuelson, p. 229.

In addition to the legal measures that restricted people's movements and separated families geographically, Magona also records in detail the impact of economic constraints on the ability of black South African parents to care for their children. Discussing her novel *Mother to Mother* in an interview, Magona expands on the political circumstances underpinning the economic situation of black South African families during the 1960s. She observes that

The government of South Africa was waging war against African families. If the father was working it was never for enough wages. So the mother had also to be working; the children were being brought up by who?⁸⁸

The causal implications of these conditions are expressed by Magona's assertion that 'all these young people are lost' because 'we were not there. The parents were not there to raise their children.'⁸⁹ The bleak contrast between Magona's own supportive upbringing surrounded by family caregivers in her childhood village, and the lives of the children whose parents are now forced to leave them alone in Guguletu while they work for white employers in Cape Town, poignantly illustrates the social effects of economic deprivation.

The combined effects of these legal restrictions and economic constraints are summarised in the final volume of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, which presents its findings on families. The TRC describes the black family as 'a core structure in society' that 'should be protected and supported by the state'.⁹⁰ The report states that

Apartheid generated a crisis in South African family life. Group areas legislation and forced removals have both been linked to disruptions in healthy family functioning, and the migrant labour system also deprived people of family life. Children were denied fatherly guidance and support during their formative years and the fact that women were obliged to take on domestic work meant that children were denied the care of their mothers.⁹¹

As section 1.4 will demonstrate, the focus of the TRC's mandate on gross violations of human rights means that, although it acknowledges the circumstances of everyday family life under apartheid in this contextual summary, the report fails to address these experiences directly through the first

⁸⁸ Attwell and Harlow, p. 285. See Sindiwe Magona, *Mother to Mother* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998).

⁸⁹ Attwell and Harlow, p. 285.

⁹⁰ *TRC Report*, V, p. 142.

⁹¹ *TRC Report*, V, p. 142.

person testimonies it invites. In contrast, Magona uses intergenerational autobiography to examine in detail how these restrictions are experienced by her own and other families in her community. As literary narratives Magona's intergenerational autobiographies are able to present black South African lives in detail over an extended period of time. This allows her not only to record dramatic violent events, but also to produce a picture of everyday life that shows how repeated instances of discrimination and long-term oppression affect both her material circumstances and her state of mind. Thus *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* supplement the historical picture presented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, filling gaps in the narrative it produces by recording the context of systemic oppression in which the extreme violence it focuses on takes place.

1.2.2 Impact of apartheid on black motherhood

In relating her life as a black woman living and raising her family in the apartheid state, Magona emphasises that her story is unexceptional, and can be viewed as exemplary of the daily lives of families in her community. Her experiences highlight not only the effects of influx control legislation that undermines black extended family structures, but also of the unstable financial and social conditions of their lives in segregated South Africa. This is illustrated in *To My Children's Children* when Magona becomes pregnant while working as a teacher, and begins to see her life mirroring those of her students who 'came mostly from women-headed homes', in which 'those women stayed in at their places of employment: they were busy being smiling servants minding white babies' (p. 90). As an unmarried mother, for Magona a teaching job becomes 'out of the question, for at least two years – the "punishment" meted out to fallen women teachers like me' (p. 117). As a result she is left with no choice but to join the large proportion of women from her community who support their families by working as domestic servants in white homes. She describes the anguished knowledge that 'each morning as I prepared and served breakfast, made school lunches, dressed kids for school, walked kids to same, in my body beat the heart of a mother whose own were left untended' (p. 146). Magona emphasises that her children 'had no bed-time stories, no books. No day-care

centres and no pre-schools to go to: had these been available, I could not have afforded them' (p. 146). Her poverty and the lack of social provision to support African families mean that Magona's children are deprived of the care and education available to the children of her white employers.

In *Forced to Grow* Magona establishes the care of her children as the focal point of her ambitions to improve both her economic situation and social status. She is determined to return to work as a teacher again when her husband deserts the family after the birth of their third child. She struggles in the face of discrimination from potential employers due to her status as a single mother, and once she does succeed in securing a teaching job the discrimination against her as a working mother continues. Magona explains that despite the fact her husband provides no financial support for their children, as a married woman 'I could only be given annual contracts, temporary posts. Permanent posts were for real breadwinners – all men, irrespective of their marital status, and also unmarried women' (p. 45). Magona's ability to provide care for her children is thus simultaneously restricted by the financial necessity that forces her to leave them while she works long hours, and the discriminatory policy of her employers, the Department of Bantu Education, which prevents her from obtaining a secure permanent job.

The legal restrictions on her employment rights demonstrate the direct control that the apartheid government exerts over Magona's role as a mother. Simultaneously, she continues to be affected indirectly by the lack of support for working black mothers, and the problem of how to provide care for the children persists. Her personal experiences heighten Magona's political awareness, as she recognises that these difficulties are faced by all black South African mothers during this period. She observes that her new teaching job 'brought to focus a whole range of problems inherent in the very position of African women in the pecking order' (*Forced*, p. 36). Magona explains that 'African women, themselves hopelessly disadvantaged and the poorest of workers, cannot afford paid child-minders, and so depend on older children or each other for this most important of functions' (p. 36). These reflections parallel similar observations that Magona makes in *To My Children's Children*, when she first begins working as a teacher straight after her training. She writes that 'more than half the

pupils in the first class I taught did not have books' because of the economic deprivation of the community, and that 'those pupils who had any of the required books were in daily danger of losing them to those who didn't and knew they would not be buying them the next day, or the next, or the next' (p. 89). Despairingly, Magona asserts that her training has left her unprepared for the conditions she is working in because, she states, 'I had not been trained to teach children from poor homes' (p. 90). Through the lens of her experiences as a working mother and a teacher Magona demonstrates how both black mothers and their children are failed by the lack of resources available to support them.

The inadequacies of Magona's teacher training as preparation for the deprived environment she works in also reflect the dominant discourse of motherhood, based on the model of the nuclear family, which is at the centre of government policies during this era. Although the ideal of the two parent family where the mother can devote her time solely to the children is woefully inadequate to the reality of black lives in the townships, it nonetheless forms the foundation of the teaching methods Magona has been taught. In describing her plight as a working mother she draws attention to the inequality between black and white families, noting that

I was to learn of the white South African woman's anguish upon becoming a working mother. Mine was not the choice of being a working mother or a not working mother. No. I could choose between being a working mother or having no children left. Whose mother would I have been had my children died from starvation? (*Children*, p. 146)

The sense of economic and social imbalance expressed here highlights the gap between the image of the ideal mother espoused by white society, and the lived experiences of black mothers, who struggle to provide their children with the bare minimum necessary for their survival. Koyana examines Magona's engagement with the discourse of motherhood, tracing the distinction between 'middle-class motherhood', which 'was still largely associated with domesticity and reproductive labour for white South African women', and motherhood for 'working-class women', which 'was inseparable from work, both productive (outside the home) and reproductive (work inside the home).'⁹² Through her

⁹² Koyana, "Why Are You Carrying Books?", p. 47.

own experiences as a mother, combined with the insight she gains into the lives of other black families through her role as a teacher, Magona demonstrates how the legal and economic conditions of apartheid circumscribe black women's abilities to mother their children by providing for their material and emotional needs. The intergenerational narrative also highlights the contrast between these circumstances and the supportive extended family environment of Magona's own childhood before apartheid legislation came into place.

In *Forced to Grow* Magona highlights the impact that the lack of government provision to support African families has on her role as a mother. She bitterly reflects that her past experiences of the apartheid government have prepared her for motherhood, stating that 'I had learned not to complain, and not to expect help from any source – least of all the government' (p. 18). Magona describes the failure of the government to support her as a black mother, dryly stating that

throughout my life, the government has never, not once, disappointed me. It has been singularly consistent in its persecution of the African, attacking the very foundation of our people – the family – robbing our young of a fighting chance to life, to dreams rightfully theirs both as members of the human race and as citizens of the twentieth century. (p. 19)

The phrase 'foundation of our people' highlights once again the importance of the traditional African family, in which the mother and other family members play a central role by providing both physical care and the emotional nurturing for the children who will in turn help to perpetuate the vital networks of family and community. Thus the social and economic imbalances between the lives of black and white South Africans are compounded by government policies that fail to support families as the 'foundation' of black communities.

The failure of the white authorities to support Magona as a black mother is highlighted by the fact that despite the precarious economic position she and her children are left in following her husband's desertion, she 'decide[s] against taking [him] to court' (*Forced*, p. 22). She attributes her lack of access to legal support to 'the laws and regulations that govern every aspect of the lives of Africans', which she states 'make it almost impossible for African women to get redress when the man fails to support his children' (p. 22). Simultaneously, Magona recoils from the prospect of 'the questions the court would force the

woman to answer', which 'are of such a personal nature and would be asked with such vulgarity and relish by a white man' (p. 22). Fear of a direct encounter with the representatives of white authority in the courtroom exacerbates the family's financial problems by preventing her from claiming redress for her husband's desertion. This passage illustrates how Magona's role as a black mother is undermined not only by inadequate provision for childcare and the education of black children, but also by discriminatory legal institutions that exacerbate her plight.

In 1977 Magona's ability to care for and protect her children is put under extreme strain, when the well-documented student strikes, rioting and violence that began the previous year in Soweto spread to Guguletu. Magona explains that the protest was sparked by the government's decision to enforce the use of Afrikaans, the language associated with the oppression of the apartheid system, as 'a medium of instruction for fifty percent of school subjects' (*Forced*, p. 150). This, she states, 'removed the last veneer of decency in Bantu Education and laid naked its agenda: the stunting of the African child' (p. 150).⁹³ The violent protests quickly spread to Cape Town and elsewhere, so that by 1977 the school in Guguletu that Magona's children attend has remained closed for many months because of the boycott. Meanwhile, Magona secures the job of Xhosa teacher at the white Herschel School, and finds herself once again leaving her children in Guguletu to travel daily to the rich white suburbs to work. During this time Magona once again experiences the bitter irony she associated with working as a maid, providing support for white children that her own black family is deprived of. She asserts that 'here I was teaching children who came from the *crème de la crème* of white South Africa, and my own three were languishing at home' (*Forced*, p. 186). The restrictive government policies that already affect her daily life and ability to mother her children are now exacerbated by the unstable political environment in the townships. This experience cements Magona's understanding of how the inequality between

⁹³ The report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission describes the long-term impact of the 1953 Bantu Education Act, supporting Magona's interpretation: 'the consequence was exactly what had been intended: namely, the under-skilling of generations of African children and their graduation into an economy for which they were singularly under-equipped.' *TRC Report*, I, p. 32.

black and white South Africans is maintained by the apartheid system's attacks on the foundations of black families.

Magona's narrative of this period demonstrates how the political unrest surrounding the Soweto uprisings exacerbates the existing challenges of everyday life that she faces as a black mother. The legal and economic constraints of living as an oppressed group in racially divided South African society combine to create a climate of desperation that fuels the unrest. In contrast to the testimonies gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which focus on instances of extreme violence, Magona uses her autobiographies to contextualise these events and reveal the systemic oppression that underpins the student riots. The intergenerational form of her narratives enables Magona to explore the circumscription of black motherhood, as well as the limitations that the conditions of apartheid place on black men as fathers, discussed below.

1.2.3 Impact of apartheid on black fatherhood

Magona's autobiographies not only explore how black women's abilities to mother their children are circumscribed by the mechanisms of apartheid, but also shed light on the parallel restrictions on black fatherhood. In *To My Children's Children* Magona describes her own father's absence from the village during her early childhood as typical of most black South African families 'then, as now' (p. 2). She writes that

He worked in Cape Town and came to see us once in a long while. That was not unusual. [...] Able-bodied African men were in the cities where the mines and the farms and industrial complexes swallow them. (p. 2)

However, in the stable village community of Gungululu where she is surrounded by extended family caregivers, the infant Magona does not feel particularly deprived by his absence. As Koyana and Gray observe, 'the proximity and cooperation of her maternal and paternal homesteads counterbalances the disruption caused by her father's enforced absence'.⁹⁴ It is once her mother and then later Magona and her siblings join her father in Blaauwlei that she

⁹⁴ Koyana and Gray, p. 8.

becomes more aware of how families are separated by financial necessity. Her father continues to fulfil his obligations to their traditional community, by providing ‘a home from home for people from our village’, other men and women ‘who had been excised from their own families by the combined exigencies of their need for employment and the government’s influx control policy’ (*Children*, p. 33). For these people, who arrive to work in the urban areas surrounding Cape Town after the new legislation of 1948, it is not possible to do as Magona’s father has done and move their families to live with them. She observes that the influx control legislation is ‘aimed at keeping Africans away from the urban areas of South Africa’, and describes it as ‘a policy that succeeded in wrecking African families’ (p. 33). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report puts the experiences described in Magona’s narrative in context:

Laws tore millions of workers from their families, forcing them to work in white areas and live in enclosed compounds to which their families had no access [...] Laws forced people from their homes and communities and from their ancestral lands.⁹⁵

The apartheid government’s legal policies had a dramatic impact on black families, and frequently forced men like Magona’s father to live at a distance from their wives and children. As a result of this phenomenon the ability of black men to build relationships with and care for their children was fundamentally undermined, illustrating that the systemic violence of apartheid disrupts the familial bonds of black men as well as women.

Although Magona’s own experience of familial separation and her father’s absence was not as damaging as those of other relatives and villagers who migrated to the cities later, she begins to feel the full impact of the restrictions that the influx control measures place on black fatherhood once she has children of her own. At the end of *To My Children’s Children*, Magona describes the circumstances that lead to her husband Luthando’s desertion of her and their three infant children in Guguletu. With bitter humour, she describes how ‘my husband became my former husband through a much more simple method than divorce; the method commonly referred to as “he is dead wearing a hat”’ (p. 167). Magona explains the implications of this idiomatic phrase, which means that

⁹⁵ *TRC Report*, I, p. 41.

the husband no longer performs those duties usually associated with that role – functions such as those of provider, protector, lover, and father. He is dead in the role of family head. However, as he is ‘wearing a hat’, he is walking around physically appearing to be alive. (p. 167)

Luthando leaves his young family in 1966, when Magona is pregnant with their third child. He tells her that he intends to make a short visit to his parents in their native village ‘Matatiele, in the Transkei, some 800 km from Cape Town’ (p. 168). However, Luthando fails to return when Magona expects him, and after several months she receives a letter asking her to bring the children ‘to join him in Johannesburg where, he stated, he was now working’ (p. 171). She responds with incredulity, describing Luthando’s unrealistic suggestion as ‘bordering on insanity!’, because ‘Africans in South Africa did not just move from one town to another at the drop of a hat, or because they so wished. My husband was asking me to break the law’ (p. 171). The legal implications for leaving the Western Cape, where Magona has a pass allowing her to remain, would mean that she ‘would be risking losing that permission’ (p. 172). In addition, as Magona explains, ‘permission to reside or work in one urban area was not only not transferable, it excluded the right to be in another’, meaning that she could face arrest if discovered living in another city (p. 172). Deserted by her husband and trapped by the restrictive laws that prevent her from joining him in Johannesburg, Magona has no choice but to resign herself to being a single mother. Since Luthando can no longer live and work in the same place as his family, he relinquishes the role of father to his children and leaves Magona to care for them alone.

In *Forced to Grow*, while she is employed as a social worker, Magona gains further insight into the reasons for Luthando’s desertion. Her new knowledge of the intricacies of the pass laws help her to understand what she describes as ‘my special hell as an African’ (p. 83). Magona uses her job to gain access to Luthando’s file, and learns that ‘in 1966 my husband, I found, had been endorsed out of the area’ (p. 90). This happens because he was classified as ‘a migrant labourer with an annual contract who had to go home each year’, and his permission to return to the Western Cape after his visit to his ancestral village had been revoked (p. 90). Faced with this information, Magona finds herself with a series of unanswerable questions: ‘Was it shame? Was it lack of

trust? When he left me, was he planning to get back to Cape Town under contract, and not let on to me? Did he encounter difficulties in getting a contract?' (p. 90). She ultimately concludes

We never really had a chance, I realised. We were fools to have married. We had not had an inkling about what we were pitting ourselves against [...] Definitely not against the state, the mighty government. Against all that power, just the two of us. No wonder we were pulverised. (p. 90)

As a migratory worker Luthando shares the experience of Magona's father a generation earlier, but due to the tighter restrictions of the influx control laws he does not have the freedom to return to his wife and children, or to relocate them to join him in Johannesburg. Meanwhile, Magona is also bereft of the supportive extended family network that her mother was able to rely on in Gungululu, and finds herself as the sole provider and carer for her children when they are left behind in the township. The intergenerational form of Magona's autobiographies juxtaposes her parents' access to extended family support, and the destruction of this communal supportive network under more restrictive apartheid legislation by the time she herself is a parent.

Many years later, as she prepares to leave South Africa and take her children to be educated in the USA, Magona tracks Luthando down so that he can say goodbye to them. On meeting her husband again she describes him as 'a perfect picture of government design. Forty-three years old. And that was his sole achievement' (*Forced*, p. 228). Magona interprets his failure to support their children as the outcome of a deliberate strategy by the South African government, which attacks the stability of black families in order to maintain the racial divisions of apartheid. As she observes earlier in the narrative, 'like an umbilical cord, the pass office was the direct link between the government and the African. And the one-way force-feed was bitter and poisonous' (*Forced*, p. 86). The tellingly ironic metaphor of the umbilical cord highlights how the damaging effects of undermining black fatherhood are transmitted from one generation to the next. Many of the children who are affected by this phenomenon will grow up deprived of paternal role models, and without a stable familial environment they will fail to develop the skills needed to care for their own future families.

1.2.4 *Legacy to future generations*

The social unrest surrounding the Soweto uprising, and the resulting disruption to her children's education, lead Magona to question her role as a mother in *Forced to Grow*. She describes this period as the moment 'when I first gave thought to the meaning of black parenthood in South Africa' (pp. 186-87). As her oldest daughter Thembeke reaches eleven, Magona reflects on the opportunities available to her and expresses fear about her future. She writes:

I wished I had not had her. For although she had escaped childhood illnesses and the early grave that is the fate of thousands of African infants each year, what was in store for her? What could she aspire to? What would she be allowed to be? (p. 187)

She envisions a future for Thembeke in which the only employment available to her is as a maid for a white mistress, without a pension to support her when she becomes too old to continue working. Lamenting her responsibility for raising the daughter who must live this life, Magona questions her decision to become a mother, asking 'how could I have brought a child into this world, one who could look forward to no better future than that?' (p. 187). These reflections poignantly illustrate that even if Magona is able to overcome the limitations that economic inequality and institutional discrimination put on her ability to effectively mother her children, there is little hope that they will have secure futures unless significant political and social changes take place.

By using her intergenerational narrative to gesture forward towards the future life of her daughter Magona once again uses her maternal subject position not only to record the personal experiences of her family, but also to highlight the broader impact of apartheid in undermining black families and communities. Imagining the long-term impacts of the constraints on Thembeke's childhood demonstrates how economic deprivation and the disruption of her daughter's education will restrict her chances of a stable future. The experiences that Magona records from her own and her family's lives illustrate how increasingly strict government policies, and concurrent social deprivation, from the 1940s to the 1980s impact on black families and communities, preventing both women and men from effectively parenting their children. Magona uses intergenerational autobiography to chart her developing understanding of these issues, as she comes to recognise the implications of apartheid for the

development of the next generation of black South Africans through her personal experiences of motherhood. In contrast to the testimonies of isolated traumatic events collected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Magona's depiction of everyday life provides the contextual detail needed to create a fuller picture of the effects of apartheid. The intergenerational frame of the narrative provides a long view of black South African history that offers a more fluid representation of the cause and effect underpinning experiences of systemic oppression than the TRC is able to present. The following two sections examine in detail how *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* intervene in debates about the representation of South African history raised by the work of the TRC. As literary narratives, Magona's intergenerational autobiographies offer her scope to engage with the apartheid past in ways that are impossible for an official government project like the TRC, making alternative perspectives available to a broad readership.

1.3 Portrayals of Apartheid History in Magona's Autobiographies and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Both for Magona in her autobiographies *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, and for those who gave statements to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, narrating personal experience is inherently political. In both cases, storytelling involves overcoming the structures of apartheid that sought to ignore or suppress the suffering of black South Africans in order to maintain the status quo of the racially segregated society. Legal studies scholar Rina Kashyap reflects on the significance of giving testimony for the individual victims who participated in the hearings organised by Human Rights Violations Committee under the umbrella of the TRC. She observes that

For most of the victims of apartheid, identified as subjugated in terms of race, class or sex, storytelling was a political act; it was an opportunity to articulate against and change the conditions that lead to abuse.⁹⁶

By encouraging previously silenced individuals to narrate their personal experiences, the TRC invites them to participate in the process of establishing an officially sanctioned historical record of the atrocities engendered by apartheid. This engagement with personal testimonies can be seen as a parallel to the political project Magona undertakes in writing her intergenerational autobiographies, which she uses to record the reality of her own life as a black South African woman, together with the experiences of those around her in the township of Guguletu.

The comparison in this section between Magona's approach to writing about apartheid and the historical record produced by the TRC highlights some of the key functions of intergenerational autobiography, demonstrating Magona's innovative use of the genre to produce a politically and culturally significant narrative of the apartheid past. By engaging within her autobiography with the experiences of earlier and future generations of her family and members of her community Magona offers an insight into the collective suffering and oppression engendered by apartheid, highlighting the representativeness of the personal stories she recounts. Incorporating experiences from her parents' lives, and the

⁹⁶ Rina Kashyap, 'Narrative and Truth: a Feminist Critique of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Contemporary Justice Review*, 12:4 (2009), 449-67 (p. 455).

narrative of her own early childhood before the Nationalist party came into government, enables Magona to show the pre-history of apartheid, highlighting how the material and psychological conditions of black South African people's lives deteriorated as the regime imposed more extreme segregation measures. Unlike the TRC, which strives to achieve consensus about apartheid, as autobiographies Magona's texts are by their nature subjective, leaving her free to foreground her political aim of telling the stories of black experience that were suppressed under the apartheid regime.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report emphasises the importance of breaking silences about past events, explaining that 'the Commission sought to recover parts of national memory that had hitherto been officially ignored.'⁹⁷ This statement illustrates the fact that, in order to fulfil its mandate, the TRC is reliant on the willingness of people who have direct experience of gross human rights violations to tell their stories. The rhetoric used in the foreword to the TRC's report by its chairperson Archbishop Desmond Tutu further emphasises this. Tutu asserts that

the wounds of the past must not be allowed to fester. They must be opened. They must be cleansed. And balm must be poured on them so that they can heal. This is not to be obsessed with the past. It is to take care that the past is properly dealt with for the sake of the future.⁹⁸

Tutu articulates the necessity for people to speak about their experiences, when he states that 'we need to know about the past in order to establish a culture of respect for human rights. It is only by accounting for the past that we can become accountable for the future.'⁹⁹ These statements emphasise the political imperative for all victims to give their testimonies, in order to form 'as complete a picture as possible' of South Africa's apartheid past, as required by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act that established the TRC.¹⁰⁰ Section 1.4 explores the TRC's failure to acknowledge the challenges faced by survivors who are asked to give testimony, and addresses the question of experiences that are omitted from the record of the past it produces as a result.

⁹⁷ *TRC Report*, I, p. 112.

⁹⁸ D. M. Tutu, 'Foreword by the Chairperson', in *TRC Report*, I, p. 7.

⁹⁹ Tutu, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 3.(1) a, in *TRC Report*, I, p. 55.

The TRC report's reliance on people who have survived gross violations of human rights to give testimony is bound up with the rhetoric of reconciliation, demonstrated by the emphasis placed on healing as a way of moving beyond the traumatic events of the past. The report states that 'in order to heal, trauma victims must ultimately put words to their experience and thereby integrate the traumatic experience in order to find new meanings for themselves and their place in the world.'¹⁰¹ This ethos is founded on an assumption that by giving trauma testimony it is possible to achieve closure, a process that is central to the TRC's representation of the apartheid era as a distinct period that is definitively in the past. As my analysis of Magona's autobiographies in section 1.2 of this chapter has demonstrated, this interpretation is problematised by the fact that the legacy of social disadvantage founded on racial discrimination endures beyond the official end of apartheid. This section compares the contrasting approaches that Magona and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission take to recording the past, exploring their effects on the narrative of the apartheid era that each produces.

1.3.1 *Historical time frames*

The political aims of Magona's autobiographical writing are closely connected with the historical functions that her narratives can perform. In contrast to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's political focus on historical consensus and nation building, Magona's autobiographical project does not have a formally inscribed responsibility to represent plural voices and perspectives on historical events. Instead, as discussed in section 1.1, Magona seeks to present a black perspective on apartheid history by giving voice to stories that would otherwise be suppressed or silenced. Whitlock asserts that 'the strategic importance of autobiographic writing is evident, for it is a way of reclaiming history, and presenting hitherto "invisible" histories of oppression and poverty.'¹⁰² The TRC's role as a repository for South African history is similarly intertwined with its political functions, and the report emphasises the key role that it plays in collating an officially sanctioned record of the apartheid past. However, in

¹⁰¹ TRC Report, V, p.137.

¹⁰² Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 160.

contrast to the overt political alignment of Magona's narratives with a recuperation of black historical experiences, the TRC invites testimonies from both 'victims' and 'perpetrators' who campaigned on both sides of the violent conflicts surrounding apartheid. In this respect the TRC's work purports to be objective, aimed at representing and reconciling the views and experiences of people from all sectors of South African society.

The rhetoric that the report uses to describe its relationship to the apartheid past is a telling illustration of the Commission's historical legacy. In his foreword Tutu writes that

The past, it has been said, is another country. The spotlight gyrates, exposing old lies and illuminating new truths. A fuller picture emerges, a new piece of the jigsaw puzzle of our past settles into place.¹⁰³

This statement demonstrates how the TRC frames the apartheid past as a historical period that can be delineated and contained, a process that its investigations will contribute to by uncovering and interpreting a definitive historical truth. This approach is founded on a linear understanding of time, which situates the apartheid era as clearly distinct from the present, and from a future where progress will continue to be made in learning lessons from and moving beyond past atrocities. Trauma specialist Stef Craps describes the political contention surrounding the TRC's 'pursuit of reconciliation', stating that 'its deployment of therapeutic and theological ideas of healing and redemption in the service of an explicit nation-building agenda led to accusations that the TRC attempted to impose premature closure on the past.'¹⁰⁴ Historian Colin Bundy offers a useful analysis of the portrayal of history in the TRC's work, describing it as 'a case study of how the past is constructed and presented, how it is contested, and what the role of history is in shaping values and institutions in civil society.'¹⁰⁵ Bundy explores the Commission's 'potential to shape historical understanding, and in so doing to narrow, to constrain and even to distort such understanding.'¹⁰⁶ He stresses that 'the notion of reconciliation as writing closure to a divided past pulled in quite a different direction' from the

¹⁰³ Tutu, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Craps, p. 56.

¹⁰⁵ Colin Bundy, 'The Beast of the Past: History and the TRC', in *After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, ed. by Wilmot James and Linda van de Vijver (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001), pp. 9-20 (p. 10).

¹⁰⁶ Bundy, p. 16.

potential for ‘an infinitely detailed, comprehensive and multi-vocal account of past traumas’ that the statement gathering process offers.¹⁰⁷ For Bundy, this problem arises because the TRC attempted to produce ‘a single, national account – an overview, which could serve as the basis for a shared history, a common, collective understanding.’¹⁰⁸ The drive to achieve consensus and closure necessitated by the Commission’s political aims thus risks overlooking the complexities of the many thousands of testimonies it gathers.

One of the key limitations of the historical narrative produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is the time period of 1960 to the early 1990s, which was used to define the period under investigation.¹⁰⁹ Bundy examines the unquestioning acceptance in Tutu’s foreword of the dates of this period, and points out the danger of ignoring events that occurred outside of this timeframe. He asserts that this approach ‘effectively frees us of the obligation to arrive at a similar reckoning with any other history’.¹¹⁰ Bundy offers a sketch of the ‘pre-history of dispossession, denial and subordination’ effectively ignored by the TRC, which preceded the ‘high noon of human rights violations’ that forms its focus.¹¹¹ This statement emphasises the arbitrariness of the timeframe adopted by the Commission, which overlooks the incremental development of segregated South African society over the preceding decades, and risks erasing the historical context of apartheid’s development. The continuity of the history of segregation, missing from the TRC’s version of apartheid history, can be accessed through attention to Magona’s autobiographical narratives and her intergenerational approach to understanding the past. As section 1.1 has highlighted, in *To My Children’s Children* Magona frames stories about her parents’ experiences within her life narrative, which allows her to contrast their lifestyle in the traditional ancestral village community at the beginning of the twentieth century to the squalid urban setting of the family’s lives from the late 1940s onwards. Intergenerational autobiography thus allows Magona to compare the changes in her community over time, in order to explore the extent

¹⁰⁷ Bundy, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Bundy, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ The parameters of the period covered by the TRC were debated at length before consensus was finally reached. See Antjie Krog’s discussion of this in her memoir of the TRC *Country of My Skull* (London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 176-77.

¹¹⁰ Bundy, p. 17.

¹¹¹ Bundy, p. 17.

of harm caused by racial segregation and oppression, and to present a chain of causality that clearly shows the impact that the advent of apartheid has on black people's everyday lives. In this respect the literary genre of intergenerational autobiography allows Magona to produce a more comprehensive view of the apartheid past that pays attention to continuity and change over an extended period, in contrast to the limited view produced as a result of the TRC's emphasis on closure.

The more integrated 'long view' of history that Magona presents in her autobiographies is not only more effective than the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report at recording the pre-history of apartheid, but it also offers greater insight into its continuing effects beyond the 1994 election. In her study of Magona's autobiographies Gugu Hlongwane reflects on the relationship between this view of apartheid history and the work of the TRC. Writing in 2004, Hlongwane observes that

the past is being suppressed, largely through the South African government's privileging of the hegemonic discourses of reconciliation and forgiveness, and the brighter future that [Magona] yearned for has been delayed by a common element in South African literature and life – amnesia.¹¹²

It is for this reason that Magona's autobiographies remain historically significant after the completion of the TRC process. Her narratives attempt to resist this cultural 'amnesia' by addressing future generations, in order both to teach them about black people's suffering during the apartheid era, and to explore how their lives may continue to be affected by its legacy.

1.3.2 Framing of testimony

As discussed, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's emphasis on achieving closure about the apartheid past as a means to reconciliation results in a limited view of South African history. The TRC's nation building aims prompt it to frame the testimonies it gathers in specific ways that influence the type of stories that emerge and the ways they are understood. As a medium of

¹¹² Gugu Hlongwane, 'Writing Apartheid for the Post-Apartheid Era: Magona's Autobiographical Works', in *Sindiwe Magona: The First Decade*, ed. by Siphokazi Koyana (South Africa: University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2004), pp. 35-50 (p. 35).

reconciliation, the TRC strives to consider multiple conflicting perspectives and negotiate consensus about the past, thus situating itself rhetorically as an objective mediator. This is illustrated by the four different 'notions of truth' that the report identifies as falling within its investigations, including 'factual or forensic truth; personal or narrative truth; social or "dialogue" truth [...] and healing and restorative truth.'¹¹³ In its discussion of what it terms 'dialogue' truth, the report describes the TRC's role in negotiating between different interpretations of past events, explaining that 'its goal was to try to transcend the divisions of the past by listening carefully to the complex motives and perspectives of all those involved.'¹¹⁴ However, despite the careful wording of this definition, as discussed above, many commentators have highlighted the political agenda of the historical 'truth' presented in the final report, which emphasised forgiveness and closure.¹¹⁵ History writing is always politically loaded, and the context of a historical narrative's production determines the meaning attributed to the events it records. The political aims of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission not only demand that silence is broken and stories are told, but also play a significant role in influencing the form those stories take in the final report. The impetus to reconciliation in the TRC's nation building agenda privileges certain perspectives on the apartheid past, at the expense of excluding those of large numbers of black South Africans whose experiences of apartheid do not fit within the narrative it seeks to produce.

The TRC gathered written testimonies from over 21,000 South Africans from every geographical region, representing each of the racial groups defined under apartheid.¹¹⁶ The sheer quantity of stories it received necessitated a selective approach to determining where to focus the attention of its investigations, to decide which 'victims' would become part of the group of 2,000 who were invited to tell their stories in person at the public Human Rights Violations Committee hearings. The TRC report explains that

The Commission recognized early on that it would not be able to investigate all the cases before it. It decided, therefore, to focus on

¹¹³ *TRC Report*, I, p. 110.

¹¹⁴ *TRC Report*, I, p. 113.

¹¹⁵ In addition to the critiques offered by Craps, Bundy and Hlongwane, see also Sarah Nuttall, 'Telling "Free" Stories? Memory and Democracy in South African Autobiography Since 1994', in *Negotiating The Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, ed. by Carli Coetzee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 75-88.

¹¹⁶ *TRC Report*, II, p. 1.

specific 'window' cases – representative of a far larger number of violations of a similar type and involving the same perpetrator groupings.¹¹⁷

Alongside the choice of testimonies to be used as 'window' cases, the Commission made 'a careful selection of victims who would be invited to testify in public' at the regional hearings.¹¹⁸ This process aimed to focus on individual testimonies that were considered most representative of the 'various forms of human rights abuse that occurred in the area'.¹¹⁹ Victims were selected, the report explains, on the basis of what it terms 'representivity in relation to gender, race, age and geographic location in the area where the hearing was held', as well as ensuring that 'victims from all sides of the conflict' were included.¹²⁰ However, the TRC report fails to acknowledge that selecting testimonies deemed to be representative of such a range of experience necessitates the omission of many individual voices. This approach risks omitting or downplaying circumstances and events that may have significant implications for the picture of the apartheid past the Commission produces.

In addition to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's selective use of personal testimonies, the mechanisms used to collect testimony and the structure of the public hearings also play a significant role in determining the kind of stories it tells and the form that they take. Fiona Ross's examination of the TRC's special hearing for women exemplifies how the framework created by the Commission leads to the production of narratives that fit within its emphasis on particular issues. Ross argues that in the hearings that focused on gender, 'diverse identities, activities and experiences were obscured through the emphasis on sexual difference and harm'.¹²¹ This is exemplified by the terms used in the TRC report to summarise the special hearing for women, which record that 'several women spoke about how their femaleness affected how they were treated, and how they themselves behaved when tortured'.¹²² The report selects the testimony of Jenny Schreiner as a representative example, quoting her description of her treatment in detention. Schreiner records that

¹¹⁷ *TRC Report*, V, p. 207.

¹¹⁸ *TRC Report*, I, p. 146.

¹¹⁹ *TRC Report*, I, p. 146.

¹²⁰ *TRC Report*, I, p. 146.

¹²¹ Fiona C. Ross, *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 25.

¹²² *TRC Report*, IV, p. 300.

Mostert, the official who interrogated her, “physically picked me up and stood me up ... so that he could slam my back into the wall.”¹²³ She interprets his actions as an assertion of power, suggesting that “it’s a clear statement from step one: ‘I am in control of this, I am bigger than you, I’m more aggressive than you and I have no respect for you’.”¹²⁴ Ross argues that the Commission’s focus on sexual violence at the special hearing for women has the effect of essentialising women’s experiences, so that ‘the subject of violence is construed as naturally gendered, and the sociological problem to be explained becomes women’s experiences of violence rather than violence and its links to gender and power.’¹²⁵ The special hearing created a framework for women’s testimonies in which they were expected to talk about the violence they suffered in terms of gender, exemplified in Schreiner’s testimony by the way that she frames her experience of torture. She states that “it’s also a question of it being a gender thing. There’s a man who is physically picking you up and shoving you into a wall.”¹²⁶ Mostert’s violence becomes the focus of Schreiner’s testimony as quoted in the TRC report, while the political implications of his actions are not elaborated on. This exemplifies Ross’s argument that the assumptions about gender underpinning the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s work produce a skewed perspective that downplays other key aspects of women’s social and political involvement in the violent struggle against the apartheid regime.

Recent research by South African scholars Antjie Krog, Nosisi Mpolweni and Kopano Ratele on the TRC testimony of Mrs Notrose Nobomvu Konile provides another productive insight into how the structure of the hearings influenced the testimony produced. Konile gave testimony at one of the general TRC hearings, in Cape Town on 23 April 1996, attesting to her experience as the mother of one of the Guguletu Seven activists who were killed by the police in Cape Town in the 1980s.¹²⁷ Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele’s research uses the transcript of Konile’s submission to the TRC as an example of ‘testimonies that

¹²³ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 300.

¹²⁴ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 300.

¹²⁵ Ross, p. 25.

¹²⁶ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 300.

¹²⁷ Antjie Krog, Nosisi Mpolweni and Kopano Ratele, *There Was This Goat: Investigating the Truth Commission Testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009), p.5.

do not fit the general framework'.¹²⁸ They highlight that the hearings were only equipped to hear and interpret testimonies that fit within the parameters of the Commission's expectations of 'find[ing] heroes, victims and perpetrators', whose actions and experiences would be 'compensate[d] with reparations or amnesty.'¹²⁹ The researchers argue that the transcript of Konile's testimony to the Human Rights Violations Committee constitutes an incomplete and confusing narrative of her experiences, and they stress the need to 'reread [...] "non-fitting" testimonies in particular ways, in order to arrive at a fuller knowledge of who we are as individuals.'¹³⁰ The researchers examine the Commissioners' lack of engagement with Konile's testimony during the hearing, suggesting that they did not know how to respond because she 'seemed to say, "Mine is not part of what you want to hear. I will tell you of my dreams, my miserable life. I want to do my own kind of accounting."¹³¹ Drawing on Kimberly Theidon's work on women's testimonies, the researchers explain that as a result of the expectations set up by its framework, the Commission

is not necessarily equipped to understand the ways in which 'confused' (or 'thick') narratives of women actually present a 'broader set of truths about systemic injustice [...] the lacerating sting of ethnic discrimination and the futility of seeking justice from the legal systems.'¹³²

Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele's project highlights the limitations imposed by the framework of the TRC hearings, both in terms of the practical mechanisms used to record and translate testimonies, and the Commission's broader concerns with producing a narrative of apartheid focused on promoting closure. The significance of Konile's testimony is obscured and rendered incomprehensible, due to the Commission's unpreparedness to respond to testimonies that do not fit within its emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation.

In contrast to the picture of apartheid history in the official narrative produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Magona does not carry the same burden of responsibility to represent and reconcile multiple perspectives and

¹²⁸ Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele, p. 43.

¹²⁹ Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele, p. 176.

¹³⁰ Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele, p. 43. The researchers identify linguistic and cultural misunderstandings in the TRC's interpretation of Konile's testimony, and undertake extensive research into the geographical, social and cultural contexts of the experiences she describes in order to reinterpret the meaning of her testimony.

¹³¹ Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele, p. 56.

¹³² Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele, p. 176. Quotation from Kimberly Theidon, 'Gender in Transition: Common Sense, Women, and War', *Journal of Human Rights*, 6 (2000), pp. 453-78.

interpretations of apartheid history. As intergenerational autobiographies, *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* provide a more overtly subjective view of South African history. Magona foregrounds her own perspective, together with the voices and experiences of people whose lives interconnect with hers, producing a picture of the apartheid era which is founded on the truth claims of direct personal experience. Although, like the TRC, Magona incorporates many people's stories from the apartheid era into her narratives, she approaches them from a communal intergenerational perspective, framing them within the story of her own life to highlight the parallel experiences they endure. Magona's political aims play an important role in determining the shape of her narratives, and she emphasises that the personal stories she relates can be read as representative of black peoples' lives under apartheid. Speaking in an interview about her motivation for writing literature, Magona observes, 'my writing really comes from a sense of responsibility that our stories may not be told if people like me are timid'.¹³³ She expands this concept of responsibility, explaining that

more and more I feel I need to write for publication, I need to voice our fears, our strengths, our weaknesses, [...] our happiness and our sadness, so that we begin to see ourselves also in the stories we read.¹³⁴

Thus Magona articulates her aim to write her autobiographies not simply as a record of the experiences of her own life, but also to give voice to the stories of many other black South Africans, producing a different form of collective narrative from that created in the TRC report. The accessibility of *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* as literary narratives enables Magona's texts to engage with cultural understandings of the apartheid era in different ways from the narratives produced by the TRC, disseminating black perspectives on her nation's past to black and white readers within and beyond South Africa.

¹³³ Gill and Irving, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Gill and Irving, p. 9.

1.4 Definitions of Violence and Trauma in Apartheid Narratives

Section 1.3 has examined some of the limitations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its approach to gathering testimonies and producing a picture of the apartheid past, and highlighted how attention to Magona's intergenerational autobiographies *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this era. However, perhaps the most important constraint imposed on the work of the TRC is the focus of its mandate on a narrow range of experiences defined as gross violations of human rights, contrasting to Magona's explorations of daily life and the contexts in which incidents of extreme violence take place. The implications of this emphasis in the Commission's work, and its lack of attention to everyday systemic oppression and racial discrimination, produce a limited view of the effects of apartheid. This section examines the implications of this imbalance in detail, and explores how Magona uses the literary form of intergenerational autobiography to situate gross violations of human rights in political and social context.

1.4.1 'Spectacular' versus systemic violence

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's focus on instances of extreme violence is determined by its political mandate, which defines gross human rights violations as 'the killing, abduction, torture or severe ill treatment of any person'.¹³⁵ The TRC report explains that

the Commission resolved that its mandate was to give attention to human rights violations committed as specific acts [...] in the course of past political conflict. As such, the focus of its work was not on the effects of laws or other organisations, however morally offensive these may have been.¹³⁶

In analysing its findings the report acknowledges that the narrow focus on these events in isolation restricts the record of the past that it compiles, noting that the definition of gross human rights violations 'limited the attention of the Commission to events which emanated from the conflicts of the past, rather

¹³⁵ Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1 (1) (ix), in *TRC Report*, I, p. 60.

¹³⁶ *TRC Report*, I, p. 64.

than from the policies of apartheid.¹³⁷ By bringing to light human rights violations committed under apartheid (both by white law enforcers and black resistance activists), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission does important work in writing these acts into the official public record of South African history. However, by focussing attention on these 'spectacular' manifestations of the conflicts of apartheid society, the TRC severely restricts the types of stories told in the testimonies it gathers, and as a result a great deal of information is omitted about the context in which gross violations of human rights took place.

In its report the TRC acknowledges the wide range of human rights violations that its mandate ignores, listing everyday experiences of apartheid that had severe impacts on people's lives. These include

violations which were caused [...] by the denial of freedom of movement through the pass laws, by forced removals of people from their land, by the denial of the franchise to citizens, by the treatment of farm workers and other labour disputes, and by discrimination in such areas as education and work opportunities.¹³⁸

The introduction to the report provides statistics that illustrate the gap between the 21,300 people who made statements to the TRC about human rights violations, and the vast section of the population whose experiences in the apartheid era were not addressed by the Commission's remit.¹³⁹ It states that 'for at least 3.5 million black South Africans [apartheid] meant collective expulsion, forced migration, bulldozing, gutting or seizure of homes, the mandatory carrying of passes, forced removals into rural ghettos and increased poverty and desperation.'¹⁴⁰ Although here the Commission does to some extent acknowledge the far reaching effects of apartheid on the entire black population, the fact remains that this vast group is not represented by the individual testimonies of direct experience that the TRC gathered.

In its discussion of the limitations imposed by its mandate's emphasis on gross violations of human rights, the TRC report acknowledges that its 'relative

¹³⁷ *TRC Report*, V, p. 11.

¹³⁸ *TRC Report*, V, p. 11.

¹³⁹ *TRC Report*, I, p. 34.

¹⁴⁰ *TRC Report*, I, p. 34.

neglect of the effects of the “ordinary” workings of apartheid has a gender bias, as well as a racial one.¹⁴¹ It states that

A large number of statistics can be produced to substantiate the fact that women were subject to more restrictions and suffered more in economic terms than did men during the apartheid years. The most direct measure of disadvantage is poverty, and there is a clear link between the distribution of poverty and apartheid policies. Black women, in particular, are disadvantaged.¹⁴²

Although the TRC did acknowledge and attempt to respond to the issue of gender imbalance by establishing the special hearing for women, many critics argue that the framework in which it invited people to tell their stories still failed to accurately represent the full range of women’s experiences of apartheid.¹⁴³ Sanders identifies forms of ‘ordinary violence’ that are experienced most severely by black women, including ‘forced removals, dispossession of land, the mandatory carrying of passes, [and] the effects of the migrant labor system on black family life’.¹⁴⁴ As explored in section 1.2, Magona’s autobiographies demonstrate the sustained attack on black families at every level by the apartheid government. The generic form of intergenerational autobiography enables Magona to present a picture of daily life over an extended duration that encompasses both her own experiences and those of earlier generations. The first person narrative voice addresses readers directly, recounting the emotional and psychological, as well as material suffering that Magona and those around her endure. In this respect *To My Children’s Children* and *Forced to Grow* can offer a more comprehensive view than the TRC of the systemic or ‘ordinary’ violence of apartheid, highlighting how these mechanisms circumscribe the lives of black individuals, families and communities.

Turning to the portrayal of the everyday lives of black people living under apartheid in Magona’s autobiographies reveals a deeper understanding than the TRC offers of the context in which gross violations of human rights take place, and the impact of such extreme violence on black communities. To demonstrate this point, it is useful to compare Magona’s narratives with an

¹⁴¹ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 288.

¹⁴² *TRC Report*, IV, p. 288.

¹⁴³ In addition to critiques discussed here, see also Dorothy Driver, ‘Truth, Reconciliation, Gender: the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Black Women’s Intellectual History’, *Australian Feminist Studies*, 20:47 (2005), 219-29; and Ilze Olckers, ‘Gender-Neutral Truth: A reality Shamefully Distorted’, *Agenda*, 31 (1996), 61-67.

¹⁴⁴ Sanders, p. 77.

example of the testimonies gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In summarising the Commission's findings, the TRC report refers to the testimony of a white Afrikaans woman, Susan van der Merwe, whose husband disappeared in 1978. It explains that 'it was established much later that he had been murdered by a group of MK soldiers', but at the time of his disappearance his body could not be found.¹⁴⁵ In her testimony van der Merwe describes both the psychological and material problems she faced in the wake of her husband's disappearance. She recounts that "the fact that there was no body even to bury led to the fact that there was no official evidence of his death", which in turn meant that she was unable "to conduct financial transactions such as buying a house."¹⁴⁶ These restrictions are enforced, she explains, because "the Transvaal Education Department, which I was working for, and the financial institutions did not regard me as a breadwinner as such."¹⁴⁷ As a white South African van der Merwe clearly experiences the restrictions of apartheid society in very different ways from Magona, who could not imagine having the means to purchase her home. However, the parallels between the legal restrictions described here, and the difficulty Magona faces in gaining a permanent teaching position because she is not considered a 'breadwinner' following her husband's disappearance, deserve attention. As explained in section 1.2, Luthando is forced to leave his family because he falls foul of influx control legislation, an everyday reality for many black South Africans in the apartheid era. The comparable experiences of Magona and van der Merwe demonstrate that extreme instances of violence exemplified by her white husband's murder, and the systemic oppression that precipitates Luthando's desertion, have similarly debilitating effects on the lives of the two women.

In *Forced to Grow* Magona articulates her sense of the importance of everyday stories like her own, describing herself as 'confounded' by what she terms the 'stratification of human suffering among the country's Africans' (p. 134). Magona focuses on Nelson Mandela's imprisonment to demonstrate this issue, describing his case as one of 'extreme suffering', but observing that 'I would

¹⁴⁵ TRC Report, V, p. 153. 'MK' is the abbreviated name of Umkhonto weSizwe, the military wing of African National Congress.

¹⁴⁶ TRC Report, V, p. 153.

¹⁴⁷ TRC Report, V, p. 153.

never say that he began suffering only after he was locked up in jail' (p. 134). She situates Mandela's exceptional experiences within the context of the everyday impact of apartheid, observing that 'I fail to see why he would have risked so much had he been happy. It is his suffering and the suffering of his people that led him to take the steps he took' (p. 134). In this passage Magona gives recognition both to the extremity of the atrocities suffered by individuals like Mandela, and to the wider context of institutionalised discrimination that not only engendered acutely traumatic events like his imprisonment, but also affected the ordinary lives of all black South Africans. This example demonstrates how Magona's focus on everyday life in her intergenerational autobiographies creates a more comprehensive view of apartheid history than that presented by the TRC.

In her analysis of the 'stratification of suffering' Magona foreshadows some of the key critiques that have been made of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's focus on gross human rights violations. A vast volume of critical scholarship has been published on the TRC, much of which focuses on the restricted view of the apartheid past that it presents. Mahmood Mamdani's seminal work on this topic describes the narrative produced by the TRC as 'a diminished truth that wrote the vast majority of apartheid's victims out of its version of history.'¹⁴⁸ Ross explores this issue in her examination of the relationship between gender and the TRC, arguing that

Considering apartheid in terms of the excess phrased as violation of certain rights – as injury – has the effect of flattening and homogenising the complex social terrain of the everyday. The focus on apartheid's spectacular dimensions undervalues, even disguises, the ordinary difficulties it caused, and the limitations it imposed on the possibilities of the everyday.¹⁴⁹

In emphasising the importance of recording everyday experiences of apartheid, Ross draws on the work of South African literary scholar Njabulo Ndebele. In his 1994 essay on 'The Rediscovery of the Ordinary', Ndebele charts the history of black South African fiction from the end of the 1950s, recording the emergence of protest literature at this time 'follow[ing] the disillusionment that

¹⁴⁸ Mahmood Mamdani, 'A Diminished Truth', in *After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, ed. by Wilmot James and Linda van de Vijver (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), pp. 58-61 (p. 61).

¹⁴⁹ Ross, p. 163.

came in the wake of the bannings of the major political organisations'.¹⁵⁰ Ndebele labels this body of politicised writing as a 'literature of the spectacular', describing it as 'the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness'.¹⁵¹ According to his definition, 'the spectacular documents; it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative, preferring exteriority to interiority; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds, obliterating the details'.¹⁵² Many of these characteristics that Ndebele attributes to spectacular protest literature might also be used to describe the narrative of South African history that is created as a result of the TRC's focus on gross violations of human rights.

In contrast to his definition of the literature of the spectacular, Ndebele observes a new literary trend during the 1990s in South Africa, which returns to a focus on the ordinary and everyday. He writes that 'the ordinary is sobering rationality; it is the forcing of attention on necessary detail. Paying attention to the ordinary and its methods will result in a significant growth of consciousness'.¹⁵³ Ndebele's argument highlights the potential of this literature of everyday life to challenge the status quo and ultimately provoke change. Ross applies Ndebele's idea of the return to the ordinary in her critique of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, asserting that a 'focus on the ordinary engages with the complexities of people's efforts to constitute themselves and their relationships in the contexts of apartheid'.¹⁵⁴ Attention to the ordinary, she argues, 'provides an impetus to social regeneration through recognition of apartheid's infliction of ugliness on people's lives and of their efforts to manage the distorted possibilities it permitted'.¹⁵⁵ This statement highlights that discussing the everyday mechanisms of apartheid as well as instances of extreme violence is not only vital to the production of a more complete narrative of the apartheid past, but also carries greater political weight. Recording the widespread effects of structural oppression highlights the extent of harm caused

¹⁵⁰ Njabulo Ndebele, *South African Literature and Culture: Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 44. Black consciousness organisations and political parties including the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress were officially outlawed by the Unlawful Organisations Act in 1960 (*TRC Report*, I, p. 458).

¹⁵¹ Ndebele, p. 49.

¹⁵² Ndebele, p. 49.

¹⁵³ Ndebele, p. 53.

¹⁵⁴ Ross, p. 140. Ross cites Ndebele, p. 57.

¹⁵⁵ Ross, p. 140. Ross cites Ndebele, p. 57.

to whole communities, rather than focusing on instances of individual suffering in isolation.

Although Ndebele does not mention Magona's work explicitly, his analysis of South African literary representations of daily life under apartheid might easily be applied to *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*. The contrast between Magona's autobiographies and the historical record produced by the TRC in this respect is exemplified by each narrative's portrayal of the treatment of young black people who were involved in protest and resistance against apartheid. In its report of the Special Hearing for Children and Youth, the Commission presents the testimony of Potwala Saboshego as a 'window case' that exemplifies the torture that young political activists were subjected to by the security forces. Saboshego describes how, in 1986 when he was seventeen years old, he was picked up by the police as he returned from school. He recounts his treatment in detention, relating how "on my arrival, they kicked me and assaulted me and they kicked me on my private parts. For the whole day, I was being kicked. Late at six o'clock, they injured my right eye."¹⁵⁶ The report records the long-term effects of this mistreatment, which 'resulted in the loss of sight in his right eye', meaning that Saboshego's 'life has been fundamentally altered; he has not been able to secure employment or continue with his studies.'¹⁵⁷ However, although the TRC presents Saboshego's story in great detail, its focus is solely on his individual experience. No information is given about how his injuries and the loss of dignity he describes affect his family, or of the impact that the threat of such torture has on other members of his community.

In contrast to the TRC report's narrative of Saboshego's torture, in *Forced to Grow* Magona depicts the communal impacts of such violence in her representation of the conflicts surrounding the protests and rioting in Guguletu following the Soweto student uprising. She writes that during this period in 1976, 'tales of horror stunned and numbed us', and gives examples of brutal violence enacted on members of her community (p. 155). One such story describes how a family lost their two sons, who were chased by the police into

¹⁵⁶ TRC Report, IV, p. 263.

¹⁵⁷ TRC Report, IV, p. 273.

their home, and 'ran straight through the house: in by the front door, out by the back and into the toilet where they closed the door' (p. 155). Significantly, Magona's portrayal of this event draws on her subject position as a parent, as she identifies with the perspective of the boys' father, who 'watched his two sons hauled out and shot at point-blank range' (p. 156). In narrating this event, which she witnesses as a member of the community, Magona highlights not only the extremity of the violence perpetrated by the police, but also illustrates how the threat of such harm impacts on the ordinary lives of Guguletu's residents. She writes that 'home that day failed to be a haven', and describes how the atmosphere of unrest affects her own family because her trust in those around her is destroyed (p. 155). Magona states: 'suddenly I did not know what I knew or who I knew. With the exception of my mother, my own sisters and brothers, and my own children, I did not know anyone at this time' (p. 160). This passage illustrates Magona's use of autobiographical narrative both to relate incidents of extreme violence, and to record the impact that oppression by the apartheid government and security forces has on the ordinary lives of people living in the black township. She uses the first person narrative voice to give an experiential account of witnessing this violence, and to contextualise it by describing her emotional and psychological response to such events. Writing from her subject position as a mother and member of the township community allows Magona to demonstrate how acts of extreme violence directed at individuals contribute to the fundamentally traumatic conditions of her own and her family's everyday lives.

1.4.2 Definitions of trauma

The limitations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's focus on gross violations of human rights in isolation are closely linked to its treatment of trauma. The TRC's approach parallels conventional models developed by Western trauma theorists in the 1990s which, as Stef Craps explains, defined trauma in terms of 'sudden, unexpected catastrophic events that happen to people in socially dominant positions'.¹⁵⁸ Craps points out the correlation

¹⁵⁸ Craps, p. 54.

between critiques of the TRC and recent re-evaluations of Western definitions of trauma, observing that

Many of the objections raised to the uncritical export of Euro-American models of trauma and recovery bear a close resemblance to criticisms which have been levelled at the TRC. It, too, has been accused of downplaying, individualizing, pathologizing, and depoliticizing the lived experience of subjection.¹⁵⁹

As discussed, Magona emphasises the need to address the traumatic daily experiences of black South Africans living under apartheid in *To My Children's Children and Forced to Grow*. Her intergenerational narratives explore how her community is traumatised by systemic violence and oppression, as well as demonstrating the communal impact of instances of extreme violence that affect families and communities both at the time of the event, and through the legacy of trauma passed to the generations that follow.

Laura Brown's well-known feminist critique of the American Psychiatric Association's definition of trauma offers a useful articulation of the problems with conventional models that privilege Western male experience. Brown argues that by defining trauma as "an event that is outside the range of human experience",¹⁶⁰ the APA universalises 'human experience' to describe what 'often means "male human experience"'.¹⁶¹ She uses the examples of US women's experiences of sexual abuse, marital rape, and domestic violence to highlight that for people who fall outside of this category such traumas are often 'not unusual, statistically; they are well within the "range of human experience"'.¹⁶² Consequently, Brown proposes that a new understanding must be developed that 'factor[s] in the effects of long-standing insidious trauma' in order to address the experiences of members of 'nondominant' groups excluded by the definition of trauma as a single event.¹⁶³ The concept of insidious trauma

¹⁵⁹ Craps, p. 56. Craps lists key theoretical texts in the Western trauma theory canon that manifest these shortcomings, including: Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); and Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

¹⁶⁰ Brown, p. 100. Brown cites American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, 3rd edn, (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1987), p. 250.

¹⁶¹ Brown, p. 101.

¹⁶² Brown, p. 101.

¹⁶³ Brown, p. 110.

demonstrates how people are traumatised by long-term or repeated experiences that cause psychological harm, such as living with the daily effects of racial oppression, or the fear of violence.

Magona's portrayal of everyday life in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* illustrates the effects of insidious trauma caused by apartheid in the lives of black South Africans. The intergenerational form of her narratives also demonstrates how insidious trauma is experienced collectively by families and communities, and can be passed between generations. Brown addresses the issue of collective trauma, describing how insidious trauma can affect 'the woman whose symptoms of psychic trauma have occurred entirely at secondhand'.¹⁶⁴ She argues that while

mainstream trauma theory has begun to recognize that post-traumatic symptoms can be intergenerational [...] we have yet to admit that it can be spread laterally throughout an oppressed social group as well, when membership in that group means a constant lifetime risk of exposure to certain trauma.¹⁶⁵

These observations shed light on the lives of people who endure the social and cultural harms that result from oppression and racial discrimination in divided societies such as apartheid South Africa. The intergenerational transmission of trauma that Brown touches on here intersects with the phenomenon of collective trauma in Magona's black South African community, as demonstrated in *To My Children's Children* by the way that Magona first becomes aware of racial discrimination through observing her parents' experiences, discussed in section 1.1. Hale's record of her Native American family's lives in *Bloodlines* examines multiple facets of inherited trauma, which Chapter Three will discuss. Magona's, Morgan's and Hale's uses of intergenerational autobiography all demonstrate the need for different understandings of trauma that acknowledge the effects of insidious, collective and intergenerational trauma in their specific postcolonial contexts. The importance of acknowledging the different ways that trauma is experienced and transmitted emphasises the omissions from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work on testimonies about the apartheid past, and highlights the additional insights that Magona provides through her

¹⁶⁴ Brown, p. 107.

¹⁶⁵ Brown, pp. 107-8.

attention to everyday experience and the long-term legacy of this history in her intergenerational autobiographies.

1.4.3 Determining who is a 'victim'

In *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* Magona uses intergenerational autobiography to portray the extent of the impact of violence and oppression not just for the individuals at which it is directed, but on children and other family members, and on the community surrounding them. The long-term effects of the violence following the 1976 student protests in Soweto on Magona's and her children's lives exemplifies this. She describes the climate of fear that pervaded Guguletu, fuelled not only by police violence, but also by power struggles and corruption amongst the campaigning students. Magona explains that 'you went along or you shut your mouth and prayed your eyes did not give you away. You did not disagree openly. Fools who did were labelled informers' (*Forced*, p. 161). These circumstances affect Magona particularly in her role as sole caregiver and protector of her children. She writes that 'the call was out for young people – boys and girls – to be abroad at late hours of the night' in order to support the protests (p. 162). Magona refuses to allow her son and daughters out of the house at night, and faces the threat that 'I would die parenting my children' if she is targeted as an 'informer' who does not support the cause (p. 163). This experience demonstrates that although she and her children do not experience the violence in their community directly, the state of constant fear and the threats to their psychological wellbeing and physical safety have a profoundly traumatic effect on them. Under the TRC's mandate, stories like Magona's of the 'ordinary' daily experience of life in the black township Guguletu go untold. Whilst Magona's narrative highlights the traumatic impact of heightened violence in her community, the TRC would view her and her children as indirect or secondary victims, people whose personal testimonies are excluded from the picture of the apartheid past it produces. The portrayal of everyday life in *Forced to Grow* highlights the need to reinterpret what kinds of experience constitute trauma, in order to address the effects of witnessing daily violence and living with the constant threat of becoming a victim.

As discussed at the beginning of this section, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work focuses on the traumatic experience of individuals, and on specific instances of 'spectacular' violence. Drawing this distinction necessitates differentiating between direct victims who personally experience gross violations of human rights, and the people associated with the victim who are 'indirectly' affected. The TRC report observes that the commissioners 'acknowledged the difficulty of distinguishing between, or weighting, the physical and psychological pain suffered by the direct victim and the psychological pain of those to whom this person was precious'.¹⁶⁶ The report emphasises the TRC's recognition of the fact that 'human rights violations can also trigger a cascade of psychological, physical and interpersonal problems for victim that, in their turn, influence the functioning of the surrounding social system.'¹⁶⁷ However, although it acknowledges these factors, the Commission does not invite testimonies from those who are affected by extreme violence against other people in their lives, and as a result a distinction is maintained between the trauma of direct victims and of those who are affected indirectly by human rights violations.

The establishment of the TRC's special hearing for women can be seen as an attempt to address the issue of determining who is defined as a victim. The TRC report states that it was discovered 'early in the life of the Commission that the majority of women who came forward to testify did so on behalf of others and seldom on their own account'.¹⁶⁸ Women more frequently testified before the TRC 'as relatives and dependants of those (mainly males) who had directly suffered human rights violations'.¹⁶⁹ The special hearing for women was established in an attempt to address this gender imbalance by encouraging women to speak about their direct personal experiences of the effects of apartheid. However, a hierarchical distinction between the severity of the suffering of direct and 'secondary' victims is retained, demonstrated by the fact that the special hearing maintained the focus on women's direct experiences of

¹⁶⁶ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 283. See also the summary of the TRC's findings in *TRC Report*, V, p. 125.

¹⁶⁷ *TRC Report*, V, pp. 125-26.

¹⁶⁸ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 283.

gross violations of human rights.¹⁷⁰ Maintaining this arbitrary distinction functions as yet another limitation that circumscribes the testimonies collected by the TRC and the picture of apartheid history that it presents.

The TRC's distinction between direct and 'secondary' victims of gross human rights violations also has significant gender implications in terms of its treatment of public and private spheres in South African society. The TRC report suggests that women failed to give testimony about personal experiences of gross violations of human rights because 'men are more commonly "active" in roles in the public sphere, while women predominate in roles in the private sphere'.¹⁷¹ Consequently, it states, 'women were often constructed – and constructed themselves – as wives, mothers, sisters and daughters of the active (mainly male) players on the public political stage.'¹⁷² The report does, however, go on to point out that in many cases, 'in South Africa, as elsewhere, women's "private" roles have often been a strong motivating factor in their political engagement.'¹⁷³ It gives the example of the female activist 'Thandi Modise of MK [who] has stated emphatically that she was a guerrilla "because I am a mother"'.¹⁷⁴ Modise's statement echoes Magona's portrayal of her involvement with political campaigning, which she depicts as motivated by her sense of maternal responsibility both for her own children and for future generations. In *Forced to Grow* Magona records her involvement with the National Congress of African Women in the 1960s, through which she comes to recognise that 'I could assume social responsibility', and 'I had the right and, indeed, the obligation to intervene in situations of distress' (p. 81). Magona continues to campaign for social change into the next decade, and she becomes a founding member of the Cape Town 'Women's Movement', committed to 'working for peaceful change' following the 1976 riots (p. 167). Her maternal role is a primary motivation for Magona's involvement in this political activism, and she attributes her passion for the cause to the fact that 'I wanted my children and their children after them to have a home in this country,

¹⁷⁰ See Lyn Graybill's analysis of reasons why women did not come forward to testify in Graybill, p. 4; and discussion of the definition of women as 'secondary sufferers' in Ingrid Owens and others, 'Stories of Silence: Women, Truth and Reconciliation', *Agenda*, 30 (1996), pp. 66-72 (p. 69).

¹⁷¹ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 287.

¹⁷² *TRC Report*, IV, p. 287.

¹⁷³ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 291.

¹⁷⁴ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 291.

a happy home, safe and nurturing' (p. 166). Magona explains that the organisation brings together women from both sides of apartheid's racial and social divide, all of whom are motivated by similar concerns for their families (p. 165). The interrelation of women's roles in the private domestic sphere of the family and their political involvement in movements for social change illustrates that, as Cherryl Walker observes, 'motherhood as a social identity [...] provided particular sections of women with a strong enough sense of self-worth from which to challenge various forms of oppression and, in the process, develop new strengths and capacities.'¹⁷⁵ The record of Magona's everyday life in *Forced to Grow* thus highlights the interrelation of her maternal role in the private sphere with her public engagement in political activism, problematising the arbitrary divisions that the TRC draws both between direct and secondary victims of violations, and between women's private and public roles in the anti-apartheid movement.

1.4.4 Silences and gaps

Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's reliance on individuals giving testimony about their personal experiences in order to fulfil its political aims is clear, this strategy for gathering information about the past is fraught with potential pitfalls. As Chapter Two will explore in detail, the act of giving testimony about traumatic experiences is never a straightforward one, and for a diverse range of reasons victims may be either unwilling or unable to tell their stories. Dori Laub's influential work on trauma testimony highlights the challenges of giving testimony, explaining that it involves confronting the trauma fully for the first time, an experience that carries the risk of the survivor becoming re-traumatised.¹⁷⁶ The necessity of facing their traumatic experience in this way may well mean that many victims wish to avoid giving testimony and choose not to engage with the Commission's work. In her analysis of the TRC Ross examines the problematic assumptions that underpin the Commission's

¹⁷⁵ Walker, p. 436. See also Ross's analysis of uses of the idiom of motherhood to campaign for political change (Ross, p. 148).

¹⁷⁶ Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 57-74 (p. 57). See detailed discussion of Laub's model of witnessing testimony in section 2.3.

engagement with individual testimonies. She states that in the context of the TRC

the narration of experience was assumed to be a simple act, a release of 'stories' of pain that already existed intact within those who had experienced violations. All that was apparently required was a forum through which these could be released and channelled.¹⁷⁷

Ross' observation points to some of the challenges associated with giving trauma testimony that the TRC failed to address. Ultimately the political need to collect personal testimonies and construct an archive of stories as part of the official narrative of apartheid history overshadows the nuances of individual testimonies and the difficulties faced by individuals when asked to tell their stories.

A key aim of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's special hearing for women discussed above was to encourage women to break their silences and voice their own experiences of gross human rights violations. However, as the chapter on the special hearing in the TRC report indicates, it was not always possible for women to give testimony about traumatic experiences they had endured. The report suggests a number of reasons why women felt unable to tell their own stories at the public hearings, noting that 'several of the women who spoke at the special hearings began their testimony by stating their reluctance to come forward. Some said that they felt their sufferings were less severe than those of many other people.'¹⁷⁸ The report goes on to suggest that 'others may have kept silent because they felt there were not ready listeners.'¹⁷⁹ Women's silences may often have resulted from the Commission's focus on gross violations of human rights, which left no space to talk about everyday and insidious experiences of trauma. The distinction drawn between direct and 'secondary' victims of violations may also have left women feeling that their stories were not relevant to the TRC's work.

In her work interviewing women activists on their experiences of apartheid, Ross introduces other motivations for some women's refusals to give testimony at the TRC hearings. She describes the women she interviews as 'reluctant to identify the self as a site of violation', and identifies some of the 'diverse sets of

¹⁷⁷ Ross, p. 79.

¹⁷⁸ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 293.

¹⁷⁹ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 293.

reasons' for this, including the fact that some women 'neither desired acknowledgement nor felt a need for reparation', while others 'wished to testify but their experiences did not really fit the Commission's definitions of gross violations of human rights.'¹⁸⁰ Ross goes on to describe the 'different origins of silence – sometimes the result of processes that discount particular kinds of experience or constrain the social spaces within which to speak, sometimes a consequence of reticence, and sometimes the result of determined efforts not to speak'.¹⁸¹ The proliferation of reasons why women did not give testimony to the TRC relates both to the restrictions of its framework and to the challenges associated with giving trauma testimony in more general terms.

It is important to note here that many of the reasons for women's silence discussed above might also apply to men who experienced gross human rights violations, but did not give testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Although less scholarly attention has been paid to the intersection of gender and race in men's experiences of apartheid than women's, the TRC report does touch on this issue. Comparing the testimonies of male and female victims, the report states that 'women, more than men, were prepared to talk about psychological aspects of their experience. Women were also more likely than men to talk about the psychosomatic and psychological problems experienced afterwards.'¹⁸² Discussing potential reasons for this omission, the TRC report suggests that possibly 'women were more affected than men psychologically', or alternately that 'men had more need, because of socialisation, to see the abuse as a test of their strength'.¹⁸³ While the TRC's special hearing for women makes some attempt (albeit in very general terms) to contextualise women's experiences of gross violations of human rights alongside the everyday deprivations they endured under apartheid, even less attention is paid to the impact of sustained and systemic oppression on men.

Once again, reading Magona's intersubjective narrative in *Forced to Grow* can help to address this omission in the TRC's work, particularly through attention to her portrayal of her estranged husband's life. Although Luthando's voice is

¹⁸⁰ Ross, pp. 157-58.

¹⁸¹ Ross, p. 163.

¹⁸² *TRC Report*, IV, p. 303.

¹⁸³ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 304.

noticeably absent from the narrative, Magona's discussion of the restrictions on his freedom of movement, personal development and employment opportunities sheds light on the day to day experiences of black men under apartheid.¹⁸⁴

Within the context of the TRC, the report suggests, it is possible to interpret men's silence about psychological aspects of their experiences 'by listening to women' in order to 'learn something about men's unacknowledged suffering.'¹⁸⁵

These speculations indicate problematic assumptions about gender difference, but nonetheless the proposal to use alternative strategies for reading men's silences has the potential to open up the TRC's work to exploring the implications of other forms of silence as well.

One particularly widespread reason for women's silences reported by the TRC surrounds experiences of sexual violence, both at the hands of white security personnel and within black resistance groups. The report acknowledges the particular challenges faced by victims of this type of human rights violation, and recounts the refusal of Thenjiwe Mtintso, chairperson of the TRC's Commission of Gender Equality, to give an account of her own experience of sexual abuse.

The report records that

In opening one of the special hearings, Ms Thenjiwe Mtintso spoke about the difficulties of describing one's suffering in a public arena. Ms Mtintso had previously spoken openly in a face-to-face interview as part of the CALS research. She was not, however, prepared to speak about her personal experiences in the open hearings.¹⁸⁶

Sanders analyses Mtintso's opening address in his discussion of the women's hearings, drawing on Antjie Krog's more detailed reporting of it in her memoir about the TRC, *Country of My Skull*. Sanders points out that

Mtintso's is, of course, not a perfect silence. By specifying that it is of 'her experience in South African Jails and ANC camps abroad' that she will not speak, she guides the commission toward a 'body of

¹⁸⁴ Magona's novel *Mother to Mother* affords additional insights into the experiences of black South African men. In this fictionalised account of the killing of white student Amy Biehl, the killer's mother describes the circumstances of her son's life, in an attempt to understand and explain what led him to commit this violent act. Craps argues that in this respect *Mother to Mother* 'can be seen to supplement the work of the TRC by critically revisiting its limits, exclusions, and elisions – and thus also to suggest a possible way for "traditional" trauma theory to reinvent and renew itself.' Craps, p. 51.

¹⁸⁵ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 304.

¹⁸⁶ *TRC Report*, IV, p. 293. See B Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, *Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg: Centre for Applied Legal Studies, University of Witwatersrand, 1996).

experience,' which is not only her own, that remains beset by silence.¹⁸⁷

In drawing attention to these details, Sanders demonstrates that 'when a witness speaks only to say that she is not ready to speak, her silence provokes interpretation.'¹⁸⁸ Ross also considers the need to interpret such silences, suggesting that 'careful probing [of] the cadences of silences, the gaps between fragile words' is necessary 'in order to hear what it is that women say.'¹⁸⁹ Thus both Sanders and Ross highlight that 'reading' and interpreting the silences of witnesses can be a productive strategy to attain a deeper understanding of the past.

Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission relies on victims of human rights violations to give testimony about their experiences in order to fulfil its political aims, it does go some way towards acknowledging that silences can also be meaningful. However, there is clearly more work to be done in terms of interpreting gaps in the testimonies it received, as well as the silences of those who, for a vast range of reasons, did not tell their stories to the TRC. Attention to silences in testimony can also shed light on Magona's portrayal of life under apartheid in her intergenerational autobiographies. Although by its nature the genre of autobiography emphasises disclosure, giving voice to the 'full story' of the autobiographer's life, Magona does gesture towards a particular area of silence in her experiential narrative. It is notable that in neither *To My Children's Children* nor *Forced to Grow* does she describe any personal experience of physical or sexual violence. Consequently, the reader might simply assume that Magona never experienced violations of this nature. This may be seen as one area in which the TRC's historical narrative is more comprehensive than Magona's autobiographies, since there is no first person testimony about this kind of violation in her texts. However, as Hlongwane has noted, *To My Children's Children* actually contains an indication that Magona practices self-silencing in relation to this aspect of her life story. In recording the breakdown of her marriage, Magona describes how her husband has become, in her eyes, 'an adversary and a rapist' (p. 153). Hlongwane points

¹⁸⁷ Sanders, p. 80. Sanders quotes Krog, p. 273.

¹⁸⁸ Sanders, pp. 80-81.

¹⁸⁹ Ross, p. 50.

out that 'this startling revelation of rape is not elaborated on', and this traumatic aspect of Magona's life story remains embedded in silence.¹⁹⁰

Just as there is work to be done reading the silences of witnesses testifying to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Magona's omission of the sexual violence that the narrative hints she endured also requires careful interpretation. Hlongwane proposes an explanation that attributes Magona's silence to her political agenda, suggesting that 'since she is always conscious of the state's hand in disrupting black families, including her own, her silences point to the difficulties that come into play when gendered relationships intersect with national concerns.'¹⁹¹ Of course, this is just one possible interpretation for a silence that could stem from a number of motivations. It is also possible that Magona is psychologically traumatised by this experience, and is unable to go through the process of articulating it in the form of testimony. Alternately, she may choose not to elaborate on this personal violation because she is unwilling to reveal the full extent of her emotional distress in the public forum of her autobiographies. However, perhaps the most persuasive explanation for her silence is suggested by the assertions that immediately follow her passing reference to Luthando as a rapist. Magona moves in the space of a paragraph from the subject of abuse to describing the resources that she draws on in order to provide materially for her family following her husband's desertion. She asserts her psychological strength by describing the 'unshakeable belief in myself and in my capabilities' instilled in her by her parents (*Children*, p. 153). With these words Magona transforms a story about being violated by her husband into one that emphasises the legacy of her parents and her own capacity for survival, writing the experience into her intergenerational narrative by emphasising the importance of familial relationships, and downplaying the significance of her difficult marriage. Throughout both volumes of her autobiography Magona presents herself as a survivor, emphasising her ability to overcome the psychological impact of her traumatic experiences. Her silence about Luthando's sexual violation suggests that Magona omits this part of the story because it does not fit with her emphasis on resilience; put simply, she refuses to position herself as a passive victim.

¹⁹⁰ Hlongwane, p. 47.

¹⁹¹ Hlongwane, p. 47.

This is one example of a gap in the narrative of her life under apartheid that Magona constructs, which also points to a more general silence about the emotional and psychological effects of the abuses she is subject to as a black woman. It seems likely that Magona's emphasis on psychological strength and her capacity to survive means that she omits or downplays the emotional challenges she faces elsewhere in her life story as well. The recognition that, like the testimonies gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Magona's narratives also retain silences about some experiences, highlights the pitfalls of relying on personal testimony and the difficulties that traumatised people face when asked to talk about their experiences. The TRC's political aims are reliant on victims and perpetrators coming forward to tell their stories, and it makes the problematic assumption that it is always possible to give testimony provided that a forum is available to do so. The literary form of Magona's intergenerational autobiographies has greater potential to allow for silences; unlike those who give testimony to the Commission, Magona is not faced with an interlocutor who probes into the gaps in her narrative with a view to uncovering a complete picture of the 'truth' of her experience. The silence in *To My Children's Children* about sexual violence is paralleled by gaps in the story of Morgan's grandmother told in *My Place*. Comparison of Magona's silence and Daisy's, discussed in section 2.2, highlights the spaces that these literary narratives leave for silences, framing them in ways that nonetheless make the reader aware of the omission and invite them to consider its significance. It is clear that careful reading strategies must be employed to interpret both the stories of personal experience that are told and those that are withheld, both in the TRC report and in Magona's intergenerational autobiographies.

Conclusion

As my analysis has demonstrated, the personal experiences from her own life and those of her family and community that Magona recounts in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* make politically and culturally significant contributions to understandings of the lives of black South African women and their families during the apartheid era. The intergenerational framework of her life story enables Magona to connect her personal experiences with others around her, and with the wider social and political context in which she lives. This technique also links the events of Magona's own lifetime with the pre-history of apartheid, and with the future lives of the following generations of her family, which are imaginatively accessible through her engagement with the experiences of earlier and future generations. Exploring the dialogue between Magona's autobiographies, and the official narrative of the apartheid past produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, raises important questions about the role of personal experiential narratives in constructing a collective national history. The constraints placed on the TRC's work by its mandate mean that it pays diminished attention to the historical antecedents of its period of investigation, to circumstances of the 'ordinary' or everyday, to the experiences of 'secondary' victims of gross violations of human rights, and consequently to the voices and perspectives of black women. Magona's innovative use of the literary genre of autobiography enables her to produce a different kind of historical narrative that addresses the experiences of many people from her family and community over an extended time period, giving voice to black South Africans whose perspectives on their country's history were suppressed and silenced during the apartheid era.

Before the official acknowledgement of the events recounted in the TRC testimonies, autobiographical writing like Magona's constituted one of the only mediums available to overcome the suppression of black voices, and record the devastating impact of apartheid on the lives of black South Africans. Magona's narratives nonetheless remain politically and culturally significant after the end of apartheid and the publication of the TRC report. *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* not only offer an arguably more comprehensive insight into

the South African past that the TRC, but also play different roles as cultural responses to the conflicts and oppression of the apartheid era. As literary narratives Magona's intergenerational autobiographies address her South African and international readers in different ways from the TRC's official findings, relating personal experience in ways that encourage the reader to identify and empathise with the challenges Magona faces, and to celebrate her resilience as a survivor of the insidious cultural trauma of racial oppression.

Chapter 2. Trauma Testimony and the Listener in the Stolen

Generations: Sally Morgan's *My Place*

Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between the interlinked first person narratives incorporated in Sally Morgan's 1987 autobiography *My Place*, which depicts Morgan's discovery of, and quest to reconnect with, her family's Aboriginal heritage. As well as narrating her own life story, Morgan functions as a listener to the storytelling of her mother Gladys and grandmother Daisy, as well as her grandmother's brother Arthur. Within the frame of her own life story, Morgan includes three chapters narrated in the first person voices of Arthur, Gladys and Daisy, which she writes from edited transcriptions of interviews she recorded with each of them. By including stories from the lives of other family members Morgan adapts the conventional individualistic form of autobiography, producing an intergenerational narrative that draws on the experiences of earlier generations in similar ways to Magona's *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, discussed in Chapter One. However, *My Place* differs both from Magona's autobiographies and from Hale's *Bloodlines* analysed in Chapter Three, by foregrounding the collaboration between the three generations in the creation of the narrative. The intergenerational narrative form allows Morgan to negotiate her emerging sense of Aboriginal identity in relation to her family's stories, and simultaneously frames the project politically in the context of colonial trauma experienced by Aboriginal people in Australia. In this chapter I analyse the position Morgan adopts as the listener to the testimonies of her mother and grandmother, exploring how existing psychoanalytic models of trauma testimony are complicated by her personal investment in their stories.

Both Daisy and her daughter Gladys grew up as part of what have since been termed the 'Stolen Generations' of Aboriginal children who were removed from the care of their parents by the white authorities. An unknown number of children were separated from their families and communities between the late nineteenth century and the 1970s, both under the mechanisms of official

government policy, and unofficially by white land owners and church officials.¹⁹² The policy of separating children from their families and educating them in a Christian schools system was a central structure in the colonisation of Australia by European settlers. Stolen Generations children were allowed little contact with their parents or Aboriginal communities, and were taught to devalue traditional language and beliefs. Postcolonial scholars Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy describe the removal of Aboriginal children as a 'genocidal policy, aimed at erasing all traces of Aboriginality from Australian culture'.¹⁹³ In boarding schools they were encouraged to adopt Western values that would suit them to becoming part of the cheap labour force to support the agricultural economy established by the European settlers. Daisy and Gladys's experiences of assimilationist policies and the Stolen Generations history leave them ashamed of their Aboriginal heritage and fearful of official intervention at every level of their lives. As a result they attempt to protect themselves by hiding their Aboriginality, not only from the Perth community where they live, but also from Morgan and her siblings as the next generation of their own family. Morgan's discovery of this hidden identity and the traumatic past experiences that surround it are a central focus of *My Place*, and her engagement with the emerging stories of her mother's and grandmother's lives before her birth is analysed in detail in section 2.1.

i. Context of publication

An examination of the changing relations between Aboriginal people and European settlers in Australia from the 1960s onwards is vital to understanding how, in the space of one generation, Morgan is able to move beyond the shame and fear experienced by her mother and grandmother, in order to speak and write openly about the family's Aboriginal heritage. Within the narrative Morgan foregrounds her negotiations with Gladys and Daisy about telling their stories,

¹⁹² According to the report produced by the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, 'it is not possible to state with any precision how many children were forcibly removed, even if that enquiry is confined to those removed officially. Many records have not survived. Others fail to record the children's Aboriginality.' *Bringing Them Home*, p. 36.

¹⁹³ Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy, 'Introduction', in *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, ed. by Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 1-15 (p. 2).

and charts their gradual acceptance of her political project to record their experiences and redress the fact that, as Gladys puts it, “there’s been nothing written about people like us, all the history’s about the white man” (p. 205). The publication of Morgan’s politically nuanced autobiographical project takes place during a transitional period in Australian history, at a time when Aboriginal people began to claim a place in the public consciousness for their experiences of European colonialism. Gillian Whitlock describes the developments in Aboriginal resistance between the 1960s and 1980s, ‘during which’, she states ‘Aboriginal people developed a sense of common interest and group solidarity and, a critical point, a strategic sense of united identity which subsumed tribal and regional identifications.’¹⁹⁴ Scholar of Aboriginal autobiography Anne Brewster charts the development of the term ‘Aboriginality’, which emerged out of this movement during the 1960s ‘to describe Aboriginal people’s united identity.’¹⁹⁵ This, she argues, ‘allows for the construction of an oppositional consciousness, one which talks or writes back to the colonising discourses which have named and defined Aboriginal people.’¹⁹⁶ Building on these foundations, the political role of *My Place* in voicing the silenced stories of Morgan’s Aboriginal family performs an important function in establishing what Whitlock terms a ‘counter-discourse’ to dominant white nationalist views of the Australian past.¹⁹⁷

The growth of Aboriginal activism in Australia from the 1960s onwards coincides in a significant way with Morgan’s own personal development. As a child born in 1951, Morgan came of age during the 1960s and 70s, and is part of the first generation of her family who are not directly affected by the Stolen Generations policies. Since she has no personal experience of white institutionalisation and separation from her family, and grows up during the era of burgeoning Aboriginal resistance, Morgan can draw on ways of thinking about her Aboriginality that are unavailable to her mother’s and grandmother’s generations. Whilst Gladys and Daisy are conditioned to be ashamed of their Aboriginal identities and to fear the intervention of white authorities in their daily

¹⁹⁴ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 155.

¹⁹⁵ Anne Brewster, *Reading Aboriginal Women’s Autobiography* (Sydney: Sydney University Press/Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ Brewster, p. 3.

¹⁹⁷ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 155.

lives, Morgan becomes free to speak out about their history without fear in ways that they find almost impossible. The contrast between Morgan's experiences of Aboriginality and those of her mother and grandmother give rise to significant differences between their approaches to talking about the traumatic past. This underpins a central conflict with her family about Morgan's political and personal aims in writing *My Place*, which is explored in section 2.2.

In addition to the personal circumstances that enable Morgan to write the life stories of herself and her Aboriginal family, the publication of *My Place* in the 1980s coincides with a number of key historical moments. The Australian bicentenary was celebrated in 1988, and as Michelle Grossman explains in her study of Australian indigenous women's writing, it was 'counter-observed publicly by a great many Indigenous Australians as a national event of mourning but also as a national marker of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survival and resistance'.¹⁹⁸ As Whitlock observes, the bicentenary engaged the imaginations of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians alike, who 'were encouraged to focus on their personal, communal, and national histories'.¹⁹⁹ The popularity of *My Place*, which 'sold 75,000 copies in the first year of publication', attests to the alignment of Morgan's themes with popular interest in the history of European settlement in Australia.²⁰⁰ Whitlock describes the impact of the bicentenary as a 'windfall', which helped to create in Australia the kind of 'discursive threshold' identified in the introduction to Chapter One with reference to the publication of Magona's *To My Children's Children*.²⁰¹ Whitlock interprets *My Place*'s publication as part of a 'threshold moment', which she describes as a time when 'contestation within the African and Aboriginal communities erupts around and through autobiographic writing', which 'appears as an agent' in identity politics in the build up to the bicentenary.²⁰² Grossman provides further insight into the cultural climate in which Morgan's text was published, observing that up until the 1980s there was a

relative dearth of Aboriginal accounts of Aboriginal lives as part of the national historical record – an occlusion overlaid significantly by the

¹⁹⁸ Michele Grossman, 'Out of the Salon and into the Streets: Contextualising Australian Indigenous Women's Writing', *Women's Writing*, 5:2 (1998), 169-92 (p. 172).

¹⁹⁹ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 157.

²⁰⁰ Stephen Muecke, *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies*, (Kensington, New South Wales: New South Wales University Press, 1992), p. 126.

²⁰¹ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 146.

²⁰² Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 146.

routine prevalence of anthropological and ethnographic modes of 'knowing' Aboriginal people, sources of authority that some non-Indigenous readers were increasingly coming to suspect told little in the way of truths about Aboriginal experience.²⁰³

These circumstances, Grossman argues, led to the growth in popularity of texts like Morgan's, which began to be accepted by both Aboriginal and mainstream white Australian publishing houses during this decade. Thus Morgan's coming of age as an Aboriginal woman free of the traumatising experiences of her foremothers coincides with a cultural climate that paid new attention to Aboriginal histories. This allows Morgan to develop her intergenerational autobiography as a way of responding to the Australian past, finding a readership for her narrative during the period of intense public interest in Aboriginal stories surrounding the Bicentenary.

In the 1980s Aboriginal authors like Morgan began using personal life stories to record their experiences and perspectives as members of communities who had been largely ignored by mainstream Australian history writing. Aboriginal autobiography emerged as a channel for communicating such stories in the absence of official narratives not only about the history of the forced separation of families, but also about Aboriginal people's place in Australian society as a whole.²⁰⁴ Comparing Aboriginal and South African autobiographies (including Magona's *Forced to Grow*), Whitlock argues that the generic form of autobiography 'offer[s] black women access to authoritative discourses and to a public that, in certain times and in certain places, allows their histories to perform important political work and to engage with social change'.²⁰⁵

Understanding the context of *My Place*'s publication emphasises the importance of autobiographical writing for Morgan, as it offers her not only the means to tell personal stories, but also to contribute to Aboriginal resistance by demonstrating the devastating impact of white intervention in the lives of her family members. At a time when the damage caused by the Stolen Generations policies was not officially acknowledged, intergenerational autobiography offers

²⁰³ Grossman, p. 170.

²⁰⁴ See Grossman's analysis of how *My Place* and Ruby Langford's *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1988) contributed to shifts in the cultural positioning of Aboriginal people (Grossman, pp. 172-73). Note that although *Don't Take Your Love to Town* is published under the name Ruby Langford, the author later began using her honorific tribal name Ginibi, and scholarly works often refer to her as Ruby Langford Ginibi.

²⁰⁵ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 166.

Morgan a means to relate this past from an Aboriginal perspective grounded in personal experience. The fact that her family hide their Aboriginality and she discovers her heritage belatedly as a young adult is also central to the text's political significance. Whitlock argues that Morgan 'uses the resources of autobiographical narrative brilliantly to present the *making* of Aboriginality, specifically of an Aboriginal identity which is available to urban Aboriginal Australians of mixed descent, and grounded in cultural and spiritual identification.'²⁰⁶ Morgan discovers her Aboriginal ancestry through the process of writing her autobiography, and self-consciously records her exploration of the meaning of her own Aboriginality in the narrative.

Morgan's reliance on Gladys and Daisy to explain their experiences in order to understand her Aboriginal identity and her family's history is reflected in the intergenerational form of the narrative. As quoted in Chapter One, the 'series of legislative changes *within living memory* (that is, within the reach of contemporary autobiography)', which Whitlock states 'produced an ongoing process of government interventions on the basis of race', has taken place in both South Africa and Australia.²⁰⁷ Consequently, Morgan uses intergenerational autobiography to engage with the colonial past in a similar way to Magona; by incorporating her mother's and grandmother's life stories into the narrative she accesses their experiences as well as her own, using familial memories to reach back into the colonial past before her own birth. Morgan uses this strategy to demonstrate 'the systemic invasion and destruction of black communities and kinship structures that were licensed by these policies', which Whitlock identifies 'at the heart of social memory in indigenous women's autobiographical writing'.²⁰⁸ As with Magona's use of the genre, intergenerational storytelling enables Morgan to present a long view of history, demonstrating the extent of the time period over which government sanctioned removals of Aboriginal children took place, and highlighting the ongoing legacy of the Stolen Generations through its impact on her own life.

In addition to the contribution they make to retelling the Australian past from an Aboriginal perspective, the intergenerational narratives brought together in

²⁰⁶ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 157.

²⁰⁷ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 155.

²⁰⁸ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 155.

My Place are also central to the text's popularity with a wide readership. Alongside her innovations on the generic form of autobiography, Morgan also draws on the conventions of a number of popular fiction genres to engage with her discovery of her family's hidden Aboriginal life stories. Whitlock identifies aspects of 'the detective story and quest narratives' in *My Place*, observing that 'there is a mystery, a destiny and search for "truth", all of which require resolution' in the text.²⁰⁹ The theme of the hidden past that Morgan as the protagonist must uncover relies not only on relating the experiences of her mother and grandmother, but also on the narrative of how Morgan comes to know their stories, through negotiating their concerns and collaborating with them in the storytelling process. While the use of the motifs of genre fiction might seem frivolous in the context of Morgan's political project, as Whitlock points out, these features of the narrative help to 'ensure [...] that *My Place* appeals to a wide popular readership.'²¹⁰ Morgan's strategic use of Western narrative forms enables her to write an accessible text that has mass appeal, whilst nonetheless challenging the assumptions of white Australians about their national history. Writing her family's story in this literary form thus allows Morgan to draw on various different storytelling techniques, to explore the relationship between her own life and her mother's and grandmother's past experiences.

The accessibility of *My Place* is illustrated by the fact that it is still an Australian bestseller, and, as Whitlock notes, it has become 'a classic text for secondary and tertiary curricula'.²¹¹ Multiple editions have been published since the first 1987 paperback, including an illustrated version in 1989, and the three volume abridged *My Place for Young Readers* series issued in 1990.²¹² Morgan's text has been adopted as a teaching aid at all levels of the Australian education system, used to give students an insight into the colonial relationship between white settlers and Aboriginal people in Australia's past. As an intergenerational

²⁰⁹ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 157.

²¹⁰ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 157.

²¹¹ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 158.

²¹² Sally Morgan, *Illustrated My Place* (Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1989); Sally Morgan, *Sally's Story: My Place for Young Readers Part 1*, (Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1990); Sally Morgan, *Arthur Corunna's Story: My Place for Young Readers Part 2*, (Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1990); and Sally Morgan, *Mother and Daughter: The Story of Daisy and Gladys Corunna: My Place for Young Readers Part 3*, (Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1990).

autobiography, *My Place* encourages readers to identify with Morgan and her family members, presenting a detailed and intimate picture of their personal lives that arguably promotes empathy to a greater extent than other forms of historical narrative. Although, as I will explain in detail below, the text has key similarities with testimony gathering projects such as the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, by framing her mother's and grandmother's testimonies within the story of her own life Morgan's text offers readers different ways of accessing the past. In contrast to more conventional historical narratives and from the official report produced by the National Inquiry, *My Place* as a literary text has the potential to reach a wider audience of both Aboriginal and white Australians.

ii. *Stolen Generations trauma testimony*

The role of listener that Morgan assumes in relation to her mother's and grandmother's life stories is vital to her own newly discovered Aboriginality, and her personal investment in the storytelling process has significant implications for the collaborative narrative she produces. As Kennedy suggests, *My Place* 'can be most fruitfully read as the autobiography of witness. That is, it can be read as an account of how [Morgan] at first unconsciously and later consciously becomes a witness to the oppression of her kin.'²¹³ Sections 2.3 and 2.4 focus on the complexity of the relationship between Gladys's and Daisy's stories as trauma testimonies and Morgan as their listener, while 2.5 explores the challenges of giving testimony in the political context of the Stolen Generations as a contested period in Aboriginal history. My analysis of Morgan's engagement with the discourse of the Stolen Generations as collective trauma draws on psychoanalyst Dori Laub's influential model of the levels of witnessing involved in giving trauma testimony. By encouraging her mother and grandmother to break their silences Morgan offers them the possibility to create new meaning from their experiences, as well as seeking to heal their traumatised Aboriginal identities. While Laub's work offers some useful insights into the importance of the listener who enables the survivor to tell their story, attention to the specificities of Morgan's intergenerational narrative and the

²¹³ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 251.

political issues surrounding it demonstrates the shortcomings of the psychoanalytic model.

As discussed, *My Place* plays a key political role in voicing Aboriginal perspectives on the Australian colonial past, and by framing her family's experiences in terms of trauma Morgan contributes to new understandings of the long-term harm caused by the removal of children from their families. The history of the Stolen Generations is a contested issue in Australia, and the negative impact it has on Aboriginal people has long been a subject of dispute. Morgan articulates these concerns in the text, lamenting that "a lot of our history has been lost. People have been too frightened to say anything. There's a lot of our history we can't even get at" (p. 208). She attributes the loss of these stories not only to the fear and shame that Aboriginal people have been conditioned to associate with their racial identities, but also to the suppression of records by the white authorities. Morgan observes that "there are all sorts of files about Aboriginals that go way back, and the government won't release them" (p. 208). She explicitly links the silencing of this history to the experiences of the Stolen Generations, asserting that "our own government had terrible policies for Aboriginal people. Thousands of families in Australia were destroyed by the government policy of taking children away" (p. 208). By discussing the suppression of Stolen Generations histories in the text Morgan foregrounds the political significance of her mother's and grandmother's testimonies as part of the recovery of this hidden past.

Aboriginal activists began advocating on the issue of the separation of children from their families during the 1970s, and the term 'Stolen Generations' was developed to refer collectively to the experiences of the vast numbers of Aboriginal people who were affected by these policies. However, there was little acknowledgement of removals in mainstream Australian culture during the 1980s, as Peter Read, co-founder of the organisation Link-Up (NSW), observes in the foreword to the 2007 reprint of his article *The Stolen Generations*, which was originally written in 1981. Read observes that when the document was first published

child separation was scarcely talked about. Non-Aborigines said it couldn't have happened. The victims of separation thought it shameful to talk about their removal. They believed that maybe their

parents hadn't been able to care for them properly, or worse still, didn't want them.²¹⁴

The lack of widespread recognition for this history is demonstrated by the fact that the term Stolen Generations is not part of the vocabulary Morgan uses in *My Place* to refer to her family's experiences. Since she has only recently discovered her Aboriginal identity when she writes the text, Morgan herself is unaware of the development of this term in activist discourses about removed children.

iii. Bringing Them Home

In 1995, eight years after the publication of Morgan's autobiography, the Australian government established the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, to investigate the experiences of Aboriginal people across Australia who were affected by the policies of removal. The Inquiry aimed to address the experiences and legacy of the Stolen Generations, representing a key turning point in the treatment of this issue by officially acknowledging it on behalf of the government. It gathered written and oral evidence and testimonies from 535 indigenous people, as well as examining testimonies collected by Aboriginal legal services and other activist organisations.²¹⁵ The Inquiry's 1997 report, entitled *Bringing Them Home*, uses these personal and collective testimonies to examine the enduring impacts of removing children from their families, and proposes potential strategies to respond to the needs of those affected. Reading the *Bringing Them Home* report alongside *My Place* throws into relief both the historical significance of Gladys's and Daisy's experiences, and the importance of using

²¹⁴ Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, 6th edn (Surrey Hills, New South Wales: New South Wales Government Office of Communities: Aboriginal Affairs, 2007), <http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/publications/53.html> [accessed 22 May 2012]. Link-Up (NSW), now renamed Stolen Generations Link-Up, was established in 1981 'to help those who wished to return to their families, but were too frightened, and to help parents and children to find each other' (Read, p. 22).

²¹⁵ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 20. The report uses the term 'Indigenous' to refer collectively to indigenous people of Australia and Melanesian people native to the Torres Strait Islands. In referring to indigenous Australians in my analysis of Morgan's autobiography I use the more specific term 'Aboriginal', adopted by Aboriginal activists, scholars, and indeed Morgan herself.

trauma testimony to make political statements about the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia.

The chronology of the publication of *My Place* and the *Bringing Them Home* report is significant to understanding the reception of these disparate texts, as well as how each functions as a narrative of Aboriginal lives in the Australian past. The work of the National Inquiry in bringing into public view the trauma of the Stolen Generations represents a historical turning point, which differentiates the reception of Morgan's work from Aboriginal life stories told after 1997. Kennedy's study of Stolen Generations testimony emphasises that the publication of the report 'was historically significant because it was the first time this history of separation was officially acknowledged by the Australian federal government.'²¹⁶ The emergence of Aboriginal autobiographies in the 1980s can be seen as a catalyst that eventually led to this government recognition. As Whitlock observes,

The evidence on this issue has always been before us, and the HREOC Report was the culmination of three decades of political struggle by activists to return the control of Aboriginal children to Aboriginal families.²¹⁷

Whitlock describes Stolen Generations narratives including the *Bringing Them Home* Report as 'one particular subset of a turn to constructing indigeneity in forms of autobiographical narrative'.²¹⁸ These observations highlight the importance of first person experiential narrative as testimony about the traumatic treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia's past. Bennett and Kennedy record how the report helped to establish a new national discourse about colonial relations between Aboriginal and settler Australians. They explain that:

In interpreting forced removal as traumatic [...] *Bringing Them Home* was not simply arguing that some individuals had been traumatized by forced removals. It also, significantly, used the concept of trauma to challenge dominant understandings of Australian settler history as a heroic struggle and survival in an alien land.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Kennedy, 'Affective Work', p. 53.

²¹⁷ Gillian Whitlock, 'In The Second Person: Narrative Transactions in Stolen Generations Testimony', *Biography*, 24:1 (2001), 197-214 (p. 202). HREOC is an abbreviation of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, publishers of the *Bringing Them Home* report.

²¹⁸ Whitlock, 'Second Person', p. 212.

²¹⁹ Bennett and Kennedy, pp. 119-20.

Thus, when *My Place* first appeared on the shelves a decade before the National Inquiry's work, the experiences of the Stolen Generations remained largely unacknowledged both in official discourse and in mainstream cultural production.

As a national project focused on gathering testimonies about injustices, violence and harm caused by the colonial policies of the past, the National Inquiry has clear parallels with the political aims of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. Similar to the South African TRC's emphasis on gathering testimonies about the past to enable reconciliation, *Bringing Them Home* highlights the importance of listening to the experiences of survivors as a means of transforming relationships between indigenous and settler Australians. This is illustrated by the introduction to *Bringing Them Home*, which asserts that the devastation of the lives of Indigenous Australians 'cannot be addressed unless the whole community listens with an open heart and mind to the stories of what happened in the past and, having listened and understood, commits itself to reconciliation.'²²⁰ Given the parallels between the political purposes of the South African TRC and the Australian National Inquiry, it seems to follow that the role of literary texts like Magona's and Morgan's autobiographies in relation to this testimony gathering work must be similar. Comparing the political functions of autobiography in Australia and South Africa, Whitlock argues that 'in both places the current politics of reconciliation works to bring the nation into contact with the demons of its past in what is beginning to unfold in each place as a precarious and different phase in decolonization.'²²¹ However, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the process of decolonisation in Australia is at a very different stage than in South Africa, where the abolition of apartheid and the transition to democratic rule create a clear watershed between the colonial past and the new regime. In Australia there has been no such transition, and as a result the work of activists and writers like Morgan in the period before official government acknowledgement of the Stolen Generations history takes on even greater significance. The intergenerational narratives incorporated in *My Place* have the potential to raise awareness of the harm caused to Aboriginal people, and by demanding that

²²⁰ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 3.

²²¹ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 166.

their voices be heard, contribute to transforming their position in Australian society.

Arguably, the lack of political regime change in Australia is indicative of the fact that Aboriginal Australians remain a colonised people. Scholar of Aboriginal culture Stephen Muecke observes that 'post-colonialism is something that can only be properly achieved in relation to the *original inhabitants* whose occupancy of the country was never properly acknowledged by the invaders'.²²² Muecke emphasises that 'a post-colonial situation might be said to exist only when the Aboriginal peoples achieve recognition, compensation and political autonomy,' a process that is still ongoing.²²³ The enduring colonial relationship between Australians of European descent and Aboriginal people is evinced by disputes about the veracity of Stolen Generations history that continue even after the publication of *Bringing Them Home*. Some descendants of the colonial settlers persist in the belief that their forebears acted in the best interests of Aboriginal people by encouraging them to assimilate into white society. This is exemplified by *Wongi Wongi: To Speak*, a memoir published in 2001 by Judith Drake-Brockman, which the author positions as a direct response to Morgan's *My Place*. Drake-Brockman is one of the daughters of the white station owners who employed Daisy as their servant during the 1920s and 30s, and she states her intention to 'write my story with all the facts and have it placed in the university and school libraries and on reading lists as a cross-reference' to Morgan's text.²²⁴ In *Wongi Wongi* Drake-Brockman contests a number of facts presented in *My Place*, and espouses the paternalistic discourse that portrays her white family as 'protectors' of Daisy and their other Aboriginal employees, who are described in the text's promotional material as 'not [...] dispossessed, but [...] loved and cared for by their employers.'²²⁵ This example of contested Stolen Generations history will be discussed further in section 2.5.

The publication of texts like *Wongi Wongi* highlights the fact that both Morgan's autobiography and the National Inquiry not only seek to overcome the silencing of Aboriginal experiences in the Australian past, but also intervene in

²²² Muecke, p. 11.

²²³ Muecke, p. 11.

²²⁴ Drake-Brockman, p. 139.

²²⁵ Drake-Brockman, back cover.

contemporary debates about Stolen Generations histories. Explaining the purpose of the National Inquiry, *Bringing Them Home* states that it was established

in response to increasing concern among key Indigenous agencies and communities that the general public's ignorance of the history of forcible removal was hindering the recognition of the needs of its victims and their families and the provision of services.²²⁶

The writers of the report observe that 'the past is very much with us today, in the continuing devastation of the lives of Indigenous Australians', highlighting the fact that although the Stolen Generations policies are no longer in place, contemporary Aboriginal people continue to experience the impact of colonialism.²²⁷ Consequently, in contrast to the South African TRC, which follows on from a key moment of decolonisation represented by the 1994 democratic elections, in Australia the National Inquiry itself aims to contribute directly to the process of decolonising Aboriginal people's lives. As Whitlock emphasises, 'the Stolen Generations testimonies are resonant texts in a critical stage of the shaping of the politics of reconciliation in Australia, and for this reason their potency in this place at this time is extraordinary.'²²⁸ The *Bringing Them Home* report provides a platform from which Aboriginal people voice their experiences and request measures to support the healing and recovery of individuals and communities, factors that may figure in their eventual transition to postcolonial status.

In a similar way to Magona's intergenerational autobiographies and the South African TRC, both *My Place* and the National Inquiry rely on personal life stories that testify to the traumatic experiences of the Stolen Generations. As Whitlock states, 'in conflicted cultures, such as [Australia], autobiographical narrative is a privileged form of communication, information, and reflection.'²²⁹ Morgan's engagement with the stories of her mother and grandmother as a way of accessing Aboriginal perspectives on the past represents an important political strategy within the activism of the 1980s. The use of experiential narratives to challenge conventional assumptions about settler history developed by Morgan and other autobiographers during this period was adopted by the National

²²⁶ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 18.

²²⁷ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 3.

²²⁸ Whitlock, 'Second Person', p. 200.

²²⁹ Whitlock, 'Second Person', p. 212.

Inquiry a decade later. First person narratives have the effect of addressing the reader directly, and the widespread use of *My Place* as an educational text highlights the important role that Morgan's intergenerational autobiography can play in encouraging her white readers to explore their own identities in relation to the history of Aboriginal-settler relations. The *Bringing Them Home* report also follows the model of Morgan's text in terms of its scope, since it addresses not only the direct experiences of stolen children and their parents, but also examines the impact of removals on broader communities and following generations of Aboriginal families. The report states that 'subsequent generations continue to suffer the effects of parents and grandparents having been forcibly removed, institutionalised, denied contact with their Aboriginality and in some cases traumatised and abused.'²³⁰ In this respect the Australian National Inquiry differs significantly from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, which, as discussed in Chapter One, draws strict distinctions between the experiences of direct and secondary victims in the testimony it gathers.

The parallels between *My Place* and the *Bringing Them Home* report lead to a close similarity between the pictures of the Australian past that each creates. In this respect there is arguably a greater proximity between this pair of texts than exists between Magona's autobiographies and the narratives produced by the South African TRC, or between Hale's *Bloodlines* and the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission examined in Chapter Three. In this chapter I use the official government narrative produced by the Australian National Inquiry to put the stories Morgan tells into context. The chronological relation between the texts serves to highlight the political significance of *My Place* in creating a public voice for Aboriginal life stories before any official acknowledgement of the Stolen Generations history existed. However, its earlier publication is not the only contribution Morgan's intergenerational autobiography can make to the historical picture of Aboriginal lives in Australia's past. As the following analysis will demonstrate, *My Place* presents a detailed portrait of the long-term impacts of past removals on Morgan's family, recording the evolving relationships between the generations over the course of their lives in more intimate detail than is possible within the structure of the National Inquiry's work. As a literary

²³⁰ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 117.

text *My Place* makes truth claims based on experiential knowledge that will not be subject to the same level of scrutiny as the testimonies submitted to the National Inquiry. The form of the narrative also enables Morgan to reach a large readership who are predominantly sympathetic to the perspective on the past she produces, while the first person narrative voices of grandmother, mother and daughter encourage readers to identify with the suffering they have endured. By portraying the personal relationships between the three generations of her family Morgan offers insights into the psychological impact of the trauma of the Stolen Generations, and her own emotive response to uncovering her foremothers' distressing stories. The self-conscious narration of the storytelling process, and Morgan's negotiations with Daisy and Gladys about breaking their silences to tell their stories, also reveal much about the complexities of giving trauma testimony in the context of the Stolen Generations. By situating herself within the text as the listener to Gladys's and Daisy's stories, Morgan provides insights into the challenges of witnessing testimony in which she is personally implicated both as a result of her own emerging Aboriginal identity, and because of the familial bonds between herself and the narrators. By using intergenerational autobiography to foreground the collaborative process through which these stories are told, *My Place* contributes a greater understanding of the construction of narratives about the Australian past than is possible within the official framework of the National Inquiry.

2.1 Stolen Generations Legacy

2.1.1 Context of removals

This section focuses on Morgan's depiction of Gladys's and Daisy's experiences as part of the Stolen Generations, and the impact that this traumatic legacy has both on their lives and Morgan's own. As a child Morgan is protected from knowledge of her foremothers' trauma by their silence about the past, and the narrative follows her gradual discovery of the family's Aboriginal heritage. During the early years of Daisy's life at the beginning of the twentieth century the Australian government established laws that officially sanctioned the control of Aboriginal people's lives by white landowners, the police and other officials. By 1911 every Australian state, with the exception of Tasmania, had appointed official Chief Protectors, who were responsible for Aboriginal people and had ultimate control over them.²³¹ Whitlock explains that under this system 'land was made available for reserves and missions, and these were managed by local police or government managers, or missionaries.'²³² The *Bringing Them Home* report states that

In the name of protection Indigenous people were subject to near-total control [...] With a view to encouraging the conversion of the children to Christianity and distancing them from their Indigenous lifestyle, children were housed in dormitories and contact with their families strictly limited.²³³

Until the late 1930s government policies emphasised the 'merging' of the Aboriginal population with Australians of European descent, and the removal of children from their families and communities was central to this process. Legislators theorised that merging could be achieved over time 'by forcibly removing Indigenous children from their families and sending them away from their communities to work for non-Indigenous people'.²³⁴ This policy aimed to eradicate Aboriginal cultures by separating children from their native communities, teaching them within a Christian education system that promoted the values of white society.

²³¹ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 28.

²³² Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 155. The restrictions on the movements of Aboriginal people in twentieth century Australia bear significant resemblance to the township system in South Africa examined in Chapter One. The majority of Aboriginal people were confined either to reserves or to the land owned by their employers, and had to request special permission to travel.

²³³ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 29.

²³⁴ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 29.

Morgan explains the ethos that underpinned the colonists' treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia in a discussion with her mother when she begins the research that will eventually form part of *My Place*. She tells Gladys that "the pastoral industry was built on the back of slave labour. Aboriginal people were forced to work, and if they didn't, the station owners called the police in" (p. 192). Morgan relates this general picture of the Australian past to the specific circumstances of her family's lives, observing that "when Nan was younger, Aborigines were considered sub-normal and not capable of being educated the way whites were" (p. 192). This attitude is illustrated by words of James Isdell, a local 'Protector of Aborigines' in Western Australia, quoted in the *Bringing Them Home* report. Isdell's response to a request from the Beagle Bay Catholic Mission to hand over mixed-race Aboriginal children to their care is indicative of the paternalism and racist beliefs of the white authorities. He writes that

The half-caste is intellectually above the aborigine, and it is the duty of the state that they be given a chance to lead a better life than their mothers. I would not hesitate for one moment to separate any half-caste from its aboriginal mother, no matter how frantic her momentary grief might be at the time. They soon forget their offspring.²³⁵

This statement illustrates both the assumption that Aboriginal people were racially inferior to people of European descent, and the widely held belief that removing children from their families and communities would benefit them by teaching them the values of the white Australian population.

Although Daisy and Gladys did not live in officially designated Aboriginal reserves, their stories told in *My Place* demonstrate the impact of these national policies throughout their childhoods and into their adult lives. Daisy was born on Corunna Downs Station, a large farmstead in the north of Western Australia where she and her relatives were essentially treated as the property of the station owners, the wealthy Drake-Brockman family. In her early 'teens Daisy is separated from her mother Annie, who works as an agricultural labourer, and taken to work in the main house. Although still living on the station, Daisy has little contact with her mother, explaining that 'I had to sneak away just to see my

²³⁵ 'Dr Christine Choo submission 385', p. 14, quoted in *Bringing Them Home*, p. 104.

own family and friends. They were camp natives, I was a house native' (p. 410). She describes the anguish of separation for both her mother and herself, recalling that 'I knew [Annie] missed me. She would walk up from the camp and call, "Daisy, Daisy," just like that. I couldn't talk to her, I had too much work to do. It was hard for me then' (p. 410). Then when she is around fourteen or fifteen years old the Drake-Brockmans move to Perth and take Daisy with them as a servant, cutting her off completely from the rest of her family. This separation is traumatic, and Daisy recalls that 'at night, I used to lie in bed and think 'bout my people [...] I really missed them. I cried myself to sleep every night' (pp. 412-13). Daisy's first person narrative attests to the distress that she and her mother experience, countering the racist attitude of the white authorities exemplified by Isdell's assertion that an Aboriginal mother's sense of loss when her child is taken is short-lived.

The forced separation of mother and child is repeated in the next generation, when Daisy gives birth to her own daughter Gladys. Once she reaches three years of age, the white mistress Alice Drake-Brockman refuses to let Daisy keep Gladys with her while she continues to work as their servant, and sends her to a children's home. Having experienced separation from her own mother, Daisy has been living with the threat of losing her daughter since her birth and states that 'I'd been 'spectin' it' (p. 420). Although the Drake-Brockmans try to persuade her that removing Gladys is for her benefit, telling her 'Gladdie needed an education,' Daisy understands that in reality 'they didn't want her there' because 'Alice said she cost too much to feed' (p. 420). Their reasons for taking Gladys from her mother are further complicated by the fact that she is mixed-race. It is clear from Gladys's appearance that her father was white, although Daisy refuses to confirm who he was. Daisy understands that this was an additional motivation for the removal of her daughter, lamenting that 'you was only allowed to keep the black ones. They took the white ones off you 'cause you weren't considered fit to raise a child with white blood' (p. 415). The Drake-Brockmans' decisions to remove Daisy from her mother, and then to separate her own child Gladys from her, illustrate how government policy in the 1920s and 30s was mirrored in the attitudes of white landowners towards their Aboriginal workers. Although Daisy and then Gladys were removed by their employers rather than under the official rules of the Aborigines Protection

Board, these informal methods ultimately have the same effects of undermining familial bonds and traumatising Annie, Daisy and Gladys.

The Native Administration Act passed in 1936 represented a change in the government's approach, and the focus moved to assimilating Aboriginal people into white culture, rather than merging them with the white Australian population. The *Bringing Them Home* report explains this distinction:

Whereas 'merging' was essentially a passive process of pushing Indigenous people into the non-Indigenous community and denying them assistance, assimilation was a highly intensive process necessitating constant surveillance of people's lives.²³⁶

The new legislation encouraged officials to scrutinise Aboriginal families' adherence to Western ideals about family and standards of living. The report records the result of these attitudes, exemplified by the application of the 1947 Child Welfare Act to support continuing forced removals of Aboriginal children from their families:

Under the general child welfare law, Indigenous children had to be found to be 'neglected', 'destitute' or 'uncontrollable'. Those terms were applied by courts much more readily to Indigenous children than non-Indigenous children as the definitions and interpretations of those terms assumed a non-Indigenous model of child-rearing and regarded poverty as synonymous with neglect.²³⁷

The *Bringing Them Home* report explains that as a result of the new legislation, 'during the 1950s and 1960s even greater numbers of Indigenous children were removed from their families to advance the course of assimilation.'²³⁸ In Morgan's home state of Western Australia, the report states that following a change in state policy in 1951 (the year of Morgan's birth), 'although the child welfare legislation required a court to be satisfied that the child was destitute or neglected, the requirement made little impact on the numbers removed in practice.'²³⁹ There were multiple possible justifications for removals, meaning that children were taken from their families 'not only for alleged neglect', but also 'to attend school in distant places, to receive medical treatment and to be adopted out at birth.'²⁴⁰ The application of Western models of parenting to Aboriginal families parallels the experiences that Magona describes in both

²³⁶ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 32.

²³⁷ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 33.

²³⁸ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 34.

²³⁹ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 112.

²⁴⁰ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 34.

To My Children's Children and *Forced to Grow*, when she reflects on the impossibility of conforming to white ideals of mothering that rely on material resources to which she lacks access. Like Magona, Morgan's incorporation of intergenerational stories into her autobiographical narrative attests to her family's survival despite these attempts to undermine familial relationships and destroy children's sense of connection to their Aboriginal cultural heritage.

As a result of the national and state governments' treatment of Aboriginal families in the 1950s, Morgan's narrative of her early years is overshadowed by fears of interference by white authority figures in the lives of her family. The traumatic legacy of both Daisy and Gladys being removed from their mothers as young children combines with the threat that she and her siblings are at risk of the same fate under the new assimilationist government legislation. In Gladys's first person narrative we learn that her husband Bill, a white man who sometimes behaved violently towards the family, used her fear of losing the children to prevent her from leaving him. Bill taunts her, threatening "nobody will let someone like you bring up kids and you know it" (p. 374). Gladys has no choice but to submit to her husband because, she explains 'Aboriginal women weren't allowed to keep children fathered by a white man' (p. 375). After Bill dies the threat of separation haunts the family, and Gladys remembers that 'I always worried unconsciously about dying and leaving the children. I knew my mother wouldn't be allowed to keep them, they'd be taken off her and she probably wouldn't be allowed to see them ever again' (p. 368). Daisy expresses similar fears, telling her granddaughter that 'we thought the government might come and get you. They didn't like people like us rearin' kids with white blood in them. Seems like no one took account of the black blood' (p. 428). Gladys's and Daisy's fears are well-founded, as Read's analysis of the removal policies highlights:

No granny, according to the whites [...] could look after the children as well as the parents. As soon as the parents ceased to look after their children in the manner approved by officials, there was the opportunity for the children to be removed.²⁴¹

The threat of government intervention to remove mixed-race children from their indigenous parents was also experienced by Native American families in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter Three will examine the parallel

²⁴¹ Read, p. 23.

experiences addressed in *Bloodlines*, which recounts how Hale's mother actually lost two of her children when she left her abusive white husband.

It is significant that when she talks about the fear of losing Morgan and her siblings, Daisy refers again to the issue of removing mixed-race children, echoing the terms 'white blood' and 'black blood' that she used earlier in her narrative to describe the justification used by Alice Drake-Brockman for taking Gladys from her (p. 428). Daisy's narrative frequently draws connections between the experiences of separation across the three generations of her family, as when she recalls the day that Gladys was taken away from her. In describing this event she reflects back on her own removal, empathising with Annie's experience of losing her children. Daisy questions

How can a mother lose her child like that? How could [Alice] 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, God bless her. (p. 420)

The narrative mirroring of the experience of separation across each generation emphasises that the practice of removing children continued to threaten the stability of Aboriginal families throughout the twentieth century. The chain of repeated separations that Daisy experiences when she is removed from her mother Annie, and then when her own daughter Gladys is taken from her, reaches forward to impact on the next generation, Morgan's own, in the ongoing fear of separation. The narrative form of Morgan's text plays a key role in the meaning created here, since she does not record her own and her foremothers' experiences in linear chronological order, but in the order in which she comes to know their stories. As the next section will examine, the text begins with Morgan's gradual discovery of her Aboriginal heritage, and follows the difficult process through which she eventually persuades her mother and grandmother to talk about their experiences in the Stolen Generations. By transferring the first person narrative to her grandmother and incorporating her life story from childhood through to the narrative present as the penultimate chapter in *My Place*, Morgan collaborates with Daisy to link the stories of separation across three generations of their family. Daisy's story addresses the perspectives of both mother and child on the loss they experience, as well as showing how the legacy of these past experiences reaches forward to the lives of Morgan's own generation. Unlike the brief insights offered by testimonies

given in the *Bringing Them Home* report, as a literary narrative relating the interconnected lives of three generations, *My Place* creates an intimate picture of the relationships between Daisy, Gladys and Morgan, showing the challenges faced by each as they come to terms with the painful legacy of the Stolen Generations.

2.1.2 Hidden traumatic past

In response to their anxiety about potentially losing Morgan and her siblings, Gladys and Daisy adopt a protective strategy, deciding to take advantage of the children's mixed heritage and pale skin to hide their Aboriginality. During Morgan's childhood, Gladys teaches her and her siblings to tell people that they are Indian, in an attempt to protect them from prejudice and shield the family from interference by the authorities. Morgan recalls first asking her mother about their racial heritage after her classmates at school begin 'asking us what country we came from' (p. 45). She tells Gladys "they reckon we're not Aussies. Are we Aussies, Mum?", to which her mother responds "what do the kids at school say?" (p. 45). Morgan lists the various options suggested by her peers: "anything. Italian, Greek, Indian", and Gladys instructs her "tell them you're Indian", brushing off her daughter's excited curiosity in response to this revelation by stating firmly "no more questions" (p. 45). Morgan describes her satisfaction at having an answer for her classmates' questions, asserting that 'they could quite believe we were Indian, they just didn't want us pretending we were Aussies when we weren't', emphasising the irony of Gladys's compliance with the racial othering of Aboriginal people by white Australians (p. 45). The testimonies collected in the *Bringing Them Home* report confirm that the practice of hiding their racial identity was common to many Aboriginal families. Evidence submitted by Link-Up (NSW) explains that

Because forcible and seemingly arbitrary separation was so widespread and because the government used the threat of separation to coerce Aboriginal adults, most Aboriginal people lived with the fear of separation by continually moving; others called themselves Maori or Indian.²⁴²

²⁴² 'Link-Up (NSW) submission 186', part III, p. 3, quoted in *Bringing Them Home*, p. 217.

Like many other Aboriginal Australians, Gladys and Daisy choose to adopt a false identity because the marginalisation associated with immigrant status is preferable to the discrimination and potential threat of intervention from the authorities that they would be subject to if their Aboriginality were known.

Gladys's denial of her family's Aboriginal ancestry is perhaps not only indicative of her concerns for their wellbeing, but also of the values she learns from the children's home where she was brought up. Telling the story of her childhood, Gladys explains that 'the Home [...] taught us never to talk openly about being Aboriginal. It was something we were made to feel ashamed of' (p. 330).

Parkerville Children's Home housed both Aboriginal and white children, and Gladys's recollections illustrate how she was conditioned to understand that her social status was lower because of her dark skin. She states that 'if there was an argument or if something had been damaged, and it was your word against a white kid's, you were never believed. They expected us to be in the wrong' (p. 330). This phenomenon is mirrored by many of the stories recorded by the National Inquiry, as *Bringing Them Home* explains:

In an attempt to force 'white ways' upon the children and to ensure they did not return to 'the camp' on their release, Aboriginality was denigrated and Aboriginal people were held in open contempt. This denigration was among the most common experiences of witnesses to the Inquiry.²⁴³

The shame associated with Aboriginality is reinforced when Gladys is sixteen, after she has left the children's home and begun working as a florist. She describes a conversation with a woman she encounters while waiting for a bus, who asks her "what nationality are you, Indian?" (p. 347). When Gladys explains that she is Aboriginal she is astounded by the woman's response of "oh, you poor thing [...] what on earth are you going to do?" (p. 347). At this time Gladys is living with her mother, and she decides to talk to Daisy about what happened. Daisy instructs that 'I must never tell anyone what I was', warning her daughter that "terrible things will happen to you if you tell people what you are" (p. 348). Gladys recalls that 'she made me really frightened. I think that was when I started wishing I was something different' (p. 348).

²⁴³ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 156. A particularly poignant example is given in the testimony of a 'woman fostered as a baby in the 1970s', who was taught to believe that her mother was an alcoholic and a prostitute, and warned that 'when we got older we'd have to watch it because we'd turn into sluts and alcoholics [...] It was in our breed, in us to be like that.' 'Confidential evidence 529, New South Wales', *Bringing Them Home*, p. 157.

Addressing the denial of Aboriginality in Morgan's family, Kennedy observes that by adopting this strategy '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.'²⁴⁴ Morgan first encounters these issues during her childhood, and must continue to grapple with the legacy of fear and shame as an adult when she begins to work on her intergenerational narrative. The challenges Morgan faces in order to persuade her mother and grandmother to break their silences and tell their life stories are discussed in section 2.2.

Despite her mother's and grandmother's precautions, and although during her childhood Morgan is unaware of her Aboriginal heritage, she nonetheless grows up fearing that the family may be separated. After her father dies, she remembers that 'for some reason, I was frightened we would be put in an orphanage' (p. 59). Although Daisy and Gladys have never articulated their anxieties to the children, Morgan's fear manifests the symptoms of the traumatic past that she inherits from them. The *Bringing Them Home* report comments on this phenomenon, stating that 'the impacts of removal policies continue to resound through the generations of Indigenous families [...] It is inherited by their children in complex and sometimes heightened ways.'²⁴⁵ Morgan's childhood anxiety about being put in an orphanage can be read in terms of trauma transmitted through the mechanisms of a transgenerational phantom, which passes symptoms including fear and shame from one generation to the next without the child being aware of the trauma that causes them.²⁴⁶ The intergenerational transmission of trauma is analysed in detail in relation to Hale's intergenerational autobiography in Chapter Three. Although this phenomenon also figures in *My Place*, Morgan represents this as just one stage in the process of discovering the truth about her family's Aboriginal heritage. By handing over the narrative voice to her mother and grandmother, who tell their

²⁴⁴ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 251.

²⁴⁵ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 222.

²⁴⁶ See Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, 'Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation', 1972, in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas T. Rand, I (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 125-38; and Maria Torok, 'Story of Fear: The Symptoms of Phobia – the Return of the Repressed or the Return of the Phantom?', 1975, in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas T. Rand, I (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 177-86.

own stories in the first person, *My Place* shifts the focus from inherited traumatic memories to Gladys's and Daisy's more direct experiential storytelling. The text thus devotes greater attention to the process of giving trauma testimony, and to Morgan's relationship with her mother and grandmother as an implicated familial listener to their first person narratives.

2.1.3 Intergenerational impact of the Stolen Generations

The parallel experiences described in the *Bringing Them Home* report and *My Place* demonstrate how the history of the Stolen Generations simultaneously undermines individual Aboriginal families, and has a sustained impact on broader issues of identity and culture that affect Aboriginal communities across Australia. The report emphasises that 'subsequent generations continue to suffer the effects of parents and grandparents having been forcibly removed, institutionalised, denied contact with their Aboriginality and in some cases traumatised and abused.'²⁴⁷ Understanding the legacy of the Stolen Generations sheds light on Morgan's use of intergenerational autobiography as a tool for exploring how her mother's and grandmother's experiences affect her own life. Morgan's lack of awareness of her Aboriginal heritage as a child illustrates how the Stolen Generations policies not only damaged Aboriginal identities directly by separating children from their cultural communities, but also indirectly contributed to further destruction by prompting families like Morgan's to suppress or deny their Aboriginality.

Morgan's and her siblings' total lack of knowledge about their Aboriginal family and cultural community is illustrated by a 'surprise visit' from Daisy's brother Arthur and his children (p. 54). Morgan is around nine years old at this time, and when she is introduced to her uncle she 'stare[s] at him in shock. I didn't know she had a brother' (p. 54). This unexpected encounter with unknown family members reflects another aspect of the protective strategies adopted by Aboriginal people in an attempt to evade interference from the authorities. As the Link-Up (NSW) submission to the National Inquiry suggests, many people who had been part of the Stolen Generations 'cut off all ties with other

²⁴⁷ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 177.

Aboriginal people, including family members' in order to maintain the protective cover of 'passing' as Maori or Indian.²⁴⁸ When Morgan meets Arthur's children on the occasion of their visit, Gladys tells her to "say hello, these are your cousins", but the shyness she feels on meeting new people is compounded by the fact she has been taught that her family are Indian (p. 54). Morgan recalls that 'I was surprised to hear Arthur speak English. I thought maybe he could speak English and Indian, whereas the kids probably only spoke Indian' (p. 55). This visit is the only time when Morgan sees Arthur until she is an adult, and there is no further mention in the text of the children she met on this occasion. The absence of a relationship with her uncle and cousins, and the child Morgan's assumption that they are culturally alien to her, demonstrate how her extended family and cultural community become inaccessible because of her mother's and grandmother's fearful suppression of their Aboriginality. The protective strategies that Gladys and Daisy adopt are comparable to those of Hale's grandmother, who avoids teaching her mixed-race children about their Native American ancestry, and refuses to take them back to her tribal village in order to meet their extended family. The significance of this behaviour in *Bloodlines* is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Bringing Them Home elaborates on the impact that the suppression of Aboriginal identity and severing of family and community ties has on members of the Stolen Generations. It argues that 'when a child was forcibly removed that child's entire community lost, often permanently, its chance to perpetuate itself in that child.'²⁴⁹ The report goes on to assert that 'the Inquiry has concluded that this was the primary objective of forcible removals and is the reason they amount to genocide.'²⁵⁰ In addition to the loss of cultural knowledge, the separations also led to a destruction of generational lineage and prevented the transmission of traditional skills. As a result, generations of Aboriginal people did not learn about their tribal kinship structures, and were left without any experience of Aboriginal parenting to pass on to subsequent generations. *Bringing Them Home* explains that this affected whole communities, because 'parenting roles, nurturing and socialising responsibilities are widely shared in Indigenous societies', and as a result 'many people in

²⁴⁸ 'Link-Up (NSW) submission 186', part III, p. 3, quoted in *Bringing Them Home*, p. 217.

²⁴⁹ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 218.

²⁵⁰ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 218.

addition to those biological parents were bereft of their role and purpose in connection with those children.²⁵¹ The contextual information provided by *Bringing Them Home* demonstrates how the policies of the colonial government in Australia undermined indigenous families in similar ways to the attacks on black parenting and extended family networks in South Africa discussed in Chapter One. Both Magona and Morgan use intergenerational autobiography to record the damaging impact of these practices, and to rebuild familial relationships through the form of their narratives.

The destruction of familial relationships is demonstrated in *My Place* by Gladys's first person narrative, in which she describes being reunited with Daisy after her mother has left the employ of the Drake-Brockmans, and is able to take her back from the children's home. They find living together very difficult, which Gladys puts down to the fact that 'I don't think Mum knew how to handle it. She was too scared to realise that it had actually happened' (p. 345). Gladys tries to reach out to her mother by discussing the confusion she feels about her Aboriginal identity, but concludes that

It was hopeless, 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. I couldn't confide my worries to her. (p. 348)

As a result of Daisy's fear of talking openly about her Aboriginality, she leaves her daughter to grapple with her confused feelings of alienation unsupported. Kennedy suggests that, in addition to their separation, Gladys's and Daisy's relationship is strained because of 'differences in their positioning relative to the dominant white culture'.²⁵² She observes that '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.'²⁵³ Gladys's account of returning to her mother after their long separation vividly portrays how Daisy's traumatic past, combined with her daughter's indoctrination with white values in the children's home, prevent them from building a close relationship.

The intergenerational impact of the Stolen Generations takes many forms, including the destruction of familial relationships, the loss of cultural knowledge,

²⁵¹ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 215.

²⁵² Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 250.

²⁵³ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 250.

the denial of Aboriginal identity and the separation of extended families and communities. In order to record and understand the impact of this legacy, Morgan encourages her mother and grandmother to tell their stories, and eventually permit her to incorporate them into the finished text *My Place*. In constructing her intergenerational autobiography she not only presents the Stolen Generations history from the perspectives of her own family, but also demonstrates how these experiences reach forward to affect her own life. Through their collaborative work on the narrative Morgan seeks to re-establish the generational continuity that has been undermined by Daisy's interrupted maternity and Gladys's fear that this experience could be repeated by the removal of her own children. *My Place* is a significant text not only because of its key political role in telling the suppressed stories of Morgan's Aboriginal foremothers, but also in terms of its cultural significance in contributing to a developing indigenous literary tradition in Australia. Morgan uses her intergenerational autobiography to explore the meaning of contemporary Aboriginality, and attest to her family's resilience in rebuilding the connection to their cultural heritage that has been undermined by the Stolen Generations history. The interlinked personal and political motivations for telling these familial stories within her autobiography present significant challenges for the collaborative storytelling process, which the next section will outline.

2.2 Conflict Between Speaking and Silence

2.2.1 *Political need to speak out*

Although as an intergenerational autobiography *My Place* takes a very different form from the historical narrative produced by the National Inquiry, the political aims of Morgan's text can be understood in similar terms. The testimonies collected in the *Bringing Them Home* report are used to raise awareness about the Stolen Generations, and the aims of the report are articulated in terms of understanding this history and responding to its ongoing effects. As quoted in the introduction to this chapter, *Bringing Them Home* states that the 'continuing devastation of the lives of Indigenous Australians' can only be addressed if 'the whole community listens with an open heart and mind to the stories of what happened in the past and, having listened and understood, commits itself to reconciliation.'²⁵⁴ Kennedy explores the important insights offered by personal testimonies about the Stolen Generations, which can 'bring into discourse details of personal relations, such as the relation between mother and child, which have been interfered with and devastated as a result of government policies.'²⁵⁵ Familial relationships are central to the historical record produced by the National Inquiry, and this focus highlights the parallels between the personal stories published in the report and Morgan's incorporation of her mother's and grandmother's narratives into her autobiographical project. However, Morgan's personal relationship with her mother's and grandmother's testimonies differentiates her literary text from the official government project, enabling her to explore the interrelation of past and present through intergenerational autobiography. Both as the listener to Gladys's and Daisy's testimonies, and as the narrator of the autobiographical frame narrative, Morgan is personally implicated in the stories she tells. The interconnected political and personal aims of her narrative at times create tensions between herself and her foremothers, but also enable her to foreground the emotional and psychological challenges experienced by survivors of the Stolen Generations.

²⁵⁴ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 3.

²⁵⁵ Kennedy, 'Affective Work', p. 49.

Both *My Place* and *Bringing Them Home* rely on testimonies given by people who have personal experience of the separation of Aboriginal families, and place emphasis on the political need for the survivors of this trauma to tell their stories. The introduction to *Bringing Them Home* acknowledges the sensitivity of the stories it records, noting that ‘much of its subject matter is so personal and intimate that ordinarily it would not be discussed. These matters have only been discussed with the Inquiry with great difficulty and much personal distress.’²⁵⁶ It also reports that

Indigenous witnesses giving confidential evidence of their experiences of forcible removal required personal and psychological support during that process and afterwards because of the traumatic nature of their memories and the inevitably confronting task of relating them to strangers.²⁵⁷

However, the report writers are at pains to emphasise that despite these issues ‘most witnesses appreciated the opportunity and many said that giving testimony had contributed to their healing.’²⁵⁸ The Inquiry makes no provision for people who choose to remain silent about their experiences, although the report does note that ‘many other people did not have the opportunity to tell their stories, were not ready to speak of their experiences or chose not to do so in the forum provided by the Inquiry.’²⁵⁹ The report goes on to stress that ‘healing and ultimately the reconciliation process require that testimonies continue to be received and recorded,’ and makes the assumption that all that is necessary to make this possible is to adopt ‘a culturally appropriate manner with recording and access determined in consultation with the person who wishes to provide his or her story.’²⁶⁰ The Inquiry’s reliance on people telling their stories seems to create a wilful blindness to the possibility that some may choose not to, or indeed may be so deeply traumatised by their experiences that they are unable to speak about them, no matter how culturally sensitive the means of recording their testimony may be.

Morgan’s political strategy in writing *My Place* is similarly reliant on her mother’s and grandmother’s willingness to tell their stories. Both Daisy and Gladys are initially reluctant to talk about their traumatic memories and allow Morgan to

²⁵⁶ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 3.

²⁵⁷ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 19.

²⁵⁸ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 20.

²⁵⁹ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 21.

²⁶⁰ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 21.

incorporate them into her autobiography. By narrating the negotiations they go through before Gladys and Daisy finally feel able to tell their stories Morgan addresses the challenges faced by members of the Stolen Generations when asked to testify about their experiences. The literary form of intergenerational autobiography enables her to explore these issues, presenting a more comprehensive picture of the experience of giving testimony than is possible within the structure of the National Inquiry. Morgan articulates her aims in writing *My Place* by recording the arguments she used to persuade her mother and grandmother to break their silences. When Daisy insists that “I got secrets [...] I don’t want anyone to know”, Morgan responds “I don’t like secrets. Not when they’re the sort of secrets you could use to help your own people” (p. 398). She situates her grandmother’s testimony as a tool to initiate political change, asserting that “someone’s got to tell. Otherwise, things will stay the same, they won’t get any better” (p. 398). The reported conversation reveals Morgan’s conception of *My Place* not only as a personal narrative about her family, but also as a means to redress the silence about Aboriginal experience in Australian history and provoke change. Her engagement with Gladys’s and Daisy’s stories thus parallels the use of personal testimony to further the political objectives of the *Bringing Them Home* report.

Gladys is the first of the women to break her silence, and she weighs her personal misgivings against what her daughter perceives as the collective benefit of adding the family’s voices to the work of Aboriginal historians. Gladys articulates her decision to tell her life story in these political terms, recognising that “if I stay silent like Nanna, it’s like saying everything’s all right. People should know what it’s like for someone like me” (p. 301). At the end of her story Gladys acknowledges that giving testimony has challenged her past fears about revealing too much information, explaining ‘it hasn’t been an easy task, baring my soul. I’d rather have kept hidden things which have now seen the light of day’ (p. 380). She makes that somewhat ambiguous statement that ‘I know I cannot retract what has been written, it’s no longer mine’ (p. 380). While these words may simply mean that by telling her story to her daughter Gladys has handed responsibility for it over to her, they also seem to imply that Gladys now views her testimony as part of a broader collective narrative, perhaps one which other people have the right to make use of. This interpretation is

supported by her contemplation of potential parallels between her experiences and those of others, as she speculates that 'maybe someone else is walking a road that's like mine' (p. 380). Gladys's reflections on telling her story demonstrate that she is ultimately persuaded of the political importance of her daughter's writing, and she comes to see giving testimony as an essential part of this process.

For Morgan and her mother Gladys, then, using intergenerational autobiography to voice Aboriginal perspectives on the Stolen Generations and Australian history is viewed as a vital political strategy. This ethos has clear similarities with the use of personal testimonies to redress conventional understandings of Australian settler history in the *Bringing Them Home* report, while offering greater insight into the process of giving testimonies by recording the challenges Morgan grapples with before she can persuade her mother and grandmother to talk about their pasts. Brewster highlights the importance of Morgan's collaboration with her foremothers, observing that

By collecting and writing down the memories of her family she is in effect reorganising the memory of the family and in so doing creating a new knowledge. This knowledge is both private and public; the violence and brutality of the colonial encounter is reinscribed in the family history and the wider collective memory and history of the nation.²⁶¹

As this statement suggests, Morgan's aims in writing her intergenerational autobiography are multiple and overlapping. Recording personal testimonies constitutes an important political contribution to voicing the experiences of the Stolen Generations, whilst as an autobiographical narrative *My Place* also charts Morgan's own process of discovering and learning to identify with her Aboriginal heritage. The interrelation of the political and personal impacts of giving Stolen generations testimony are made uniquely visible to the reader through the form of Morgan's intergenerational autobiography, which foregrounds the emotional consequences of telling the stories as well as their contribution to establishing a record of Aboriginal experiences in Australia's colonial past.

²⁶¹ Brewster, p. 21.

2.2.2 Personal motivations for breaking silence

As explained in 2.1.2, during her childhood Morgan is unaware of the family's Aboriginal heritage. It is not until she is an adult, studying at university and newly married, that she and her sister Jill begin to realise that the story that the family are Indian is a cover, and that Daisy must be Aboriginal. Discussing her suspicions with Jill, Morgan asserts that she and her siblings have "a right to know" about their identity (p. 169). Her demand for knowledge illustrates the personal significance she places on persuading Gladys and Daisy to tell her about their pasts. Morgan records a conversation with her mother shortly after this, when Gladys expresses her misgivings regarding the book her daughter is proposing to write about the family. She demands "can't you just leave the past buried? It won't hurt anyone then" (p. 193). However, Morgan argues that hiding the past has "already hurt people. It's hurt you and me and Nan, all of us. I mean, for years, I've been telling people I'm Indian!" (p. 193). Here Morgan articulates the connection between her personal and political aims in breaking the silence about their past experiences that Gladys and Daisy have maintained for years. Whilst recovering the silenced voices of Aboriginal people is a significant motivation, it is clear that the need to understand her own cultural origins is an equally important factor in Morgan's desire to persuade her foremothers to tell their stories.

Gladys expresses similar sentiments herself when she decides to help her daughter try to uncover Daisy's story, revealing years of frustration by complaining to Daisy that "whenever we ask you about the past, you get nasty" (p. 187). Echoing Morgan's words, she goes on to demand "we're your family, we've got a right to know", arguing that "all my life, you've never told me anything, never let me belong to anyone. All my life, I've wanted a family, you won't even tell me about my own grandmother" (p. 187). Gladys expresses a parallel need to understand the family's past here, and sees persuading Daisy to talk about her life as a potential route to understanding her own Aboriginal heritage and cultural identity. Both Morgan's and her mother's assertions of their 'right' to know Daisy's history set up what is at times a confrontational dynamic between their desire to understand the past and Daisy's reluctance to break her silence. For both Gladys and Daisy, silence about their Aboriginal

origins has long functioned as a protective mechanism to shield them from white discrimination. This factor, complicated both by the shame they have learned to associate with being Aboriginal, and by the traumatic nature of their experiences of separation, means that they must both overcome immense challenges in order to tell their stories. The tension between Morgan's agenda and the psychological pain Daisy associates with talking about her past sets up a critical dilemma in the production of the narrative.

2.2.3 Morgan's ethical dilemma

The changing relations between Aboriginal people and white Australians over the course of the twentieth century mean that Morgan has vastly different experiences of Aboriginality from those of her mother and grandmother. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, since she does not share their personal experiences of the trauma of separation and the shame they have learned to associate with being Aboriginal, Morgan feels free to talk about the history of the Stolen Generations in ways that her mother and grandmother find much more difficult. In addition to Morgan's political and personal arguments for breaking silences about the Aboriginal past, *My Place* is published at a historical moment when giving testimony is viewed as a potentially healing process, and this cultural focus on trauma testimony can also be seen as an influence on Morgan's project. The generational differences between Morgan's and her grandmother's experiences of Aboriginality give rise to an emotional and ethical conflict.

When they discuss the possibility of Morgan recording her grandmother's story in *My Place*, Daisy expresses her misgivings, exclaiming "Ooh, no, I got secrets, Sally, I don't want anyone to know" (p. 398). She articulates their generational difference, telling her granddaughter that older Aboriginal people refuse to talk about the past because "they frightened. You don't know what it was like. You're too young" (p. 398). Under the persuasive influence of her granddaughter's arguments, Daisy eventually agrees to compromise, relating part of her life story but retaining some of her treasured secrecy. She concludes her first person narrative by reiterating that 'I got my secrets, I'll take

them to the grave. Some things, I can't talk 'bout' (p. 428). Like Gladys, Daisy is aware that her testimony will be read as part of an Aboriginal retelling of Australian history, and she affirms the political worth of her granddaughter's project. She reflects that

I think maybe this is a good thing you're doin'. I didn't want you to do it, mind. But I think, now, maybe it's a good thing. Could be it's time to tell [...] what it's been like in this country. (p. 429)

Daisy's understanding of the political importance of her testimony is illustrated by her assertion that 'the government and the white man must own up to their mistakes. There's been a lot of coverin' up. Maybe they want us all to die off so no one'll talk' (p. 429). However, she maintains that there are limits to what she and other trauma survivors are able to tell, observing that 'you can't blame us old ones for not wantin' to talk. We too scared' (p. 429). These passages illustrate that while Daisy tentatively agrees about the value of telling her story in the context of Morgan's project, she is ultimately unable to speak about all of her experiences, and consequently her trauma testimony remains incomplete.

The extent of the tension between Morgan's reliance on her mother's and grandmother's testimonies to carry the political burden of her project, and their reluctance to relate memories that engender fear and pain, is dramatically demonstrated after Daisy has completed the recorded first person narrative from which Morgan will transcribe her story. At this point Morgan reflects that there remain 'great dark depths' in her grandmother's memories that she 'would never plumb' (p. 431). She describes herself as 'filled with conflicting emotions. I was happy for her because she felt she'd achieved something. I was sad for myself and for my mother. Sad for all the things Nan felt she couldn't share' (p. 431). She speculates that the gaps in Daisy's story centre on the possibility that she had another daughter before Gladys was born, who she wasn't allowed to keep. Gladys introduces this possibility earlier in the narrative, when she describes experiencing a "flashback to when I was little", in which she recalls asking her mother "why I didn't have a brother or a sister" (p. 300). She is certain that Daisy "put her arms around me and whispered quietly, 'You have a sister'" (p. 300). Although she is aware that her memory may be coloured by imagination, Gladys tells her daughter that she has a "gut feeling" that "I had a sister somewhere" (p. 300). When Gladys asks Daisy about this in the narrative present she is 'met with anger and abuse', and Daisy tells her to "let

the past be” (p. 300). At this point it seems that Daisy is so deeply traumatised and ashamed as a result of losing this child that she will remain unable to talk about this experience.

In telling her tape-recorded story Daisy does broach the issue of her first child despite her misgivings, stating that ‘before I had Gladdie, I was carryin’ another child, but I wasn’t allowed to keep it’ (p. 419). She follows up this ambiguous statement with the words ‘they took our children one way or another’, but refuses to explain further, asserting ‘how this all came about, that’s my business. I’ll only tell a little’ (p. 419). By maintaining her silence and yet alluding to it Daisy performs a similar act to Magona’s self-silencing about her husband’s sexual violence in *Forced to Grow*, discussed in section 1.4.4. In his analysis of the effects of removals Read identifies a ‘large group of people who will not talk of their experiences at all.’²⁶² He emphasises the need to interpret the meaning of traumatised silences, suggesting that ‘their refusal to talk tells its own story.’²⁶³ Daisy follows her reference to her other child by observing that ‘I never told anyone that I was carryin’ Gladdie’ (p. 419), possibly suggesting that she was forced to terminate her first pregnancy, although this is not mentioned in the text. In addition to her silence about her first child, Daisy also refuses to reveal the identity of either of her children’s fathers. The observations she makes about the mistreatment of Aboriginal women working for white families suggest that this may be another reason for her refusal to talk about her first pregnancy. She states that ‘we had no protection when we was in service. I know a lot of native servants had kids to white men because they was forced’ (p. 417). Although she speaks in the third person about the rape of Aboriginal women by white men, it seems possible that Daisy is referring obliquely to personal experiences.

It is significant that Daisy’s silence on the subjects of possible rape and the loss of her first child is not absolute, as her testimony incorporates hints that suggest that it may be possible to interpret the meaning of her silence in order to understand more about her traumatic experiences. The gaps and hints in Daisy’s narrative also point to the possibility of other experiences of exploitation

²⁶² Read, p. 25.

²⁶³ Read, p. 25.

by her white employers that have traumatised her so deeply that she keeps them secret in order to protect herself from having to relive them. Kennedy explores the meaning of Daisy's silences, arguing that

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.²⁶⁴

This statement highlights the irony of Daisy's compliance with white silencing of her experiences as an Aboriginal woman, which is pivotal to understanding the conflict between Morgan's desire to tell her grandmother's story, and Daisy's need to maintain her protective silence around these issues.

Failing to understand these implications of Daisy's silence, Morgan feels encouraged by her grandmother's hints about her other child and decides to 'make one last effort to find out about [Gladys's] sister' (p. 431). By confronting her grandmother with the question "has Mum got a sister somewhere?" she brings the conflict between her demand for knowledge and Daisy's need for silence to a crisis (p. 432). Daisy's distressed response clearly illustrates the pain associated with her memories:

When she finally turned to face me, her cheeks were wet. 'Don't you understand yet,' she said softly, 'there are some things I just can't talk 'bout.' Her hand touched her chest in that characteristic gesture that meant her heart was hurting. (p. 432)

Kennedy analyses the dynamics of Morgan's relationship to Daisy's testimony, observing that '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.'²⁶⁵

Consequently, she suggests, 'it is [...] reasonable to speculate that Daisy hears Sally's insistent questions very differently than Sally intends them.'²⁶⁶ Morgan's inability to recognise the differences between her own and her grandmother's points of view is illustrated earlier in the narrative, when she tries to persuade Daisy to talk about the past by asking who her father was, another difficult subject that she wants to avoid. Daisy ends their conversation abruptly, leaving Morgan questioning 'why couldn't she just be honest with us? Surely she realised we didn't blame her for anything. Surely she realised we loved her?'

²⁶⁴ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 241.

²⁶⁵ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 256.

²⁶⁶ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 256.

(p. 204). The differences between Morgan's experiences of Aboriginality and those of her grandmother mean that she is unable to comprehend Daisy's wish for silence.

Daisy's distress when Morgan pushes her to talk about the loss of her first child leaves her granddaughter 'with a face full of tears and a mind full of guilt', forcing her to recognise that 'I was so insensitive sometimes. I should have known better' (p. 432). The guilt she feels at causing such distress prompts her finally to accept Daisy's silence on the subject, and to resolve that 'I would never ask her another thing about the past' (p. 432). Kennedy points out that 'Morgan does not reflect on her grandmother's resistance, except to read it as a sign of her shame and oppression.'²⁶⁷ However, the fact that Morgan records the difficulties she and her grandmother negotiate in order to collaboratively tell the story is itself important, presenting another facet of the picture which can also shed light on Daisy's experiences both as a child and a mother under the Stolen Generations policies. By foregrounding her grandmother's reluctance and at times outright refusal to talk about certain of her experiences, Morgan emphasises that parts of her story remain unspeakable. Daisy's silence thus occupies a central position in Morgan's intergenerational narrative, attesting to the extent of her trauma, the shame she has learned to associate with her Aboriginal identity, and the pain of losing her child. The untold story of Gladys's missing sister thus remains a telling absence in Morgan's intergenerational autobiography.

The *Bringing Them Home* report recounts similar difficulties regarding the silences of Aboriginal women who lost their children in the Stolen Generations, demonstrating that Daisy's response to her experiences is far from unique. Contrary to the assumption put forward in the introduction to the report that all Stolen Generations survivors would be able to give their testimony under the right circumstances, when dealing with the experiences of mothers the National Inquiry acknowledges that many deliberately choose not to speak. *Bringing Them Home* observes that 'few of the parents have survived to tell their own stories. Many of those who have felt such guilt or despair that they were unable

²⁶⁷ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', pp. 255-56.

to come forward.²⁶⁸ The Link-Up (NSW) submission describes the barriers the organisation encountered when it sought testimony from Aboriginal women whose children were taken by the authorities. It states that

we found that Aboriginal women were unwilling and unable to speak about the immense pain, grief and anguish that losing their children had caused them. That pain was so strong that we were unable to find a mother who had healed enough to be able to speak, and to share her experience with us and with the Commission.²⁶⁹

The submission describes the shame experienced by many mothers whose children were taken, which arises from the ways that ‘they were made to feel failures; unworthy of loving and caring for their own children; they were denied participation in the future of their community.’²⁷⁰ Parents, and mothers in particular, of Aboriginal children who were removed by the white authorities experience the separation of their families in different ways from the children themselves. It is significant that while the Inquiry has found many hundreds of Aboriginal people who were removed from their families as children to give testimonies, the experiences of Aboriginal mothers force it into silence because they are unwilling or unable to tell their stories. This is reflected in the partial story that Daisy tells in *My Place*: once she agrees to her granddaughter recording her story, Daisy willingly talks about both her own removal from her mother Annie, and about being separated from her daughter Gladys. The fact that Daisy is ultimately reunited with Gladys seems to enable her to talk about their separation, but she remains silent about losing her first daughter, whose absence from Daisy’s life is never recuperated.

Whitlock analyses the discourse produced by the *Bringing Them Home* report, examining how the focus of Stolen Generations activism brings particular stories and experiences to the fore. She notes ‘how much the emotive force of *Bringing Them Home* is generated by the figure of the child as victim’, which ‘provide[s] both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians with a powerful lexicon in which to speak about assimilationist history’.²⁷¹ Whitlock examines how this emphasis on the stolen child excludes the experiences of other groups affected by the Stolen Generations, such that it ‘now appears to occupy virtually

²⁶⁸ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 212.

²⁶⁹ ‘Link-Up (NSW) submission 186’, part III, pp. 30-31, in *Bringing Them Home*, p. 212.

²⁷⁰ ‘Link-Up (NSW) submission 186’, part III, pp. 30-31, in *Bringing Them Home*, p. 213.

²⁷¹ Whitlock, ‘Second Person’, p. 203.

all of the available space in accounting for this history.²⁷² Consequently the National Inquiry produces only certain kinds of narratives about the Australian past, just as the form and political functions of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission restricts the focus of the testimonies it gathers to a narrow range of experiences. Whitlock gives the example of the 'experiences of the non-Aboriginal women who adopted and fostered these children' as stories that 'cannot be spoken' within the framework of the National Inquiry.²⁷³ The omission of the voices of Aboriginal mothers whose children were removed from their care indicates that they too are unable to tell their stories within current discourses about the Stolen Generations.

The challenges faced by Aboriginal mothers when asked to tell their stories have a significant impact on the narratives of Stolen Generations history presented in both the *Bringing Them Home* report and Morgan's intergenerational autobiography. In this respect, although the story of Daisy's life recorded in *My Place* remains incomplete, the narrative Morgan produces nonetheless presents a more comprehensive picture of the effects of losing a child than the National Inquiry is able to produce. The literary form of the narrative enables Morgan to record not only the words of Daisy's testimony, but also the difficulties her grandmother faces and the reasons she gives for keeping her secrets. While she is not always sympathetic to her grandmother's wish to remain silent, Morgan's portrayal of their negotiations and her eventual acceptance of the gaps in the story present an intimate portrait of Daisy's experience as a mother of stolen children. In addition, as stories produced for inclusion within Morgan's autobiography, Daisy and Gladys's testimonies are not subject to the same kind of scrutiny as those given to the National Inquiry, a fact which may have encouraged them to disclose more without the fear of the truth of their accounts being challenged by unsympathetic readers.

²⁷² Whitlock, 'Second Person', p. 203.

²⁷³ Whitlock, 'Second Person', p. 203.

2.3 Significance of Giving Testimony

Morgan's use of her uncle's, mother's and grandmother's first person life narratives in *My Place* is an important innovation in the genre of intergenerational autobiography, setting this text apart from the other works analysed in this study. As Kennedy observes,

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 witness to her mother and grandmother.²⁷⁴

Morgan uses tape recordings of her family members telling their stories, and includes the transcribed versions of these stories as separate chapters, each narrated in the first person by its respective protagonist.²⁷⁵ Approximately one third of the 440 page text is devoted to these familial voices, with 'Arthur Corunna's Story' comprising forty-seven pages, 'Gladys Corunna's Story' seventy-seven pages, and 'Daisy Corunna's Story' twenty-eight pages. Muecke explores the significance of Morgan's incorporation of these three first person narrative voices, describing it as a move 'away from standard autobiography towards Aboriginal textual convention', in which 'the story, it is stressed, does not just belong to the narrator, Sally Morgan'.²⁷⁶ He goes on to explain that

Her 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. According to traditional custom [...] 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.²⁷⁷

As well as the cultural significance of Morgan's use of familial narrative voices identified here, Arthur's, Gladys's and Daisy's stories perform a number of other key functions in the text. Although the transcripts of their testimonies are incorporated as discrete chapters within *My Place*, Morgan also relates stories from their lives elsewhere in the narrative by recording informal conversations that she has with each of them as they go about their daily lives. As a result

²⁷⁴ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 252.

²⁷⁵ Although Morgan describes recording the oral narratives onto tape, she does not discuss the methods she uses to transcribe them into their written forms. All three first person stories follow a roughly chronological structure, and it seems likely that Morgan has undertaken significant editing work to produce coherent narratives that fulfil the purposes of her project. The fact that she makes no mention of such interventions leaves Morgan open to criticism. Section 2.5.1 examines critiques that have been directed at *My Place*'s claim to authenticity.

²⁷⁶ Muecke, p. 134.

²⁷⁷ Muecke, p. 134.

Arthur's, Gladys's and Daisy's first person narratives are not read in isolation, and for this reason I do not analyse them here as separate texts. The combination of formally recorded testimony and domestic familial storytelling is a unique feature of Morgan's use of intergenerational autobiography, which offers insights into the gradual process of breaking silence, and the difficult emotions that Morgan, her mother and grandmother deal with as the realities of their traumatic pasts are pieced together.

Gladys's and Daisy's voices are particularly vital to Morgan's discovery and understanding of her own Aboriginal heritage and identity, demonstrated by the emphasis she places on hearing about their pasts in their own words. The experiential narratives have great personal significance, and are also vital to the truth claims made in the text to support Morgan's political project. By telling the stories of their lives from childhood onwards Morgan's foremothers offer insights into their daily lives as Aboriginal Australians, such as the details of Daisy's role in the Drake-Brockman household, and Gladys's confusing encounter with the white woman at the bus stop discussed in section 2.1.3. These experiences might not seem significant in comparison to the formal testimonies collected in the *Bringing Them Home* report, but read within the context of Morgan's intergenerational autobiography they contribute to a greater overall understanding of the traumatic experiences of the Stolen Generations.

This section focuses on Morgan's supportive role in enabling the testimonies of her foremothers, and engages with the work of influential psychoanalytic trauma theorist Dori Laub, whose model of the levels of witnessing offers useful insight into the functions of trauma testimony and the importance of the listener. Attention to the intergenerational form of *My Place* highlights the limitations of Laub's model however, and section 2.4 explores how Morgan's position as a listener is complicated by her personal implication in Gladys's and Daisy's testimonies. Section 2.5 builds on this critique of Laub's work by focussing on the specific issues associated with giving testimony about the Stolen Generations, given the political contention surrounding this period in the Australian colonial past. The form and function of the testimonies incorporated into *My Place* demand new understandings of the mechanisms of trauma testimony and the role of the listener, which must pay attention both to Morgan's

personal investment in the testimonies she hears within the frame of the narrative, and to addressees external to the text who are situated in the position of the 'perpetrator' of traumatic harm.

2.3.1 *New knowledge from trauma testimony*

Arguably one of the most significant reasons for Daisy's refusal to talk about her experiences is the way that Aboriginal people affected by the Stolen Generations policies were denied the ability to determine the meaning of their own experiences. Separated from her family and Aboriginal community, in the home of her white employers Daisy was conditioned to view herself as socially and racially inferior. Her internalisation of these beliefs is illustrated by an incident that takes place when Morgan is a teenager, and returns from school early one day to find her grandmother crying. When she asks "what's wrong?", Daisy replies in an outburst "you bloody kids don't want me, you want a bloody white grandmother, I'm black. Do you hear, black, black, black!" (p. 120). In the Australia of Daisy's early life Aboriginality was viewed as shameful, and this is one of the reasons why she and Gladys have kept their heritage a secret from Morgan and her siblings. The white social environment that Daisy inhabits encourages her not only to denigrate her Aboriginal identity, but also to view her separation first from her own mother, and then from her daughter Gladys, as inevitable. By writing her mother's and grandmother's stories into the discourse of the Stolen Generations history, Morgan begins a process of politicising their experiential knowledge, enabling them to speak out for the first time against the mistreatment to which they were subjected.

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, the Australian government did not officially acknowledge the history of the Stolen Generations until the establishment of the National Inquiry in 1995. This event took place after a long process of recovering Aboriginal histories over the preceding decades, as activist groups and individuals like Morgan began to highlight the need for Aboriginal life stories to be told. Until the 1970s, Aboriginal people were still subject to discriminatory laws and social practices, and in the absence of a discourse about the trauma experienced by the Stolen Generations many

people were unable to speak out about the mistreatment to which they were subjected. The suppression of Stolen Generations experiences gives rise to Daisy's long-standing silence about her past, which her brother Arthur attributes to the fact that "she's bin with whitefellas too long. They make her feel 'shamed, that's what white people do to you'" (p. 188). Daisy is prevented from testifying to the distressing experiences of her past, not only because she does not expect her story to be heard or believed by white society, but also because she has internalised racist perceptions of Aboriginal inferiority which make her ashamed to acknowledge her Aboriginality.

Daisy's recollection of the Drake-Brockman family removing Gladys from her care offers an emotive example of the ways in which her white employers prevent her from determining the meaning of her own experiences. In her first person narrative Daisy describes her powerlessness when Gladys is taken away, asking 'what could I do? I was too frightened to say anythin'. I wanted to keep her with me, she was all I had, but they didn't want her there' (p. 420). When Gladys is sent to Parkerville Daisy is permitted to express neither her opposition to her daughter's removal, nor the emotional distress caused by the separation. She explains that 'Alice said she cost too much to feed, said I was ungrateful. She was wantin' me to give up my own flesh and blood and still be grateful. Aren't black people allowed to have feelin's?' (p. 420). This incident demonstrates that, as an Aboriginal woman in the white Drake-Brockman family's household, Daisy is expected to embrace the belief that removing her child is in her own and Gladys's best interests.

The narrative of Daisy's separation from her own mother is similarly coloured by an opposition between the 'official' white version of events and her own distressing experiences. Before Daisy tells her story, Morgan interviews Alice Drake-Brockman as part of her research for *My Place*, and asks her to explain why she decided to separate Daisy from her family by bringing her to Perth to work for her. Alice asserts that she made a decision based on Daisy's mother's wishes, stating that 'Annie had said to me shortly before, "Take her with you, mistress, I don't want my daughter to grow up and marry a native"' (p. 213). This version of Daisy's removal from her family contrasts significantly with her first person narrative, in which she records that

They told my mother I was goin' to get educated. They told all the people I was goin' to school [...] My mother wanted me to learn to read and write like white people. Then she wanted me to come back and teach her. (p. 411)

Instead, Daisy is put to work in the Drake-Brockmans' Perth home, explaining 'I got nothin' out of their promises. My mother wouldn't have let me go just to work [...] They should have told my mother the truth. She thought I was coming back' (p. 411). Once again Daisy has no means to voice her opposition to the way that she and her family are treated, and instead is expected uncomplainingly to accept her new position as an underpaid domestic servant in a strange city far from her family. It is only after her long struggle with the shame and trauma she has faced in her life that Daisy is finally able to articulate the pain of familial separation by telling her story to her granddaughter.

The limitations placed on Daisy's ability to voice her own experiences as an Aboriginal woman in a white-controlled environment emphasise the significance of her eventual agreement to tell parts of her life story. Despite Morgan's reservations about the remaining 'great dark depths' that Daisy still refuses to discuss (p. 431), telling her first person narrative is nonetheless an important breakthrough. Morgan observes in the chapter following Daisy's narrative that 'I was happy for her because she felt she'd achieved something. It meant so much to be able to talk and to be believed' (p. 431). This statement highlights the importance of Morgan's role in facilitating Daisy's testimony, offering her a safe space to talk about her experiences without the fear of repercussions from white authority figures, and where her interpretation of events will not be disputed. As discussed in 2.2, in persuading both Daisy and Gladys to tell their stories Morgan emphasises the importance of voicing Aboriginal experiences to contribute to a more comprehensive picture of the colonial past in Australia. In this way Morgan plays an active role in the reinterpretation of Daisy's experiences, enabling her to understand them in new ways that have implications both for her personal healing, and for the collective history of the Stolen Generations.

The role of trauma testimony in *My Place* is complicated both by Morgan's personal investment in hearing and retelling her mother's and grandmother's stories, and by the political context in which the stories are told. Nonetheless, it

can be productive to draw on Laub's model of trauma testimony, which offers useful insight into the work that Daisy as a trauma survivor and Morgan as the witness to her testimony undertake to create new meaning from Daisy's experiences. Laub's theoretical work is contextualised by his experiences as a psychoanalyst working with Holocaust survivors, and as an interviewer for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University.²⁷⁸ He theorises that the specific circumstances of the Holocaust created 'a world in which one *could not bear witness to oneself*.'²⁷⁹ Laub explains that

The Nazi system [...] convinced its victims, the potential witnesses from the inside, that what was affirmed about their 'otherness' and their inhumanity was correct and that their experiences were no longer communicable even to themselves and therefore, perhaps never took place.²⁸⁰

Whilst these observations reflect the specific circumstances of the Holocaust, parallels exist between what Laub sees as the impossibility of witnessing events as they occurred in the Nazi extermination camps, and the traumatic denial of Daisy's interpretation of her own experiences in the *Stolen Generations*.

According to Laub, since the survivor cannot witness traumatic events even as she lives through them, her recognition and response to trauma occurs through the process of giving trauma testimony after the fact. He describes surviving trauma as an 'entrapment in a fate that cannot be known, cannot be told, but can only be repeated', until the survivor goes through 'a process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially, of *re-externalizing the event*'.²⁸¹ This takes place through giving trauma testimony, as Laub explains it 'can occur [...] only when one can articulate and *transmit* the story, literally transfer it to another outside oneself and then take it back again, inside.'²⁸² The 'entrapment' Laub identifies is clearly apparent in Daisy's story, as the shame that she associates with her Aboriginal identity and her traumatic experiences leads her to create a protective silence about her past. Her silence prevents Daisy from telling her story, leaving her unable to understand it in terms of her

²⁷⁸ Dori Laub, 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 61-75 (p. 61).

²⁷⁹ Laub, 'Truth and Testimony', p. 66.

²⁸⁰ Laub, 'Truth and Testimony', pp. 66-67.

²⁸¹ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 69.

²⁸² Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 69.

own reactions, and viewing it instead through the perspective of her white employers.

In narrating their first person testimonies, both Daisy and Gladys reflect on how their own behaviour was influenced by the discriminatory views of Aboriginal people that they had been conditioned to believe. When Gladys talks about her decision to hide the family's Aboriginality from her children she observes that 'looking back now, it seems awful that we deprived them of that heritage, but we thought we were doing the right thing at the time' (p. 378). Echoing her daughter's sense of what has been lost through the denial of Aboriginality, Daisy painfully describes how her identity as an Aboriginal woman has been traumatised by the racist treatment of her white Australian employers. She articulates these feelings for the first time in telling her story:

I'm 'shamed of myself, now. I feel 'shamed for some of the things I done. I wanted to be white, you see. I'd lie in bed at night and think if God could make me white, it'd be the best thing [...] What was wrong with my own people? (p. 415)

Each of these examples illustrates how Morgan's mother and grandmother are influenced by the racist conditioning that taught them to be ashamed of their Aboriginal identities. This internalised racism impacts on how they perceive themselves and influences their behaviour towards the next generation of the family, an experience shared by Hale's foremothers in *Bloodlines*, which Chapter Three explores. It is through the process of giving their testimonies that Gladys and Daisy come to understand the negative impact of their past behaviour and beliefs, recognising the way they were mistreated in white society as traumatic for the first time.

Laub's theory of trauma testimony emphasises the pivotal role of the listener or witness to the trauma survivor's story, explaining that 'it is the encounter and the coming together between the survivor and the listener which makes possible something like a repossession of the act of witnessing. This joint responsibility is the source of reemerging truth.'²⁸³ By engaging with the survivor's testimony, the listener plays a vital role in enabling the survivor to comprehend her experience because, as Laub states, 'the listener [...] is a party

²⁸³ Laub, 'Truth and Testimony', p.69.

to the creation of knowledge *de novo*.²⁸⁴ He explains that because trauma survivors are unable to fully comprehend their experiences as they take place, ‘the emergence of the narrative which is being listened to – and heard – is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the “knowing” of the event is given birth to.’²⁸⁵ This model of trauma testimony sheds light on the relationship between Daisy’s first person narrative and Morgan’s role as a listener and facilitator of her testimony. However, whilst Laub’s work focuses on the therapeutic value of giving trauma testimony, by including Daisy’s narrative in *My Place* Morgan also engages with historical and political discourses about the Stolen Generations. As the listener to her grandmother’s testimony Morgan shares with Daisy the responsibility for the truth about her past that comes to light through her storytelling, both in terms of the new understanding Daisy gains about her own experiences, and as part of an emerging picture of Aboriginal lives in Australia’s past. Section 2.5 will examine how giving testimony about the Stolen Generations is complicated by the political context in which this storytelling takes place.

A discussion Morgan has with her grandmother shortly after they have recorded Daisy’s first person narrative demonstrates how she benefits from being able to talk about her past with a sympathetic listener. Daisy is staying with her granddaughter during her final illness, and Morgan helps her to prepare for the night by massaging her back to ease her pain. Daisy revels in the physical comfort as well as the love that her granddaughter expresses through this act of care-giving, murmuring “‘you know, Sal ... all my life, I’ve been treated rotten, real rotten. Nobody’s cared if I’ve looked pretty. I been treated like a beast. Just a beast of the field”” (pp. 432-33). Here Daisy demonstrates a new understanding of how she was mistreated by her white employers, and begins to question the Drake-Brockman family’s use of her as a work animal. Kennedy notes that ‘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.’²⁸⁶ Morgan’s listening role is pivotal to this process: by encouraging Daisy to break her silence and providing her with a safe space in which to relate her past

²⁸⁴ Laub, ‘Bearing Witness’, p. 57.

²⁸⁵ Laub, ‘Bearing Witness’, p. 57.

²⁸⁶ Kennedy, ‘Autobiography’, p. 246.

anguish, she provides emotional respite that parallels the physical relief she gives through ministering to Daisy's bodily pain. For the first time Daisy feels able to talk about her past to someone who will not dispute her version of events, enabling her to take control of the meaning attributed to her life story. Thus, through giving testimony to Morgan as her listener, Daisy's interpretation of her own story changes, and she develops a new understanding of the traumatic meaning of her experiences.

The domestic setting of this poignant encounter between Morgan and her grandmother reflects their intimate familial relationship, and whilst this differs from the tape recorded first person narrative transcribed in the preceding chapter, both Daisy's more formal storytelling and this informal discussion contrast distinctly with the testimonies gathered in the *Bringing Them Home* report. The form of *My Place* as an intergenerational autobiography plays a vital role in the narrative of Stolen Generations history that Morgan is able to produce. With her granddaughter as a supportive and emotionally implicated listener Daisy talks about her personal experiences with greater ease than might be possible if she was giving testimony to a stranger. As one of her grandmother's care-givers Morgan has access to the domestic environment where this episode takes place, allowing her to give greater insight into the impact of giving testimony than would be possible for the National Inquiry. The intergenerational narrative also pays attention to the listener's experience, allowing Morgan to record her own reactions to the stories her grandmother tells. In this respect *My Place* also offers greater insight into the intergenerational effects of the Stolen Generations than the *Bringing Them Home* report is able to do, by portraying the day-to-day relationships between Morgan, her mother and siblings as family members living with the legacy of this traumatic past.

2.3.2 Defining traumatic experience

Significantly, in depicting her mother's and grandmother's experiences in the Stolen Generations, Morgan does not explicitly use the term 'trauma' to describe their suffering. However, her framing of their stories within the political

project of voicing Aboriginal pasts nonetheless writes their experiences into a discourse that defines them as traumatic. In common with the National Inquiry, Morgan's political project relies on the understanding that the Stolen Generations policies resulted in multiple traumatic effects for survivors, their families and communities. The *Bringing Them Home* report articulates this interpretation thus:

Separation and institutionalisation can amount to traumas. Almost invariably they were traumatically carried out with force, lies, regimentation and an absence of comfort and affection. All too often they also involved brutality and abuse. Trauma compounded trauma.²⁸⁷

The report cites Judith Herman's examination of the effects of 'prolonged, repeated trauma' to explain how this functions for members of the Stolen Generations.²⁸⁸ Herman describes how people subjected to this form of trauma

develop an insidious progressive form of post-traumatic stress disorder that invades and erodes the personality. While the victim of a single acute trauma may feel after the event that she is 'not herself,' the victim of chronic trauma may feel herself to be changed irrevocably, or she may lose the sense that she has any sense of self at all.²⁸⁹

Herman's definition of long-term 'chronic' trauma corresponds to Laura Brown's work on insidious trauma examined in section 1.4.2; both scholars highlight the impact of repeated or continuous exposure to trauma, which sheds light on the traumatic experiences of indigenous people in colonial settler societies. Herman's definition emphasises the differences between the trauma of institutionalised racism in the context of the Stolen Generations, and the single catastrophic traumatic event experienced by the Holocaust survivors, with reference to which much Western trauma theory has been developed.²⁹⁰

Whilst the Holocaust constitutes an acutely traumatic event with a distinct end point defined by the liberation, Stolen Generations survivors like Daisy have been subjected to ongoing mistreatment and discrimination throughout their

²⁸⁷ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 196.

²⁸⁸ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 86. See discussion in *Bringing Them Home*, p. 196.

²⁸⁹ Herman, p. 86.

²⁹⁰ Although Herman's model offers productive insights, any theory of trauma that attempts to universalise diverse experiences in different political contexts should be used advisedly. As Craps has pointed out, Herman's work emphasises 'commonalities' between different traumatic experiences. In doing so, Craps argues, Herman 'risks erasing important differences and thereby ultimately doing more harm than good,' by applying 'hegemonic definitions of trauma' that risk '(re)coloniz[ing]' people in postcolonial societies. Craps, p. 54.

lives. Brought up within Australian colonial society and conditioned to see themselves as racially inferior, members of the Stolen Generations have no frame of reference to even imagine an alternative to the everyday suffering they endure. Labelling the Stolen Generations past as traumatic in the National Inquiry's work gives weight to its appeal to all Australians to 'listen with an open heart and mind to the stories of what happened in the past', and to 'commit itself to reconciliation.'²⁹¹ In a similar way, the discourse of trauma in *My Place* demands recognition of the devastating harm done to Morgan's Aboriginal family. However, it seems possible that while Morgan redefines her grandmother's trauma within the terms of her narrative, Daisy is unable to relearn the ways that she has been conditioned to interpret events in her life. Although giving her testimony clearly has positive effects on her wellbeing, comments she makes during the conversation with her granddaughter while Morgan rubs her back illustrate that Daisy's reinterpretation of her past experiences can only ever be partial. Daisy demonstrates how deeply the cultural denigration of Aboriginal people has affected her self-worth, by persisting in describing herself in derogatory terms as "just a dirty old blackfella" (p. 433). Morgan feels emotionally devastated by her words, responding "you're my grandmother and I won't have you talk like that. The whole family loves you" (p. 433). She recognises that she cannot erase the effects of years of discrimination, lamenting 'how hollow my words sounded. How empty and limited. Would anything I said ever help?' (p. 433). Daisy's persistence in using racist language to describe herself, together with her continued refusal to relate certain parts of her past, demonstrate that the healing potential of giving trauma testimony remains problematic for her.

The unresolved issue of Daisy's self-worth throws into question the validity of Morgan's reading of her grandmother's life story in terms of trauma, since it seems that Daisy never fully understands her experiences in this light. The cultural context in which she has learned to interpret her life is perhaps incompatible with the framework of Western trauma theory that her granddaughter uses to re-evaluate it. Craps observes that the 'talking cure' associated with conventional models of therapy and healing from trauma focuses on 'disarticulat[ing] the past from the present', so that 'the traumatized

²⁹¹ *Bringing Them Home*, p. 3.

person [...] come[s] to understand that the event is over and need not go on causing harm in the present.²⁹² The effect of this emphasis, he argues, is that 'immaterial recovery – psychological healing – is privileged over material recovery – reparation or restitution and, more broadly, the transformation of a wounding political, social, and economic system.'²⁹³ In Daisy's case the material recovery identified by Craps remains to some extent impossible. Not only does she still view her racial identity in the negative terms she has been conditioned to internalise, the material loss of her children has never been fully recuperated: her absence during Gladys's childhood cannot be repaired, and the mystery of her other child remains unsolved. As a result, it seems, trauma testimony's potential to psychologically heal the survivor cannot fully resolve the effects of Daisy's experiences as a member of the Stolen Generations.

Despite the problematic nature of Daisy's testimony, it is clear that she does find some relief in rearticulating the mistreatment she endured in ways that allow her to express the injustice of it. Morgan interprets her grandmother's experience within the discourse of the Stolen Generations as traumatic because this is the best strategy available to her, contributing both to her political project and her desire to support her grandmother's healing. By not only incorporating her grandmother's testimony into her intergenerational autobiography, but also recording and reflecting on her response to the process of giving it, Morgan produces a poignant narrative of the issues faced by indigenous people living with the legacy of trauma in a (post)colonial society. This differentiates *My Place* significantly from the work of the National Inquiry, which incorporates the stories of Stolen Generations survivors but lacks the means to explore the after-effects of giving these testimonies. Morgan uses the literary form of her narrative to problematise the assumption that giving testimony facilitates healing, and avoids the danger of imposing a false closure on Daisy's narrative by leaving the question of her ongoing pain unresolved.

²⁹² Craps, p. 55.

²⁹³ Craps, pp. 55-56.

2.4 Listening to Familial Trauma Testimony

2.4.1 *Boundaries between survivor and listener*

The focus in *My Place* on the collaboration between the three generations of Morgan's family in the production of the text offers insights not only into the challenges that Gladys and particularly Daisy face in order to tell their stories, but also into Morgan's own role as a listener and witness to their testimonies. This section focuses on the difficulties faced by the listener, and considers how both Morgan's personal relationship with her mother and grandmother and her political investment in recording their stories intersect with her performance of this role. As discussed in 2.3, Laub's psychoanalytic model of trauma testimony suggests helpful ways of understanding the role of the witness or listener, who enables the survivor to recognise and respond to her traumatic experiences for the first time through giving testimony. Laub's model identifies three forms of witnessing trauma: the first is to witness an event oneself, while the next level is to be witness to the testimony of others, and the final form is to be 'witness to the process of witnessing itself.'²⁹⁴ The second and third forms of witnessing occur through interaction between the survivor of trauma and another person who listens to their testimony, a relationship that is central to Morgan's engagement with her mother's and grandmother's trauma narratives in her intergenerational text. The process of witnessing that Daisy and Gladys begin as trauma survivors narrating their experiences is continued on a new level by Morgan, who takes the role of listener in relation to their testimony and records it within her autobiographical narrative. Morgan's intergenerational autobiography also becomes part of the third form Laub identifies, bearing witness to 'the process of witnessing itself', as she observes and reflects on Gladys's and Daisy's experiences of revisiting traumatic memories in telling her their stories.²⁹⁵ In addition, the addressee of *My Place* as a written text is situated in the position of another 'listener', creating a fourth level of witnessing for Gladys's and Daisy's testimonies. The reader is located outside the text in which the survivor-listener interaction takes place, and therefore functions as a

²⁹⁴ Laub, 'Truth and Testimony', p. 61.

²⁹⁵ Laub, 'Truth and Testimony', p. 61.

witness to the testimony at one further remove. Section 2.5 explores the importance of the reader-addressee in terms of Morgan's political project.

According to Laub, the emergence of new knowledge of trauma through witnessing testimony has a transformative effect on the listener, through which s/he 'comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself.'²⁹⁶ Laub explains that 'the relation of the victim to the event of the trauma [...] impacts on the relation of the listener to it, and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that the trauma victim feels.'²⁹⁷ Thus through his/her interaction with the survivor's testimony, the listener comes to identify with the experiences described almost as if s/he had lived through the same events. Laub places emphasis on the responsibility of the listener, referring to a 'contract of the testimony' that has significant implications when applied to Morgan's position in relation to grandmother's story.²⁹⁸ He observes that 'a journey fraught with dangers lies ahead' for the listener, because 'as one comes to know the survivor, one really comes to know oneself; and that is not a simple task.'²⁹⁹ In the context of Laub's work gathering testimony as a historian and a psychotherapist, this experience might have an impact on how s/he as a listener perceives himself and his experiences. For Morgan as the listener to the stories of her mother's and grandmother's lives as Aboriginal women in Australian colonial society, the transformative effects of hearing their testimony are arguably far greater. In uncovering her mother's and grandmother's pasts through listening to their testimonies, Morgan literally 'comes to know herself' in the context of the Aboriginal heritage and cultural identity that her family have been forced to hide. Her emotive responses to the pain and injustice that Gladys's and Daisy's stories reveal also highlight how the 'danger' and 'hazards' associated with witnessing trauma testimony are heightened in the context of her intergenerational narrative.

The emotional challenges Morgan faces in witnessing her family's stories are illustrated by her depiction of working with Gladys on her first person narrative.

²⁹⁶ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 57.

²⁹⁷ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', pp. 57-58.

²⁹⁸ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 72.

²⁹⁹ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 72.

She explains that 'it took several months to work through Mum's story and, during that time, many tears were shed. We became very close' (p. 381). Morgan not only experiences the sense of shared responsibility for the story Gladys tells that Laub identifies, but as one of her mother's children she also takes responsibility for supporting the other members of her family as they gradually hear parts of the story. Her witnessing of her mother's testimony thus becomes a collective experience, as she asserts that 'we all found it difficult to come to terms with the experiences Mum had been through' (p. 381). Her responses to the stories she hears about Daisy's life at several points in the narrative also demonstrate Morgan's vulnerability as she listens to her foremothers' trauma testimonies. Her shocked reaction when Daisy uses derogatory racial terms to describe herself during the discussion at her bedside examined in 2.3.2 is a poignant example. After leaving her grandmother to sleep Morgan describes the pain that her words have caused, recording that 'I felt so hurt. I wanted to contain the deep emotions that were threatening to swamp me' (p. 434). The experience of sharing some of Daisy's pain grows out of Morgan's role as a witness to her trauma testimony, heightened by their intimate familial relationship and the empathy she feels for her grandmother.

In his model of the levels of witnessing, Laub emphasises the need for the listener to retain some distance from the survivor, despite the fact that s/he in part comes to share the experience of trauma that results from witnessing testimony. He asserts that the listener must preserve 'his own separate place, position and perspective; a battleground for forces raging in himself, to which he has to pay attention and respect if he is properly to carry out his task.'³⁰⁰ In the context of Laub's professional relationship to the trauma survivors whose testimony he listens to, the 'separate place' may be easy to maintain. However, for Morgan the distinction between the psychological and emotional states of her mother and grandmother as survivors, and herself as the listener to their stories, is less easily defined. Laub suggests that:

The listener [...] has to be at the same time a witness to the trauma witness and a witness to himself. It is only in this way, through his simultaneous awareness of the continuous flow of those inner hazards both in the trauma witness and in himself, that he can

³⁰⁰ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 58.

become the enabler of testimony – the one who triggers its initiation, as well as the guardian of its process and of its momentum.³⁰¹

Arguably, by foregrounding the process of giving testimony, and recording both the survivors' and her own responses to the stories they tell, Morgan can use her intergenerational autobiography as a medium through which to reflect on and bear witness to her own witnessing as Laub suggests. However, Laub's model of the relationship between listener and trauma survivor demands a level of detachment that is clearly impossible for Morgan in relation to the stories of members of her family. Her political aims and personal investment in hearing the testimony situate her instead as an implicated listener, establishing a pre-existing framework through which she not only brings her own interpretation to their stories but, as explored earlier in section 2.2, also makes demands that reach beyond what Daisy is able to articulate.

2.4.2 Morgan as an 'identifying witness'

Morgan's position of identification with her mother and grandmother as trauma survivors is multifaceted: she is implicated in their narratives both by virtue of her emotional connection with them, and by her desire to understand her own cultural heritage. The intergenerational form of *My Place* allows Morgan to foreground the collaborative process of telling Daisy and Gladys's stories, thus making visible her own role not only as a facilitator but also interpreter of their trauma testimonies. This clearly demonstrates that while Laub's theory of the levels of witnessing is helpful in emphasising the importance of the listener, in the context of Morgan's relationship with the familial testimonies recorded in her autobiography, his model has significant limitations. Kennedy suggests an alternative interpretation of Morgan's listening role, asserting that 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.'³⁰² This reconceptualising of the listener's role goes beyond Laub's warnings about the need for the listener to maintain the boundary between himself and the trauma survivor, since Morgan's personal and political investment in hearing

³⁰¹ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 58.

³⁰² Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 252.

and retelling her foremothers' stories potentially influences the meaning produced by their testimonies.

Morgan undertakes background research into Aboriginal history, demonstrated when she first decides to write a book about her family's lives, and goes to Battye Library of West Australian History to "read up about Aborigines" (p. 192). The research creates a contextual framework in which Daisy and Gladys's experiences can be read as part of a collective narrative of trauma, supporting Morgan's political aims by contributing to a broader picture of Aboriginal lives in the Australian past. On one level the foreknowledge that Morgan gains through the archival research she undertakes before hearing Gladys's and Daisy's stories qualifies her as an effective listener according to Laub's model. He states that 'the listener must be quite well informed if he is to be able to hear – to be able to pick up the clues.'³⁰³ However, Laub warns that 'knowledge should not hinder or obstruct the listening with foregone conclusions and preconceived dismissals, should not be an obstacle or a foreclosure to new, diverging, unexpected information.'³⁰⁴ His model demands that the listener functions as 'the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time', a metaphor that cannot be accurately used to describe Morgan's position as her mother's and grandmother's listener.³⁰⁵ As a result both of her prior knowledge and of her identification with her mother and grandmother, the 'screen' on which they inscribe their testimonies is already traced with her understanding of Aboriginal history, and embedded within the personal and political motivations that underpin Morgan's construction of her autobiographical narrative.

Morgan's personal involvement in the testimonies she encourages her mother and grandmother to give can be seen as the root of the conflict discussed in section 2.2, between her reliance on their stories in order to fulfil the political aims of her project, and Daisy's desire for silence about her painful past. The familial and political contexts of Morgan's project transform her role as listener from the detached enabling position that Laub's model envisages, leading her instead to insist that her foremothers give testimony despite their deep

³⁰³ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 61.

³⁰⁴ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 61.

³⁰⁵ Laub, 'Bearing Witness', p. 57.

ambivalence about revisiting and sharing their traumatic experiences. The levels of witnessing taking place in *My Place* are immeasurably more complex than the less personal interaction between Laub and his interviewees for the Fortunoff archive, or in the clinical context of psychotherapeutic work with Holocaust survivors.³⁰⁶ In the terms of Laub's model, Morgan's personal implication in her mother's and grandmother's stories makes her an unsuitable, fallible listener.

Kennedy examines another aspect of Morgan's complex position in relation to her mother's and grandmother's testimonies, suggesting that, as an 'identifying witness', she 'witnesses from a position that is simultaneously implicated in, and yet very different from, her grandmother and mother's experiences.'³⁰⁷ She asserts that 'in her desire to identify with them', Morgan 'ignores crucial differences of class, race, and embodied experience.'³⁰⁸ With her mixed-race heritage and light coloured skin, and protected during her childhood by the cover story that the family are Indian, Morgan has escaped the personal experiences of racial discrimination her grandmother suffers. The differences in Daisy and Morgan's racial identities are highlighted by an incident that occurs when Gladys's pet dog misbehaves, and Morgan tells him off by calling him "you bloody mongrel" (p. 181). She is surprised when Daisy objects to this term, seeing her assertion that "it hurts me" as an overreaction, until she realises that Daisy thinks she is referring to 'a small Aboriginal boy' who is sitting on the grass nearby (pp. 181-82). Daisy upbraids her, saying "I've heard them called that. It's not right, they got feelings" (p. 182), and attributes her distress to the fact that "I been called that" (p. 181). Daisy's mistaken assumption suggests that she subconsciously aligns her granddaughter's perspective with that of racist white authority figures, rather than with her own point of view as a black woman who has suffered racial denigration throughout her life. The distressing exchange also illustrates that while Morgan seeks to

³⁰⁶ Kennedy points out that Laub is himself a Holocaust survivor, and is therefore 'in a strong position of identification' with the fellow survivors whose testimonies he listens to (Kennedy, 'Affective Work', p. 58). This suggests that Laub's attempt to create a universal model for trauma testimony, reliant on the conception of the listener as 'blank screen', is also problematic in his own case. Arguably the detached role Laub asserts that the listener should perform is impossible in any political and cultural context, and attention must always be paid to the listener's personal implication in the trauma testimony they witness.

³⁰⁷ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 256.

³⁰⁸ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 256.

proudly assert her newly discovered Aboriginal identity, the fact that she has not shared Daisy's experiences of racial denigration makes her less attuned to the linguistic nuances to which her grandmother reacts. This incident is another example of the 'differences in their positioning relative to the dominant white culture' of the generations in Morgan's family, paralleling the distance that Kennedy identifies between Gladys's and Daisy's experiences.³⁰⁹ Whilst in terms of Laub's model of trauma testimony Morgan is a fallible listener because she cannot maintain the necessary detachment from the stories she hears, in Kennedy's interpretation Morgan fails at times because she cannot identify *enough* with her mother's and grandmother's perspectives, and therefore fails to fully understand their experiences.

The focus on the pivotal role of the listener in facilitating trauma testimony in Laub's work offers some insight into Morgan's relationship with her mother's and grandmother's stories in *My Place*. However, Morgan's personal and political investment in the familial testimonies she listens to mean that ultimately her work does not conform to Laub's model. The listener-witness relationship in *My Place* should be read in terms of both the personal and political aims of the text. Whilst Holocaust testimonies do of course have a political dimension, the focus of Laub's work is psychotherapeutic, and it is in these terms that he determines the importance of the listener's detachment. In contrast, Morgan's role in relation to the maternal testimonies in her narrative is not simply that of an enabling listener working to facilitate their healing, but is also responsible for politicising her mother's and grandmother's use of their experiential knowledge. Kennedy's alternative model of Morgan as an identifying witness highlights the personal and emotional significance of listening to familial testimonies, and throws into relief the complexities of Morgan's identification, given the differences between Daisy and Gladys's experiential knowledge and her own.

³⁰⁹ Kennedy, 'Autobiography', p. 250.

2.5 Testimony in the Context of the Stolen Generations

As explored in the previous section, new understandings of the relationship between trauma testimony and the listener must be developed in order to address Morgan's intergenerational narrative. In addition to the issues of Morgan's emotional involvement and political investment in the stories her mother and grandmother tell, it is important to examine the role of readers as the text's addressees, who are also positioned as witnesses to Gladys's and Daisy's testimonies. In the Australian political context narratives by and about members of the Stolen Generations challenge the traditional argument that in separating Aboriginal families white settlers acted in their best interests. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the lack of a clear regime change means that Australia arguably maintains some of the structures of a colonial society. Whilst there has been much progress in the recognition of Aboriginal perspectives on this history, it has occurred (and is arguably still occurring) through a gradual process of transition, rather than a clear redefinition of the relationship between indigenous and settler Australians.³¹⁰ As this section will demonstrate, the Stolen Generations remains a contentious subject for some settler Australians. This has significant implications for the relationship between survivors and the addressees of their trauma testimonies, both in the context of the official testimony gathering work of the National Inquiry, and for *My Place* as a literary narrative of the Stolen Generations.

2.5.1 *The Stolen Generations as contested history*

In his study of Aboriginal historiography, Bain Attwood examines what have been termed the 'history wars', which emerged around the turn of the twenty-first century, fuelling debates about what constitutes the 'truth' of Australia's colonial past.³¹¹ He explains that the 'growing popularity of Aboriginal history' during the 1980s 'drew it increasingly into the public sphere where it became a public history – a history which is produced and consumed, used and abused in

³¹⁰ See Young, p. 20, and Muecke, p. 11.

³¹¹ Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History* (Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2005), p. 3.

an array of public contexts.³¹² This phenomenon has given rise to ‘a struggle over who controls this past, who can influence the interpretation of this past, and who can determine the historical truth about the nature of colonialism.’³¹³ Attwood attributes the controversy surrounding Australia’s colonial history to ‘the historical relationship between the nation’s non-aboriginal or settler peoples and aboriginal peoples’ which, he argues, ‘is an especially difficult past to confront, all the more so in the Australian case because of the nature of national history-making in the past.’³¹⁴ As a narrative of Morgan’s Aboriginal family’s experiences in Australia’s colonial past, *My Place* engages with debates about who has the authority to tell these stories, and raises questions about the addressee of trauma testimonies in the context of this contested history.

Although *My Place* has in general been continuously well received in Australia since its publication in 1987, it has nonetheless not escaped intense scrutiny on the grounds of authenticity, and a number of critics have sought to challenge the version of the Aboriginal past that Morgan presents. Scholar of Aboriginal literature Christine Watson examines the particular vulnerability of Aboriginal autobiography as a genre to questions of authenticity. She argues that

the complex relationship between ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ plays itself out, over and over, in Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives as the authors struggle to resist those ‘official’ versions of history that silenced them by constructing them as objects of a narrative to which they could not contribute.³¹⁵

Consequently both the subject matter and the form of *My Place* present critics with opportunities to question or counter the picture of the Australian past that Morgan creates. Critiques of *My Place* have frequently focused on the issues of Morgan’s mixed-race identity and her ‘assimilation’ into mainstream white Australian culture, which distance her perspective from those of her mother and grandmother. These arguments are exemplified by Attwood’s examination of Morgan’s discovery of her Aboriginal heritage. He poses the question: ‘what is the unconscious (or conscious) problem that belief in her Aboriginality solves for

³¹² Attwood, *Telling the Truth*, p. 51.

³¹³ Attwood, *Telling the Truth*, pp. 1-2.

³¹⁴ Attwood, *Telling the Truth*, p. 1.

³¹⁵ Christine Watson, “‘Believe Me’: Acts of Witnessing in Aboriginal Women’s Autobiographical Narratives”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 20:64 (2000), 142-52 (p. 143). See also Margaret McDonnell’s examination of challenges on the grounds of veracity associated with life writing, in ‘Locating the Text: Genre and Indigenous Australian Women’s Life Writing’, *Life Writing*, 2.2 (2005), 71-90 (p. 77).

Morgan, or what wishes or desires does this belief satisfy?³¹⁶ He identifies at the crux of this issue what he describes as a ‘contradiction between Morgan’s freedom to choose this identity and her assertion of it as essential.’³¹⁷ Annabel Cooper examines such challenges to *My Place*’s authenticity, observing that there is a ‘critical anxiety surrounding Morgan’s “inauthentic” form, “Aboriginal autobiography”’, which ‘turns up repeatedly, displaying, perhaps, a sense of generic miscegenation between the categories of oppressor and oppressed.’³¹⁸ Cooper argues that Morgan

participates both in social power with her university education, her ‘white’ privileges, her role as artist; and in oppression, coming as she does out of a violent home, where the secrets of a terrible family past yield fears as profound as the threat of losing the children.³¹⁹

Cooper goes on to suggest that ‘at the risk of over-simplifying, Michaels, Muecke and Attwood all at moments seem to be questioning [...] what they see as [Morgan’s] claim to categorise herself as oppressed.’³²⁰ Interrogations of Morgan’s authenticity thus hinge on the interconnected cultural and political meanings of contemporary Aboriginal identity.

The nature of Morgan’s upbringing means that she herself explores the issue of her Aboriginal identity within the text, when she first discovers the family’s heritage, and interrogates her own claim to authenticity. After Gladys and Daisy admit that they are Aboriginal, Morgan and her sister Jill apply for Aboriginal scholarships to support their university studies, but their eligibility is challenged by fellow students. Morgan has to defend her right to claim the scholarship, and eventually convinces the Senior Officer at the Commonwealth Department of Education that her Aboriginal heritage is authentic. However, the distressing encounter leaves Morgan confused, and she questions her right to identify as Aboriginal. She asks;

had I been dishonest with myself? What did it really mean to be Aboriginal? I’d never lived off the land and been a hunter and a

³¹⁶ Bain Attwood, ‘Portrait of an Aboriginal as an Artist: Sally Morgan and the Construction of Aboriginality’, *Australian Historical Studies*, 25 (1992), 302-318 (p. 303).

³¹⁷ Attwood, ‘Portrait’, p. 303. Tim Rowse offers an interesting discussion of Attwood’s critique in his essay ‘Sally Morgan’s Kaftan’, *Australian Historical Studies*, 25:100 (1993), 465-68.

³¹⁸ Annabel Cooper, ‘Talking About *My Place*/My Place: Feminism, Criticism and the Other’s Autobiography’, *Southern Review: Communication, Politics, Culture*, 28 (1995), 140-53 (p. 149).

³¹⁹ Cooper, p. 149.

³²⁰ Cooper, p. 149. In addition to Attwood’s 1992 essay cited above, Cooper refers here to Eric Michaels, ‘Para-Ethnography’, *Art and Text*, 30 (1988), 42-54, and to Stephen Muecke, ‘Aboriginal Literature and the Oppressive Hypothesis’, *Southerly*, 48:4 (1998), 405-418.

gatherer. I'd never participated in corroborees or heard stories of the Dreamtime. I hardly knew any Aboriginal people. What did it mean for someone like me? (p. 178)

Whitlock examines the significance of this passage, observing that 'My Place allows quite specific questions about Aboriginality to be voiced by the "naive" narrator', a factor which contributes to the text's accessibility to the 'foreign reader' who has little prior knowledge of Aboriginal culture.³²¹ Whitlock argues that by foregrounding Morgan's exploration of her newly discovered Aboriginal identity, 'My Place' unseated long-held notions that wholeness and authenticity in Aboriginal identity reside in colour, "blood" and physical characteristics.³²² Critical discussions of Morgan's authenticity are therefore mirrored by her own engagement with the question of her Aboriginal identity in the text which, Whitlock argues, establishes 'more contemporary and flexible notions of identification, and an autobiographical enactment of Aboriginal heritage as a spiritual tie with the land, which passes on, undiminished, through generations.'³²³ Morgan's exploration of contemporary mixed-race Aboriginality is an interesting parallel to the trope of 'blood memory' that Hale employs in relation to her Native American identity *Bloodlines*, explored in Chapter Three. As Whitlock demonstrates, by working through these issues in her intergenerational autobiography Morgan challenges conventional understandings of Aboriginal people's lives and identities, negotiating a new discourse of Aboriginality for mixed-race descendants like herself.

The critical debates surrounding the authenticity of Morgan's Aboriginality also relate to the intergenerational form of the narrative, since this issue throws into question her ability to speak on behalf of her mother and grandmother as Aboriginal women. By incorporating Daisy and Gladys's life stories, told by them in the first person, within her autobiography, Morgan purports to represent them in the sense that Spivak defines in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' as 'representation', creating a portrait of their lives.³²⁴ However, as Kennedy stresses, '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

³²¹ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 157.

³²² Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 158.

³²³ Whitlock, *Intimate Empire*, p. 158.

³²⁴ Spivak, p. 275.

died.³²⁵ Kennedy argues that ‘we inevitably read Daisy’s testimony through Sally’s representation of her’, as a result of the fact that Daisy ‘appears as a character in Sally’s story before she speaks in her own voice’.³²⁶ As author and narrator of *My Place*, Morgan determines the meaning of her foremothers’ narratives through a range of techniques, including the framing of their life stories within her own that Kennedy highlights here, and her personal investment in the production of their first person narratives discussed in section 2.4. Each of these factors influences the picture of Aboriginal lives that *My Place* produces, giving rise to the question of whether Morgan in fact represents her mother and grandmother in the alternate sense Spivak identifies, arguably ‘speaking for’ them by appropriating their voices and experiences for the purpose of her own political agenda.³²⁷

Although Morgan’s incorporation of Daisy and Gladys’s stories into her intergenerational autobiography leaves her work open to these important questions, *My Place* nonetheless performs important work in giving voice to their stories as part of a record of the lives of Stolen Generations survivors. In her work on Stolen Generations testimony, Whitlock emphasises that ‘autobiographical testimonies of violence and suffering’ face significant challenges relating to the circumstances of their production.³²⁸ She explains that

These narrators are always caught in the vexed position: their experience must be told for atrocities to be believed, social reformers need a public to hear what these narrators have to say, but these narrators are unauthorized by any social, cultural, or political rank.³²⁹

As a result, Whitlock argues, ‘these texts must authorize the narrator, and must offer clear signals on how the narrative is to be read and what constitutes its truth to be witnessed by a believing reader in an appropriate way’.³³⁰ This authorising function is performed in *My Place* by Morgan’s role as the frame narrator, witness and editor of her mother’s and grandmother’s testimonies. Morgan harnesses the privilege she benefits from as an assimilated, university educated, mixed-race Aboriginal woman, in order to authorise the testimonies of

³²⁵ Kennedy, ‘Autobiography’, p. 240.

³²⁶ Kennedy, ‘Autobiography’, p. 240.

³²⁷ Spivak, p. 275.

³²⁸ Whitlock, ‘Second Person’, p. 208.

³²⁹ Whitlock, ‘Second Person’, p. 208.

³³⁰ Whitlock, ‘Second Person’, p. 208.

her mother and grandmother by creating a context in which their voices can be heard.

Although the authenticity of *My Place* has been extensively critiqued, it is important to understand these arguments in terms of the text's form and purpose. As an experiential narrative, Morgan's intergenerational autobiography does not purport to present a fully authenticated, 'official' record of Australian history in the way that the *Bringing Them Home* report does. Instead, the literary genre allows Morgan to foreground the process of her self-discovery, and the interrelation of her life story with those of her mother and grandmother, producing a deliberately subjective experiential narrative that negotiates her right to determine her own cultural identity. As Whitlock highlights, using autobiography to represent Aboriginal lives enables Morgan to address the perspectives of non-Aboriginal Australians, by drawing them into a position of identification with her exploration of Aboriginality in ways that are not possible within the structure of the National Inquiry. Through her use of intergenerational autobiography Morgan creates a public space for the marginalised voices and stories of her foremothers, which are placed at the centre of her project. Whilst her mediation of Gladys's and Daisy's stories may be seen as problematic, Morgan does important work in bringing their experiences into the public consciousness, allowing them to address a readership that they would have no access to without the interventions she makes to create a framework through which their narratives can be told.

2.5.2 Judith Drake-Brockman's response to *My Place*

Perhaps the most astounding critique of *My Place*'s authenticity is Judith Drake-Brockman's memoir *Wongi Wongi*, published in 2001 as a response to Morgan's representation of her grandmother's employers in her text. I introduce this text here to illustrate the ongoing debate about Stolen Generations history in Australia, a phenomenon that has significant implications for the role of trauma testimony in Morgan's intergenerational autobiography. Drake-Brockman's memoir not only constructs an alternative narrative of Daisy, Gladys, and Daisy's mother Annie's lives, but also presents a more general

picture of Aboriginal-settler relations that contests the discourse of the Stolen Generations as traumatic. She describes her narrative as a response to the 'discrediting' of her family in *My Place*, and disputes what she terms 'serious aspersions cast on my father.'³³¹ Drake-Brockman uses the memoir form to present alternative 'facts' about Daisy and Gladys's paternity in order to deny the possibility that either of them could have been the daughters of Howden Drake-Brockman.³³² Her version of Daisy's life with her family also rewrites Morgan's portrayal both of Daisy's removal from Annie, and of Gladys being sent away to Parkerville children's home. Drake-Brockman maintains that her mother Alice took Daisy from her family on Corunna Downs station at Daisy and Annie's requests. She writes that 'both Daisy and her mother were adamant. Daisy wanted to come home with us and Annie agreed that: "this is no place for my girl, take her with you"'.³³³ Similarly, Drake-Brockman asserts that Alice sent Gladys to the children's home at the age of three in order 'to ensure that she received a good education', maintaining that Daisy visited her there at least every other week.³³⁴

In re-writing Daisy's story Drake-Brockman asserts that 'we were all a happy and united family, and that included Daisy [and] Gladys', playing down the social divisions between the employers and their servants with the words 'eating in the kitchen was commonplace and there was no shame being called a "servant"'.³³⁵ Describing her own relationship with Daisy as the nursemaid who cared for her during her childhood, she writes that 'I have always considered that I had two mothers, one white and one black.'³³⁶ Read alongside Daisy's narrative of this period in her life in *My Place*, the irony of this statement is clear. Drake-Brockman writes from a position of privilege that enables her to overlook the fact that Daisy's own daughter Gladys was deprived of the maternal care that she received in abundance both from her biological mother and her family's

³³¹ Drake-Brockman, p. 138.

³³² Drake-Brockman restates the story she tells when Morgan visits her during her research for *My Place* (recounted in Morgan, pp. 195-97), that Daisy's father is a man called Maltese Sam (p. 23). Drake-Brockman makes no mention of Gladys's father, but states that Howden 'never knew her' (p. 55). This version of events counters Daisy's assertion in her first person narrative that Howden nursed baby Gladys while on his death bed (Morgan, p. 419), which might be interpreted as evidence that he was Gladys's father (possibly as well as being Daisy's).

³³³ Drake-Brockman, p. 32.

³³⁴ Drake-Brockman, p. 98.

³³⁵ Drake-Brockman, p. 79.

³³⁶ Drake-Brockman, p. 25.

Aboriginal servant. This version of Daisy and Gladys's lives contests their first person narratives published in *My Place*, as Drake-Brockman attempts to show her family in a positive light, succeeding only in revealing her own bias and racial prejudice.

In addition to the depiction of Daisy and Gladys's relationships with her family, Drake-Brockman also discusses the role of white landowners and authorities in relation to Aboriginal people in more general terms. She observes that

With so many malicious and unkind things being said today about government policy towards Aborigines during that period, it is easy to overlook the fact that there were many well meaning and caring people, inside and outside government with genuine concern for the best interests of the Aborigines.³³⁷

Drake-Brockman discusses the role of the Native Affairs Department, which required Aboriginal people who did not live on reserves or agricultural stations to regularly report where they were living and working. She defends this policy against criticisms of paternalism, arguing that 'it was designed to protect those Aboriginal boys and girls from being exploited and to ensure that certain conditions and wages were met.'³³⁸ These arguments demonstrate the racist assumption that Aboriginal people should be treated like children who require 'protection', supporting the view that they were intellectually and emotionally inferior to white people in order to justify the control over their lives that enabled the settlers to exploit them financially for their labour.

The paternalism and racist attitudes to the relationship between Aboriginal and settler Australians that Drake-Brockman espouses is an example of the version of Australia's past that Morgan seeks to counter in *My Place*. The fact that *Wongi-Wongi* was published in 2001, fourteen years after Morgan's text, and four years after the *Bringing Them Home* report, demonstrates that even after decades of Aboriginal activism and the official government acknowledgement of the Stolen Generations history, this era in the colonial past remains contentious. The debate about the authenticity of Morgan's Aboriginal identity, and the publication of Drake-Brockman's alternative version of her family's stories, both highlight the challenges of giving trauma testimony about the Stolen

³³⁷ Drake-Brockman, p. 101.

³³⁸ Drake-Brockman, p. 33.

Generations in postcolonial Australia. Aboriginal perspectives on the colonial past are subjected to close scrutiny, and their representation of the relations between indigenous and settler Australians is frequently contested. The implications of these issues for the process of giving testimony are examined below.

2.5.3 *The addressee in Stolen Generations testimony*

The contestation around Aboriginal histories and the Stolen Generations in Australia has significant implications for the witness or listener's relation to trauma testimony. In her discussion of Laub's model of witnessing trauma, Kennedy highlights that his cautionary emphasis on the need for listeners to retain a distance between themselves and trauma survivors (discussed in 2.3 above) is less applicable to Stolen Generations testimonies. She argues that in these circumstances the danger is instead 'that listeners will deny or reject the witness's testimony as false or exaggerated, or will claim that the experience may have been difficult, but was for the best in the long term.'³³⁹ Faced with the possibility that listeners may reject the definition of their experiences as traumatic, Kennedy explains, Stolen Generations survivors are met with a very different set of challenges from those of the Holocaust survivors on whose testimony Laub based his model. She describes the 'most notable' challenge as 'how to break through barriers that prevent people from listening and responding to the speakers' address.'³⁴⁰ The example of Drake-Brockman's *Wongi Wongi* highlights the denial that Stolen Generations survivors risk when they speak or write about their experiences. In this political context, in addition to Morgan's role as the listener to Gladys's and Daisy's testimonies in *My Place*, there is another alternately positioned 'listener' or witness, in the form of the reader who may challenge the view of Aboriginal history presented in the text.

In her collaborative work with Tikka Jan Wilson, Kennedy explains the limitations of psychoanalytic models of trauma testimony in postcolonial contexts, arguing that 'how a testimony addresses readers, and how readers

³³⁹ Kennedy, 'Affective Work', p. 59.

³⁴⁰ Kennedy, 'Affective Work', p. 59.

respond to that address, is complicated by cultural differences and the legacies of colonialism and racism.³⁴¹ She explains how this functions in the Australian context in her work on Stolen Generations testimony, outlining the contrasting ways 'in which these testimonies are produced and consumed, read and viewed, debated and discussed' in comparison to Holocaust testimonies in the United States.³⁴² Kennedy explains that in the US context 'remembering the Holocaust does not raise the same political and moral difficulties that confronting Aboriginal dispossession [...] raises in Australia.'³⁴³ She suggests that in the political context in which Stolen Generations testimonies are given, an alternative 'critical methodology for reading testimonies' should be developed, which 'must consider not only issues of trauma and affect, but also questions of power and subjectivity.'³⁴⁴ Whitlock notes that in these circumstances 'the second person, who is the witness and the narratee, is called upon to witness her own complicity and implication in the loss and suffering which is finally being spoken.'³⁴⁵ Both Kennedy and Wilson, and Whitlock, articulate the need for an alternative to Laub's psychoanalytic model of testimony and witnessing that pays attention to the subject position of the addressee in the political context of the Stolen Generations.

Attention to the addressee in Stolen Generations testimony has important implications for *My Place* as Aboriginal autobiography, shedding light on the role of Morgan's readers as additional 'listeners' to her mother's and grandmother's stories. Within the framework of the intergenerational narrative, Gladys's and Daisy's testimonies are addressed to two different witnesses: firstly to Morgan as an implicated listener whose collaboration in the storytelling process is foregrounded within the narrative, and secondly to the eventual readers of the published text. Christine Watson highlights 'the unspoken issue of responsibility demanded of those who engage in reading and writing about these acts of witnessing' in Aboriginal women's autobiographies.³⁴⁶ She emphasises that 'the assertion of the role of the witnessing subject carries

³⁴¹ Kennedy and Wilson, p. 120.

³⁴² Rosanne Kennedy, 'Stolen Generations Testimony: Trauma, Historiography, and the Question of "Truth"', *Aboriginal History*, 25 (2001), 116-31 (p. 125).

³⁴³ Kennedy, 'Stolen Generations Testimony', p. 125. Also see the discussion of this comparison in Whitlock, 'Second Person', p. 209.

³⁴⁴ Kennedy, 'Stolen Generations Testimony', p. 125.

³⁴⁵ Whitlock, 'Second Person', p. 209. See also Kennedy and Wilson, p. 121.

³⁴⁶ Christine Watson, pp. 143-44.

strong political and social intentions and implications because in many cases Aboriginal autobiographies dare to challenge accepted and dominant versions of history.³⁴⁷ As an Aboriginal autobiography *My Place* engages readers in a process of evaluating their own position in relation Morgan's multi-layered testimonial narrative.

Kennedy and Wilson propose a new model of witnessing based on 'a performative understanding of testimony' that focuses on the role of the addressee, which they develop in response to the specific context in which Stolen Generations narratives are told.³⁴⁸ They explain that this approach 'calls for the analysis of subject-positions the testimony constructs both for the narrator and for the listener/reader.'³⁴⁹ As Kennedy explains elsewhere, 'the understanding of testimony as an address draws out the listener's ethical obligation to respond,' echoing Christine Watson's assertion of the responsibility carried by readers of Aboriginal autobiographies.³⁵⁰ Kennedy and Wilson argue that, as an alternative to psychoanalytic models of testimony like Laub's, approaches that consider address 'may enable an understanding of testimony as a contribution to a shared Aboriginal history, which challenges a monolithic Australian history in which Aboriginal history is excluded or marginalised.'³⁵¹ As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, as a literary text *My Place* is able to reach a wide-ranging readership, and thus potentially to address greater numbers of non-Aboriginal Australians than official testimony gathering projects like the *Bringing Them Home* report are able to reach. The intersubjective form of autobiography invites readers to empathise with the narrators, including not only Morgan herself, but also her mother and grandmother whose stories are embedded within the text. In this respect *My Place* fulfils an important role in the re-evaluation of Aboriginal histories, by confronting its wide readership as addressees of Gladys's and Daisy's trauma testimonies, and prompting them to examine their own subject positions in relation to the colonial past.

³⁴⁷ Christine Watson, p. 145.

³⁴⁸ Kennedy and Wilson, p. 121.

³⁴⁹ Kennedy and Wilson, p. 121.

³⁵⁰ Kennedy, 'Affective Work', p. 50.

³⁵¹ Kennedy and Wilson, p. 127.

Conclusion

As an intergenerational autobiography Morgan's *My Place* draws on collaborative familial storytelling to produce a poignant narrative about the impact of the separation of Aboriginal children from their families, both for the survivors of the Stolen Generations and for future generations of Aboriginal people. Whilst Morgan's incorporation of first person testimonies, and her approach to the Stolen Generations history, closely parallel the narrative produced by the Australian National Inquiry's *Bringing Them Home* report, the literary form of the text offers greater insights into the complexities of responding to this traumatic past. Paralleling Magona's narratives of the colonial oppression of indigenous people in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, Morgan uses intergenerational autobiography to access her foremothers' stories and produce a long view of history, demonstrating how generations of Aboriginal people's everyday lives are affected by the ongoing legacy of the Stolen Generations. She develops her own innovative use of the genre by reflexively recording her discovery of the family's Aboriginal heritage, and the negotiations with her mother and grandmother to persuade them to tell their stories. By embedding the first person testimonies that they eventually agree to give within the text, framed by domestic interactions between herself, Gladys, and Daisy, Morgan foregrounds the challenges of giving trauma testimony and explores the healing potential of familial storytelling.

The political aims of Morgan's work are reliant on the testimonies of her mother and grandmother, which she uses to write their perspectives and experiences as Aboriginal women back into the public understanding of Australian history. Morgan plays a vital role within the text as the listener and facilitator of their testimonies, enabling them to reinterpret their past experiences and attest to the traumas they endured as the result of colonial interventions in the lives of Aboriginal families. As my analysis has shown, the Western psychoanalytic model of trauma testimony and the listener's role has significant limitations when applied to *My Place*. New understandings of testimony must be developed in order to address both Morgan's role as an identifying witness to her mother's and grandmother's life stories, and the political context of contestation and denial surrounding the history of the Stolen Generations. The

collaborative storytelling work that Morgan undertakes with her foremothers also performs an important personal and cultural function, by reaffirming the familial relationships attacked by the separation policies, and enabling her to examine the significance of her own contemporary Aboriginal identity.

Chapter 3. Trauma And Haunting In Native American

Autobiography: Janet Campbell Hale's

Bloodlines: Odyssey Of A Native Daughter

Introduction

i. *Introducing Bloodlines*

This chapter explores how Janet Campbell Hale uses intergenerational autobiography in her 1993 collection of autobiographical essays, *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter*. In this text Hale records her personal experiences of abuse and alienation from her Native American family, and revisits the lives and stories of her mother and grandmothers, in an attempt to comprehend the forces behind the traumatic destruction of generational connections to her family and cultural heritage.³⁵² As Hale explains in the introductory essay 'Circling Raven', her father is full-blooded Coeur d'Alene, while her mother's lineage is mixed-race Canadian-Irish, Chippewa and Kootenay (p. xvi). Hale uses intergenerational autobiography to explore the complexity of her mixed-race identity, and seeks to understand the legacy of the violence and cultural trauma experienced by her Native American ancestors as a result of encounters with the colonial settlers. *Bloodlines* differs from Magona and Morgan's intergenerational autobiographies, in that Hale's foremothers are no longer living when she writes her narrative, and her relationship to their stories is played out through inherited memory and the recovery of lost stories from their pasts. I examine theoretical models of the intergenerational transmission of trauma as ways of reading the ongoing effects of her family's

³⁵² Scholarly discourse about the indigenous peoples of North America refers to this group variously as 'Indian', 'Native', 'Indigenous', 'Aboriginal', and 'First Nations', amongst other terms. Whilst there is no clear consensus on the most appropriate labelling, I have elected to use the descriptor 'Native American', which appears to be the most widely used term amongst academics, policy-makers and Native American activists since the late 1990s. In discussing Native American people as a group, it is in some sense artificial to portray the hundreds of indigenous tribes across the North American continent as a homogenous entity. Although I seek to retain an awareness of the unique cultural heritage of each individual tribe, I also refer to Native Americans as a group because this helps to highlight the effects of the shared history of European colonisation, which was experienced on different levels by indigenous people across the continent.

experiences in Hale's own life story. In addition to her exploration of inherited trauma, Hale uses the trope of her bloodline and the concept of 'blood memory' to tell an alternative maternal story, which offers the potential to overcome the damage caused by generations of colonial trauma, and to establish a more positive Coeur d'Alene identity through her engagement with the next generation. In common with Magona and Morgan's intergenerational autobiographies, the interconnected familial stories in *Bloodlines* can be read as historical narratives that offer an indigenous perspective on the continuing legacy of the colonial past for Native American people in both the USA and Canada.

The form of *Bloodlines* is central to Hale's engagement with inherited stories, and she states explicitly that the text is 'a collection of autobiographical essays, not a single work' (p. xxii). The episodic structure allows her to engage with the stories of family members in discrete sections, using several different approaches to explore how their experiences relate to her own life. The structural compartmentalising of the familial stories that Hale relates can be seen as a response to inherited traumatic experiences, and in particular to the difficult relationships between herself, her mother and her maternal grandmother. Writing her intergenerational autobiography in the form of individual essays enables Hale to focus fully on each of her foremothers' stories, and to separate these from her depiction of aspects of her personal life that she does not connect with the familial narratives. As well as the lives of her mother and grandmothers, Hale also writes about the experiences of her father's first wife, touches on the lives of her sisters, their children and grandchildren, and examines the subjectivity of her own daughter. Although the essays can be read independently, *Bloodlines* nonetheless forms a cohesive narrative, comprising a series of related stories about events in the lives of Hale and her foremothers. The text is framed by the introduction 'Circling Raven' and the final essay 'Dust to Dust', both of which reflect on Hale's relationship with the inherited stories and consider the legacy she passes on to future generations.

Hale's narrative depicts her childhood experiences in the mid-western United States and records the nomadic life that she and her parents lead, oscillating

between setting up home in various predominantly white small towns, and returning for periods of time to her father's reservation. They live in conditions of extreme poverty, and their itinerant lifestyle is indicative of the displacement of many Native American people as a result of their removal from traditional tribal homelands across North America.³⁵³ Whilst the Coeur d'Alene tribe that Hale's father is a member of have rights to an officially designated reservation, as Hale explains, they have been 'confined to one small portion of what had been vast ancestral land' in northern Idaho (pp. xv-xvi).³⁵⁴ During her childhood the family are frequently driven away from the Coeur d'Alene reservation by financial necessity, choosing to seek opportunities elsewhere. Hale explains that such deprivation continues in the narrative present, listing 'the poverty, the lack of employment opportunities, [and] the high crime rate' as some of 'the many social problems that plague modern reservations' (p. xix).

The difficulties of reservation life are exacerbated in Hale's childhood by the fact that her father Nick struggles with alcoholism and sometimes behaves violently. Hale analyses these issues in Native American communities in the adult education manual *Native Students with Problems of Addiction*. As lead author of the manual, Hale writes that 'for Native people, the void that occurred as a result of cultural and spiritual loss, and the parallel loss of control over economic and social institutions, have contributed to addictive behaviours.'³⁵⁵ The destruction of traditional cultures alluded to here can be attributed in part to the

³⁵³ The US/Canadian border bisects many Native American homelands, including that of Hale's maternal Kootenay ancestors. Kathleen Mullen Sands observes that the border 'does not affect how tribal peoples define their traditional homelands or cultures'. See Sands, 'Indian Women's Personal Narrative: Voices Past and Present', in *American Women's Autobiography: Fea(s)ts of Memory*, ed. by Margo Culley (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 268-94 (p. 291 n. 13).

³⁵⁴ It should be noted that Native American reservations differ significantly from the black townships in apartheid South Africa, and from the enclosure of Australian Aboriginal people in reserves in the early nineteenth century. Unlike the forced relocation of indigenous South Africans and Australians, Native American reservations are usually located on some part of original tribal lands. Residence is optional, and the rights associated with tribal membership are considered both economically and spiritually significant. Reservations are to an extent self-governing spaces controlled by elected tribal leaders, although as literary scholar Chadwick Allen notes, 'tension between separation and supervision remains at the heart of ongoing treaty disputes'. See Allen, *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 164.

³⁵⁵ Janet Campbell Hale and others, *Native Students with Problems of Addiction: A Manual for Adult Educators*, ed. by Miranda McLaws (Victoria: British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training, and Technology, 1990)
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED351174&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED351174 [accessed 09 January 2012] (p. 8).

Indian Residential Schools system, as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has highlighted. In a study of the historical background of the system, the Canadian TRC describes how

the impacts began to cascade through generations [...] until eventually, the legacy of the schools became joblessness, poverty, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, family breakdown, sexual abuse, prostitution, homelessness, high rates of imprisonment, and early death.³⁵⁶

The impact of the residential schools and the work of the TRC are discussed further below. Tracing the links between the destruction of traditional Native American tribal communities and alcohol and drug abuse demonstrates that the alcoholism in Hale's family is symptomatic of broader social issues. In *Bloodlines* Nick's struggle with addiction causes further disruption to Hale's childhood, when on a number of occasions Margaret takes her daughter and flees from her husband's damaging behaviour.

Throughout the text Hale's and her parents' lives are haunted by North America's colonial history, as she reflects on how these experiences have impacted on their identities and fractured relationships with one another. The family's complex mixed-race heritage has a significant impact on their experiences, as they struggle to reconcile the discriminatory attitudes of their white ancestors with traditional Native American cultural values. Sections 3.1 and 3.2 explore Hale's engagement with the inherited traumatic experiences of earlier generations. In section 3.1 I examine the overtly personal strategy she uses to tell the story of her relationship with her mother, as she incorporates experiential stories that Margaret tells about her life before her daughter's birth into the narrative. The concept of the transgenerational phantom developed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok sheds light on Hale's inheritance of symptoms of trauma from her family, in the form of the abuse her mother directs at her. Section 3.2 explores a second mode of engagement with inherited life stories, whereby Hale uses independent historical research to uncover the circumstances of her maternal grandmother's early life. Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory provides an insight into the compulsion Hale feels to tell Gram Sullivan's story, which plays a vital role in Hale's exploration of

³⁵⁶ *They Came for the Children*, pp. 77-78.

contemporary Native American identity, and contributes to her production of an experiential history of her indigenous family's experiences in the colonial past.

In the opening essay 'Circling Raven' Hale describes the aim of the book as

An effort to understand the pathology of the dysfunction, what made my family the way it was. I examine my own life in part, but reach beyond what I personally know or could know ... back along my bloodlines to imagine the people I came from in the context of their own lives and times. (pp. xxii)

The trope of 'reach[ing] back along [her] bloodlines' is central to Hale's engagement with inherited familial stories in her life narrative, as she researches and imaginatively recreates her ancestors' experiences in order to draw out the implications of the dysfunctional relationships in their family life. As section 3.3 discusses, Hale also uses the concept of her bloodline to reconnect with her Native American foremothers in a more positive way, employing the literary trope of 'blood memory' to imaginatively rebuild her relationship with her paternal grandmother. Reimagining and writing the stories of her Native American foremothers enables Hale to voice their experiences and attempt to redraw generational links that will reconnect her with her family and tribal identity, enabling her to establish a new legacy for future generations. Simultaneously, Hale's use of the blood memory trope to imaginatively recreate the violent confrontation between Native Americans and white settlers at the Battle of the Bear Paw also contributes to a rewriting of colonial history from the perspective of the colonised people.

ii. Contextualising the narrative

The context of *Bloodlines*' publication is central to understanding its significance, both as a narrative of Native American experiences in colonial history, and in terms of Hale's personal and cultural exploration of contemporary mixed-race Native American identity. The development of Native American autobiography as a distinct genre and the role of life writing in relation to Native American activism in the second half of the twentieth century both shed light on Hale's use of the genre. The existence of autobiography – in the broad sense of telling first person narratives about one's own life – in traditional Native

American societies before European colonisation has been the subject of extensive critical debate.³⁵⁷ However, what is certain is that a tradition of English language Native American life writing exists from the nineteenth century onwards, and has been associated with resistance to European colonisation from its inception. Scholar of Native American literature Arnold Krupat observes that after 1830 a 'new [...] interest in the Indians' own perspective' on the 'history' of white invasion began developing.³⁵⁸ As Krupat goes on to explain, 'this led to the development of the Indian autobiography as an attempt to preserve, complete, or correct the record in the name of historical justice.'³⁵⁹ The development of Native American autobiography as an expression of resistance was not, however, the straightforward process that this statement might suggest. Initially Native American autobiographies took the form of what have been termed 'as-told-to' texts, oral narratives published in heavily mediated forms through collaboration with white transcribers and editors.³⁶⁰ As Jordana Finnegan notes, in the nineteenth century the 'narration of Native lives by non-Native editors often rationalized western expansionism', by shoring up the paternalist colonial belief that introducing the mechanisms of Western 'civilisation' to Native American people was in their best interests.³⁶¹ Not until the twentieth century, as Finnegan observes, did Native American writers begin adopting the conventions of Western literary autobiography to author their own life stories, and hence 'through the narration of their own lives, perform a very different (yet politically necessary) function by asserting the continuance and dynamic transformation of their lives and communities.'³⁶² Reading Hale's intergenerational autobiography in the context of this literary lineage emphasises the role of her life writing in resisting dominant colonial narratives of North American history.

³⁵⁷ See for example Sands, p. 270; and Hertha Dawn Wong, *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 6.

³⁵⁸ Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Came After: A Study of Native American Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 6.

³⁵⁹ Krupat, *For Those Who Came After*, p. 6.

³⁶⁰ Sands, p. 272.

³⁶¹ Jordana Finnegan, 'Refiguring Legacies of Personal and Cultural Dysfunction in *Bloodlines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter*', *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, 19:3 (2007), 68-86 (p. 70).

³⁶² Finnegan, p. 70.

In addition to their adoption of a traditionally Western narrative form, the vast majority of Native American autobiographers do not write in their original tribal languages, but in English, which Hertha Wong terms ‘the language of the oppressor’ that ‘has become the dominant language of the oppressed.’³⁶³ As she explains, ‘the majority of Native Americans speak English as their first language’, a phenomenon that can be attributed to the assimilationist policies of colonial governments in the USA and Canada, which ‘coerce[d] indigenous people to speak English’ through the residential school system.³⁶⁴ Hale and her surviving family members all speak English as their first language. Thus, unlike Magona, who chooses to write her autobiographies in English as a politically and commercially savvy strategy that affords her access to a wider readership in the global literary market place, Hale writes *Bloodlines* in English because it is simply the only language available to her. Although she briefly laments the fact that she did not learn the native language of her paternal grandmother as a child (p. 149), Hale’s narrative does not otherwise engage with debates about the implications of writing in English. Arguably, as a Native American woman unapologetically writing her autobiography in English, Hale claims the language that originates from the colonial oppressor as her own, and uses it to create an English-language history told from the perspectives of her ancestors. In conjunction with this project Hale also adapts the conventions of Western autobiography by incorporating intergenerational narratives, developing the genre in order to address the cultural and historical specificity of her own and her family’s experiences.

The progression of Native American resistance in the twentieth century is significant for understanding the political role that *Bloodlines* can play. A newly invigorated Native American literary tradition emerged in the USA and Canada alongside Native American rights activism, as part of the burgeoning civil rights movements of the 1960s. Resistance groups campaigned using the concept of ‘Red Power’, frequently focussing on the issue of tribal land rights. The campaigners protested against the seizing of traditional lands by white colonisers, and the vast number of treaties between settlers and Native American tribes that have been broken or disregarded throughout the history of

³⁶³ Wong, *Sending My Heart*, p. 154.

³⁶⁴ Wong, *Sending My Heart*, p. 154.

European settlement in North America. Significantly, these campaigns hinged on historical counter-narratives that sought to write the Native American tribal past back into the history of North America, and hence to open up the public consciousness to acknowledge the traditional rights of indigenous peoples. Chadwick Allen identifies the 'Indian stereotypes promoted by White conservatives and White liberals alike' that Native American activists and authors sought to rewrite in the 1960s and 70s.³⁶⁵ He observes:

Whether romanticized as nineteenth-century Plains Indian warriors (distinctly Other but characteristically 'American' in their fighting spirit) or pitied as members of a contemporary underclass hampered by poverty and racism (their problems easily solved through recourse to programs designed for 'minorities'), Indians are represented as vanquished and ultimately as vanished.³⁶⁶

Consequently, control over the representation of Native American people played a central role in the civil rights campaigns, highlighting the importance of literary narratives by and about Native American authors in re-inserting the stories and perspectives of their people into North American historical and cultural narratives.

Growing out of the Red Power movement, a generation of prominent Native American authors sought to establish a strong sense both of individual tribal identities and of Native American people as a social group. Texts such as Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*, her hybrid mythic and experiential narrative *Storyteller*, and autobiographical works *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Names* by mixed-race Kiowa and Cherokee writer N. Scott Momaday, contributed to what critics have termed the 'American Indian renaissance.'³⁶⁷ Allen emphasises key features of this movement, noting that the authors 'consciously bear historical witness to present and future generations. Against the odds, they invest contemporary texts with ancestral power and indigenous presence.'³⁶⁸ The literary lineage of authors like Silko and Momaday has a significant influence on Hale's writing, and she represents

³⁶⁵ Allen, *Blood Narrative*, p. 160.

³⁶⁶ Allen, *Blood Narrative*, pp. 160-61.

³⁶⁷ See Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), and *Storyteller* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1981). Also N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), and *The Names: A Memoir* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). Allen examines the label 'American Indian renaissance' in *Blood Narrative*; see in particular pp. 161-62.

³⁶⁸ Allen, *Blood Narrative*, p. 193.

the interconnection of earlier and future generations in similar ways. The trope of 'blood memory' examined in section 3.3 was first developed by Momaday, highlighting the importance of this twentieth century Native American literary tradition for Hale's work. Writing within this cultural movement, Hale rearticulates her Native American identity in *Bloodlines*, and counters the racist denigration of her ancestors in ways that were impossible for her mother and grandmothers' generations.

Hale makes a unique contribution to the Native American literary renaissance's emphasis on establishing alternative histories through her innovative use of intergenerational autobiography. Finnegan observes that 'Hale's memoir [...] attempts to shift the center of Euroamerican, patriarchal narratives by focusing on the interconnected life stories of multiple generations of Native women.'³⁶⁹ Paralleling Magona's narration of apartheid history in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, and Morgan's exploration of contemporary Aboriginality in *My Place*, by addressing the colonial past in generational terms Hale both highlights the changing lives of Native American people over the lifetimes of her family members, and explores how future generations may relate to their heritage through these inherited stories. Intergenerational autobiography enables Hale to narrate her family's past from an experiential perspective, adding their voices to dominant historical narratives that emphasise white settler experiences. Like Magona and Morgan, Hale uses the literary genre of intergenerational autobiography to present an intimate picture of her family's lives and relationships to one another, poignantly demonstrating the psychological damage and trauma that she and her foremothers suffer as a result of systemic racism and oppression. As a literary text *Bloodlines* has the potential to reach both Native American and non-indigenous readers across North America, encouraging them to identify with the intimate details of Hale's and her family's domestic lives, and their personal struggles to survive the economic, cultural and psychological effects of colonial oppression.

Since the 1980s the focus of Native American activism has shifted to address the cultural and social impact of colonial government policies, in addition to the legal issues surrounding ownership of land and resources that were central to

³⁶⁹ Finnegan, p. 71.

the movement in the 1960s and 70s. Introducing these facets of the colonial past into the struggle for Native American rights helps to establish a more complete picture of the impact of European colonisation on indigenous communities. The publication of *Bloodlines* in 1993 takes place during this key period of shifting emphasis, and Hale's evocation of her Native American ancestors' stories can be read as part of this process.³⁷⁰ By writing her own counter-narratives to established views of North American history, Hale gives voice to her foremothers' experiences both of specific violent encounters between white settlers and Native Americans, and of the systemic oppression and racism that restricted their daily lives. The inherited trauma that underpins the dysfunctional relationship between Hale and her mother also poignantly demonstrates the legacy of this history for Native American people in the contemporary era.

The continuing effects of the colonial past in the lives of Native American people highlights the ambiguities surrounding their (post)colonial status, as examined in the introduction to this thesis. As Young's analysis of settler societies highlights, Native Americans arguably remain a colonised group in the contemporary political contexts of the USA and Canada, in a similar way to the social position of Aboriginal people in Australia discussed in Chapter Two.³⁷¹ In outlining the debate about whether to categorise Native American literature as 'postcolonial', Krupat makes a key point about the political position of Native Americans in contemporary North America. He argues that

there is not yet a 'post-' to the colonial status of Native Americans. Call it domestic imperialism or internal colonialism; in either case, a considerable number of Native people exist in conditions of politically sustained subalternity.³⁷²

Krupat's emphasis on the subjugated status of contemporary Native American peoples highlights the defining influence that the colonial relationship still has on the social, political and cultural lives of Native American people at the turn of the

³⁷⁰ Hale's earlier fictional work, including the novels *The Owl's Song* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), and *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* (New York: Random House, 1985), share *Bloodlines'* emphasis on creating a realistic portrayal of Native American lives. These narratives address the social problems experienced by their Native American protagonists, both within reservation communities, and as they attempt to integrate into white society when they relocate to the cities to pursue further education.

³⁷¹ Young, pp. 19-20.

³⁷² Arnold Krupat, *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 30.

twenty-first century. Hale uses intergenerational autobiography to engage with this question by examining how her own and her foremothers' lives have been affected by the legacy of European colonialism. As section 3.4 will discuss, *Bloodlines* also explores new understandings of Native American identity, re-imagining a positive tribal heritage that enables Hale to re-negotiate her own and future generations' positions in contemporary North American society.

iii. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*

In Canada in particular since the 1990s the struggle to gain official recognition of the historical injustices done to Native American people has centred on the history of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system. Under this system, which existed in Canada from the 1870s until the 1990s, over 150,000 indigenous children were removed from their families and tribal communities to attend church- and state-run schools.³⁷³ As Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper states, the IRS system sought to 'remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.'³⁷⁴ The erosion of Native American tribal identities through this system is a specific example of the social impact of colonial government policies that sought to eradicate traditional Native American communities. This practice has clear similarities to the removal of Stolen Generations children from their Aboriginal families in Australia addressed in Chapter Two, highlighting the parallels between the attacks on indigenous families as a tool of colonial oppression and control in each of these settler colonies. Reflecting on the treatment of indigenous Canadians in *Native Students with Problems of Addiction*, Hale observes that the 'assimilation and conversion policies pursued by the Canadian government for more than four generations have denied and devalued Native cultures and have correspondingly reduced self-esteem for Native people.'³⁷⁵ Campaigners have aimed to increase public awareness not only about specific instances of abuse in residential schools, but also about the

³⁷³ *Interim Report*, p. 1.

³⁷⁴ Stephen Harper, 'Prime Minister Harper Offers Full Apology on Behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools System' (Office of the Prime Minister, 11 June 2008) <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?category=2&id=2149> [accessed 14 October 2011].

³⁷⁵ Hale and others, p. 8.

wide-ranging social damage caused by removing children from their homes and undermining the connections to their cultural heritage. This work has also highlighted the ongoing legacy of the IRS system, both for former students themselves and for their families and communities.

Following a vast number of legal claims for compensation lodged by former Indian Residential School students and their families, the Canadian government has initiated a process of addressing the impacts of the IRS system and its contemporary effects on Native American communities. In September 2007 it implemented the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement,³⁷⁶ and on 11 June 2008 Prime Minister Harper issued an official apology 'for Canada's role in the Indian Residential Schools system.'³⁷⁷ One function of the Settlement Agreement has been to establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which was appointed with a 5 year mandate in June 2008.³⁷⁸ The Canadian TRC parallels the South African TRC and the *Bringing Them Home* report in Australia, in that each of these government-sponsored projects seeks to gather testimony from survivors of colonial injustice and violence, and to establish consensus among disparate groups about historical truth. The Canadian TRC articulates one of its 'overarching purposes' as 'reveal[ing] to Canadians the complex truth about the history and the ongoing legacy of the church-run residential schools, in a manner that fully documents the individual and collective harms perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples'.³⁷⁹ The Commission explicitly addresses the intergenerational effects of the residential schools, reporting that 'the legacy from one generation to the next has contributed to social problems, poor health, and low educational success rates in Aboriginal communities today.'³⁸⁰ By establishing an official investigation into the collective damage caused to Native American communities and the long-term effects of the IRS system over generations, the TRC of Canada addresses one key aspect of North America's colonial past.

³⁷⁶ Canada and others, *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement*, (2006) <http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/settlement.html> [accessed 14 October 2011].

³⁷⁷ Harper.

³⁷⁸ 'Schedule "N": Mandate for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Indian Residential Schools Agreement* (2006) http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/pdfs/SCHEDULE_N_EN.pdf [accessed 11 April 2012].

³⁷⁹ *Interim Report*, p. 1.

³⁸⁰ *Interim Report*, p. 1.

Despite the parallels between the historical functions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in Canada and South Africa, it is important to examine the disparate political contexts in which these projects take place. Whilst the South African TRC was established as part of the transition to democracy following the end of apartheid rule, the (post)colonial status of indigenous people in North America is more similar to the Australian situation discussed in Chapter Two, in that there has been no such distinct watershed moment that marks the end of colonialism. Political scientists Michelle Bonner and Matt James discuss the significance of this distinction for the Canadian TRC, emphasising that ‘the circumstances of regime change or concerted international pressure typically associated with transitional justice are glaringly absent in Canada.’³⁸¹ Considered in light of the ongoing subaltern status of Native American people identified by Krupat, it is clear that establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission plays a different political role in Canada than in the context of significant political reform such as that seen in 1990s South Africa. The lack of political regime change in Canada has affected the timescale of the TRC which, as Bonner and James point out, only began to be discussed ‘two decades after the majority of residential schools had closed’.³⁸² They attribute this delay to ‘the political marginalization and oppression of Canadian Indigenous and Métis peoples’, which meant that ‘residential school survivors and their communities had to wage arduous, long-term battles to bring even the most elementary concerns about the schools onto the Canadian public agenda.’³⁸³ Consequently, and perhaps counter-intuitively, there are greater obstacles to official government acknowledgement of the harm caused by the colonial past in the established democracy of Canada than in the transitional political environment of mid-1990s South Africa.

The relatively static political context in which the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established means that awareness-raising work and campaigning carried out by Native American rights groups play a

³⁸¹ Michelle Bonner and Matt James, ‘The Three R’s of Seeking Transitional Justice: Reparation, Responsibility, and Reframing in Canada and Argentina’, *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 2:3 (2011) <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/iipj/vol2/iss3/3/> [accessed 28 September 2011], p. 2.

³⁸² Bonner and James, p. 23.

³⁸³ Bonner and James, p. 23.

particularly significant role. Bonner and James attribute the establishment of the TRC to 'Indigenous mobilization and pressure in the face of official obfuscation and denial', asserting that 'attention to these kinds of society-level struggles is arguably even more crucial in the Canadian case than it might be in situations where the pressures for transition are more varied and multiple.'³⁸⁴ Paulette Regan identifies one of the most fundamental challenges that the TRC faces as the 'foundational myth of the benevolent peacemaker – the bedrock of settler identity'.³⁸⁵ This creates a historical blindness that allows non-Indigenous Canadians to ignore what Regan terms 'the more subtle forms of violence that permeate everyday Indigenous-settler relations – racism, poverty, cultural domination, power, and privilege.'³⁸⁶ The Canadian TRC addresses this issue, explaining that

Canadians have been denied a full and proper education as to the nature of Aboriginal societies. They have not been well informed about the nature of the relationship that was established initially between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples and the way that relationship has been shaped over time by colonialism and racism.³⁸⁷

The counter-narrative that the TRC is currently producing will play an important role in redressing the myths Regan identifies, and raising awareness about Canada's colonial past. In this respect the TRC and Hale's intergenerational autobiography perform parallel functions in disrupting conventional understandings of colonial history, and in highlighting the previously ignored voices and experiences of Native American families and communities.

In the United States there has been no equivalent project to the Canadian TRC, and in the absence of any official acknowledgement or investigation into colonial violence and the oppression of Native American people, cultural ignorance of these issues is even greater. Allen examines the dissemination of similar myths in the USA to those described by Regan in Canada, identifying a 'climate of wilful ignorance and selective amnesia', where 'Indian activists and writers worked to reinstate the indigenous into America's performance of a triumphantly settler present.'³⁸⁸ As a result of the Canadian and US

³⁸⁴ Bonner and James, p. 2.

³⁸⁵ Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), p. 11.

³⁸⁶ Regan, p. 68 and p. 10.

³⁸⁷ *Interim Report*, p. 26.

³⁸⁸ Allen, *Blood Narrative*, p. 192.

governments' contrasting approaches to the history of colonial control over Native American peoples, Hale's literary text takes on even greater significance in the United States. In both the USA and Canada the intergenerational form of Hale's *Bloodlines* can play a vital political role in voicing Native American perspectives on the colonial past, as well as highlighting the ongoing social and cultural violence experienced by her family as Native American women living in twentieth century. Writing a literary narrative offers Hale scope to engage with the colonial past in different ways than are possible within the structure of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, highlighted by her interweaving of personal and inherited memories, archival research, and imaginative recreation to tell her foremothers' stories. By incorporating the familial narratives into her autobiography Hale highlights the contemporary significance of her mother and grandmothers' experiences in the colonial past, which play vital roles in the negotiation of her own mixed-race Native American identity.

The Canadian TRC's official acknowledgement of the harm caused to Native American people comes fifteen years after the publication of *Bloodlines* in 1993, whilst in the US context such acknowledgement has still not been granted to date. In this respect the political significance of Hale's text can be read as parallel to those of Morgan's *My Place* in Australia, and Magona's *To My Children's Children and Forced to Grow* in South Africa. The authors analysed in this study each published their autobiographical narratives in the absence of any official government response to the oppression and trauma that they and their indigenous ancestors have suffered. It is possible to trace a causal relationship between the publication of Magona and Morgan's intergenerational autobiographies alongside indigenous civil rights activism in their respective nations, and the official government acknowledgements of these histories some years later. In the Australian context the publication of *My Place* and the widespread attention to Aboriginal people's role in Australian history in the 1980s eventually prompted the government to address the Stolen Generations legacy in the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report. Similarly, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission extended official recognition of the gross violations of human rights perpetrated under apartheid in its 1998 report, seven years after Magona published her first autobiographical volume *To My*

Children's Children as part of unofficial work by activists and writers to raise awareness of the impacts of apartheid on the daily lives of black South Africans.

In the case of *Bloodlines*' role in the struggle for recognition of Native American histories, progression from the publication of literary works on these issues to official attention being paid by the US and Canadian governments is more difficult to identify. While the Canadian TRC can be seen as a significant step towards official acknowledgement of the negative impact of colonial policies, it actually addresses only one aspect of a much larger picture. Although, as Bonner and James highlight, 'the residential schools policy was central to the larger Canadian goal of colonizing Indigenous peoples', the focus of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the IRS system is nonetheless comparatively narrow.³⁸⁹ It is also significant that no such initiative has been taken by the United States Government. Within the Canadian context, by focussing only on the trauma experienced by students who attended residential schools and their descendants, the TRC fails to address the wider impact of colonial legacies on the lives of all Native American people. For these reasons it is difficult to determine a clear relationship between the political work of Hale's autobiographical narrative in voicing the traumatic experiences of her Native American ancestors, and the establishment of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As section 3.4 will explore, *Bloodlines* in fact makes little reference to Indian residential schools, and Hale focuses on a broader range of experiences in the stories inherited from her Native American ancestors that lie outside the scope of the Canadian TRC. Consequently, the comparison between Hale's intergenerational autobiography, and the official narrative constructed by the truth commission, is less significant for this chapter than in my work on the Australian and South African contexts. My exploration of the political role of Hale's intergenerational autobiography here focuses on her narration of stories that remain excluded from the national historical narratives of the USA and Canada. Section 3.4 examines the various uses Hale makes of intergenerational storytelling, and explores ways of reading her literary autobiography as an alternative to conventional historical narratives about European colonisation in North America.

³⁸⁹ Bonner and James, p. 12.

3.1 Intergenerational Haunting in 'Daughter Of Winter'

3.1.1 *Damaging maternal relationship*

This section examines Hale's portrayal of the destructive relationship between her mother and herself, reading Margaret's abusive behaviour in historical context. As she recalls her childhood experiences in the narrative present, Hale attempts to understand what motivated her mother's mistreatment of her, by examining the circumstances of Margaret's life before her birth and during her early years. In contrast to the celebrations of maternal inheritance and emphasis on repairing generational connections in Magona and Morgan's intergenerational autobiographies, *Bloodlines* presents a more ambivalent portrait of maternal relationships. Hale's narrative makes clear that maternal legacies can be negative and damaging as well as nurturing and potentially healing, and a key feature of the text is her attempt to understand and reconcile herself to the physical, verbal and psychological abuse she experienced at the hands of her mother. I draw on Abraham and Torok's psychoanalytic theory of the transgenerational phantom to explore how the damaged personal relationship between Hale and her mother manifests the symptoms of her family's traumatic experiences in the colonial past. By addressing the issue of abusive maternal relationships, *Bloodlines* suggests that the impact of the colonial legacy is internalised by Hale's family, causing damage to individual selves and interpersonal relationships that cannot be recuperated through the writing process. Hale creates an experiential history of Native American lives which suggests that the relationship between herself and her mother may never be reconciled, prompting her to explore other potential routes to healing.

The essay in which Hale explores her mother's life and their damaged relationship in greatest detail is 'Daughter of Winter', which spans the 40 years of their relationship from Hale's childhood in the 1940s up until Margaret's death in 1988. The first and perhaps most painful instance of abuse that Hale describes occurs when Margaret takes her daughter 'on the run' from one of her husband's drinking binges when she is seven years old (p. 29). Hale and her mother make their temporary home in a 'dumpy old two-room apartment in Omak, Washington', where they are forced to listen to a 'drunkard couple' in the

next-door apartment who 'drink and fight and throw furniture around all night long' (p. 32). Compounding the disruption in her home life, Hale has to attend a Catholic school where, she states, 'I am the only Indian there. I hate [...] the awful kids and the awful nuns who grab me and pull me around' (p. 32). Her anger and frustration mount until she explodes in retaliation against Margaret for constantly swearing at her, telling her mother that 'she's going to burn in purgatory [...] unless she stops the swearing' (p. 33). Hale depicts this act as an attempt to exert some control over the misery of their life, deciding to 'tell off' her mother because 'I couldn't make the drunkard couple stop, I couldn't control the nuns at school. But I can get my mother to stop swearing' (p. 33). In the aftermath of the altercation Margaret asserts "since you're so dissatisfied with me as your mother, you can leave", and forces her daughter out of the house (p. 33-34). After wandering alone for hours with the suitcase her mother packed for her and 'trying to think of ways I can survive' outside of the maternal home, Hale realises 'I have to go home and humiliate myself as I never have before. I have to go beg my mother to take me back' (p. 34). The combined feelings of neglect and psychological humiliation evoked by this episode characterise the narrative of Hale's relationship with her mother throughout her childhood.

Later in 'Daughter of Winter' Hale reflects from the vantage point of adulthood on the way she was treated by her mother, and writes that

the constant uprooting would have been enough. But then there was also the verbal abuse. I was not normal, she liked to tell me. She mocked the way I walked and talked. She would attack me. Sometimes her attacks came from nowhere. Sometimes the smallest thing would set her off. (p. 40)

Comparing these attacks on her wellbeing, Hale asserts that the physical violence 'is easiest to understand and forgive', describing how 'compared to the verbal abuse [...] and the constant uprooting, the whipping and slapping seems like nothing' (p. 42). In contrast to the physical abuse, it is the repeated exclusions from the family by her mother and sisters, and her parents' failure to support Hale's emotional needs that ultimately traumatise her. This is poignantly illustrated by the questions fifteen-year-old Hale asks herself when she is forbidden from entering her sister's house, and is forced to spend an entire summer living outside in a storage shack. She cannot understand why her parents allowed her sister to enforce this exclusion, asking 'they were

supposed to be interested in my welfare, weren't they? And if they weren't ... what did that say about me?' (p. 49). This question highlights how the traumatic abuse that her family subjects her to undermines Hale's already fragile self-worth.

Visiting her mother's death bed in hospital some thirty-five years later prompts Hale to revisit memories of this abuse, and to try to understand its significance. She reflects on her older sisters' collusion with Margaret in shutting her out of their homes, and asks 'why did they – with Mom as their leader – excommunicate me from the family?' (p. 60). She recalls that Margaret 'used to send me out of the house every morning in tears', after taunting her as she got ready to go to school by shouting "You're not pretty. You're not. You're not anything!" (p. 60). An italicised flashback passage follows these reflections, describing an experience from Hale's early teens. One morning as she prepares to leave the house for school Margaret calls her back to threaten, "*don't think you can get away from what you are by getting away from me!*" (p. 60). She continues, "*you think you can walk out of here ... go to that damned dumb school and be somebody else, don't you. We'll you can't*", telling her daughter, "*people will instinctively know what an evil thing you are*" (p. 61). The denigration of her daughter expressed in this passage foreshadows the essay 'The Only Good Indian' discussed in section 3.2, which depicts the internalised self-hatred that Margaret and her own mother project onto Hale.

3.1.2 *The transgenerational phantom*

The narrative of the neglect and abuse Hale endured during her childhood performs a double function within the text, recording her personal experiences and simultaneously demonstrating the symptoms of her mother's traumatised identity. Margaret's psychological wellbeing has been undermined by her past experiences, together with the deprivation of the family's life, and her husband's alcoholism. Unable to articulate the full extent of her trauma and with no means of healing herself, Margaret's traumatic symptoms are expressed through her mistreatment of her daughter. Hale introduces the phenomenon of inherited

trauma in 'Circling Raven', recording a conversation with her niece about 'how dysfunction begets dysfunction' within their family (p. xxxii). Her niece draws on research for her master's degree about dysfunctional families to shed light on their damaged familial relationships, explaining that 'the dysfunction gets passed down from one generation to the next. Not intentionally [...] It almost has a life of its own' (p. xxxii). This behaviour can be understood in terms of the transgenerational phantom described by psychoanalytic theorists Abraham and Torok, which forces Hale to confront the legacy of her mother's traumatic past, whilst denying her any way of understanding the origin of the harmful emotions directed towards her. As I will demonstrate, the dysfunctional fracturing of the family exemplified by the abuse Hale experiences can be read both in terms of inherited trauma from within her family, and as a manifestation of broader cultural trauma caused by discrimination and deprivation experienced by many Native American people.

The concept of the transgenerational phantom offers a psychoanalytic perspective to explore how trauma can be unconsciously passed on from parent to child. According to Abraham and Torok, a phantom originates from an incorporated object that was created in the psyche of the parent as the result of a traumatic loss. They define incorporation, which causes the psychic loss to be hidden from the ego, as 'the refusal to acknowledge the full import of the loss, a loss that, if recognized as such, would effectively transform us.'³⁹⁰ This process creates hidden shameful or traumatic memories in the parent's psyche that she or he is unaware of, but which can nonetheless be experienced by the child in the form of traumatic symptoms. As Nicholas Rand explains, 'in Abraham and Torok's sense, the secret is a trauma whose very occurrence and devastating emotional consequences are entombed and thereby consigned to internal silence, albeit unwittingly, by the sufferers themselves.'³⁹¹ The parent unknowingly passes on the hidden memories to the child as a phantom, which Torok describes as 'a formation of the dynamic unconscious that is found there not because of the subject's own repression but on account of a *direct empathy*

³⁹⁰ Abraham and Torok, 'Mourning or Melancholia', p. 127.

³⁹¹ Nicholas T. Rand, 'Editor's Note to Part IV: New Perspectives in Metapsychology: Cryptic Mourning and Secret Love', in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas T. Rand, I (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 99-106 (pp. 99-100).

*with the unconscious or the rejected psychic matter of a parental object.*³⁹² The transmission of a transgenerational phantom can continue through several generations, and is manifested by a 'story of fear' in the child's inherited phobic symptoms.³⁹³ This takes the form of 'either a fear whose actual victims are their parents or, alternatively, a fear that the parents themselves had inherited and now transmit willy-nilly to their own reluctant offspring.'³⁹⁴ Thus the child's life is 'haunted' by the incorporated parental trauma, whilst the experiences that gave rise to it remain hidden.

Using the concept of the transgenerational phantom to analyse the abusive maternal relationship Hale describes in 'Daughter of Winter' demonstrates how trauma from the colonial past can affect intergenerational relationships. As Abraham and Torok suggest, the 'phantom' that Hale inherits in the form of Margaret's abuse may originate from her mother's experiences, or from the traumatic experiences of earlier generations that Margaret has inherited from her own parents. Thus, although psychoanalytic literary analysis is not a central concern in this project, I adopt the theory of the phantom here as a useful metaphor for interpreting the functions of inherited trauma in Hale's intergenerational narrative. Rand observes that 'the concept of the phantom moves the focus of psychoanalytic inquiry beyond the individual being analysed because it postulates that some people unwittingly inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors' lives.'³⁹⁵ Following this formulation, I use the concept of the phantom to make a parallel move in the focus of my analysis, by reading beyond the mistreatment that Hale is subjected to by her mother to examine the traumatic past that underpins their relationship and manifests itself through the abuse.

Claire Stocks' work on trauma theory and cross-cultural identity demonstrates the particular relevance of the phantom theory in (post)colonial contexts. Stocks argues that the focus on transmission of experience between psychoanalytic subjects offers a way of understanding family relationships that

³⁹² Torok, p. 181. Emphasis in original.

³⁹³ Torok, pp. 180-81.

³⁹⁴ Torok, p. 181.

³⁹⁵ Rand, 'Editor's Note to Part V: Secrets and Posterity: The Theory of the Transgenerational Phantom', in *The Shell and the Kernel*, pp. 165-69 (p. 166).

'question[s] the strict opposition between self and other that the trauma theorists tend to insist is integral to mental health.'³⁹⁶ She offers this broader understanding of the individual self as an alternative to conventional trauma theory based on Freudian psychoanalysis, which 'focuses interest on specifically Western notions of identity formation, subjectivity and narrative.'³⁹⁷ The theory that the child can inherit hidden memories of trauma from the parent suggests a potential fluidity between the individual self and her family, which illuminates the ways in which the generations in Hale's maternal line experience internalised trauma and shame. The problematic relationship between Hale and her mother thus reveals the legacy of traumatic psychic damage caused by the oppression of their tribal ancestors.

3.1.3 Margaret's trauma

In 'Daughter of Winter' Hale not only records the childhood experiences of abuse examined at the beginning of this section, but also looks back as an adult from the narrative present to describe her mother's life story before her own birth. The intergenerational form of the narrative enables her to embed her mother's story within her own, exploring the interrelation of her experiences of abuse and the trauma Margaret has suffered earlier in her life. Framing Margaret's story in terms of the desire to understand why she was abused as a child, Hale asserts that 'I've tried to be compassionate as I looked back over my troubled childhood ... to believe that none of it was her fault' (p. 42). As part of this self-declared attempt to absolve her mother of blame, Hale evokes the circumstances of Margaret's life 'before she became my mother, before she met my father' (p. 43). Hale's exploration of her mother's story reveals that her behaviour results from a combination of personal traumatic experiences, and the social context of poverty and discrimination that traumatises Native American people as a cultural group.

The family environment Margaret grew up in resonates with the similarly unsupportive world that Hale inhabits as a child, characterised by disruption and

³⁹⁶ Claire Stocks, 'Trauma Theory and the Singular Self: Rethinking Extreme Experiences in the Light of Cross Cultural Identity', *Textual Practice*, 21:1 (2007), 71-92 (p. 78).

³⁹⁷ Stocks, p. 76.

instability. 'Circling Raven' describes how Margaret 'had to quit school after grade three to stay home and help take care of the younger ones and help with the housework' (p. xxiii). In 'Daughter of Winter' Hale records an encounter at Margaret's death bed, when she 'begins telling me how mean her mother and sisters were to her when she was young', revealing more about her unhappy childhood when she relates how 'they mocked her [...] the way she walked ... the way she talked' (p. 59). Hale has never heard her mother speak about this experience before, and finds it hard to comprehend her words, wondering 'if this is true, or if she got mixed up and began to think what she'd done to me was done to her instead' (p. 59). Hale refuses to acknowledge that her mother could have had similar experiences to the abuse she suffered, stating 'nothing she ever told me that her own mother did or said [...] could hold a candle to her repertoire' (p. 61). This deathbed revelation suggests that, although Hale is reluctant to give credence to her mother's words, the abuse Margaret enacted on her daughter could be a repetition of the ways she was treated by her own mother. Finnegan reads this discovery as an indication that 'Hale's alienation from her family is not an individual phenomenon [...] as Hale discovers that her suffering is the product of an ongoing pattern of dysfunction that originated in past generations.'³⁹⁸ The source of the transgenerational phantom that haunts Hale's relationship with her mother may therefore have roots that originate in the traumatic experiences of earlier generations, which reach back beyond Margaret's personal experiences of trauma and abuse.

In her teens Margaret sees marriage as an opportunity to escape her painful home life, and Hale writes that she 'married a white man when she was just sixteen', but found herself entering 'a bleak, desolate existence with that man who hated music, who it turned out, hated Indians, too' (p. xxiii). In the later essay 'The Only Good Indian' Hale records the racial denigration that Margaret's first husband subjected her to: "Squaw," my mother's first husband would call her when he felt mean, which was a lot of the time. "Stupid Siwash squaw. That's all you are, you know" (p. 119). Hale explains that the term 'Siwash' 'was sort of like *squaw*, but worse [...] It had the power to cut like a knife' (p. 119). Equating the impact of this language to physical wounding emphasises the lasting impact of the abuse that scars Margaret as a result of

³⁹⁸ Finnegan, pp. 59-60.

her first marriage, which compounds the trauma of her family's mistreatment, and will go on to haunt her relationship with her daughter.

Hale offers an insight into her mother's state of mind during this period of her life, explaining that she suffered from a depression that sometimes made her suicidal, and was forced to 'abandon [...] two children in order to save her own life' (p. 44). Margaret finally left her first husband when she met Hale's father, who represented a safe escape route, but she had no choice but to leave behind the children. As Hale explains in 'Circling Raven'

In cases like that, in the 1930s, a mother always lost her children. Especially if the husband she left were white and the woman half-Indian and the man she ran off with a full-blood and the place she ran to was an Indian reservation. (p. xxvii)

Margaret's story demonstrates the intersection of her individual experiences of economic and social deprivation during her childhood, and racist abuse in her marriage, with institutional discrimination in the wider political context. Margaret recognises that she can expect no assistance from the authorities if she attempts to claim her children, an experience that bears close resemblance both to Magona's discussion of her powerlessness to claim financial support from her estranged husband through the South African legal system in *Forced to Grow* (discussed in 1.2.2), and to Gladys's and Daisy's fear that Morgan and her siblings will be taken from them after their white father dies in *My Place* (discussed in 2.1.2). The parallels between the limitations imposed by discriminatory legal systems in all three texts highlight how colonial governments in South Africa, Australia and North America all fail to protect indigenous families, leaving them traumatically damaged. Although the circumstances of Margaret's separation from her children that Hale describes are not legally enshrined, the racist attitude of the white authorities would automatically privilege her white husband's right to raise the children over her claims. The same prejudices underpinned the Indian Residential School system in Canada, and forced the separation of Native American children from their families and cultural groups on the assumption that their lives would be improved if they adopted the values of white Christian society. Thus while the circumstances of Margaret's loss of her children are different, her experience nonetheless parallels the lives of families who were separated by the IRS

system, and demonstrates the impact of disrupted parenting within Hale's own family.

Examining this time in her mother's life is central to Hale's quest to understand the hidden trauma that underpins Margaret's abusive behaviour. She explains that after Margaret and Nick were married and her three full sisters were born, 'my father turned out to be (at times) a vicious, brutal drunkard, and he began to beat her when he got drunk' (p. 44). Margaret is trapped in another abusive marriage, and this time she 'couldn't get away from him. When the other three were small, there was no way she could take them and get away. She had no place to go' (p. 44). Carrying the remorse of losing her eldest children, Margaret is left without an escape route, because 'she would not abandon another child of hers, not ever again' (p. 44). Hale concludes her mother's story by observing that 'by the time I knew her, she already had a wasted life. A lost youth', exacerbated by the 'crippling illness' of arthritis that further thwarts Margaret's psychological wellbeing (pp. 44-45). As a result, Hale states, her mother is filled with 'anger [that] had to go somewhere' (p. 45). Needing an outlet, Hale believes that 'Mom aggressively turned her anger, not inward, but outward ... with great force ... away from herself. And I was her safest target' (p. 44). Thus the story of Margaret's life offers a potential explanation for her abusive behaviour towards Hale, uncovering not only the personal trauma the her mother experienced as a victim of abuse and when she lost her first two children, but also the broader context of social discrimination against Native American people.

3.1.4 Traumatized culture

The functioning of the transgenerational phantom in *Bloodlines* suggests that trauma is inherited not only from within the family unit, but also from a wider traumatized cultural group. This phenomenon is supported by theoretical explorations of the applicability of the phantom theory to events experienced on

broader community and cultural scales.³⁹⁹ As Rand suggests, ‘the falsification, ignorance or disregard of the past [...] is the breeding ground of the phantomic return of shameful secrets on the level of individuals, families, the community and possibly even entire nations.’⁴⁰⁰ Stocks builds on what she terms Rand’s ‘shift from a familial to a national focus’, to apply the phantom theory to (post)colonial communities. She suggests that ‘extreme events including genocide, war or Depression may well prompt a collapse of “national identity” and produce “typical” social practices deployed by many families.’⁴⁰¹ Stocks argues that this ‘may prompt silence or shame on a large scale’, creating ‘a version of the phantom which has its origins in social or cultural, rather than merely familial, secrets.’⁴⁰² While in Stocks’ terms cultural trauma originates from ‘extreme’ events, I suggest that it may also arise from long-term insidious trauma such as the racist abuse and social discrimination in Margaret’s life story. The emotional and psychological impact of the experiences that give rise to Margaret’s abusive behaviour are not so much a deliberately kept ‘secret’ as a traumatised silence, aspects of her life story that she is unable to articulate to her daughter, leaving the child Hale bewildered by the mistreatment to which her mother subjects her. The implications of this large scale cultural trauma become evident to Hale only when she begins to explore and contextualise experiences from her mother’s life story, through writing her intergenerational autobiography.

The relationship between Hale and her mother depicted in ‘Daughter of Winter’ demonstrates the intergenerational transmission of trauma, which Hale experiences in the form of Margaret’s abusive treatment of her. Looking back on this period as an adult as she writes *Bloodlines*, Hale deciphers the meaning of her mother’s behaviour and its origins in the traumatic experiences in Margaret’s own life. Through this process Hale also contextualises her mother’s life story, demonstrating that the racist abuse and separation from her eldest children that Margaret has endured are symptomatic of the experiences of Native American people as a traumatised group. Rand observes that the

³⁹⁹ See E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p. 68 and pp. 105-06.

⁴⁰⁰ Rand, ‘Editor’s Note to Part V’, p. 169.

⁴⁰¹ Stocks, p. 82.

⁴⁰² Stocks, p. 82.

concept of the transgenerational phantom 'suggest[s] the existence within an individual of a collective psychology comprised of several generations, so that the analyst must listen for the voices of one generation in the unconscious of another'.⁴⁰³ Consequently an examination of the stories Hale tells from the lives of earlier generations of her family can also shed light on the transgenerational transmission of trauma. Hale uses intergenerational autobiography to examine her traumatic childhood and read its significance in terms of her mother's life story, which is vital in helping her to understand the meaning of her own experiences.

⁴⁰³ Rand, 'Editor's Note to Part V', p. 166.

3.2 Retelling Familial History in 'The Only Good Indian'

In the essay 'The Only Good Indian' Hale complicates the representation of inherited trauma in 'Daughter of Winter' by introducing the perspective of her maternal grandmother, Gram Sullivan. Hale revisits her childhood experiences in this essay, and there are echoes of the traumatic abuse depicted in the earlier narrative, viewed here through the lens of Margaret's relationship with her own mother. Whilst there are manifestations of the transgenerational phantom in the experiential familial narratives in 'The Only Good Indian', the essay also introduces a different facet of intergenerational storytelling, in the form of independent research Hale undertakes about the circumstances of her grandmother's life. By referring to historical archives for information, she looks beyond the stories her mother and grandmother are able or prepared to tell, and discovers further information about Gram's life that helps her to understand her grandmother's behaviour in the context of her past experiences. In this section I introduce the concept of 'postmemory' developed by Marianne Hirsch, as a framework to analyse Hale's retelling and imaginative engagement with stories from her family's past.

Hale's personal motivations for exploring her maternal grandmother's story in 'The Only Good Indian' are interlinked with the political work of retelling the colonial past from the perspectives of her Native American ancestors. She refers to archival research to explore the context of her grandmother's life story, and examines her family's relationship with Gram's grandfather Dr John McLoughlin, a key figure in the colonisation of the north eastern United States. In writing her ancestral link to McLoughlin into the story of Gram's life, Hale counters mainstream historical narratives that suppress McLoughlin's interracial marriage and the mixed-race heritage of his descendants. Intergenerational autobiography thus allows Hale not only to explore the legacy of Gram's traumatic experiences of racism in colonial society, but also to respond to the erasure of her ancestors' stories from conventional historical narratives.

3.2.1 *Uncovering Gram's story*

By telling her maternal grandmother's story in 'The Only Good Indian', Hale explores her own position in relation to the legacy of cultural discrimination that she and her mother inherit. Introducing the narrative of Gram's life, Hale explains that her father David McLoughlin was a 'half-breed Indian boy', son of John McLoughlin and his Native American wife Margaret (p. 114). Escaping from the white world of his wealthy father, David met and married 'a full-blooded Kootenay Indian woman named Annie Grizzly, who became Gram's ma' (p. 114). As a mixed-race Native American woman Gram 'was actually one-quarter white', but Hale states that she 'was a *dark* Indian woman, much darker than I [...] She was part white, but she had the looks of a full-blood' (p. 114). This mixed-race lineage and Gram's obviously Native American appearance become central to understanding the complex legacy of cultural trauma that she passes on to her daughter Margaret, and hence on to Hale herself.

Describing her relationship with her grandmother as a child, Hale recalls that she 'had a reputation for being mean', as well as 'a reputation for not liking us, the children of my mother's second marriage' (pp. 114-15). She recounts an incident that illustrates Gram's animosity towards her daughter's children, described as a 'memory, not of her exactly but of a conversation, a short exchange between my mother and me' (p. 115). The incident occurs when Hale is less than six years old, when she recalls crying and being comforted by her mother in the bathroom of Gram's house. She asks "'why does Gram hate me?'" , to which Margaret responds "'she doesn't hate you. Don't think that. She hardly even knows you. She's just old and cranky. And ... you remind her of someone else ... someone she does hate'" (p. 115). Hale writes that 'the words sink in, and I remember them always. *I remind her of someone she hates. Who?*' (p. 115). Unable to understand the implications of this incident as a child, this question becomes the focus of Hale's drive to uncover her grandmother's life story and understand the implications of the difficult relationships between Gram, Margaret and herself.

During Hale's childhood, Margaret proudly teaches her about Gram's connection to the famous John McLoughlin, taking her daughter as a small child

to visit the McLoughlin House in Oregon City, which is run as a museum commemorating his role in colonial history. Here Hale learns that McLoughlin 'was chief factor for the Hudson's Bay Company a long time ago. This was sort of the same as being governor, my mother said' (p. 111). However, Hale is ridiculed when she tells her teacher in a history class that she is a descendant of McLoughlin, and Margaret warns her that 'I should never mention that I was related to Dr McLoughlin. Nobody would believe me' (p. 126). The irony of her mother's injunction not to tell the story despite her own pride in the family's lineage perplexes Hale, who asks herself 'why would I be interested in his life? Why would I want any part of him?' (p. 126). Historical denial about mixed-race marriages and fears about miscegenation force Hale and her mother to suppress their connection to the McLoughlins, and this part of their history becomes a family secret.

The complex relationship between Hale's family and the famous figure of McLoughlin is reflected in the epigraph of 'The Only Good Indian', a quotation from nineteenth century historian Hubert Howe Bancroft. In the quoted passage, Bancroft expresses his belief that 'such men as John McLoughlin' let 'their name and honors descend to a degenerate posterity' by marrying Indian women and fathering mixed race children.⁴⁰⁴ Bancroft's history writing exemplifies the discriminatory attitude held by the colonial settlers towards Native American people, and highlights the culturally ambiguous position of women like Margaret McLoughlin, who married and had children to white men during this era. The preface to Bancroft's *The History of Oregon* reveals the ethos that underpinned the treatment of indigenous people by the colonial settlers, when he asserts that

Aside from the somewhat antiquated sentiments of eternal justice and the rights of man as apart from man's power to enforce his rights, the quick extermination of the aborigines may be regarded as a blessing both to the red race and to the white.⁴⁰⁵

Exemplifying the colonialists' intentions of eradicating Native American culture, if not the entire indigenous population, Bancroft asserts that 'avarice, war,

⁴⁰⁴ Hale references the source of this quotation as H. H. Bancroft, *The History of Oregon*, 1884 (*Bloodlines*, p. 110). In fact it appears in Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: History of the Northwest Coast 1884-86*, (San Francisco: A. L Bancroft, 1884), XXVIII, p. 651.

⁴⁰⁵ Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, pp. viii-ix.

injustice, and inhumanity are often the most important aids to civilization.⁴⁰⁶ Of women like Hale's great-great-grandmother Margaret McLoughlin who 'held the relation of wives to the officers of the company' at Fort Vancouver, Bancroft writes that they 'were in no sense equal to their station; and this feature of domestic life in Oregon was not a pleasing one.'⁴⁰⁷ By quoting Bancroft in the epigraph to her narrative of Gram Sullivan's life, Hale highlights the oppression and racial denigration that her Native American ancestors were subjected to by the colonial settlers, juxtaposing Bancroft's representation of North American history to her own rewriting of this era from the perspectives of her foremothers.

In response to her mother's instruction not to tell anyone that she is descended from McLoughlin, Hale states that 'I never did mention it again' (p. 126). However, by writing 'The Only Good Indian' she finally breaks Margaret's injunction, and uses her intergenerational narrative to disrupt the family's generations-long silence about their prestigious white ancestor. The silencing of Hale's foremothers in relation to this aspect of their family's racial heritage is an interesting juxtaposition to the secrecy practiced by Morgan's family in *My Place*, discussed in section 2.1. While Morgan's mother and grandmother hide their Aboriginal identities to protect themselves and their children from discrimination and intervention from the white authorities, Hale and her mother are ironically forced to suppress their European ancestry in the face of disbelief and ridicule from white society. Writing their mixed-race heritage back into her family's story in *Bloodlines* is a politically charged act for Hale, through which she reclaims the colonial past and contributes to a cultural rewriting of traditional colonial narratives like Bancroft's *History of Oregon*. Hertha Wong emphasises the importance of such work for Native American women, for whom 'reclaiming their own histories and cultures is not a Romantic retreat to a lost past, but a political strategy for cultural (and national) survival and personal identity.'⁴⁰⁸ Thus for Hale, as for Morgan, the political and personal significances of breaking silences and retelling familial stories are closely interlinked.

⁴⁰⁶ Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, p. ix.

⁴⁰⁷ Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, p. 26.

⁴⁰⁸ Hertha D. Sweet Wong, 'First-Person Plural: Subjectivity and Community in Native American Women's Autobiography', in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), pp. 168-78 (p. 171).

As an adult after her grandmother's death, Hale revisits the ambivalent relationship between her Native American and European ancestors, when she decides to explore and retell Gram's life story. Unlike Morgan, who foregrounds the collaborative process of recording the stories of her still-living mother and grandmother, Hale draws on archival research to fill in the gaps in the stories that Margaret and Gram Sullivan failed to tell her during their lifetimes. She discovers information about Gram's interactions with the McLoughlin family, which demonstrates the racist attitudes that eventually force her mother and grandmother to hide the connection, as they seek to suppress the shame of being rejected by the McLoughlins. Hale describes the scholarly approach she takes to uncovering this history during 'a sixty-day residency fellowship' at 'the Center for the Study of the History of the American Indian at the Newberry Library in Chicago' (p. 126). She describes her desire to 'study the fur-trade era in North America, the white-Indian marriages of that time, and the mixed-blood people, who were (and are) a legacy of the fur trade' (p. 126). However, although she presents this initially as an objective historical research project, her work is motivated by her personal desire to 'imagine, if I could, Gram's early life before she left the People of the Valley [the Kootenay tribe] and married Sullivan and became my mother's ma' (p. 127). Hale ultimately hopes to answer her questions: 'What had Gram really been like? Who, if anyone, had I reminded her of?' (p. 125). Researching the context of her grandmother's early life allows Hale to recreate her life story, imaginatively identifying with her in order to construct a narrative that explains the hatred directed towards her as a child.

Hale researches the lives of Gram's parents, David McLoughlin and Annie Grizzly, and explores the historical context of their lives. Although Gram Sullivan (born Angeline McLoughlin) does not appear by name in the historical documents she reads, Hale imaginatively engages with her grandmother's experiences, using information she discovers to recreate stories from her life. Hale muses, 'I wonder if she ever daydreamed of the life her father had lived before [...] Did Gram ever wish she could go back to Oregon from whence her pa had come and reclaim something, at least, of what rightfully should have been hers?' (p. 133). Hale asserts 'I have reason to think she did', when she

discovers a reference to a woman she believes must be her grandmother in the records of Oregon Historical Society (p. 133). The records recount how two women Hale decides must be 'Gram at the age of nineteen and one of her sisters', who were granddaughters of John McLoughlin, contacted the Society in 1895 (p. 137). Hale finds an 'account by a woman who was a member of the Society' (p. 136), who writes that the women '*asked for assistance in seeking employment [...] They seemed to think they were deserving of some sort of special consideration because of who their grandfather had been*' (p. 137). Although the account does not record the women's names and contains no definitive evidence that they are Gram or any of her sisters, it is important to Hale to read this incident as her grandmother's experience. She empathetically recreates their visit, speculating 'I bet they were all dressed up [...] in job-hunting attire, in corsets and dresses with long skirts and bustles and high buttoned shoes, trying their damndest to look presentable' (p. 137). However, the Historical Society account states that the women are offered no help, due to '*their lack of education and unpresentable appearance*', which makes them unsuited '*for any sort of employment save that of washer women*' (p. 137). Hale understands the term 'unpresentable' to mean too obviously Native American in appearance, and celebrates the women's confidence in approaching the Society for assistance 'as if they didn't realize they were Indian women and the limitations that imposed on them' (p. 137). The discovery of this incident that Hale writes into her grandmother's life story becomes a pivotal moment in her quest to understand Gram's point of view, and is a key step in the process of discovering the reasons for the hatred she directs towards Margaret and her children.

3.2.2 Postmemory

The concept of 'postmemory' developed by Marianne Hirsch offers a useful insight into Hale's engagement with her grandmother's story in 'The Only Good Indian'. Hirsch's theory complements the psychoanalytic work of Abraham and Torok on the transgenerational phantom, offering another strategy for exploring the haunting impact of traumatic parental memories on the next generation. As Hirsch explains, through postmemory parental trauma is 'witnessed by those

who were not there to live it but who received its effects, belatedly, through the narratives, actions, and symptoms of the previous generation', meaning that it is not hidden as absolutely from their children's conscious recognition as Abraham and Torok suggest.⁴⁰⁹ She describes how 'the second generation – those who are deeply affected by events they themselves did not experience but whose memory they inherited – are also subject to different, if always overlapping, modes of "remembering."⁴¹⁰ Hirsch emphasises the psychological influence of parental trauma on the child, explaining that

postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated.⁴¹¹

The intergenerational narrative form of *Bloodlines* can be interpreted as a demonstration of the 'evacuation' of Hale's life story by memories inherited from her foremothers; her desire to reconnect with Gram's life story is a powerful example of how her own story is overwritten by the need to understand why Gram appears to hate her. Postmemory becomes the driving force behind Hale's research into relations between Native Americans and European settlers, as she explains that her motivation stems from the fact that 'Dr John McLoughlin's life was relevant to Gram's life. And Gram's life was, somehow, relevant to my own' (p. 126). Learning about and using imagination to fill the gaps in her grandmother's life is central to Hale's autobiographical narrative, since it allows her to interpret the meaning of experiences that hauntingly dominate her own life.

Hirsch explains how, despite the impossibility of sharing their parents' experiences, children of trauma survivors are nonetheless compelled by the overriding influence of postmemory to narrate and respond to the memories of parental trauma. The mediation involved in this process is central to the functioning of postmemory. Hirsch asserts that postmemory is 'defined through an identification with the victim or witness [...] modulated by an admission of an

⁴⁰⁹ Marianne Hirsch, 'Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission', in *Extremities: Trauma Testimony and Community*, ed. by Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougas (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp. 71-81 (p. 73).

⁴¹⁰ Hirsch, 'Marked by Memory', p. 74.

⁴¹¹ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 22.

unbridgeable distance separating the participant from the one born after.’⁴¹² Hale is separated from Gram first by psychological barriers created by the difficult relationships between her family members, and then in the narrative present by the fact that both her grandmother and her mother have died. As a consequence of the gap between her own experience and Gram’s story Hale recreates it through postmemory, which Hirsch explains is ‘a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation.’⁴¹³ The role of imaginative recreation differentiates postmemory from Abraham and Torok’s concept of the transgenerational phantom, because postmemory actually comes into being through the child’s engagement with familial memories. Thus, in contrast with unconsciously inherited traumatic symptoms in the form of a phantom, by exploring inherited trauma through postmemory Hale actively responds to the memories that haunt her own life, and consciously situates her identity in relation to Gram’s traumatic past by imaginatively identifying with her experiences.

Hale’s discovery of Gram Sullivan’s story in the Oregon Historical Society records prompts further imaginative speculation about her grandmother’s past, through which she identifies closely with her experiences of racial denigration. Imagining the sense of rejection she would have experienced at being turned away by the Historical Society, Hale questions ‘Did she ever hate her Indianness? At least sometimes? At least a little? She knew how unacceptable she was because of her looks’ (p. 139). She empathises with the self-hatred she believes her grandmother must have felt, by evoking her own memory of a time when she was ostracised as the only Native American girl in a school yard full of white children at elementary school. Hale describes this experience in an italicised flashback, recalling that ‘*the nuns organized the kids in hand-holding games like Red Rover*’, excluding her because ‘*nobody would hold my hand*’ (p. 139). In response to this rejection by her classmates, Hale ‘*went home after school and filled a white enamel basin with water, then poured a cup of Purex bleach into it and soaked my hands*’ (p. 140). She describes how, ‘*I hoped and prayed I could make them white. That I could make myself*

⁴¹² Hirsch, ‘Marked by Memory’, p. 76.

⁴¹³ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 22.

acceptable enough' (p. 140). The adjective 'acceptable' echoes the use of the term 'presentable' in the story of Gram's visit to the Historical Society, emphasising the parallels between the experiences of grandmother and granddaughter. Through postmemory Hale retells the story from her own childhood in light of its connection to her grandmother's experiences of racial denigration, which allows her to reflect on the shared experience of self-hatred. This identification with her grandmother's perspective in the text helps Hale begin to understand why Gram appeared to hate her, and empathetically to rebuild the damaged connection between the generations.

In addition to the applicability of postmemory to inherited traumatic memories that are passed between generations within a family, Hirsch also discusses the concept's wider relevance for analysing cultural trauma. In common with many Western trauma specialists, Hirsch first developed her theory with reference to the children of Holocaust survivors, meaning that her conception of postmemory is closely linked to the specific circumstances of this traumatic event in European history.⁴¹⁴ She states that

children of exiled survivors, although they have not themselves lived through the trauma of banishment and forcible separation from home [...] remain marked by their parents' experiences: always marginal or exiled, always in the diaspora.⁴¹⁵

This constitutes a parallel 'condition of exile from the space of identity' for the next generation, which becomes 'a characteristic aspect of postmemory.'⁴¹⁶ In her later work Hirsch also discusses the applicability of her theory on cultural and as well as familial levels, arguing that 'postmemory is not an identity position, but a space of remembrance, more broadly available through cultural and public, not merely individual and personal, acts of remembrance, identification, and projection.'⁴¹⁷ Whilst it is imperative to avoid collapsing the differences between widely divergent experiences of trauma in disparate cultural and national contexts, the concept of exile from the 'space of identity'

⁴¹⁴ Marianne Hirsch, 'Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile', *Poetics Today*, 17:4 (1996), 659-86 (p. 661).

⁴¹⁵ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 243.

⁴¹⁶ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 243.

⁴¹⁷ Marianne Hirsch, 'Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy', in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1999), pp. 3-23 (pp. 8-9).

explored here can offer useful insights into intergenerational responses to traumatised cultural histories like that of Hale's Native American ancestors.

The concept of postmemory can shed light not only on the stories Hale inherits from her family, but also on the experiences of Native American people as a cultural group. Although Hale's foremothers are not exiled in the literal sense of being forced out of their country of birth, they experience what Hirsch describes as 'exile from the space of identity' on several levels.⁴¹⁸ Firstly, there is the issue of tribal homelands, which were taken from Native American peoples over the centuries of colonisation in North America. Whilst Hale's father's Coeur d'Alene tribe retain a portion of their traditional homeland in the form of the reservation, the family is geographically displaced from their land and tribal community because of the deprived social and economic conditions that drive them to seek better opportunities elsewhere. In addition to this physical dislocation, the traumatic legacy of colonialism causes further breakdown of Hale's connection to her Native American family and culture because, as 3.4.2 will explore, her mother and sisters' abusive behaviour discourages her from returning to the reservation in adulthood. In these terms Hale is distanced both literally and psychologically from her family and the Coeur d'Alene tribal community as a 'space of identity'. However, the most significant destruction of Native American identity for Hale's family is seen in their own attempts to distance and dissociate themselves from traditional culture, prompted by a process of internalising racial hatred and shame about their tribal heritage. In 'The Only Good Indian' Hale uses intergenerational storytelling as a strategy to reconnect with this lost identity, by researching and attempting to understand her grandmother's history, and recreating the connections between them through narrative identification with Gram's perspective.

3.2.3 Gram's racial self-hatred

Hale examines her grandmother's complex relationship with her Kootenay heritage and identity as part of the intergenerational storytelling in 'The Only Good Indian'. She explains that 'Gram loved her home in the Kootenay Valley

⁴¹⁸ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 243.

and went back for visits. She didn't take her children with her, though, unless they were babies' (p. 121). Gram does not teach Margaret and her siblings about their cultural origins, and by refusing to take them with her when she visits her tribal home and relatives she discourages them from developing any sense of their own identities as Native American. A hierarchy of skin colour is at work here, since Gram's dark appearance exacerbates the discrimination she experiences in white society. As mixed-race women whose father is of Irish descent, Gram's daughters are able to avoid some of the racism their mother faces because they are all very light-skinned and European in appearance. Gram's behaviour can be seen as protective, since she seeks to help her children avoid the racism she endures by 'passing' as white. Although her decision to distance her children from the tribal community is ostensibly her personal choice, it is clear that the underlying social context plays a big part in her desire to suppress her daughters' Kootenay lineage.

In *Native Students with Problems of Addiction* Hale examines the damage caused to Native American people by separation from their cultural heritage, linking addictive tendencies to 'frozen development in Native culture.'⁴¹⁹ She associates this phenomenon with the Indian Residential Schools system, explaining that 'rules at these schools were such that Native languages and traditions were abandoned [...] Children were required to deny their culture and numb feelings toward their family and heritage.'⁴²⁰ In her analysis of Hale's education manual, women's autobiography scholar Julia Watson observes that it 'frames illness as a cultural sickness stemming from historical crisis and requiring changes throughout the community,' highlighting how tribal groups have been traumatised by the legacy of colonial settlement.⁴²¹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada addresses the effects of suppressing tribal cultures, stating that 'the residential school system belittled and repressed Aboriginal cultures and languages. By making students feel ashamed of who they were, the system undermined their sense of pride and self-worth.'⁴²² While

⁴¹⁹ Hale and others, p. 7.

⁴²⁰ Hale and others, p. 7.

⁴²¹ Julia Watson, 'Writing in Blood: Autobiography and Technologies of the Real in Janet Campbell Hale's *Bloodlines*', in *Haunting Violations: Feminist Criticism and the Crisis of the 'Real'*, ed. by Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 111-36 (p. 119).

⁴²² *Interim Report*, p. 26.

Margaret and her sisters are not separated from their family through the IRS system, their mother's cultural denial has a similar impact on them, making them ashamed of their Native American identities and heritage.

The absence of a sense of Kootenay tribal identity in her family is a significant motivating factor for Hale's use of intergenerational autobiography in writing *Bloodlines*. Finnegan suggests that

Because she is unable to rely on tribal traditions as a stable foundation, Hale must retrace her ancestry to recover the tribal experiences from which she has been cut off and to uncover the origin of the internalized racism that shapes her contemporary urban life.⁴²³

Gram Sullivan's attempts to suppress her Native American heritage and distance her children from the racial slurs associated with it contribute to the damaged intergenerational connections in Hale's family. Experiencing this loss through postmemory, Hale feels compelled to explore the hidden familial past and to write it back into the narrative of her own life as a Native American woman. By researching and reimagining her grandmother's life story Hale reinserts Gram's experiences into historical narratives about the North American colonial past, attesting to the cultural trauma experienced by Native American people and reasserting the tribal identity Gram felt compelled to suppress.

Gram's attempts to distance her daughters from their Native American heritage parallels the actions of Morgan's grandmother Daisy in *My Place*, who hides her Aboriginal identity and refuses to teach Morgan and her siblings about their racial heritage. Like Daisy, Gram Sullivan's silence is an attempt to protect the following generations from the trauma of racial discrimination she experiences in her own life. Daisy's actions are motivated by concern for her own and the children's wellbeing, based on her personal experience of the removal of mixed-race aboriginal children from their families. In contrast, Gram Sullivan's motivation for suppressing her Kootenay heritage is more ambiguous, complicated by negative stereotypes of Native American people she has internalised. Gram's children inherit an active hatred of Native Americans, demonstrated when Hale is taken to visit her mother's sisters as a child. She

⁴²³ Finnegan, p. 77.

observes that despite their own Kootenay heritage, 'they made stupid, snide remarks about Indians [...] whenever they could' (p. 116). Margaret's sisters treat her with disdain because she 'alone, of seven Sullivan children, married an Indian, went to live on a reservation, and had Indian kids' (p. 115). The hierarchy of skin colour is evident again in the sisters' behaviour, as Hale explains that they 'all looked one hundred percent white, just like Mom. They were poor, uneducated, working-class, yet made no effort to disguise the fact they looked down on us because we were Indian' (p. 115). Finnegan observes that 'in retracing the past, Hale finds that Gram's hatred of Indianness reveals the successful indoctrination of dominant anti-Indian sentiments; the colonization of American Indians is therefore ideological as well as physical, economic, and spiritual in its implications.'⁴²⁴ The internalised racial hatred that Gram passes on to her children both creates rifts within the immediate family unit, and reinforces their exile from the traditional 'space of identity' that Hirsch associates with the functioning of postmemory at a cultural level.⁴²⁵ The cultural breach between Gram and her own children is passed on to the next generation, when Margaret's sisters denigrate Native American people in front of their sister's mixed-race white, Kootenay, and Coeur d'Alene children.

3.2.4 'I remind her of someone she hates'

By examining the social context of Gram's attempts to distance herself and her children from their Kootenay heritage, Hale gains a new insight into the traumatic memories that haunted Gram's treatment of her as a child. In *Native Students with Problems of Addiction* Hale states that 'cultural self-hatred leads to a sense, deep in the core of the being, that there is nothing that can be done to make up for the void in oneself and the belief that one is deeply and profoundly unlovable.'⁴²⁶ Recognising parallels between her own and her grandmother's lives in 'The Only Good Indian' demonstrates that this lack of self-worth is experienced not only by individuals, but is also transmitted between the generations. When she recalls her childhood attempt to bleach her hands, the realisation that she and her grandmother share parallel experiences

⁴²⁴ Finnegan, p. 79.

⁴²⁵ Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 243.

⁴²⁶ Hale and others, p. 8.

of the haunting legacy of racism prompts Hale to return to the question, 'what did Gram think of, way back then, when she looked at me? At my Indian face, which was rather like her own?' (p. 140). Her postmemorial identification with her grandmother through retelling her story finally enables Hale to answer, 'who did I remind Gram of if not herself?' (p. 140). Finnegan observes that 'in uncovering this explanation, Hale finds that personal patterns of dysfunction cannot be separated from historical events that shape personal identity.'⁴²⁷ As evidence of this, Finnegan points to Hale's use of historical research to situate her grandmother's experiences in context, highlighting the interrelation of Hale's personal exploration of her Native American identity, and the political significance of relating her foremothers' experiences of the colonial past in *Bloodlines*.

In addition to Gram's racial self-hatred, the narrative of 'The Only Good Indian' suggests that Margaret has also inherited her mother's negative view of her Native American identity. As a result of Gram's reluctance to teach her daughters about their Kootenay family and culture, Hale's mother was prevented from valuing the family's Native American heritage and, as explained in section 3.1, she was driven to marry her abusive white first husband to escape from the hostile environment of the maternal home. Although she later married Hale's full-blooded Coeur d'Alene father, Margaret's acceptance of discriminatory cultural stereotypes suggests that she nonetheless inherits the shame Gram associates with her Kootenay identity. On her childhood visit to the McLoughlin house Hale remembers seeing a portrait of Margaret McLoughlin, John McLoughlin's Chippewa wife. Her mother tells her that "Doctor McLoughlin was not ashamed of her," Hale recalls, 'as though it were mighty big of him not to have been' (p. 112). She is puzzled by her mother's words, musing 'not ashamed of her? I studied her portrait. Solemn. Sad eyes. An Indian woman. What was there about her to be ashamed of?' (p. 112). The attitude that Margaret articulates here echoes the epigraph from Bancroft discussed in section 3.2.1. Elsewhere in *The History of Oregon*, Bancroft describes marital relations between the 'native women' and white men of Fort Vancouver, stating that

⁴²⁷ Finnegan, p. 78.

the connection was so purely a business one that [...] the native wives and children were excluded from the officers' table, and from social intercourse with visitors, living retired in apartments of their own, and keeping separate tables.⁴²⁸

These words counter Margaret's view of McLoughlin, suggesting that he and his colleagues were in fact very much 'ashamed' of their Native American wives and children. However, Bancroft's *History* and Margaret's words to her daughter nonetheless imply the same message: that interracial marriage between white and Native American people is viewed as shameful, and that Margaret McLoughlin was racially inferior to her husband.

Hale's exploration of mixed-race marriage in 'The Only Good Indian' is an important facet of her rewriting of traditional colonial histories, countering conventional views of Native American identity as culturally homogenous. Finnegan observes that Hale 'complicates the "threat" of miscegenation by representing herself as the product of a complex union of diverse cultural traditions and backgrounds (who nevertheless identifies primarily as an American Indian).'⁴²⁹ The fact that Hale privileges her Coeur d'Alene and Kootenay heritage over her European ancestry undermines the dominant cultural narratives that devalue Native American identity and prompted Margaret and Gram to regard it with shame. By recording these aspects of her family's lives, Hale demonstrates the extent to which settler history and the experiences of Native American people are interlinked, emphasising a historical reality that is ignored by conventional narratives about the colonial past.

Narrating the exchange in front of Margaret McLoughlin's portrait prompts Hale to recall another remembered conversation with her mother, when she lectures her daughter about the difference between 'good Indians', who "are clean and neat and hardworking and sober", and 'bad' ones who "white people look down on", viewing them as "drunken, lazy louts" (p. 113). Hale is frustrated by the implication that she should learn to be a 'good Indian', asking 'why don't they worry about being the sort of person I respect? Why should I have to be the one to live up to someone else's expectations?' (p. 113). This exchange illustrates the negative self-perception that Margaret inherits from her own

⁴²⁸ Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, p. 27.

⁴²⁹ Finnegan, p. 75.

mother, and the instructive tone she uses to her daughter indicates her attempt to perpetuate these ideas. Finnegan observes that ‘the internalization of prejudice is perhaps the most insidious effect of the dysfunction that is passed on to Hale by Margaret, who views Indians (and thereby herself) as inferior to Euroamericans.’⁴³⁰ The internalised racism can also be seen as one of the causes of the abuse Margaret directs at her daughter, exemplified when she taunts Hale: “*don’t think you can get away from what you are by getting away from me!*” (p. 60). By criticising her daughter’s appearance and behaviour Margaret is perhaps striving to make her conform to her view of a ‘good Indian’. The traumatic internalised self-hatred and shame are transmitted through the generations, exacerbating the damaged relationships between Hale, her mother and her grandmother, and demonstrating how their entire cultural community is traumatised by racist discrimination.

Significantly, in answering the question of her grandmother’s hatred, Hale does not address the relationship between Gram and Margaret. The narrative makes an oblique reference to Gram’s opinion of her daughter’s life, but only to explain why Hale as a child of her second marriage becomes the object of her hatred. Hale juxtaposes Margaret’s marriage to Gram’s attempt to divorce herself and her offspring from their Kootenay heritage through her own marriage. Hale writes that Gram ‘married a hard-drinking Irish railroad man from New York City [...] and had seven children with skin as presentable as snow. And every one of them married white, had white children’ (p. 140). Viewed from her grandmother’s perspective, Margaret’s second marriage is the moment when ‘something went wrong’, because one of Gram’s ‘presentable daughters [...] left her white husband. She left her first miserable marriage for a dark man who spoke with an accent. A full-blood. A reservation Indian’ (p. 140). Julia Watson observes that ‘for her mother’s family, any quantum of Indian blood has meant contamination, and the choice to marry an Indian smacks of Bancroft’s charge of degeneracy.’⁴³¹ Margaret’s relationship with her Native American identity is complex, since she chooses to marry her Coeur d’Alene husband and live with him on his tribal reservation, despite the negative stereotypes her family instil in her. Although through these actions Margaret appears to reconnect with her

⁴³⁰ Finnegan, p. 75.

⁴³¹ Julia Watson, p. 128.

Native American identity, the racial denigration that underpins her abusive treatment of her daughter suggests that this connection is ambivalent at best.

Hale understands that Margaret's marriage to her full-blooded Coeur d'Alene father prompts Gram to redirect her racist self-hatred onto Hale as a child of this marriage, because 'I, like my father and older sisters, look Indian' (p. 28). However, the narrative fails to articulate the second answer to the mystery that haunts Hale's childhood, that the object of hatred Gram sees when she looks at her granddaughter might also be her own daughter, Hale's mother. Although Margaret's skin colour is light and Hale's is dark, both mother and daughter become victims of Gram's internalised self-hatred because they have failed to distance themselves from their Native American heritage as she wishes. This reading highlights the intergenerational transmission of the cultural trauma of racism, which engenders the self-hatred Gram revisits onto her daughter, and in turn onto Hale. This unspoken answer to the mystery takes the form of another family secret, which both Margaret within the frame of the narrative, and Hale as the narrator of the story, fail to fully articulate.

Read in the light of this alternate interpretation, the mediated form in which Hale recalls first experiencing her grandmother's hatred is particularly significant. Rather than directly remembering the encounter with Gram that made her cry, Hale vividly recalls the exchange with her mother that followed it. Without the memory of any overt expression of Gram's hatred of her, it is not her grandmother's words but her mother's that 'sink in', and that she will 'remember [...] always' (p. 115). The mediation of Hale's memory through her mother's interpretation of the incident illustrates how Gram's racial self-hatred is passed through the generations. Although verbal rather than textual, Margaret's words create her own postmemorial representation of Gram's behaviour, which is embedded within Hale's exploration of their life stories. The parallel experiences of grandmother, mother and daughter are thrown into relief by the intergenerational form of the narrative, which Hale uses to highlight the long-term effects of the trauma of racial denigration on Native American people as a cultural group.

Examination of 'The Only Good Indian' illustrates the strands of traumatic intergenerational haunting at work on different levels in the interwoven life stories of Hale, Margaret and Gram. As a child Hale experiences the symptoms of familial and cultural trauma in the form of a transgenerational phantom, which keeps the overt memories of her mother's and grandmother's experiences hidden from her. Once she reaches adulthood, Hale begins to engage with the history of her family and their cultural community, enabling her to explore the origins of the traumatic familial memories that haunt her life. Through the imaginative representation and recreation that characterise postmemory Hale is able to identify with the pain experienced by her mother and grandmother. The fact that she fails to recognise the parallels between Gram Sullivan's hatred of herself and of her mother illustrates the enduring impact of the transgenerational phantom, which is still in evidence even though she has begun the process of postmemorial identification with their stories. Nonetheless, by exploring the political circumstances that give rise to her family's trauma, Hale produces a cultural record of Native American lives in the colonial past that highlights the historical significance of her own and her family's personal experiences.

3.3 Bloodline and Blood Memory in 'Return To Bear Paw'

3.3.1 *Defining blood memory*

In addition to Hale's engagement with her mother and maternal grandmother's stories discussed in sections 3.1 and 3.2, she incorporates a third strand of intergenerational storytelling in *Bloodlines* in the form of her paternal grandmother's story in the essay 'Return to Bear Paw'. Using the concept of the bloodline from the text's title, Hale adopts the metaphor of the physical lineage that connects the generations of her family to identify with her grandmother's life, drawing on emotional empathy and a sense of shared physical experience. Intergenerational storytelling through the trope of the bloodline differs from Margaret's and Gram Sullivan's traumatic stories, which seem to invade Hale's life story through the overriding impact of inherited trauma. Her engagement with her paternal grandmother's story has more positive connotations and suggests that the process of creating the narrative contains the potential for healing.

Hale first explores the concept of the bloodline at age twenty, when she travels with her father and infant son to the Coeur d'Alene reservation, a visit recorded in the essay 'Transitions'. Physically returning to the reservation at this point in her life has a particular resonance for Hale, who describes the visit as 'the first time I'd gone home as an adult' (p. 103). Looking back at this moment from the narrative present, she views the trip with even greater poignancy because although 'I didn't know it then [...] this was the last few days I'd ever spend with Dad, as he would die suddenly, of a heart attack, in March of the following year' (p. 103). The location and the presence of both her father and her son prompt her to reflect on her relationship with her ancestors, and Hale remembers this as 'the first time I thought about connections to people who had come before, connections to the land – about ancestral roots that predated the white society that had superimposed itself onto North America' (p. 103). She draws a connection between her ancestral past and her own position in the generational lineage, describing this as also 'the first time I thought about my own posterity ... of the possibility of my own bloodline continuing down the ages' (p. 103). These thoughts are echoed by the introduction to the text when, many years later,

Hale states that she wrote *Bloodlines* in part to ‘reach [...] back along my bloodlines to imagine the people I came from in the context of their own lives and times’ (p. xxii). Hale’s contemplation of her ‘bloodline’ as a young mother on her return to the reservation initiates the process of remembering, researching and retelling the familial stories that she eventually brings together in *Bloodlines*. As this section will demonstrate, reconnecting with her bloodline through writing her intergenerational autobiography becomes a potential source of healing, through which Hale attempts to repair the familial relationships that have been undermined by the traumatic circumstances of their lives.

This section examines Hale’s use of the bloodline trope in relation to the concept of ‘blood memory’ developed by contemporary Native American writer N. Scott Momaday. Allen describes the twofold function of blood memory, explaining that Momaday develops it both ‘as a trope for continuity across generations and as a process for contemporary indigenous textual production.’⁴³² A number of Native American writers have employed the blood memory trope, using it to build connections to the experiences and memories of earlier generations through empathetic reimagining.⁴³³ By engaging with the concept of the bloodline and adopting the trope of blood memory, Hale develops an alternative form of intergenerational storytelling to those of transgenerational haunting and postmemory. Incorporating this narrative technique into her work enables Hale to draw on a contemporary literary trope that is specifically Native American in origin, using it to reclaim the cultural inheritance of her family’s life stories.

Allen provides a useful explanation of blood memory in his work on Momaday’s autobiographical and fictional writing. He explains that through this trope

The contemporary Indian writer renders himself coincident with indigenous ancestors and with indigenous history – and makes available to readers both that indigenous past and his contemporary

⁴³² Allen, *Blood Narrative*, p. 162.

⁴³³ Allen analyses several Native American writers’ use of the blood memory trope, including James Welch’s novel *Winter in the Blood* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1974); Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*; Joy Harjo’s poetry collection *She Had Some Horses* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1983), and Gerald Vizenor’s extension of the trope in the novel *Darkness in St Louis: Bearheart* (St Paul, Minnesota: Truck Press, 1978). See Allen, *Blood Narrative*, pp. 188-92.

identity as indigenous – through strategies of narrative re-membering and transgenerational address.⁴³⁴

Julia Watson applies this analysis of the blood memory trope to *Bloodlines*, observing that Hale's 'argument for the continuity of blood – in memory, dream, image, prophecy, and experience – from generation to generation is presented as radically literal.'⁴³⁵ This is performed through what Watson describes as 'mapping routes of memory' from earlier generations, demonstrated in the essay 'Return to Bear Paw' where Hale engages most explicitly with the concept of her bloodline.⁴³⁶ The 'mapping' Watson identifies is established in several ways: through oral storytelling Hale remembers from her childhood, the lineage of the bloodline, her physical experience of the battleground in which her grandmother's memory is embedded, and Hale's evocation of an imaginative connection between them. Allen highlights the relation between past and present in the blood memory trope, identifying the 'power of the indigenous writer's imagination to establish communion with ancestors' as a key feature of blood memory.⁴³⁷ This engagement with the stories and experiences of earlier generations is central to Hale's portrayal of her paternal grandmother's life story in the traumatic colonial past. As this section will demonstrate, in 'Return to Bear Paw' blood memory not only enables Hale to access the intergenerational story of her grandmother, but also reinforces the construction of her own Native American identity in the text, allowing her metaphorically to share her ancestor's experience at the battlefield.

3.3.2 *The Battle at the Bear Paw*

Hale's identification with her grandmother in 'Return to Bear Paw' is initiated when she visits Montana on a speaking tour, and experiences a sense of physical connection between their lives. On this trip Hale decides to travel to the Bear Paw battleground, site of the final battle of the 'Great Flight of 1877', which her grandmother was caught up in (p. 144). Hale recounts the background of this historically documented event, explaining that it began when

⁴³⁴ Chadwick Allen, 'Blood (and) Memory', *American Literature*, 71.1 (1999), 93-116 (p. 101).

⁴³⁵ Julia Watson, p. 117.

⁴³⁶ Julia Watson, p. 118.

⁴³⁷ Allen, *Blood Narrative*, p. 178.

the Nez Percé tribe attempted to reclaim their 'homeland, the beautiful, fertile Wallowa Valley in Oregon', after the United States government told their tribal leader Chief Joseph 'to remove himself and his people to a seedy, rocky, arid piece of land in Idaho nobody wanted' (p. 145). Initially the tribal leaders attempted to gain support from other Native American tribes in order to fight for the land, but when this failed they 'decided they would run away from the United States rather than turn themselves in to the soldiers' (p. 145). At the Bear Paw, just thirty miles from the Canadian border, the cavalry finally caught up with the fleeing people, attacking 'just before dawn while the Indians still slept', leaving '419 Indians – 88 men, 184 women and 147 children [...] dead on the frozen ground' by the end of the battle (p. 158). Hale's narrative of the Great Flight and the Battle at the Bear Paw that ended it demonstrates the two-fold nature of the violence directed at Native American people in North America's colonial past. The physical violence of the battle that left so many dead is perhaps the most shocking, but the seizing of Nez Percé tribal lands that was the catalyst for the battle has a more pervasive legacy. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the issue of land rights continues to affect indigenous people in the USA and Canada in the contemporary era, undermining traditional tribal communities as well as denying them access to the land and resources that they originally owned.

Hale frames her retelling of the battle at the Bear Paw within the narrative of her own journey across Montana. She explains to her travelling companion that her Coeur d'Alene grandmother's involvement in the battle "'had to do with a case of mistaken identity'" (p. 147). While the United States cavalry were searching for Chief Joseph and his tribe, Hale's grandmother was working 'with a group of Coeur d'Alene root gatherers', who 'had gone quite a distance from Coeur d'Alene country into what used to be Nez Percé territory to dig camas roots' for food (p. 147). The cavalry found the group and, mistaking them for the Nez Percé, demanded to know Chief Joseph's whereabouts. Since the Coeur d'Alene people were unable to answer, the commander shot a member of the group, who defended themselves and succeeded in killing 'a good many soldiers and [...] beat[ing] the rest into retreat' (p. 148). The small group are 'a long way from home', distanced from the protection of their own tribe, and as a result have 'no choice but to find Chief Joseph and join forces with him' after

this violent encounter with the cavalry (p. 148). Hale narrates her grandmother's experience of this event from her memories of oral stories told to her during her childhood, and uses imagination and empathetic identification to recreate aspects of the experience at the battleground. This approach to telling the story differs significantly from the personal experience of Hale's relationship with Margaret narrated in 'Daughter of Winter', and from the archival research she undertakes to recreate Gram's story in 'The Only Good Indian'. Blood memory offers Hale an alternative narrative strategy that allows her to establish a different kind of relationship with her paternal grandmother's story in the text.

Hale's inclusion of her paternal grandmother's story in 'Return to Bear Paw' might be read as a function of postmemory, similar to the stories told in 'The Only Good Indian', as she is again motivated by the desire to understand how her grandmother's traumatic experiences relate to her own life. However, Hale's relationship with her paternal grandmother's story is in fact quite different, as she does not directly inherit traumatic memories and symptoms in the way that she does from Margaret and Gram. The Coeur d'Alene people are only indirectly involved in the land rights struggle that preceded the events at the Bear Paw, and the tribe still retain a portion of their lands in the Coeur d'Alene reservation. Hale's father grows up in the Coeur d'Alene tribal community, and as a result retains a relatively stable and positive sense of his Native American cultural identity. In addition, the fact that he is a full-blooded tribal member means that he does not encounter the issues surrounding mixed-race identity explored in section 3.2 that exacerbate Margaret's and Gram Sullivan's experiences of racial discrimination. As a result, Nick is not as profoundly affected by his mother's traumatic past as Margaret is by Gram Sullivan's experiences, and therefore Hale does not inherit a legacy of trauma from her paternal ancestors in the way that she does from the maternal side. Identifying with her father's mother through blood memory allows Hale to re-establish an alternative, positive relationship with another maternal figure.

During Hale's childhood, instead of her paternal grandmother's story intruding into her life as Margaret's and Gram's past experiences do, she feels a sense of loss because she has no personal connection with her grandmother. Hale explains that she 'died five years before my birth so I have no memories of my

own of her', and she envies her older sisters who knew their grandmother, recalling 'I wished I, too, had known her, had listened to her stories, had understood the language' (pp. 148-49). This childhood desire initiates Hale's attempt to re-establish her connection to her grandmother, as she explains that 'I imagined her [...] when I was a child, and she became almost real to me' (p. 149). She echoes this imaginative connection in the narrative present, evoking the 'grandmother I could only know in my mind's eye, in my heart's eye', by recreating a picture of her 'riding through the woods and open meadows on Sunday, all decked out in her finery [...] riding proud, beautiful, white-haired Indian woman' (p. 150). This passage represents Hale's first use of blood memory to tell her grandmother's story, seeking to recreate the relationship that she was denied during her childhood. The incorporation of her paternal grandmother's story into her autobiographical narrative is a deliberate choice prompted by Hale's desire to re-establish their intergenerational connection, contrasting to the involuntary haunting by Margaret's and Gram's traumatic pasts. Since Hale's own life is unaffected by her grandmother's trauma she is free to engage with her story through blood memory as a positive, healing process.

Significantly, Hale's retelling of her Coeur d'Alene grandmother's story is very different from her decision to write about Gram Sullivan's life. In contrast to her carefully planned research into the fur-trade era and the history of interracial marriage in order to understand Gram's experiences, Hale travels to Montana without being fully aware of the significance of the location in connection to her family. She states that 'I hadn't even realised, at first, that the place where the cavalry finally caught up with the Indians led by Chief Joseph was in Montana' (p. 144). The association of her Coeur d'Alene grandmother with the Great Flight is buried in Hale's memories, and she notes that 'I hadn't thought of my grandmother, my father's mother, who had been among those Indians, for many years' (p. 144). The physical experience of travelling through the land where these events took place prompts Hale to remember her grandmother, and she finds it 'impossible not to think of her, not to think of Chief Joseph and the Great Flight' as she journeys across Montana (p. 144). Hale states that 'I saw her, my grandmother, the young girl she had been in 1877 more and more clearly', not only engaging with her grandmother's story but also drawing 'closer and closer

to her', beginning to identify with her through the bloodline as she approaches the location of the battle at the Bear Paw (p. 152).

3.3.3 *Reconnecting to Native American heritage*

Hale's identification with her grandmother arises not only from travelling across the same landscape, but also from her sense of sharing her physical experience, exemplified by the extreme cold Hale encounters in Montana. She describes the climate there as 'startlingly cold for May', and suffers much discomfort on the trip, falling ill on the first day from 'a bad cold that would last the length of my stay' (p. 143). Whilst Hale describes these circumstances as 'petty concerns' of her own discomfort, they strengthen her physical empathy with the Native Americans who fought at the Bear Paw (p. 152). She notes that 'the last days of the Great Flight were in September, and that year it was, as it often is, very cold in Montana, maybe as cold as the time of my own journey' (p. 154). By the final day of the trip Hale asserts that

After eight days' time, all those hours of recalling what I knew about my grandmother and the Great Flight of 1877, and imagining how it must have been, after travelling all those hard Montana miles, I felt compelled to complete the journey now, to close the circle. (p. 155)

Her physical identification with her grandmother has become almost involuntary, and the metaphor of 'closing the circle' in this passage emphasises the continuity of the bloodline. A cyclical rather than linear understanding of the intergenerational connection suggests that rather than simply recording the story she inherits of her grandmother's life, Hale interacts with the intergenerational narrative by situating her own life in relation her grandmother's experiences at the Bear Paw.

Once she reaches the Bear Paw battleground, Hale reflects on the significance of the location by posing questions that explore how her grandmother may have thought and felt. She asks

What did that girl dream of that night as she lay sleeping? Did she dream of the beautiful Coeur d'Alene country that was her home? Did she see the faces of her father and mother? Or did she now dream of her new life in Canada? (p. 158)

This questioning technique is similar to Hale's explorations of Margaret's and Gram Sullivan's experiences, but unlike the telling of their stories earlier in the text, Hale does not refer to her own memories or draw on historical research to answer these questions. Instead, the answers are suggested by her physical presence at the battleground, where Hale writes that she 'stood in the snow and felt myself being in that place, that sacred place' (p. 158). She identifies with her grandmother through her own bodily experience, observing that 'I saw how pitifully close lay the mountains of Canada. I felt the biting cold' (p. 158). By evoking her grandmother's story through the metaphor of 'closing the circle', Hale creates a dialogue between their lives that enables her to write about the battle as though from personal experience. Hale aligns her consciousness with her grandmother's memories, stating

I was with those people, was part of them. I felt the presence of my grandmother there as though two parts of her met that day: the ghost of the girl she was in 1877 (and that part of her will remain forever in that place) and the part of her that lives on in me, in inherited memories of her, in my blood and in my spirit. (p. 158)

Thus Hale's engagement with her paternal grandmother's story is explicitly articulated in terms of the bloodline as a physical and spiritual inheritance. In his analysis of the features of blood memory, Allen uses the example of Momaday's short poem 'Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919', identifying how the author 'conflat[es] storytelling, imagination, memory, and genealogy into the representation of a single, multifaceted moment in a particular landscape.'⁴³⁸

These features are also evident in Hale's narrative of her visit to the Bear Paw in *Bloodlines*, where her own perceptions and physical sensations combine with inherited memories of her paternal grandmother's life and an imaginative recreation of the experience of the battle. The trope of blood memory is evident in Hale's use of physical location as a source of identification with her grandmother, and her invocation of the bloodline connection through the meeting she envisages between the ghost of her grandmother left behind at the Bear Paw, and the part of her spirit that exists within Hale herself.

Using the literary trope of blood memory, and drawing on her connections with earlier generations through the concept of the bloodline, allows Hale to rebuild

⁴³⁸ Allen, 'Blood (and) Memory', p. 101. See N. Scott Momaday, 'Carnegie, Oklahoma, 1919', in *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 136.

the missing connection with her paternal grandmother that she mourned as a child. This is emphasised by the closing passage of 'Return to Bear Paw', which includes the only instance of her grandmother's own storytelling voice, introduced to describe the birth of Hale's father 'in the mountains one summer day in 1892' (p. 160). Hale records that her grandmother

would tell him about his birth in the mountains and how she came riding down with the basket strapped to her horse on one side filled with huckleberries and the basket on the other side containing her new baby boy. (p. 160)

The reported oral story emphasises the significance of motherhood in Hale's intergenerational narrative, which is central to her portrayal of connections between the generations of her family both through her maternal and paternal bloodlines. Looking forward to the narrative present at the close of the passage Hale evokes the metaphor of 'closing the circle' discussed above, stating 'as a writer I would go back to that hard Montana country, and on a cold day in May 1986, I would, at last, return to the Bear Paw' (p. 160). Although she has not previously visited the battle site herself, Hale's journey is a physical enactment of the generational continuity evoked through blood memory, through which she metaphorically returns to the space of her grandmother's story. The cyclical generational relationship she creates in the narrative allows Hale to bridge the intervening century and a gap of two generations, and to imaginatively connect her own life with the memories inherited from her paternal grandmother. This passage also highlights the significance of the bloodline as a motif through which Hale explores her relationship with colonial history. As Finnegan asserts, 'by drawing imaginative links between her own situation and the historical event, Hale [...] move[s] toward a new understanding of history as well as a sense of familial and cultural belonging.'⁴³⁹ Drawing on two distinct ways of understanding the past – inherited familial memories and official historical narrative – Hale reveals how each of these perspectives sheds light on the other, and uses imaginative recreation to build an experiential picture of her Coeur d'Alene foremother's life in the colonial past.

Chadwick Allen and Julia Watson both emphasise that the literary trope of blood memory allows Native American authors not only to explore the lives of their ancestors, but also to counter the contemporary policing of tribal identities by

⁴³⁹ Finnegan, p. 80.

the US and Canadian governments. For Watson, the textual coupling of blood and memory ‘provocatively asserts a continuous line of descent and affiliation linking family across generations in shared experience despite government expropriation of their lands, forced assimilation of native peoples, and distance from reservation life.’⁴⁴⁰ This statement emphasises Hale’s use of empathetic identification to repair or overcome the divisions in her family and the denigration of their Native American heritage caused by the traumatic legacy of colonialism. Allen articulates the political implications of blood memory, describing it as an example of ‘the narrative tactics American Indian writers and activists employ to represent the recovery of self, place, voice, and community – specifically, to represent the rearticulation of individuals as indigenous and indigenous nations as sovereign.’⁴⁴¹ He interprets blood memory as an explicit rewriting of official definitions of Native American status determined by the United States government, addressing the issue of mixed-race heritage that is central to Hale’s identity.

Allen explains the significance of measures of ‘blood quantum’ used by the authorities as ‘a standard of racial identification’, which ‘originally served as a device for documenting “Indian” status for the federal government’s purpose of dividing and subsequently alienating collectively held Indian lands.’⁴⁴² Blood quantum is used in both Canada and the USA to determine eligibility for Native American tribal membership which, Allen asserts, ‘enshrines racial purity as the ideal for authentic American Indian identity’,⁴⁴³ and prevents ‘Indian nations from determining their own criteria for tribal membership.’⁴⁴⁴ Hale addresses the complicated legal definitions of blood quantum in ‘Circling Raven’ when she introduces her parents’ tribal heritage, explaining that whilst her father is full-blood Coeur d’Alene and a US citizen, her mother ‘was Canadian and not a “status Indian” (that is, an Indian recognized as such by the government) because her father, to whom her mother was legally married, was a white [...] man’ (p. xvi). Consequently, Margaret does not have the same rights to

⁴⁴⁰ Julia Watson, p. 118.

⁴⁴¹ Allen, *Blood Narrative*, p. 161.

⁴⁴² Allen, ‘Blood (and) Memory’, p. 96.

⁴⁴³ Allen, ‘Blood (and) Memory’, p. 96.

⁴⁴⁴ Allen, *Blood Narrative*, p. 177.

Kootenay tribal membership, collectively held land, and participation in tribal decision-making that her husband has in his Coeur d'Alene tribe.

The narrative strategy of identification with earlier generations through blood memory is developed by Native American writers in response to these exclusionary definitions of tribal identity. As Allen argues, the trope of blood memory allows authors like Momaday to 'counter dominant culture's stereotypical images of "real" or "authentic" natives', by 'boldly convert[ing] the supposedly objective arithmetic of measuring American Indian blood into an obviously subjective system of recognizing narratives – memories – of Indian indigeneity.'⁴⁴⁵ An example from Momaday's memoir *The Names* demonstrates the political significance of blood memory for redefining the terms by which Native American identities are defined. Describing his own birth, Momaday quotes in full 'a notarized document issued by the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs', which confirms that he is 'of $\frac{7}{8}$ degree Indian blood'.⁴⁴⁶ This official designation of his identity is followed by Momaday's description of 'the first notable event in my life', when his parents 'took me to Devil's Tower, Wyoming, which is called in Kiowa Tsoai, "rock tree"', where his ancestor Pohd-lohk 'gave me a name'.⁴⁴⁷ In the fifteen page passage that follows, Momaday imagines the day from Pohd-lohk's perspective, situating it within his ancestor's life story, and culminating in the moment of his naming when Pohd-lohk states 'now you are, Tsoai-talee'.⁴⁴⁸ As Allen explains, this passage demonstrates that

It is not Momaday's blood quantum, inscribed by the US government in official documents, that confers his Kiowa identity; rather, it is his blood memory, the story of his being situated within ongoing Kiowa narratives of their identity as a people in the North American landscape.⁴⁴⁹

The story of Momaday's naming thus demonstrates that developing the blood memory trope allows him to assert his place in traditional tribal lineage, countering the authorities' 'official' designation of his Native American blood quantum.

⁴⁴⁵ Allen, 'Blood (and) Memory', p. 111.

⁴⁴⁶ Momaday, *The Names*, p. 42.

⁴⁴⁷ Momaday, *The Names*, p. 42.

⁴⁴⁸ Momaday, *The Names*, p. 57. Momaday translates his Kiowa name Tsoai-talee as 'Rock Tree Boy' (p. 168).

⁴⁴⁹ Allen, *Blood Narrative*, p. 187.

Hale's journey to the Bear Paw in *Bloodlines* parallels the description of Momaday's naming, although in her case the landscape in which she situates blood memory is associated not with traditional tribal practices and beliefs, but with violence and trauma in the colonial past. Hale expands on Momaday's use of blood memory by adapting the trope to build connections between her own life and her grandmother's story. Using blood memory to recreate the connection between herself and her grandmother within this landscape doubly asserts Hale's ability to define Native American identity in her own terms, by simultaneously evoking the bloodline that connects her to her paternal grandmother, and rewriting the historical significance of the battleground. Her evocation of this event asserts the significance of the Bear Paw in her own tribal heritage, countering traditional narratives of European conquest and settlement that are associated with the battle. Simultaneously, the Bear Paw becomes the site of Hale's reconnection with her Native American heritage, thereby attesting to the endurance of her grandmother's people despite the colonial settlers' attempts to either exterminate or assimilate them. By evoking the battle in terms of her grandmother's personal experience and her own sense of physical empathy, Hale invites both Native American and non-indigenous readers to identify with the perspectives of the Coeur d'Alene and Nez Percé people who fought and died in the battle.

3.3.4 Future generations and Hale's legacy

By using the trope of blood memory in *Bloodlines*, Hale reconnects with her Native American cultural identity by imaginatively experiencing and retelling stories inherited from her ancestors. She articulates the importance of intergenerational connections in 'Circling Raven', recording a visit to the tribal school on the Coeur d'Alene reservation in 1992. Asked by the teacher 'if I were able to maintain my "ethnic identity" where I lived in New York', Hale explains how she envisages her Native American status (p. xix). She tells the students 'I am as Coeur d'Alene in New York as I am in Idaho [...] it is something that is an integral part of me', and asserts that 'being a tribal person is something special, something non-Indian Americans don't have, and it can be

a source of strength' (p. xix). Hale invokes blood memory as she describes this strength to the students, telling them that being a tribal person 'can provide a sense of continuity, of being connected to the land and to each other' (p. xix). She asks the young people to think about 'how long our tribe has existed right here in this very place', drawing hope from the fact that 'we have survived as a tribal people for a long, long while. And, we're becoming stronger' (p. xix). Memories inherited through her bloodline become a positive force in Hale's construction of her Native American identity. By passing these values on to another generation of Coeur d'Alene students she actively engages with her 'posterity', addressing 'the possibility of my own bloodline continuing down through the ages' (p. 103) that she contemplates on her first return trip to the reservation with her father and son, discussed in 3.3.1.

Through the trope of blood memory and her portrayal of intergenerational relationships as cyclical, Hale reaches forward as well as backward, to consider her own legacy for following generations. By articulating the significance of the bloodline for the group of students, Hale extends the legacy of her Native American identity beyond her own offspring by communicating it to the wider community, suggesting that the future of the Coeur d'Alene tribe can be secured by drawing strength from their cultural heritage. Hale's exploration of what it means to be Coeur d'Alene in the light of her experiences of inherited trauma and the complexities of her mixed-race heritage, parallels Morgan's use of intergenerational autobiography to explore her contemporary mixed-race Aboriginal identity in *My Place*. Blood memory allows Hale to claim an authentic Coeur d'Alene identity despite her mixed racial ancestry, countering the blood quantum definitions imposed by government authorities. By recreating her grandmother's experiences of the Great Flight Hale also employs the literary trope of blood memory to produce an alternative historical narrative that offers readers a new insight into the violence suffered by Native American people at the hands of the colonial authorities.

3.4 Functions of Intergenerational Autobiography in *Bloodlines*

The three strands of intergenerational storytelling discussed in sections 3.1 to 3.3 of this chapter enable Hale to engage with her mother and grandmothers' life stories within her autobiography. This section explores the effects of retelling these inherited life stories in *Bloodlines*, examining how and why Hale addresses the perspectives and experiences of her foremothers. In addition to her engagement with previous generations, this section also explores Hale's relationship with her living relatives, and the ways that she envisages her own legacy. I focus on the complex relationship Hale charts between herself, her ancestors and future generations, exploring whether the various strategies of intergenerational storytelling she employs can succeed in healing the harmful impact of inherited trauma that leaves her 'broken-off' from her family (p. xxi). The complexities of healing encompass both re-establishing the intergenerational connections that have been undermined in Hale's traumatised culture, and her exploration of her own contemporary Native American identity. In addition, I examine how Hale uses autobiographical and inherited stories as a political means to voice Native American perspectives on the colonial past, and explore the relationship between her work and the official historical narratives being constructed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

3.4.1 *Hale's ambivalent familial relationships*

Hale's discussion with the school students in 'Circling Raven', explored in 3.3.4, suggests that by engaging with the life stories of earlier generations of her family she is able to overcome the damage caused by abuse in her childhood, and establish a positive sense of her Native American identity. However, in a passage reflecting on her visit to the school Hale problematises the positive statements she has made, demonstrating that the rifts in her traumatised family cannot easily be repaired through narrative. Qualifying her assertion that 'tribal identity and commitment to the community and family ties are important', Hale imagines warning her listeners that 'some of you kids, like me and like many other people from all different kinds of racial and ethnic backgrounds, don't come from families that can and will encourage and support you' (p. xxi).

Generalising from her own experience, she asserts that ‘some families will, if they can, tear you down, reject you, tell you you are a defective person’, and imagines advising children from such families that ‘you must, for the sake of your own sanity and self-respect, break free, venture out on your own and go far away’ (p. xxi). These sentiments suggest that whilst telling ancestral stories has strengthened Hale’s identification with her Native American heritage, her use of intergenerational storytelling to rebuild familial connections can never fully repair the damage caused by her mother’s abuse and the legacy of trauma she inherits.

The question of Hale’s inability to reconcile with her family members prompts a re-examination of her engagement with her mother’s and maternal grandmother’s life stories. It seems clear that while telling their traumatic stories in ‘Daughter of Winter’ and ‘The Only Good Indian’ allows her to understand the context of colonial oppression and racial denigration, intergenerational storytelling does not enable Hale to fully recover positive relationships with Margaret and Gram. It is useful here to compare Hale’s intergenerational storytelling with Morgan’s narratives of her mother Gladys and grandmother Daisy’s experiences in *My Place*. The supportive listening role that Morgan plays in relation to Gladys’s and Daisy’s storytelling is not possible in Hale’s narrative, due to the dysfunctional relationships she has with her foremothers. Unlike Morgan’s family, who are traumatised as a result of external pressures from colonial society, Margaret and Gram have internalised the discrimination and trauma they have suffered, expressing the racial hatred they have internalised through abusive treatment that Hale feels unable to forgive. Unlike the supportive listening and maternal storytelling depicted in *My Place*, the inherited stories that Hale relates from Margaret’s and Gram Sullivan’s lives do not extend to them the possibility of healing. However, the narrative nonetheless does important work in recording their traumatic history as Native American women facing the multiple damaging effects of European colonisation. Hale’s engagement with inherited trauma in *Bloodlines* is not, therefore, a celebration of recovery, but a narrative of the ongoing impact of the traumatic past on both familial and cultural levels.

For Morgan, a key focus of her project is to recover her foremothers' stories, encouraging them to break their silences about the traumatic past both so that she and her siblings can learn about their heritage, and to facilitate her grandmother's healing. In contrast the interactions between Hale and Margaret in *Bloodlines* are characterised by Hale's denial or reluctance to listen to her mother's view of events. In 'Circling Raven' she records

all the awful things [Margaret] used to tell me about my father, things no child should hear, things I didn't want to hear but had to because I was powerless to make her stop. I was just a child and at her mercy, her unwilling little confidante. (p. xxiv)

In her study of domestic violence narratives Janice Haaken explores Hale's response to her mother's stories about her abusive marriages, observing that

In her own efforts to monitor the border between her mother and herself, she keeps such knowledge at a distance. When her mother displays her scars, insisting that her children bear witness to the cruelty she has endured, the daughter looks the other way.⁴⁵⁰

This distancing is partly the result of the damaged mother-daughter relationship that prevents Hale from identifying with her mother's experiences. Unlike Morgan's supportive role as a witness and implicated listener to her foremothers' trauma testimonies, Hale is depicted as her mother's 'little captive confidante' (p. 43), refusing to engage with the stories Margaret tells about her traumatic experiences.

The counterpoint to Hale's unwillingness to listen to the stories of her mother's unhappy marriages is Margaret's own refusal to discuss other aspects of her life with her daughter. As an adult Hale attempts to talk to her mother about the time they lived in a rented apartment in Waputo when she was twelve years old. Hoping to prompt Margaret's memories, she asks 'what did you think about when we lived on West Eighth?' (p. 26). Hale explains 'I meant, how had she felt during that time, how had she interpreted this experience to herself? What sort of person had she been?' (pp. 26-27). However, her mother misinterprets the 'question as a reproach, and this irritate[s] her', and she snaps 'what do you think I thought about? I thought about where my next dollar was coming from' (p. 27). Hale laments that Margaret 'would never discuss anything with me having to do with my early life with her. Unless she wanted to tell me what a

⁴⁵⁰ Janice Haaken, *Hard Knocks: Domestic Violence and the Psychology of Storytelling* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2010), pp. 97-98.

horrid child I'd been. That made understanding all she'd done difficult' (p. 27). As discussed in section 3.1, Hale maintains in 'Daughter of Winter' that she has tried to sympathise with Margaret and absolve her of blame. However, she qualifies this by asserting that 'to look with compassion requires distance and a feeling of safety ... that you've gone beyond the reach of all that had harmed you way back when' (p. 42). Ultimately it seems that for both Hale and her mother the traumatic past remains perpetually present, manifested by Hale's ongoing estrangement from her family that cannot be repaired by the intergenerational storytelling in her autobiography.

The final essay in *Bloodlines*, 'Dust to Dust', demonstrates how Hale's traumatic childhood continues to affect her relationship with her Coeur d'Alene tribal homeland. In a conversation with her daughter she explains that she sees the Coeur d'Alene reservation as closed to her, stating "I haven't lived here since I was ten. And I never can again" (p. 185). Hale associates the reservation with her sisters; for her it will always be 'their home' she explains, and consequently 'it can never be mine. I will remain, as I have long been, estranged from the land I belong to' (p. 185). Analysing this moment in the narrative, Julia Watson argues that 'while writing creates a textual legacy, it cannot negotiate her social alienation from family and the Coeur d'Alene; belonging and estrangement coexist.'⁴⁵¹ *Bloodlines* can be read as part of Hale's ongoing negotiation of her contemporary Native American identity in the context of her experiences of childhood abuse and inherited trauma. Contrasting with Magona's *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*, and Morgan's *My Place*, Hale's intergenerational autobiography questions the possibility of rebuilding familial relationships that have been destroyed by the legacy of colonial trauma. While Magona and Morgan use familial storytelling to reassert generational connections that were undermined by oppression and the discriminatory policies of the South African and Australian colonial powers, for Hale this process is complicated by the maternal abuse that harms her family from within. In *Bloodlines* healing takes a different form, as Hale uses intergenerational autobiography to explore the contemporary relevance of her Native American heritage in new urban contexts, seeking to establish a positive legacy for future

⁴⁵¹ Julia Watson, p. 132. See also discussion of this issue in Finnegan, pp. 82-83.

generations that breaks the pattern of familial and cultural trauma transmitted from parent to child.

3.4.2 *Contemporary Native American identities*

Discussing the complexities of Hale's relationship with her Native American family and heritage, Watson observes that 'the tension between an identity of transhistorical connection to a primal land as blood that she performs for a younger generation and her personal memory of being alienated in her family admits of no simple narrative resolution.'⁴⁵² She suggests that 'Hale offers two conclusions to the consequences of telling her story: an imagined possibility of collective memory through the performance of narrative and a generational reflection on Indian otherness in a multicultural future.'⁴⁵³ Whilst her relationships with her mother and sisters remain problematic, Hale's use of the blood memory trope offers the potential for a more positive reconnection with earlier generations of her family, and a strengthened legacy for the future. Finnegan interprets 'Return to Bear Paw' as a key turning point in *Bloodlines*, in which 'by forging a connection with her paternal grandmother through memory and writing, Hale attains a sense of belonging and cultural identity that she lacks at the beginning of the text'.⁴⁵⁴ This is reflected by Hale's interactions with her daughter in the succeeding and final essay in the collection, 'Dust to Dust', which depicts a trip to the Coeur d'Alene reservation that they take together in 1992. She envisages the trip in terms of resurrecting familial memories, observing that 'I saw myself going home, visiting my father's grave at the tribal cemetery, recalling the time of my childhood' (p. 170). Hale decides to take her college-aged daughter with her, resolving to 'show her where I used to live. Tell her what I know of what used to be. Pass down what I know to her' (p. 170). On their visit to the reservation Hale contemplates her legacy, reflecting that 'I have so little to pass down [...] Just the stories, the history, who we came from: we are of the Salish People, the Coeur d'Alene tribe, and this is our country' (p. 185). Paralleling the importance of visiting the battleground in 'Return to

⁴⁵² Julia Watson, p. 122.

⁴⁵³ Julia Watson, p. 130.

⁴⁵⁴ Finnegan, pp. 79-80.

Bear Paw', Hale attaches great significance to the landscape of reservation, celebrating it as the physical location of her history and Coeur d'Alene identity.

Hale describes how when her daughter was a child 'I stitched together a happy childhood for myself, an expurgated version I could recall to my little girl', but realises that 'I think I must have made it up for myself first, long before I told her – smoothed off the rough edges' (p. 169). She states that 'this was all true. Not one word, not one incident was a lie. It was just not the whole truth' (p. 168). However, as her daughter grows up Hale shatters this illusory picture of her family life, explaining that 'when she got older, I wanted her to know what kind of childhood I'd had' (p. 176). The two versions of her childhood that Hale tells her daughter echo the contrasting messages about Native American identity that she gives in the reservation school classroom, and imagines giving if she had the freedom to tell a more complete story. Hale's recollection in 'Dust to Dust' of the way her sisters humiliated her at her father's funeral exemplifies her acceptance of her true childhood memories. Her daughter participates in the telling of the story, prompting her mother's narration by interjecting to affirm "I know", and recalling details that corroborate Hale's view of events (p. 185). In one of the few supportive mother-daughter interactions depicted in *Bloodlines*, Hale's daughter comforts her with the words "Mom, I'm glad you got out of that. Away from them, I mean" (p. 185). This interaction is more closely akin to the supportive listening role that Morgan takes in relation to Gladys's and Daisy's stories in *My Place*, contrasting sharply with the refusals and silences that characterise Hale and Margaret's discussions of their pasts. The strong relationship with her daughter that enables Hale to fill in the gaps in the story of her childhood suggests that although engaging with inherited stories has not healed her relationships with her mother and sisters, intergenerational storytelling does enable Hale to build a positive connection with the next generation.

The open and supportive intergenerational relationship between Hale and her daughter provides a positive model of Native American parenting, and demonstrates the legacy Hale hopes to pass on through her bloodline. She writes that because of her white appearance her daughter 'can choose, as I never could, whether or not to be an Indian' (p. 186). Not only has she 'always

considered herself one', but she also embraces her Native American cultural identity through her career plans, as Hale explains that she 'wants to work with disturbed children in either a Native American community or a community that includes Native American people' (p. 186). These details of her daughter's life not only demonstrate the cultural values that Hale has instilled in her, but also indicate the contrast between Hale's early life and her daughter's. Hale compares her daughter's youthful outlook to her own young adulthood, when 'I didn't think of myself as young. Even now, as I look back, I don't seem to have been young in those days' (p. 182). The disparate experiences of mother and daughter indicate that the cycle of inherited trauma and parent-child abuse has been broken. Her daughter's identification with her Coeur d'Alene and Kootenay heritage suggests that Hale has succeeded in reconnecting herself, and the following generation, with a positive inheritance through their bloodline. In this respect the intergenerational narratives told in *Bloodlines* can be seen as paralleling Magona's focus in *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* on creating a textual legacy for future generations. In their intergenerational autobiographies both Magona and Hale draw on their experiences as mothers to explore the relationships between ancestral heritage and their indigenous identities. By recording her family's experiences of traumatic colonial oppression Hale establishes a textual legacy, producing a narrative of her ancestral past and cultural values through which following generations can explore their own Native American identities within and beyond the tribal reservation.

3.4.3 Historical functions of Bloodlines

Viewed in terms of the political work Hale undertakes in *Bloodlines* by giving voice to Native American women who are silenced in conventional narratives of the colonial past, the unresolved tensions in her relationship with her sisters, and the legacy of inherited trauma, become even more significant. The endurance of these issues highlights the ongoing impacts of racial denigration and colonial oppression, producing a more complex picture of these issues than would be possible had she written a straightforward portrayal of familial reconciliation. In 'Circling Raven' Hale self-consciously examines the question

of how to write about the maternal abusive to which she was subjected, explaining that ironically 'it was my mother who helped free me to write such a piece, though I know she didn't realize what she was doing' (p. xxii). Hale describes how when she was writing her first novel *The Owl's Song*, 'I was stuck', because 'I was torn between writing a novel that was true to my own vision and one that presented a positive image of Indian people' (p. xxii). When she tells her mother about her dilemma Margaret responds

'Maybe I'm just ignorant, but I thought it was a writer's business to write the truth as she sees it. Isn't it? What's the point of writing, why would anyone even want to do it if she's going to just write some nonsense to please someone else?' (p. xxii).

True to Margaret's vision of the purpose of writing, Hale concludes that both her fictional and autobiographical works must show the full extent of the damage to Native American people's lives and relationships, despite the negative implications of this portrayal. Consequently, although she is unable to write an unequivocally positive reassertion of her familial relationships, by recording the continuing effects of her foremothers' traumatic experiences Hale attests to the ongoing impacts of the North American colonial past.

By focusing on experiences and stories inherited from her female ancestors, and exploring how these relate to her own and her daughter's lives as Native American women, Hale puts their voices at the centre of her historical project. Sands outlines the distinctive features of female-authored narratives like *Bloodlines*, explaining that

Autobiographies of Indian men tend to focus on public lives [...] while the autobiographies of Indian women tend to focus on private lives, examining personal relationships and individual growth and concentrating on everyday events and activities.⁴⁵⁵

Sands examines the implications of this for 'reader reception and critical assessment', observing that 'female narratives are, as in mainstream literature, marginalized because their content does not seem significant.'⁴⁵⁶ Such assumptions create a limited view of Native American lives that devalues the social and political meaning of women's experiences. Wong examines the role of the everyday in Native American women's writing, arguing that 'attention to domestic details reveals the female autobiographer's web of relationships, not

⁴⁵⁵ Sands, p. 271.

⁴⁵⁶ Sands, p. 272.

her circumscribed mind'.⁴⁵⁷ The focus on personal relationships and the everyday is central to Hale's engagement with intergenerational narratives in *Bloodlines*, which she uses to produce a nuanced understanding of how she and her Native American foremothers are affected by events that occur in the public forum of colonial history.

Hale's use of the everyday to explore colonial history is demonstrated by the portrayal of her abusive childhood, which highlights how the effects of colonialism and racial discrimination are experienced at the levels of the domestic and personal. An altercation between Hale and her mother about her hair when she is six years old exemplifies this. Each morning Margaret arranges her daughter's hair in 'Shirley Temple curls' which she hates, asserting 'to me, those curls were ridiculous. I felt like a damned fool' (p. 70). Hale describes herself 'unable to openly resist my mother's dictates [...] hiding, undoing what my mother had done to me before stepping out into the world' (p. 70). Margaret catches her daughter pulling out the curls, and furiously cuts her hair 'so short she used my father's electric clippers on the back of my neck' (p. 70). Ostensibly this incident might seem like the result of a straightforward act of childhood rebellion, but it carries other implications when read in the context of the racist stereotypes of Native American people that Margaret has internalised. She describes curling her daughter's hair as a way of 'trying to make her look decent for school' (p. 69), but by attempting to make her look like a white child star Margaret's actions reveal her desire to conform to the norms of beauty valued by the settler community in which they live. This incident becomes embedded in the everyday reality of Hale's relationship with her mother, as Margaret repeats the story 'over and over again as the years [go] by' (p. 69). Hale describes this as an indication that her mother 'cherished that story for what it said to her concerning my intrinsic bad character' (p. 70), emphasising the racist values Margaret has internalised surrounding the need to conform to white society's definition of a 'good Indian'.

Hale's evocation of the details of domestic life to highlight how every aspect of her family's lives are pervaded by the legacy of colonialism has clear parallels with Magona's focus on the everyday explored in Chapter Two, which she uses

⁴⁵⁷ Wong, *Sending My Heart*, p. 23.

to demonstrate the daily experiences of the majority black of South Africans that are left out of narratives of 'spectacular' colonial violence. For both Hale and Magona the web of personal relationships they depict is central to the political aims of their writing, demonstrating the impacts of inequality and discrimination for ordinary citizens. In the Native American context, government policies in both the USA and Canada have worked to undermine traditional cultural practices, beliefs and support networks, by dispersing tribal communities and creating rifts in familial relationships. The aim of cultural erasure is formalised by institutions like the Indian Residential Schools system, and manifests itself more covertly through the discrimination and racial denigration demonstrated by the family stories Hale collects in *Bloodlines*. By recording the everyday lives and relationships of her Native American foremothers Hale contributes to the rewriting of conventional historical narratives about the settlement of North America, countering the portrayal of indigenous people as racially inferior and historically insignificant exemplified by Bancroft's *The History of Oregon* discussed in 3.2.1.

3.4.4 Comparison with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The political role that *Bloodlines* can play in creating an experiential record of the lives of Hale's Native American foremothers in colonial North America is closely aligned with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which aims to raise awareness about people's experiences of the Indian Residential Schools system that have been overlooked by conventional narratives of Canada's colonial past. The TRC emphasises the importance of personal testimonies, affirming in the *Interim Report* that it is 'committed to providing every former residential student – and every person whose life was affected by the residential school system – with the opportunity to create a record of that experience.'⁴⁵⁸ It states that those people who have already given testimonies 'want the full history of residential schools and Aboriginal peoples taught to all students in Canada at all levels of study and to teachers,

⁴⁵⁸ *Interim Report*, p. 12.

and given prominence in Canadian history texts.⁴⁵⁹ By undertaking this work the TRC seeks to counter the silencing of Native American people's voices and experiences in traditional narratives of colonial history like Bancroft's, as well as redressing the contemporary myth of peaceful settlement in Canada identified by Paulette Regan.⁴⁶⁰ However, while there are parallels between the Canadian TRC and Hale's engagement with colonial histories, as a literary text *Bloodlines* allows Hale the freedom to address a wider range of ancestral experiences and explore the past in different ways than are possible within the structure of the official government project.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established specifically to address the legacy of Indian Residential Schools, focusing on the experiences of people who were affected by this system. As the *Interim Report* states, 'the schools often were sites of institutionalized child neglect, excessive physical punishment, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.'⁴⁶¹ Consequently, the testimony gathering work that the TRC is currently undertaking addresses both specific instances of violence and abuse perpetrated by individuals within the system, and the more widely experienced conditions of daily life for all students who attended the residential schools. Unlike the distinction drawn by South African TRC between direct and secondary victims, in Canada the TRC seeks to address the experiences of all Native American people who are affected by the IRS system. The Canadian government actively acknowledges the cultural and intergenerational impacts of the residential schools legacy, illustrated by Prime Minister Harper's 2008 apology for the IRS system, which he addresses to 'the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities'.⁴⁶² The far-reaching impact of the system on Native American families and communities is outlined by the *Interim Report*, which states that 'as each succeeding generation passed through the system, the family bond weakened, and, eventually, the strength and structure of Aboriginal family bonds were virtually destroyed.'⁴⁶³ By paying attention to the personal testimonies of individual

⁴⁵⁹ *Interim Report*, p. 7.

⁴⁶⁰ Regan, p. 11.

⁴⁶¹ *Interim Report*, p. 25.

⁴⁶² Harper.

⁴⁶³ *Interim Report*, p. 25.

people affected by the residential schools system both through direct experience and the intergenerational effects, the Canadian TRC's focus is similar to Hale's approach to the traumatic experiences of her family members in *Bloodlines*. Hale's intergenerational autobiography addresses both the colonial violence represented by the battle at the Bear Paw, and the insidious trauma of sustained racial denigration and oppression that is transmitted from generation to generation through the maternal abuse enacted by Margaret and Gram.

Ostensibly then, it seems that the intergenerational stories Hale tells in *Bloodlines* create a historical narrative that is similar to the perspective offered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. However, *Bloodlines* does not in fact directly address the IRS system, since none of the family members whose stories Hale explores in detail attended residential schools, either in Canada or the USA. The only residential school survivor that Hale writes about is her father Nick, whose experience she touches on in 'Return to Bear Paw' to contextualise her paternal grandmother's story. Hale frames his experiences within the generational view of history she uses throughout *Bloodlines*, describing her full-blooded father as a member of 'the first generation of Indians to have Christianity forced upon it' (p. 150). In the brief paragraph devoted to Nick's schooling, Hale recounts the physical abuse to which he was subjected, when he was 'beaten by a priest [...] for speaking his own language' (p. 151). Experiences cited in the TRC's historical study *They Came for the Children* demonstrate that such practices were widespread, exemplified by one former student's testimony that "if we were heard speaking Shuswap, we were punished. We were made to write on the board one hundred times, 'I will not speak Indian any more.'"⁴⁶⁴ Hale contextualises the physical violence of Nick's punishment alongside the cultural violence perpetrated by official institutions, as she explains: 'the Church, for him, was an instrument of assimilation, an authority sponsored and sanctioned by the government whose primary purpose was to "civilize" the Indian and make him as much like a white man as possible' (p. 150). Thus in the single short passage from *Bloodlines* that records a residential school experience Hale

⁴⁶⁴ Jean E. Speare, ed., *The Days of Augusta* (Vancouver: J. J. Douglas, 1973), p. 7, quoted in *They Came for the Children*, p. 24.

addresses both a violent incident of physical abuse, and the insidious trauma of cultural denigration that her father suffered in the IRS system.

The mixed-race white and Kootenay heritage of Hale's maternal ancestors is a key reason for the absence of residential school experiences in their life stories, as it complicates their positions in relation to the Canadian and US governments' efforts to assimilate Native American children. This is highlighted in 'The Only Good Indian', where Hale explicitly compares Gram Sullivan's childhood to those of other Kootenay children who were 'found and taken away' to government schools across the United States (p. 132). She explains that 'there was no reason to haul [Gram and her sisters] away', because 'they spoke English as well as, or better than, any white children around. And they could read and write like nobody's business' (p. 132). Although Gram evades separation from her family through the residential schools system because she has been taught to speak, read and write English by her mixed-race, white-educated father David McLoughlin, the irony of Hale's observations is nonetheless clear. Due to their upbringing Gram and her sisters have already in a sense attained the goal of the colonial government, by being culturally assimilated into white society and learning to devalue their Native American heritage.

As section 3.2 discussed, the discrimination and racial hatred that Gram internalises as a result of her upbringing initiates the traumatic legacy of abuse that dominates the intergenerational relationships between herself, her daughter and granddaughter. Discussing the intergenerational effects of the IRS system, scholar Kim Stanton observes that

Indigenous people who never attended an IRS have nonetheless suffered from the harms inflicted there due to the interruption of traditional cultural transmission and parenting skills, [...] the pathologies and dysfunction now endemic in many Indigenous communities and the loss of language, culture and spirituality.⁴⁶⁵

Stanton's description of the damage caused by residential schools can also be applied to the intergenerational relationships Hale explores in *Bloodlines*. Gram Sullivan's rejection of her Kootenay heritage, and the legacy of traumatic

⁴⁶⁵ Kim Stanton, 'Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Settling the Past?', *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 2:3 (2011) <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/iipj/vol2/iss3/2> [accessed 28 September 2011] (p. 1).

dysfunction in her family, demonstrates parallels between the experiences of Native American people both within and outside of the IRS system. *Bloodlines* therefore adds to the range of experiences that the Canadian TRC is investigating, by depicting the lives of Hale's mixed-race Native American foremothers who did not attend residential schools, but who nonetheless experienced similar traumatic experiences as a result of their ambiguous social positions within white settler society.

Aside from her father's time at the residential school, the intergenerational stories Hale tells depict the lives of her Coeur d'Alene and Kootenay ancestors outside of the comparatively narrow range of experiences within the formalised IRS system addressed by the TRC. In addition, the inherited life stories that Hale incorporates into her autobiography address the cultural violence and discrimination experienced by Native American people in the USA as well as Canada, narrating experiences which fall outside of the geographical scope of the TRC. Consequently *Bloodlines* expands the historical picture being produced by the Canadian TRC, by exploring the parallel experiences of Hale's Native American ancestors in broader contexts. The text incorporates stories both of violent encounters between Native American people and colonial settlers, and of the sustained discrimination, deprivation and racism experienced in the everyday lives of Hale's ancestors, to create what Julia Watson terms a 'retelling of collective history through personal stories.'⁴⁶⁶ Hale's narrative records the traumatic past and examines the historical context of her family's experiences from a specifically Native American perspective, challenging conventional narratives of North American colonial history that privilege the experiences of white settlers. Intergenerational autobiography is central to the historical function of Hale's work, allowing her to access the life stories of Native American women at different points in the history of European settlement, as well as powerfully demonstrating how their familial relationships and cultural heritage are damaged by the continuing effects of North American colonialism. The literary form of Hale's intergenerational autobiography allows her to explore the stories she tells in different ways than are possible within the formal testimony gathering structure of the TRC, contextualising her mother and grandmothers' experiences through the lens of her own relationships with them.

⁴⁶⁶ Julia Watson, p. 112.

Like Magona and Morgan, Hale claims authority to write about the colonial past based on personal experience, as well as testifying to the effects of inherited trauma. Her exploration of her foremothers' traumatic stories and her use of the trope of blood memory demonstrate the specifically literary interventions Hale makes to produce a communal Native American experiential narrative of colonial history. By introducing the perspectives of her daughter and the Coeur d'Alene students Hale also addresses the legacy of this past for future generations, and records her own negotiation of contemporary Native American identity in the light of the legacy of familial trauma she inherits.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed Janet Campbell Hale's collection of autobiographical essays *Bloodlines*, to explore how and why Hale makes use of intergenerational life stories inherited from her Native American foremothers. The text incorporates three key strands of intergenerational storytelling: exploring trauma inherited from Hale's mother Margaret through the concept of haunting, accessing the memories of her maternal grandmother through postmemory, and connecting to her paternal grandmother using the Native American literary trope of blood memory. Drawing on the bloodline metaphor from the text's title, Hale uses blood memory to establish her own place in the generational lineage. The text is bracketed by two incidents in which Hale communicates her strengthened sense of her Native American identity to future generations, through her interactions with a group of Coeur d'Alene school students in the introduction 'Circling Raven', and her relationship with her own daughter explored in the final essay of the collection 'Dust to Dust'. However, as section 3.4 has demonstrated, Hale's relationship with her family's Native American heritage remains problematic, as she is unable to fully heal the damaged bonds with her mother and surviving sisters, and feels that the Coeur d'Alene reservation is closed to her. In this respect the functions of intergenerational autobiography in *Bloodlines* differ from the ways that Morgan and Magona use it in their narratives. For Hale, engaging with inherited stories and exploring their significance for her own life cannot bring about an unequivocal triumph over the traumatic past, nor does it enable her to fully re-establish damaged familial connections.

Hale's depiction of her enduringly ambivalent relationship with her family is politically significant, allowing her to demonstrate the extent to which the legacy of colonial trauma persists into the narrative present. Her narrative supplements the work begun by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, by contributing to a picture of Native American people's lives across (post)colonial North America. *Bloodlines* addresses a greater range of experiences than is possible within the TRC's geographical and institutional focus, and throws into relief the particular traumatic challenges her mixed-race foremothers face as a result of their ambivalent status in relation to both their

white and Native American ancestry. *Bloodlines* can be read as a testament to the resilience of Hale's cultural identity in the face of repeated attacks on her family and community's physical, economic, and psychological wellbeing. Through intergenerational autobiography Hale examines the contemporary relevance of her foremothers' experiences in the colonial past, and explores the complexities of her own mixed-race Native American identity, in the context of her contemporary estrangement from her surviving family members and the Coeur d'Alene reservation.

Thesis Conclusion

This study has analysed examples of intergenerational autobiography by three authors who each adapt the conventional individual form of the genre to produce texts that respond to the historical and political circumstances of their indigenous families' lives in a different postcolonial settler society. By incorporating the memories and voices of their foremothers within their life stories Sindiwe Magona, Sally Morgan, and Janet Campbell Hale create intersubjective narratives that engage with the traumatic legacy of the colonial past, and explore the meanings of their contemporary indigenous identities. I do not attempt to produce a definitive definition of intergenerational autobiography, but to examine the specific uses to which the authors studied put this hybrid genre in response to their own and their families' traumatic experiences. In *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* familial life stories offer experiential insights into the mechanisms of colonial control employed by the South African, Australian, Canadian and US governments. Whilst the relationships between European settlers and indigenous peoples have functioned differently in these diverse contexts, the indigenous family has been a central focus of discriminatory legislation in each, as the authorities attempt to undermine its functions as a structure of cultural transmission and a means of resistance against attempts to assimilate or exterminate indigenous communities. Magona, Morgan and Hale variously use intergenerational autobiography to record the impact of familial harm from the perspectives of their ancestors, and to reaffirm their cultural and generational connections despite the legacies of violence and oppression their families have endured. The genre offers a unique means to explore how their individual identities relate to indigenous cultural heritage and ancestral experiences in colonial settler societies, and to explore their own legacies for future generations.

Magona, Morgan and Hale each use intergenerational autobiography to contribute to civil rights activism in their respective indigenous cultural groups, participating in the rewriting of colonial histories to include the experiences and perspectives of their ancestors, which have traditionally been suppressed and

silenced. Incorporating familial stories into their autobiographies allows these authors to access experiential narratives that reach back before their own births, adopting a generational approach to the past to compare their own and their foremothers' experiences, explore continuity and change, and draw causal links between events and situations in their ancestors' lives. *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* all employ autobiographical writing and intergenerational collaborations to rewrite traumatic experience and assert control over the meaning produced in narratives of the colonial past.

Magona's two autobiographical volumes situate her life story in relation to the experiences of earlier generations of her family, and to the lives of other members of the black township community she inhabits. *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow* trace the evolution of racial segregation measures from the early twentieth century and throughout the apartheid era, highlighting the impacts of systemic oppression and daily experiences of racist discrimination that give rise to insidious trauma. Magona's representation of the traumatic experiences of apartheid in these terms produces a detailed picture of the suffering of ordinary black South Africans, and can be read as a counterpoint to the historical picture produced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, which has been critiqued for overlooking the systemic mechanisms of oppression. Magona writes from her maternal subject position to explore the communal and intergenerational effects of this trauma, situating her narratives as an address to future generations. By foregrounding the strength she draws from her parents, and adopting the instructive maternal voice to engage with following generations, Magona preserves her family's generational continuity in the face of the apartheid government's attempts to destroy black families and communities.

In *My Place* Morgan uses intergenerational autobiography in a different way, tracing her gradual discovery of her family's suppressed Aboriginal heritage, and foregrounding the collaborative storytelling she undertakes with her mother and grandmother in order to uncover their hidden pasts in the Stolen Generations. In a significant departure from the conventions of Western autobiography, Morgan hands over the first person narrative voice to each of

her foremothers in turn, embedding their stories within her own. This innovative feature of the text allows her to explore the mechanisms of trauma testimony, demonstrating the shortcomings of the traditional model of witnessing trauma based on work with Holocaust survivors in the USA. Comparison with the Australian government's official inquiry into the Stolen Generations history highlights the challenges of giving testimony in a political context where Aboriginal perspectives are still contested, and the addressee of her foremothers' trauma testimonies may often be aligned with the perspective of the white perpetrator. Morgan is an identifying witness, deeply invested in the familial testimony she listens to, and the form the narrative enables her to explore her own and her mother's and grandmother's responses to telling the stories they have long suppressed, offering further insight into the intergenerational effects of the traumatic colonial past.

Like *My Place*, Hale's *Bloodlines* also engages with hidden familial stories, although in her situation the collaborative storytelling Morgan depicts is rendered impossible by the damaged and abusive relationships between her maternal grandmother, her mother and herself. The essays collected in *Bloodlines* highlight the effects of internalised racism and inherited trauma, which functions both on familial and cultural levels. Hale explores a number of different ways of uncovering intergenerational narratives, using personal memory, archival research, and imaginative identification to examine the significance of her foremothers' traumatic experiences for her own contemporary mixed-race Native American identity. The effects of inherited trauma in Hale's life story throw into question the potential of intergenerational autobiography to rebuild damaged familial relationships. In counterpoint to this, the blood memory trope offers a more positive narrative strategy of physical and emotional identification, which Hale employs to reconnect with her paternal grandmother's story. *Bloodlines* performs a similar political function to Magona and Morgan's narratives, by writing the stories of Hale's foremothers back into national narratives of the colonial past. She depicts parallel experiential narratives to the testimonies currently being collected by the Canadian TRC, but is able to address her foremothers' experiences of racial denigration and discrimination on a broader scale that demonstrates the complexities of mixed-race Native American identities. Through her engagement with

intergenerational stories Hale ultimately breaks the chain of abusive behaviour passed from mother to daughter, and endeavours to produce a positive sense of contemporary Native American identity as her legacy to future generations.

Magona, Morgan and Hale adapt the hybrid form of intergenerational autobiography in diverse ways to respond to the traumatic legacies of their indigenous families' lives in (post)colonial South Africa, Australia and North America. Each author demonstrates how familial stories interconnect with her own life, drawing on the perspectives of earlier and future generations to explore the meaning of her contemporary indigenous identity. *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow, My Place*, and *Bloodlines* all make important interventions in debates about colonial history in their respective political contexts, reinserting the stories and voices of their indigenous ancestors into the collective narratives of their nations' pasts. As a literary form intergenerational autobiography enables different ways of engaging with the past, producing alternatives to conventional colonial histories, and to official testimony gathering projects established by postcolonial governments. By foregrounding the everyday, personal, and domestic these authors throw into relief the insidious trauma and systemic harm endured by their families and communities, highlighting the need for social and political change to address the ongoing effects of this suffering. The focus on familial and intergenerational relationships in each of these narratives produces intimate pictures of the cultural legacies of discrimination and oppression, inviting indigenous and non-indigenous readers alike to identify and empathise with the experiences depicted. By giving ancestral voices and intergenerational stories a central place in their autobiographies, Magona, Morgan and Hale all attest to the survival of their indigenous families and the evolution of their cultural identities in contemporary postcolonial societies. They examine the possibility of recreating positive intergenerational relationships through familial storytelling, seeking to produce a strengthened cultural legacy for future generations.

**Appendix A. Rebecca Gill and Claire Irving, Transcript of
'Interview with Sindiwe Magona', Newcastle University, 25
March 2010**

CI: *Mother to Mother* is directed at Amy Biehl's mother Linda, but beyond this central figure did you have awareness of who you were writing for, the kind of larger audience for the novel?

SM: Really *Mother to Mother* is for Linda Biehl as you say, but it is also for all South Africans, because I had the feeling, which I still have, after that sad incident, that – you know there was a lot of show of support, of shock and of grief, by South Africans. The moment of silence, the then-President declared a moment of silence. You know, and yet I didn't get the sense that we were fully aware as a nation of our collective, you know, culpability. Yes four young men were held responsible for the murder of Amy Biehl, but I feel all South Africans killed Amy Biehl. Had we not allowed race hate to continue, to be in the country and continue, to the extent it reached by the time Amy was killed, had we had no apartheid, had we not allowed race hate to grow in the country and become entrenched, Amy would still be alive today. And I don't think as a nation we have addressed that.

RG: I'm really interested in this idea of, kind of who you address your work to, and I'm particularly looking at autobiography in my own research, so I've been thinking about *Mother to Mother*, but also about *To My Children's Children* and *Forced to Grow*. And I was thinking about the fact that you address your autobiography to, um, your child-of-your-child-of-your-child, your great grandchild –

SM: My children's children's children – yes, yes.

RG: Um, so I wondered who you think about – sort of, do you have the addressee in your mind as you're writing?

SM: The two books of autobiography, which incidentally were written as one, one great big thing, until I found a publisher and then the story changed. Um, from a sense of not really being a writer – those are the first things I ever wrote, for publication, I wasn't quite sure who, you know, I I knew I wanted to write a book you know, and I knew I wanted to spell out how a typical African childhood – young woman you know – was like. Because I believed that one day apartheid would be no more. I'm not going to lie know and tell you I thought that would happen during my lifetime, because I didn't. Nobody did. Ah, the idea was that in say two hundred years time, when there was no longer any apartheid in South Africa and when the country had changed to such an extent that people really wondered ah when they read about apartheid how could it have been? How was it like? And I thought this would be, you know good records. In fact, what gave me the guts to actually write was the understanding, I mean the belief – I didn't think these would be books that people would read during my lifetime either. I got persuaded after I'd finished that big record of my life, ah you know the idea of archaeologists digging around and find this was the manuscript they would really get, which was why it's addressed to posterity, not necessarily you know my own biological offspring but to the future, to the people who would be there, in South Africa as well as elsewhere, long after apartheid was – was not, was dead. That was my idea, that in future people will wonder, and this will be a reflection, a record, of how our lives were like.

RG: Did you see it as addressed to not only future generations in your own family, but obviously you spoke about kind of wider, a wider reader, a wider audience –

SM: I had no reader in mind, I'm not going to lie, which is why, in a way, I was so forthright! Because I wasn't going to be embarrassed by any – I never thought it was going to be, you know, works that would be produced during my lifetime. Not when I was writing those, er you know, that volume that was later then split into these two books. I really was just addressing myself to people who'd be completely not knowledgeable about the workings of apartheid. As it goes now, even children, young people in South Africa don't really know and you know, the country was so successfully divided that I later on found that um, even South Africans didn't really know how we lived. If you lived in black

ghettos you had a fair idea of how white people – but that even that idea was not really accurate, it was you know a vision through the prism of our ghetto and our hatred and our jealousies and our perception. White people were white, rich, happy. I was in my early thirties before I discovered white pain. I had no idea white people suffered. You know, growing up you think of them as just happy, which means you – you know we really didn't, we, we took away our basic, you know the basic humaneness of others. They just became the things they stood for. And vice versa.

RG: Mm. I think you really get a sense of that, it comes across in both –

SM: It's another, it, it really is a frightening thing for people to live within the same geographical boundaries, and know so little about one another because they have so little contact.

CI: Is that something that's changing, as South Africa has changed?

SM: Pocco pocco. Haha, very little. You know, ah you cannot legislate you know friendliness. You can legislate against overt acts of racism or things like that but you cannot make laws that make people like one another, befriend one another. And um, there is some change. But it's very slow. Almost imperceptible.

RG: Um, I was wondering do you have a sense of, or did you have a sense of then of kind of writing a text as a form of history? Would you describe it as history writing?

SM: In a way, not just history – supplement to the history. Because when I was in school certainly the history books, and all non-fiction really, that mattered, if not all completely was from the – one viewpoint, the white viewpoint, you know. And I felt there was value in adding my little voice. Not as an expert about apartheid, not as somebody who went to university to study, a sociologist or someone, but as somebody who lived the experience.

RG: Uhuh, it's very important that sort of knowledge from experience.

SM: Mmm, I think so. I thought you know they would be very – from saying this is how I lived it, this is how I saw it, this is how I felt it.

RG: [to C] Do you want to continue?

CI: I'm interested in the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, firstly as a South African and a novelist, what are your views on the TRC? Did you follow the hearings?

SM: I did, I did. Ah, it's a good thing that it happened. It's a, it's a sad thing that of necessity it had to be limited in scope. But what is sadder still is that there has been no follow up. We have this knowledge now. This sad knowledge, of our wickedness and our weakness, and our cruelty. And the horrendous things that happened. And I don't know who it should have been – government, politicians, sociologists, historians, you know the clergy, the churches, I don't know. But it seems to me we skipped a step, following the demise of apartheid, and the TRC, and knowing, getting a glimpse of just how broken we were as a people, everybody in the country – black, white, coloured, Indian, everybody. And yet nobody felt there was a need for a national movement of healing. We have not addressed our hurts, our angers, our, our bigotry, our – we have not addressed that at all. We came to freedom in brokenness in 1994 and yet we have done nothing for that.

CI: But you said earlier that you can't legislate friendliness, friendship.

SM: Well you cannot -

CI: Is that something that has to happen on an individual level, this follow up to the TRC and seeing how broken you can –

SM: I, I wouldn't be able to, to say exactly what nature it must take, but there ought to have been some way of, of of calling a national, you know something that was done for the whole nation. To say let's look at ourselves, let's acknowledge our brokenness, let's find a way of moving forward, healing and

you know coming together. There hasn't been that at all. You know, sorry there's the big label, we are the 'rainbow nation', but nothing really has been done to bring us toge – there was a brief moment during Mandela's ah presidency, of hope. That's all.

CI: In *Mother to Mother* there's a focus on empathy and understanding, Mandisa says you have to understand my son to see why he killed your daughter. Um, in that sense it comes in line with the work of the TRC. In what ways do you see that literature can contribute to or further the work of the TRC? Can it play its part in a national consciousness?

SM: You know literature, um you know visual art, ah it can. It can, if it is bold enough. If it pushes the boundaries a bit. Ah, we need to see writers coming up, we need visions with ah, you know, imaginings of what could have, what could have happened. What if. What if the TRC had been extended to everybody? What if following the TRC everybody had had their say? What, what could have happened, what could have been, you know, emerged for instance if, village by village, town by town, city by city, people were brought together, to air their grievances, their joys and their sorrows, and to find a way of, you know because from the tears and the anger has to come a point, not of reconciliation and beyond, reconciliation cannot stop at talk. You know, we need to see actions, you know, a lived reality emerging from talk. It is good to see I, you know, I ask for your forgiveness, and for someone else to say I forgive you, that's on an individual basis. Then there is the larger community, what happens there? The people who were hungry before 1994 are still starving. The jobless, those who were jobless, are still jobless. Those who could never have had a good education are still in the, in the same plight. And therefore people lose hope, and feel, rightly so, that nothing is changing in their lives. And it – while it might be tolerable for somebody, for a grown up, to see that there's no movement in one's life, I think it's terrible when one begins to see not only is there no movement in my life, there won't be any – there is no movement in my child's life. And you know because then you, you become so hopeless. So devoid of hope, that ah, you might as well be dead. You know there is, there is nothing as terrible to my way of seeing things, and as

dangerous, as a human being who not only has no hope, but has no hope of ever having hope.

CI: Um, you mentioned in the reading group of the village justice you practiced in your culture where you've got to look someone in the eye and apologise. Um, I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit more about that.

SM: It's what you, you know, from a book such as *Mother to Mother*, er that unfortunately, I mean, when I say the village I mean the village *then*, it's no longer you know tradition changes, and unfortunately sometimes people – in our eagerness to get Westernised and civilised and whatever else that we, we think is better – you throw away the baby with the bathwater. But in the olden days part of *ubuntu* was exactly that, that no quarrel was allowed to grow and fester. The village was mindful of its integrity, and knew that nobody was moving, nobody was going anywhere. There may be a quarrel between the two of you. Neither of you are leaving the village, and if the quarrel is allowed to continue it will, it will grow to the extent that it engulfs more and more people and eventually the whole village. To avoid that, you know, people were encouraged, it was the norm, let me put it that way, that when there was a quarrel you know a time, a day, two depending on how – the nature of the quarrel was allowed for, you know, tempers to cool a bit. But people were brought together so that they would effect a reconciliation. Because, as I say, nobody's going to move away. And you cannot live in a situation where each time the two of you meet there's going to be blood spilt.

The same way the village was aware that you know there've always been poor people, don't always, you know in every society people are not quite equal, there will be people with more and people with less. But the poorest of the poor within the village was helped, to be, you know to sustain their lives. After people with cattle had ploughed their lands, you know they came together and looked after the poor, the weaklings, you know the poor people with nothing. You know, this one would give two, two cattle, there will be a span of cattle to go and plough that land, because come reaping time nobody's going to fold their arms and watch other people eat and not eat. They're going to come and steal from you! So you enable them to be self-sustaining. To avoid future

conflict. There wa – the village lived in cooperation. In understanding and helping one another. Nobody was allowed to starve to death.

RG: It's very interesting. Thinking about how that sort of –

SM: Yeah, but the village really, the concept of a village is we live here, we belong here, and what aids one eventually – it's like a disease. If you let a disease, you know, one family, if it's a disease that can be passed on, eventually everybody in that village will die. So, it is to the interest of the whole village to cure the sick as soon as possible, as quickly as possible. The same with starvation. The same with children who are unruly. The whole village took part in disciplining any child, because once a child is wayward I shouldn't sit here and be gloating because it's not my child, because eventually that child will grow up and kill *me*, not the parent. You know what I mean? It's not, it doesn't follow that if so-and-so's child, if M's child is rude and undisciplined, M is the only person who will ever suffer. No.

RG: Ok. It's very interesting that you talk about this kind of, perhaps collective responsibility for the child's wellbeing, because it's something that I'm – I've been very interested in. Sort of thinking about the idea of motherhood and fatherhood and parenthood in general, erm, and particularly in *Forced to Grow* when you speak about mothering your children and um, kind of how your role as a mother is circumscribed by the circumstances. Um I wondered if you could speak a little bit about that, whether you feel that it's – is it possible to, to be a mother in a different way perhaps under apartheid, even if certain functions of mothering are limited by the situation.

SM: Well, what was the limitation of course was that because we were not, um, we were never citizens in South Africa we had no access to government help at all, and so if you are a poor mother, you are a poor mother and it was up to you to find a way of, you know looking after yourself and your children. And we fell back on tradition. You know, you tapped your family, your neighbours, and again that concept of *ubuntu*, you know, prevailed then. And um, if you are as I was at some point a working mother, the other mothers help look after your children. And then at the end of the month you when, when we had you know a

couple of pennies to rub together, you know when you did your groceries you you helped them with a little bit of groceries. Now people charge, now it has become more formalised you know, we are learning the Western ways fast. Haha.

RG: Um, I find it very interesting the sort of, the way that motherhood um I almost feel that you find a different way of expressing what it means to be a mother, particularly in *Forced to Grow* when you wrote about um, going to study abroad at Colombia university, how people said you to you how can you do this and leave your children behind –

SM: Oh, it wasn't even that, I mean it was much much earlier! No, when I started studying, I was trying to complete high school. You know, there I am taking, you know doing correspondence college – looking at me suspiciously like um, what is that you're carrying, it looks like books! And I am feeling a little bit self-conscious myself. Yes it's books. Why are you carrying books, don't you have children? Haha, as if the two are mutually exclusive! I say I do have children. *Yho, yho, yho, [inaudible]*. You know, and I mean, they they, she was scandalised. How could she be busying herself with books when she had children? And for me, that was a sad thing because it meant at twenty-three, twenty-five, I was expected to just think of myself as now I'm a grown woman, mother of three kids, and that's the end of my life. I couldn't bring myself to – a stubborn streak in me just couldn't accept that my life, my life was over. I, I had no right to a tiny weeny little bit of ambition. Ha, I mean I couldn't, I just couldn't accept it. And then there was the pressing problem if I accept that how am I going to raise these children with, with nothing? For me, the only way I could get out of dire poverty was to improve my, my qualifications. And so I just told myself I – you know, to hell with you, I really don't care what you think! I have to stop being poor, and I will stay poor if I don't get this high school diploma. I couldn't see how else I could, you know.

RG: I think, for me there was a real sense when reading the text that gaining education was obviously very important for you personally, but also was part of the role of being a mother, was part of taking on that responsibility.

SM: Yes! Because I was going to have to be both mother and father. I, I recognised that. That these kids were my responsibility and mine alone. Not only did I know I could get no help from the government, I also knew that I wasn't going to get any help from the husband you know, now gone. I mean, when a man is fed up and doesn't like you any more it seems to be once love disappears so does the sense of responsibility. And I had seen it in men you know, older than me and women older than me that once the husband left, he forgot the children. I could, I could be quite happy with a man who said I'm out of this, you know, relationship, but my responsibility to my children does not – this I would respect but most men don't, don't think like that. Certainly where I come from. They don't, you know I mean later on when I worked as a welfare worker, you know help you know under a social worker, a man would cry tears because we, you know meaning the welfare worker the social worker, were forcing him to feed his children, you know the three or four children from the wife he now no longer lives with. 'But ma'am,' he would say, 'she is living with another man!' We say, 'yes, she is living with another man, this is not what we are discussing. We are discussing the four mouths that need to be fed.' He couldn't see the point: 'she's going to take my money and feed that man!' 'Yes she may feed the man 'cause he'll be there, but she'll also be feeding your four children and when that man gives her money it feeds your four children.' It's an amazing thing. 'I don't love this woman and I, I no longer care about the children we have together.' So I realised that I knew I couldn't get any help from the government, but I also knew I wouldn't get any help from the father of the children. And I was alone. That recognition scared me, that realisation.

RG: I was quite, really, sort of fascinated by the fact that there's this real strong sense of self-reliance that comes across in, particularly in *Forced to Grow* for me. Um, how do you think or where do you think that came from? That sort of sense of resource?

SM: Fear! Fear. Once you realise that you have this enormous responsibility. I have had this good fortune of having caring parents, you know, parents who took their role of parenting seriously. And therefore with a husband gone, I realised that I had a serious job to do raising three kids alone. That's something I never, in my worst nightmare I never thought I'd be a single parent. Ah but

once I accepted that, the next thing was how am I going to do this? I, I developed a single – you know, of purpose, a singleness of purpose. I just knew I had to get myself, you know, better qualified, to be able to get better jobs, and and better salaries. And um, because we, the Africans, were the only population group that paid for the education of its children.

RG: Oh, I wasn't aware of that.

SM: Mmhmm. There's this one right that people don't often talk about. Africans, of the four groups of, you know, under apartheid: white, coloured, black Indian, and Africans. Africans were the only group to have the children were free to not to go to school. White kids, coloured kids, Indian kids suffered under what was called a compulsory system of education. The children were forced by law to go to school and stay in school until age sixteen, under penalty of law if they didn't. Not African children. But then, when the government wasn't paying for our education how could it force us to go to school? Until the mid-80s the last records I have, or I've seen, this is how much the government was spending on the education of the children in South Africa, these are the mid-80s about ten years before independence. The rand then was stronger than the dollar, so we'll use dollars. 480 dollars a year on the education of *one* white child, 480! Coloured children, Indian children a little less: 280. So you see we was not getting quite the same education. But by the time it came to *our* children, the government had no qualms at all spending twenty-eight dollars a year on the education of black children, per child. Now you can see that there's a little difference between 480 and twenty-eight! And today, and I'm not apologising for the mess, you know, some of the government, you know people in government do, but sometimes when I hear that that department had to return so much money because it couldn't spend it and yet the country's crying for services, I've been saying myself well, from that twenty-eight dollars a year education, what did we expect really! It's a sad thing but we're still reaping the bad – you know, the results of what apartheid sowed.

RG: I wonder if I could ask one more question before I let Claire have the floor again. Um, I was thinking about the, the kind of importance of relationships in the family and the sense of, of a kind of continuity across generations I

suppose. You've spoken about your parents and upbringing, and also your kind of sense of responsibility to your own children. Um, and I was wondering whether you think of writing autobiography as writing your story as an individual, or do you think of it as – is it about other lives as well? Is it about those lives of your family, and all the people around you?

SM: It's mainly about my life, but obviously my life is not lived in seclusion you know, completely, no. So where my life you know, criss-crosses with other lives, and sometimes I need to say a little bit about those lives, but I'm ever conscious of the fact that other people haven't asked for their lives to be made public property, so I try as much as possible to – in fact what I do really is to say when something has touched my life in a positive way then I may name that person, but when the interaction has been negative then I either use a, you know, another name, or I just describe the circumstance and leave the name out. I, I just feel for me the important thing is that ah the record be straight, that / hide nothing. And er, if another is implicated I have no interest really in showing anybody up as terribly bad. It's not about that, life is about what happened to me.

RG: Mmhmm. Thank you for clarifying that.

CI: So, back to *Mother to Mother*, in the novel the group of youths aren't able to have their meeting, they go but the hall is already being used. However, in real life on that day the political meeting *did* go ahead and there was a lot of subsequent violence in Guguletu between the police and the youths. Why did you decide to play down this political aspect by having the meeting not take place? Or were you unaware of the actual circumstances?

SM: No no no. Some meetings took place, some meetings didn't take place. There wasn't one group of students. There were groups and groups of students. And the group I'm focusing in on, which is in my mind really, I wanted them to be frustrated enough so that when they marched down NY1 there, there is this feeling of anger against the police. And the feeling of anger against the priest who couldn't stand up to the police. Although they knew, deep down, that

there was no way that he could, but still the young people felt a little betrayed by us, the older people – we hadn't done a, b, and c before them.

CI: Mahmood Mamdani has criticised the TRC for producing a 'diminished' truth, so its focus on gross violations of human rights undermines the widespread insidious violence of apartheid, the kind of day-to-day denial of rights and so forth. Would you see your work as uncovering these widespread abuses of the apartheid era, bringing them to view?

SM: Hopefully. That's exactly how I feel about the TRC. As I said it was a good thing it happened, but that definition of gross is the same way I feel, you know, just – for me it didn't work. The same way I feel when people think the only people who suffered under apartheid were are people who were on Robben Island, or who were jailed, or who were killed. The question I ask myself, why do you think these people went to Robben Island? If life outside was so splendid, what were they complaining about? What were they protesting? Life under apartheid was gruesome. You didn't have to be in jail to experience that. In fact if it had not been gruesome, people like Mandela would never have ended up in jail.

CI: The importance of family and community is very clear in *Mother to Mother*, however Mandisa's relationship with her son is – she has no authority over him. How does that sit with this idea of family and community being so important with their relationship?

SM: Family is important, but history has, has you know, had such a negative impact on black family life that sad to say, it is in a sorry state right now. I won't go as far as saying the family has been all but destroyed, but it is that close, that close. Fatherhood, black fatherhood has all but disappeared. If you read my novel *Beauty's Gift* you will sense how saddened I am, and how, how how *angry* I am. Because black men have totally succumbed to history, and the ravages of history. And I am not excusing them, because human beings are meant transcend situations, we are not created to just succumb. I mean, you know I'm not saying apartheid was a good thing, but I am saying apartheid is not the only suffering human beings – not the only strife human beings have

ever gone through in the history of humanity. We can't just say we were oppressed and then go on being victims you know, eternal victims; this disgusts me.

CI: Some people might criticise *Mother to Mother* by saying that Mandisa is making excuses for her son. How would you respond to these people?

SM: She is she isn't. She is in the sense that she's bewildered. You know, when you're confronted with such a reality as a parent, you don't just embrace this wholeheartedly, you try to find excuses why it happened. You, you you go back to the sands that are your life and sift through, try to find, you know what makes sense. You do you are trying to make sense of this, and that's all she's doing – she's trying to make sense with a horrible reality from which her inner being, her mind recoils. She cannot, in the end she just has to explain it that it's unfortunate it happened, and her son is responsible, her son. But her son was also influenced by older people, more educated people. She takes a wider view, a more realistic view in my, in my way of seeing things. Yes her son is the instrument of the collective anger, the collective hurt, and did what many people wanted to do but dared not because realistically they knew they'd end in jail and didn't want to. That was the collective wish of black people. I mean, in history they'd this, you know, let's drive them all to the sea, you know – centuries before. It didn't happen, it will not happen. That's exactly what we need to think about today in South Africa: that we are forced whether we like it or not to co-exist. Why don't we come together and find a way in which we can do so in exuberance and happiness because we embrace it. We haven't come to that.

CI: Is reconciliation a realistic hope for South Africa?

SM: If people want it enough to work for it, there will be no reconciliation in South Africa if there is no social transformation. You cannot get reconciliation without social transformation. If we leave South Africa the way it was, the way it is, there will always be strife.

CI: Thank you.

RG: Um, just a couple more things I was interested to ask. Um, you spoke in the reading group about, um, kind of feeling a sense of responsibility in telling the story of the murderer's mother in *Mother to Mother* and I was wondering whether you could say, whether you would say the same thing about your autobiographical writing: whether there's a sense that as well as telling your own story you're also telling stories for people who maybe don't have access to the means to telling their experiences?

SM: You're right. You know I often say I'm not writing to unseat people like Jane Austen and other august, you know personages like that! My writing really comes from a sense of responsibility that our stories may not be told if people like me are timid, because of course as I said, at first I wasn't writing for publication, but more and more I feel I *need* to write for publication, I need to voice our fears, our strengths, our weaknesses, you know our happiness and our sadness, so that um, we begin to see ourselves also in the stories we read. Even as children in school or young people studying, hopefully if the literature gets to such a, you know, a state that it gets to the universities and the schools and the colleges. But also so that um, you know, we – we augment what is available. What, you know, and get better insights into South Africa and the lived reality of its people. I believe history is ah, is enriched really if not explained, explained if not enriched perhaps I should say, by, by literature. If you want – if you are a student of history and you want to understand any period really really well, because history's usually about, you know, the few great people, the greats, but if you want to understand how they all – you need to go to the lives of ordinary people, and that you find in fiction. And to another extent also in biographies. History books just summarise everything, you know. If you read and you hear that the peasants lived hard lives, that doesn't tell you anything really, does it? But if you read Charles Dickens and you – you begin to understand what a hard life was. And so hopefully –

RG: So would you say that you, um in order to understand history we need individual stories, that we need to be able to see kind of individuals in order to identify with them.

SM: Oh yes, lives, lived lives. You know you take a period and then you go to the literature that you do – you look at the lives of people, especially the vast majority that never make the history books. You know, King so-and-so went to war. King so-and-so never went to any war really, he was sitting in his palace! You know, eating his, his – it's the ordinary people who went to war. He sent his subjects to war. And if you want to experience the, the grief of war, the horror of war, go to the lives of those people. In the slums. You know, the seventeen year old who had a sixteen year old sweetheart, his mother, the hopes of the family, you know – all that will be captured in the stories. Not in King so-and-so went to war. Haha.

RG: Ok. Um, thank you – I think you've actually answered almost all of my questions there! Thank you, that's wonderful.

CI: Just one more. Would you describe yourself as a storyteller?

SM: I am a storyteller. That's what I do. Yeah, that's what I do when I'm not busy writing, I tell stories. I'm a storyteller – mainly children but I also do, you know, grown ups. Unfortunately in South Africa it's not, storytelling's not taken as seriously in the States and in the Caribbean. They have wonderful festivals in the Caribbean, storytelling, where families come, not just the children – families, people pack baskets of food, it's a picnic, it's a celebration! They stay there the whole day, and you know, storytellers you know, move from one arena to another. It's wonderful. Telling stories, at the beach, the waves are pounding, oh, it's beautiful! Haha, I like storytelling.

CI: Well, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us.

SM: No no, thank you.

RG: Thank you.

CI: It's been very interesting, thank you.

SM: You have my email address? In case you need any clarification.

RG: That would be fantastic as well, thank you – we may be in touch!

SM: Yeah yeh! And good luck with your studies.

RG, CI: Thank you, thank you so much.

SM: What are you hoping to do after graduation?

CI: I'm going to do a masters hopefully, and maybe a PhD. Don't know, that's a few years off yet!

RG: I'm hoping to stay in academia, in particular to teach, that's where my big interest is, so –

SM: It's, it's one – of all the jobs I've done, and I've done many, I don't think there's one I quite enjoyed as much as teaching.

RG: I really loved reading about your experiences as a teacher, occasionally identifying with things as well.

SM: I loved teaching! I think it's one of the best jobs one can – if you, if you really feel the call, the calling to become a teacher, because it's something in your heart really. And ah, to, I enjoy – I just enjoy being with kids or young people, and ah you know, and being part of that awakening.

CI: What do you think of education in South African now?

SM: Oh my god.

CI: That's another whole hour!

SM: Haha. Now you're going to get me depressed! Unfortunately, like all things you know, systems perpetuate themselves. And so with the best intentions in the world, it's no improving because a: the government is bumbling

about and doesn't know what it's doing, each new minister of education comes with a new system, and so the teachers are always having to keep up with systems they don't really understand. B: history is there, catching up with us, busy you know, not letting go. If you have kids who come from a home where neither of the parents finished grade school they're not likely to produce PhD students, with the best will in the world. And that's where we are.

RG: We see that the world over, don't we?

SM: Yeah, yah. Those figures I gave you about the, the expenditure on education of the apartheid government are still wreaking havoc with the people, the most – the majority of black parents know absolutely nothing about education and so even if you took a black child and said that I'll pay the fees for her to go to a good school, you could do that and people are doing that, that child goes there between 8.30 and 2.30, comes home, there is a divide. What is happening at home has nothing to do with what's happening at school. And as you know, you know you need backing at the home at the, at the home environment for the child to do well at school. And that's where we are. There is a complete divide, these kids don't read, they don't do their – they work, they have no access to the things that – you know you find a 3 year old, a 4 year old with *more* vocabulary than somebody who is in high school. It's not – it's just so sad. Again, that's something that could have been addressed, if we had a national *real* reconciliation and transformation exercise. It's not going to happen because it would be good for South Africa to happen, it can only happen if people work for it. And nobody's working for social transformation, no. Unfortunately.

Appendix B. Email from Sindiwe Magona, 17 June 2011

Rebecca Gill

To: [REDACTED]

17 June 2011 15:44

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 17 June 2011 08:57

To: Rebecca Gill

Subject: Re:

Good morning

Oh yes, I do remember you ... and Newcastle University, where I was treated royally.

All fond memories, although the trip became dimmed and sullied [in memory] by the ash from Iceland, which resulted in my being stranded in Vienna and missing the London Book Fair, which in turn fell victim to the same mischief!

Your questions: All my books were first published in SA by David Philip Publishers. And the only restriction I can think of is financial - and that persists to this day. Black people, especially those whose mother tongue is not English, tend not to read. And those who do, do not do so in their mother tongue - no concern to you, I realise. Besides that, the SA reading public is terribly small - in all languages, including English. I write so that our point of view is also represented in this form of memory conservation. Otherwise, history is only seen through one prism, that of the oppressor or representative of same. Even when a liberal white writes about our oppression, it can only be from the point of view of the by-stander, albeit a sympathetic bystander. I write so that we leave footprints, tell the story of our oppression, our living through the dark days of apartheid, in our own words. Our children's children will be happy to hear from us, get our take on these issues - of that I am convinced.

Will answer your queries, when they come. Please, do not be disheartened if there is a time lag, we are about to go on winter vac and I will be off to the village - no electricity, no email!

Best
SM

Done Internet 100%

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