

Whose Shoes?

Writing *The Heaven I Swallowed*

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Abstract

My novel *The Heaven I Swallowed* tells the story of Grace Teresa Mary McAllister, a World War II widow who decides to “save” a young Aboriginal girl, Mary, by adopting her into her home, believing she will be able to redeem the child by giving her all the benefits of white society. In Part I of the novel Mary arrives and it soon becomes obvious that her presence is bringing back the deceptions in Grace’s past. In Part II five years have passed and Grace is struggling to cope with the way she treated Mary. Exploring the myth of “for their own good” *The Heaven I Swallowed* is a tale of the Stolen Generations, told from the perspective of the white perpetrator.

The exegesis, ‘Whose Shoes? Writing *The Heaven I Swallowed*’, is also divided into two parts. Part I traces my awareness of the Stolen Generation stories and the reasoning behind the decision to narratively take the perspective of a white woman who steals an Aboriginal child. In Part II, I turn to two contemporary literary texts – Kate Grenville’s *The Secret River* and Gail Jones’s *Sorry* – to examine different strategies that the non-indigenous writer might employ to counter-act stereotypical representation of Aboriginality. Further analysis of the novel in the lead up to the final draft is then aided by another two texts: Elizabeth Jolley’s *The Well* and Joyce Carol Oates’s *Black Girl/ White Girl*. Using these as models – one in regards to a Gothic re-rendering of the work and the other in regards to the depiction of ambiguous race relations – I find a way to reconcile myself with the representation of Aboriginality in *The Heaven I Swallowed*. Finally, I come to the conclusion that the novelist might often travel a great deal away from their original intent but that these footsteps have to be taken to ensure motivations are justified and one’s conscience is at ease.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

(Signed) Rachel Hennessy

BA (Hons), MA

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Finally, having dedicated my first novel to my mother, this work is for my father: eternal optimist, pillar of strength and general bringer of joy. Never let the turkeys get you down.

Introduction

The front cover of *The Stolen Children; Their Stories: Extracts from the Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, edited by Carmel Bird, reproduces a photo of six young children. Each one of the six is dressed in a white smock, one holds a toy rabbit, most look into the camera with strangely dead eyes. One of the girls – for they are all female – has a crude cross drawn on the centre of her dress. Under the photo are the following hand-written words: ‘I like the little girl in centre of group, but if taken by anyone else, any of the others would do, as long as they are strong’ (sic).

During the writing of my novel, *The Heaven I Swallowed*, this photo remained above my desk. It served two purposes: firstly, it reminded me of the barbarous way in which many Aboriginal children had been distributed across Australia during a period of State sanctioned displacement and, secondly, it continued to put real and suffering faces to this barbarity. In a way it served as a talisman, a reminder of why I began the project in the first place.

In my novel a World War II white widow, Grace, receives into her home a twelve-year-old Aboriginal girl, Mary, who has been selected from an institution by the local priest. Told exclusively from the perspective of Grace, the narrative tracks the intense pressure the white woman feels from Mary’s presence, particularly in regard to her sense of self, a sense of self maintained via lies and delusion.

The Heaven I Swallowed is my second novel and the writing of it followed on quite soon from the completion of my first. While my first novel, *The Quakers*, relied heavily on a true story and a great deal of autobiography, the idea for *The Heaven I*

Swallowed came from a mixture of the historically real, the personal and the political. In creating a novel, you step constantly in and out of different shoes: one minute the artist empathising so deeply with a character as to be lost in the world of imagination (as the cliché goes); the next, the angry activist frustrated at your seemingly worthless contribution to fixing injustice; the following moment, a critic, standing outside of your work, looking in, comparing it to the work of others, convinced of your own failings and completely unable to see any way through to the end of the creative piece; the next, a genius, convinced of your invincibility and ability to change the world.

As a reflection of this, this attempt to exegise the work contains various voices: the article-read, quote-heavy, theory-familiar “academic” voice; the free-associating, footnote-lacking, vague-tangent “writer” voice; and a mixture of the two. It attempts to see how these personas help one another through the process of creative writing from the inspiration for the work to the excruciating re-writing. It asks the questions: as the writer moves from the initial idea to realisation, is she obliged to hold onto the political and social motivations originally behind the work? Which shoes best fit the author: those of the critically aware reader or those of the imaginatively motivated writer, true only to the internal text? How does knowing the pitfalls of cultural representation help or hinder the creative process? And where is the fine line between self-awareness and self-censorship?

While this exegesis poses these questions, it can give no easy answers. The journey of a novel is in constant flux. As Anne Bartlett notes in her exegesis of *Knitting*, writing about the writing of a work is like attempting to draw a map after the terrain has been traversed. The experience can never be truly re-created, for the arrival at a destination has already changed your perception of the travels: ‘The larger journey of writing a novel is fed by many small journeys of investigation, with reference to those

who have gone before, and writing an exegetical essay after a novel is rather like drawing a second map over the first' (Bartlett 9).

This exegesis, then, is only an attempt to step back into the various shoes that I wore during the writing of *The Heaven I Swallowed*. In the book itself, footwear is important: Mary arrives in oversized shoes; Fred reappears in un-polished, scuffed boots; and Grace is constantly concerned with the state of her feet. While I do not consciously remember setting out to make this a motif, it seems appropriate, in coming back to recall the creation of the novel, that I should re-imagine it as various ways of walking.

Like my novel, this exegesis is divided into two parts. In Part I, I trace my awareness of the Stolen Generation stories and the reasoning behind the decision to narratively take the perspective of a white woman who steals an Aboriginal child. In looking at the issue of point-of-view, I discuss my discovery that this decision was fuelled by indignation at the Howard government's treatment of the Stolen Generations, a concern with the notion of goodness and a familiarity with issues of whiteness. The voice is that of the politically motivated writer, intent on righting the wrongs of the past by exposing the harmful motivations behind the policy of enforced child removal.

Following on from this, I detail the more personal relationship I have with the material that became *The Heaven I Swallowed*, through the histories of my maternal grandmother and my paternal great-aunt and look at the writing process in terms of making both instinctive and pragmatic decisions. In looking closely at the material that I drew upon, I became aware of my intense empathy with my central white character and increasingly uneasy with the depiction of my Aboriginal character. Here, the instincts of the artist – ready and willing to cannibalise her ancestral stories – collided with the

critic, as I began to write with an awareness of the postcolonial microscope that my work may fall under.

Subsequently, in Part II, I detail my turn to two contemporary literary texts, Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and Gail Jones's *Sorry*, to examine different strategies that the non-indigenous writer might employ to counteract stereotypical representation of Aboriginality. Putting myself into the shoes of an academic critic, I learnt some useful lessons to help me with the particular dilemmas faced in the re-writing of the novel. Further analysis of the work in the lead up to the final draft of the novel was then aided by another two texts: Elizabeth Jolley's *The Well* and Joyce Carol Oates's *Black Girl/White Girl*. Using these as models – one in regards to a Gothic re-rendering of the work and the other in regards to the depiction of ambiguous race relations – I found a way to reconcile myself with the representation of Aboriginality in *The Heaven I Swallowed*.

Finally, I come to the conclusion that the novelist might often travel a great deal away from her original intent but that these footsteps have to be taken to ensure motivations are justified and her conscience is at ease.

Part I: Political and Personal Inspiration

A Bitter Wind

The photo of the six children that sat above my desk had originally appeared *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, released in 1997. This Report, from the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, documented the state-by-state use of changing government definitions of Aboriginality to take Aboriginal children from their homes and place them in State institutions, religious missions and foster homes. From the early part of the twentieth century until the 1960s (and later in the case of some states) these placements resulted in a severing of familial ties, now commonly referred to as the Stolen Generations, a term that points, not only to the theft of Aboriginal bodies, but to their displacement from culture, place and identity.

As Carmel Bird says of the photo on the front cover of her book: ‘It is a haunting picture, an image of the saddest and most tender vulnerability, already damaged, about to be further violated and sacrificed. This picture is an emblem of stolen children, and it rouses pity, outrage, grief and mourning’ (2). In editing her collection of stories, Bird had deliberately and swiftly set out to extract the personal from the *Bringing Them Home* report, to make the material more accessible: ‘. . . it was clear to me that unless people could have more ready access to the material in the Report, they would remain largely uninformed of its details, the true fabric of the matters in question’ (6). She had, like so many non-indigenous Australians, been filled

with shame at the content of the Report and needed to find a way to respond to that shame.

Similarly, Drusilla Modjeska, speaking not long after the release of the *Bringing Them Home* report, tells of the sensation of waking up to find herself ‘in an Australia I barely recognise’ where she hears, like Virginia Woolf, ‘a bitter wind’, the symbol of ‘a time of upheaval and conflict in which ways of thinking, and perhaps even of writing, are challenged and changed in the most painful way ... for the story of those children, and the struggle for land that surrounds it, is like an open wound through our history’ (‘A Bitter Wind’ 159).

My first personal knowledge of the Stolen Generations dates back to a mini-series called *Women of the Sun*, produced in 1981. I watched it on video in 1994 because I had embarked on an Honours thesis about representations of Aboriginal women. *Women of the Sun* was a four-part mini-series chronicling different Aboriginal women’s lives, from pre-Contact to the late 1970s. In one of the episodes an Aboriginal woman is seen wailing as she runs down a dry and dusty road, chasing the black car that is carrying her child away. Yet, in 1997, when the *Bringing Them Home* report was first released, I did not go in search of the original material. I was not a full-time writer at the time and felt strongly that these stories needed to be heard through the voices of those who had been there. Working in the theatre world in 1998, I then saw the play *Stolen*. Written by Jane Harrison, *Stolen* drew material from the *Bringing Them Home* report and other sources. A commission by Ilbjerri Theatre Cooperative, Harrison’s brief was to ‘tell many stories, not just one, and not to present Indigenous people as homogenous people who all felt and reacted the same way’ (‘My journey’ 67). The strength of the piece was its ability to contain many voices and the confronting nature of the material – stories that, effectively, undermined any notion of egalitarianism and, more pertinently,

the idea of “sisters beneath the skin” that my feminist self wanted to believe in – traumatised me, like a great many non-indigenous Australians. As literary and cultural historian, Kay Schaffer, succinctly puts it in her analysis of white nation responses to the Report:

We turn away, uncomprehending, not from the words but from the recognition they threaten to provoke of a nation and its people, a recognition so remote from the myths of nation that fuel our perceptions of ourselves as Australian so as to be unrecognisable. (24)

Yet, as is now well documented, not all Australians felt the same way. While the publicity surrounding the *Bringing Them Home* report ensured that the notion of the Stolen Generations became widely known in Australia, in the months immediately following the Report’s publication, a national debate raged around the need for a government apology, the need to say “sorry” to the victims of child removal. Then Prime Minister John Howard, in his first public response to the Report at the Australian Reconciliation Convention in May 1997, declared that ‘Australians of this generation should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control’ (qtd. in Dow n.pag.). Furthermore, his Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, John Herron, maintained in Parliament that:

An apology could imply that present generations are in some way responsible and accountable for the actions of earlier generations, actions that were sanctioned by the laws of the time, and that were believed to be in the best interests of the children concerned. (Hansard 435)

In contrast, Kim Beazley, then leader of the Opposition, made an apology on behalf of the Australian Labor Party and was joined by State governments around the country, as

well as leaders of the churches involved in running the institutions and missions that housed many of the stolen children. These public figures were willing to concede that the actions of the past had been harmful but, in November 1997, the ruling Liberal government formalised its decision not to apologise on behalf of the nation.

A grassroots reconciliation movement was galvanised by this decision, symbolised most potently by the Sydney Harbour Bridge Walk for Reconciliation in the year 2000 when 250,000 citizens gathered to walk as one across one of Australia's most famous landmarks. However, in the mainstream press, the "sorry" debate began to diminish and disappear from public view. From the years 1997 to 2007, Prime Minister John Howard often proclaimed he was more interested in the practical needs of indigenous peoples. For example, when ATSIC, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, was abolished in 2004, Howard declared it had 'become too preoccupied with what might loosely be called symbolic issues and too little concerned with delivering real outcomes for Indigenous people' (qtd. in *ATSIC News* 4). His view that the children were taken for their own good was accepted by many and, in some cases, the idea of the Stolen Generations was, in itself, rejected.

Robert Manne, in his 2001 book *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*, divides the motivation behind Aboriginal child removal into two phases: in the first phase (pre-World War II) removal was motivated by genocidal intent, a deliberate attempt to "breed" out the colour and effectively rid Australia of Aborigines (further supported by Beresford and Omaji; Read and G. Hennessy). The second phase (post World-War II), according to Manne, was motivated by social concerns: having continued to survive despite the odds, Aboriginal people now had to be assimilated into white society.

Manne tracks the way in which many conservative commentators balked at the term ‘genocidal’ and how many tried to insist that “half-caste” Aborigines were not accepted into traditional Aboriginal society, bringing up cases of infanticide and maintaining that, therefore, removal was legally and morally justified. The late P. P. McGuinness, editor of *Quadrant*, the journal responsible for publishing much of the initial anti-*Bringing Them Home* report material, declared there to have been enough ‘mawkish sentimentality’ and ‘pharasaical breast-beating’ regarding the Stolen Generations (qtd. in Manne 58). There is little doubt that such views backed up the Liberal government’s decision not to say sorry and perpetuated the myth that the majority of children were taken for their own good.

Of course, the use of the term ‘genocide’ in regards to the Stolen Generations made not only conservatives uncomfortable. Inga Clendinnen called it a ‘moral, intellectual and [...] political disaster’ (qtd. in Gigliotti 164), primarily because it is a term too closely associated with the Holocaust, an event that has become what Simone Gigliotti terms ‘a limit event’, that is, ‘an event or practice of such magnitude and profound violence that its effects rupture the otherwise normative foundations of legitimacy and so-called civilising tendencies that underlie the constitution of political and moral community’ (164). Many Australians refused to see the Stolen Generations in such terms.

While, at the time, I was unaware of the intricacies of these so-called ‘culture wars’¹, the Howard government’s decision to not apologise contributed to a great feeling of alienation. By 2001 I literally turned my back on my country in a quest to find

¹ As David Throsby summarises it: ‘The term culture wars came to prominence in the United States in the 1980s to describe the confrontation between the Christian right and the moderate centre-left over issues such as abortion, gay rights and the censorship of art, especially of visual art that was regarded as pornographic or sacrilegious. In Australia, cultural battles have been fought along similar ideological fault-lines, but the issues have become more sharply defined around what are seen as fundamental Australian values: attitudes to multiculturalism, to the teaching of history, to the treatment of refugees, to Aboriginal reconciliation, to the republic, indeed, to the very notion of Australian identity’ (n. pag.).

another home, hardly able to deal with the callousness demonstrated by the Howard government – not only on this issue but on many others as well – or with the fact that the majority of Australians seemed to share Howard’s lack of empathy with the Stolen Generations.

Running away is never a solution, of course, but it seemed easier at the time to live in England and reassure myself that I was one of the “good” white people. If I had been aware of the situation, I told myself, I would not have let the children be taken away.

In late 2001 the Tampa affair occurred. A boat of 438 refugees, mainly Afghans, was aggressively turned away from Australian shores. This incident, which received international media attention, was followed soon after by the terrorist attacks on the USA on September 11 and Australia’s focus firmly shifted away from Aboriginal affairs to the issue of refugees, with the insidious link being made between terrorism and immigration. Racism in Australia had another kind of face to deal with. The issue of saying ‘sorry’ to the Stolen Generations was given less and less airtime. Indeed, indigenous issues were, it seemed, off the national agenda altogether as the Howard government whole-heartedly threw Australia into the war on terror.

The UK, where I was living at this time was, however, hardly a haven of racial harmony and, after two years, England offered me unemployment and ridiculous rents, while Australia offered family and a Creative Writing course. I moved to Adelaide and began my first novel. The Australia I returned to was no less “Howardised”. Indeed, I began to wonder if the conservatives had won permanently. Such fear – that, perhaps, my country was doomed to Liberal government for all time – was, though, quite galvanising. After writing a first novel that was primarily autobiographical, drawing on my teenage and university years, I felt the desire to expand my horizons and explore a

character very different from my own. When it came to writing my second novel, I also wanted to write something that spoke to the political atmosphere I was living within. The diminished media attention on indigenous affairs angered me and I had what historian Bain Attwood would call ‘the ideal of reconciliation’ in mind for my narrative, that is:

. . . the repressed Aboriginal past is released from the national unconscious, its truths uttered, the pain of the dispossessed Aborigines acknowledged, the sins of non-Aboriginal Australians or their forebears confessed, and forgiveness sought.
(204)

I read the *Bringing Them Home* report itself for the first time early in 2005, eight years after its original release. The pain and suffering of the removed children was still potently there in the text and my anger at the lack of national apology still bubbled under the surface. Yet now it seemed that I wanted not to turn away or run away but to try and hear the various voices in the Report. To ask the question that haunted me: would I really have done any differently?

For Their Own Good

In contrast to the sadness of the photo of young stolen Aboriginal children, I also have a picture of the statue of ‘St Teresa and the Seraph’ by Baroque sculptor and architect, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, blu-tacked to my wall. Teresa, in an abundance of marble robes, swoons before the arrow-wielding angel, clearly in a state of ecstasy, waiting to be pierced by God’s love. The image, photocopied from *The Art of Ecstasy: Teresa, Bernini and Crashaw*, in contrast to the photo of stolen children, has no handwritten scribbles anywhere to be seen, just the informational type ‘St Teresa and the

Seraph (S. Maria della Vittoria, Rome)' (Plate II). Here is art, not reality. We may or may not believe that such a scene ever took place though we are encouraged by the sculptor to believe in Teresa's reality by the detail and intensity of her facial expression, her obvious succumbing to ecstatic agony induced by the Seraph's visitation. Why place such a Eurocentric image beside evidence of the slave-like manifestation of Australian racism? Because, raised as a Catholic, the notion of *for their own good* led me to question goodness. What does it mean to do good? And this, inevitably, led me to religion.

Many of the white agents who took the Aboriginal children away from their families were priests and nuns, many of the houses that received the children were religiously run institutions, missions or religious foster homes. Surely their motivation was to help, to give the children a better life, to do good in the world, not evil? Yet a belief in one's own goodness, supported only by one's membership in a particular religion had, through the ages, wreaked havoc.

In the picture on my wall, Bernini's Saint Teresa is pierced by the arrow of God, penetrated by His goodness. Her eyes are half closed, her mouth open a little. On the verge of what is clearly almost an orgasm, she is focussed on her own personal communion with God. As she herself wrote: 'In the state of ecstasy the soul is totally absorbed. No self exists outside the ecstasy. The soul in this state has been compared to a bird which cannot see the air which supports it, or a fish which cannot see the water in which it swims. It knows all and knows nothing, yet it feels its condition' (qtd. in Petersson 32). In exploring this notion of self-absorbed religiosity, I began to wonder about how my character might manifest what I saw as an age-old contradiction: the Catholic obsession with higher states of being centred quite clearly in the body running

alongside the continual subjugation of the flesh. In naming my character Grace Teresa Mary I implanted the seeds for dealing with this hypocrisy.

Furthermore, this consummation between God and self, while offering connection between humanity and other-worldly goodness in the form of God, gives us little clue about what it means to *do* good. Where, then, to look? Visiting the *Book of Saints* early in my reading in an attempt to track down religious “goodness”, I found no litany of good deeds. Rather, small narrow columns described the lives of the saints, emphasising evangelical behaviour during life and martyrdom in death. For example, Saint Agapitus was described as:

. . . a youth of noble birth who, at the age of fifteen was arrested as a Christian, and after being put to the torture was sentenced to death (sic). The brave boy was thrown to the wild beasts in the Amphitheatre; but, as not rarely happened in the case of Christian Martyrs, the fierce creatures refused to do him any harm . . . the judge cut matters short by ordering Agapitus to be forthwith beheaded.

(Book of Saints 7)

There was Joseph Barsabas, surnamed ‘The Just’, who ‘devoted his life to the work of evangelising the heathen . . . suffering much from the enmity of the Jews, his fellow-countrymen, who are said to have on one occasion made him drink poison, from the fatal consequences of which he was miraculously saved’ (154). As for the female saints, it seemed either virginity or widowhood were the main paths to beatification. Saint Isabel, a virgin, was ‘a pious and cultured maiden who refused to give her hand to the Emperor of Germany’s eldest son and heir, in order to consecrate her virginity to God’ (143) while Saint Aya ‘sanctified herself in a holy widowhood . . . Among other wonders it is related of her that after her death she hindered an injustice being done by speaking from her tomb’ (37). The lives of the saints, then, seemed to be characterised

by stubbornness and martyrdom, with some hermit tendencies, and I was not the first to believe that most of these people were not holy but delusional or, probably, wholly delusional.

While I was still pondering the notion of goodness, a talk entitled 'How to Be Good', was held at the 2005 Adelaide Festival of Ideas. Chaired by Monsignor David Cappo, the panel included the barrister Julian Burnside and Germaine Greer. Perhaps to be expected, none of the panellists wanted to claim their own innate goodness. Rather, they emphasised their actions. Greer maintained that to not exercise your intelligence was, in fact, the height of evil and, again perhaps not surprisingly, took the tack that the lie fed to women of virtue equalling purity is a patriarchal ploy. Her conclusion was that being good is to be brave and honest and have integrity. Thus, Greer advised, we must 'do noble things not dream them all day long'.

What no one seemed to be able to define was the boundaries of goodness and I realised what I longed for did not exist, that the notion of what it is to "do good" is constantly shifting, dependent on time, place and point of view. In the year 2000 during one of the first Stolen Generation cases, *Cubillo v Commonwealth*, Justice O'Loughlin observed: 'It is a truism to say that we live in changing times. What was accepted yesterday is rejected today. What would not be tolerated yesterday is accepted today. There are moral and social issues that have in the past divided, and continue today to divide, sections of the community' (par. 85). This case was dismissed. Seven years later, the first successful case for a victim of the Stolen Generations – *Trevorrow v State of South Australia* – resulted in the awarding of \$525,000 compensation to Bruce Trevorrow who was placed in foster care at the age of thirteen months after a visit to the Adelaide Children's Hospital in 1957. The separation from his family had lasted ten years. It seemed the judgements were changing.

To explore, then, the notion of taking children from their families *for their own good* required looking at the way in which self-righteousness and missionary zeal blinds people to social and cultural difference, rather than any fixed notion of good versus evil. How difficult would it be to engage with characters who believed completely in their own goodness in taking away an Aboriginal child from their family, from the historical perspective we now have, knowing all the harm that was done? How could I create the kind of character that the reader would want to go on a journey with? Given that I wanted to explore whether I would have done any differently, the subject position I had already taken was that of the white perpetrator, the subject who took a child away. Subsequently, I went in search of such voices.

The White Mother

In her article ‘Stolen Children, Invisible Mothers and Unspeakable Stories: The Experiences of Non-Aboriginal Adoptive and Foster Mothers of Aboriginal Children’, Denise Cuthbert tells the story of Faye (her name has been changed by the author to protect her identity) who adopted a baby boy, Michael, in the 1970s. In his twenties, Michael goes looking for his biological family and discovers he is Aboriginal. For Faye this is a disaster. She firstly emphasises her inability to see her son’s Aboriginality. She then reflects on the Aborigines she has known or seen in her lifetime – a few kids at her school, some fringe-dwellers near Mildura – and becomes highly distressed in her interview with Cuthbert about the way she has always placed Aboriginal people as lesser than herself. In Cuthbert’s chronicling of the pain felt by Faye, she comes to the conclusion that a great deal of this pain comes from Faye’s sense of self relying on

being *not*-Aboriginal. Upon finding her own son, her own family, permeated with Aboriginality, Faye's preconceptions had to be re-examined.

Cuthbert was one of the few researchers I encountered who had interviewed the white mothers of adopted Aboriginal children. While such voices have been heard – primarily in the Bringing Them Home Oral History Project and recorded in Mellor and Haebich's *Many Voices: Reflections on Experiences of Indigenous Child Separation* (2002) which spoke to a number of white people involved in the policy, from police officers to foster parents – the majority of work has been written from the point of view of the Aboriginal survivors, and mainly in the form of autobiography and memoir. In setting up her research project in 1997 Cuthbert was hindered by the rise of the 'stolen child' narrative that had entered into popular discourse, for the adoptive mothers of Aboriginal children were not to be heard nor sympathised with: 'They have been rendered not only silent but their experiences are virtually *unspeakable* in the present context' (Cuthbert, 'Holding the Baby' 47).

Sadly, Faye's reaction to her son's Aboriginality was not unique in the small group Cuthbert interviewed, though some had more positive outcomes than others. They were not a homogenous group. Beth, who raised four Aboriginal adopted children, resisted all stereotyping of Aboriginality and detailed the progressive Aboriginalisation and politicisation of herself and her husband through their children's reunion with their birth families.

However, many of the other women used Aboriginality to explain their adopted children's faults, drawing on racist tropes such as unreliability, sexual wildness and laziness, even with children who had had no outward contact with their heritage: 'The idea of returning to type settles very much on the question of blood and ultimately racist constructions of Aboriginality' (48). This story illustrated, to me, the complex feelings

many non-indigenous Australians have felt, and continue to feel, at having their national and personal identity intricately tied to Aboriginality.

What Cuthbert concluded was that while many of these women might be dismissed as racist, the more interesting investigation was the ways 'in which this racism is manifested and the means by which particular kinds of racism were promoted and used in the process of garnering the child-raising labour of non-Aboriginal women such as these to the management of the Aboriginal "problem"' (51). These women's fears and desires relied heavily on a white self constructed from their difference to the Aboriginal Other who they suddenly found in their midst. In reading of these women, I was able to begin to construct the boundaries of my white racist narrator. She would also be obsessed with high levels of cleanliness, she would be on the lookout for sexually deviant behaviour in her Aboriginal child and she would have a belief in her own innate racial superiority.

Whiteness

This white self that is so threatened by the racial Other has been the subject of intense scholarship since the early 1990s and, in starting out this novel, it seemed necessary to have some sense of the way in which whiteness has been constructed. Perhaps beginning the whole area of whiteness studies, Toni Morrison, in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, emphasised the importance of examining the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it. She wrote of the value of 'a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behaviour of masters' (12).

Interestingly, as a writer herself, Morrison highlights the way in which writers can ‘unhobble the imagination’ (13) from the demands of racially inflected language for ‘the ability of writers to imagine what is not the self, to familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar, is the test of their power’ (15). In examining American literature’s imagining of the African other, Morrison calls for averting the critical gaze from the ‘racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served’ (90). This seemed, to me, to be the ideal call to account that I wanted. Morrison seemed to be advocating for exactly the kind of work I was imagining: a creative work told from the point of view of the ‘master’.

Following on from Morrison, Aileen Moreton-Robinson writes in her preface to *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* that whiteness is clearly ‘the invisible norm against which other races are judged in the construction of identity, representation, subjectivity, nationalism and the law’ (vii). In Richard Dyer’s investigation, *White*, the invisibility of whiteness as a racial marker of self is both its power and its anxiety. Influenced by the imperial project, the myth of the pure Caucasian and the Christian separation of spirit from body, white identity is ‘everything and nothing’ (Dyer 39) and relies on a series of paradoxes:

... a vividly corporeal cosmology that most values transcendence of the body; a notion of being at once a sort of race and the human race, an individual and a universal subject; a commitment to heterosexuality that, for whiteness to be affirmed, entails men fighting against sexual desires and women having none; a stress on the display of spirit while maintaining a position of invisibility. (39)

Intersecting gender with race, Ruth Frankenberg then asked the questions ‘how did I become white?’ and ‘how was I racialised?’ and answered them through a series of intensely personal interviews with American women of ‘non-race’ in *White Women*,

Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness. What emerged was a continuing white anxiety over not having a culture. As one woman put it: 'To be a Heinz 57 American, a white class-confused American, land of the Kleenex type American, is so formless in and of itself' (191).

Anne Brewster, in her article 'Writing Whiteness: The Personal Turn', identifies similar issues in the 'troubling of white self-identity in Australia from the 1990s on, and the development of a new ethics of relationality' (n.pag.), particularly following Aileen Moreton-Robinson's book *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*. This Aboriginal response to white feminists led to what Brewster has described as 'the imperative for white women to situate themselves within their readings of indigenous literature, history and culture, their pedagogies and other scholarly and activist projects' (n.pag.). Whiteness, in contemporary Australian theory, is 'hyperconscious of its *relationship* with the other, that is, the relationality of self and other – their intersubjectivity, intercorporeality and interaffectivity' (n.pag.). In comparison to American and British studies, Australian whiteness studies is much more concerned with colonial power relations, the ways in which, as Moreton-Robing puts it, 'whiteness erupts and transforms itself depending on the colonising nature of its arrival and relationship to the British Empire' ('Preface' viii).

In familiarising myself with the basics of whiteness theory, I knew that the relationship between my white narrator and the black subject would be problematic, that in making my white mother a woman who did believe in her superiority, who was very much a product of colonial power, I would have to tread the fine line between interrogation and reiteration of racist belief. That is, while setting out to prove that the notion of taking the children *for their own good* was a construction of white self-

delusion, the narrative would have to leave enough space for the reader to perceive this; at the same time as the voice would have to be authentically racist.

Denise Cuthbert suggests that the Stolen Generation stories provide an important ‘contact zone between Aboriginality and non-Aboriginality’ (‘Stolen Children’ 152). Could the creative imagining of such contact, through the point of view of the white perpetrator, go some way towards examining the ways in which white standards rely on their own self-delusion and undermine the notion of *for their own good*?

Ancestral Voices

I wrote the opening scene of my novel: a young girl arrives in a black car at Grace’s house. This black car had arrived in my imagination from *Women of the Sun*, having driven down that dry and dusty road after its abduction, taken the child to any one of a number of cold institutions and then continued to drive such children to whoever was willing to take them, regardless of background or motivation. This opening scene engaged with an artefact from the past and, without questioning too much, I was inside the shoes of that woman who would receive the stolen child.

I had decided to engage with what it would have been like to be the white adoptive mother of an Aboriginal child. Complicating this point of view, however, was the confirmed knowledge of Aboriginality in my own heritage, my mother, Gail Hennessy, having completed a PhD investigating her mother’s (my grandmother’s) history and concluding that my grandmother had engaged in the process of “passing”, denying any Aboriginal strain in herself. In fact, my mother believed my grandmother actively denied her Aboriginality by working against the stereotypes of the 1950s and 1960s and trying to make herself an exemplary citizen. Maureen Perkins, in her article

'False whiteness: 'passing' and the stolen generations', describes passing in the following way:

. . . people who deny their ancestral links to communities of colour and pretend to be white are said to be trying to 'pass', and white culture has long claimed that such people can be unmasked, as not really belonging, by various 'non-white' behaviours which will 'out' at moments of stress. (165)

While it was tempting to use my Aboriginal heritage as an excuse for changing point of view, I could not reconcile my personal identity with this subject position for I came from an urban background with little connection to Aboriginal culture. Nor did I feel it justified the appropriation of a fictional voice based in indigeneity. This, of course, may seem to conflate narrative voice with personal identity and enters into the field of the politics of representation. What I did not want to get caught up in, at this stage, was the question of one's right to write a particular story. It seemed obvious that I did not want to appropriate any specific story in regards to the Stolen Generations; to do so would be culturally insensitive, not to mention emotionally invasive. What I would do, however, was use aspects of my grandmother's story in the imagining of my characters, both white and black.

I was overseas (being a "good" white girl) for the greater part of my mother's PhD and she asked me to write memories of my grandmother to be included in her thesis. I wrote a few pages but did not send them in time for my mother to use them, primarily because they were all rather negative. As a child, I did not like my grandmother a great deal. She was hard, critical, acerbic and treated my father with a thinly disguised contempt. As I grew older, my view softened somewhat but the fixed memories were of harsh words and bitterness, and I have never been one to sugar-coat.

When I finally read my mother's thesis I found it peppered with personal stories and anecdotes that I was afraid of inadvertently cannibalising in my own work. My mother talked of turning her thesis into a book and I encouraged her to do so, but in the conclusion of the thesis she wrote: 'It is time now to move on from my mother's story' (328). Still, I struggled with how much to talk to her about this idea I had for a novel. I was already thinking of my grandmother as a little girl: the child that was given away because of the black blood inside her; the child who creates fantasies of a beautiful, *fair* mother; the child who never knows her family.

The other older female relative who also started to invade my imagination was my great-aunt. My paternal grandparents died before I could know them, thus the sister of my father's mother was the only relative on my father's side that I have childhood memories of: a large house in the now well to-do suburb of Double Bay in Sydney, lunches of blue-swimmer crabs freshly caught by my very active great-aunt and a belief that her husband had died in the War. I do not remember the exact time when I discovered that her husband had, in fact, abandoned her for a Japanese woman. Again, I was wary of asking my father too much, primarily because I was afraid of ruining the story inside my head with "the truth".

In the end, I discussed the idea of using elements of my grandmother's story and my great-aunt's story in my novel with both my parents. Neither had issue with my use of the material. In fact, my father was grateful to have a willing recipient of many of the photo albums and scrapbooks he had inherited upon my great-aunt's death.

Past or Present?

One of the other issues that needed to be resolved was the timing of the work. As noted, the taking away of Aboriginal children continued well into the late 1960s (and some would argue that the Howard government's intervention into the Northern Territory in late 2007 was another form of state control of Aboriginal familial relations), so there was no reason to make the novel too historically distant. My thoughts had already been sparked by Drusilla Modjeska's essay, 'The Present in Fiction', where she asks: 'Why isn't anyone here writing a novel like Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections*? Why are so few people writing novels about lives we are living right now, here in Australia? Why this retreat of fiction into history [with] one novel after another set in our pre-modern past?' (*Timepieces* 208).

In answer to Modjeska's question, my original idea had been to write three novellas: one written in the past, one in the present and one in the future. Inspired, to a great degree, by Rachel Seiffert's *The Dark Room*, each novella would deal with Aboriginality in a different way. This meant that I could set one novella in the past, thus requiring only a short excursion into any kind of historical writing before I scrambled out again into the present and then, in the third novella, into the mythical future. The decision to abandon the three novella structure came quite early in the process and, along with this, the choice to set the entire novel in the 1950s and early 1960s. The elements of the past – letter writing, the sexual repression of women, the background of World War II – ended up working to my advantage, though the struggle with historical authenticity continued throughout (this will be further detailed in Part II).

Hearing Voices

Having reconciled myself to the familial connections my character would have to real life and to the historical period she would inhabit, I began to try to hear her voice. I wrote the following:

When I asked – and I did ask – at the beginning, they assured me the only ones deemed suitable were those who could pass for a white. What kind of white, I had to ask when she first arrived. Their white obviously was not the same as my white. My white was the white of sheets in sunlight or crisp blank pieces of paper not yet marked with the scribbles of high school children. My white brought light into a room, not the sullen expression the girl wore with her hunted look, her eyes never reaching higher than my waist, her head turned toward her shoulder, as if checking for someone standing behind her.

No, this was not the type of face I had imagined and I think when I saw her I had the thought of sending her back. I am sure I knew such an act was possible. The authorities obviously had no illusions all cases would be a success. They had advertised 150 of them and surely expected most of them to be returned? Like any kind of goods, they had to be tried and tested and proved to be what the owner did or did not need. Like my new electric washing machine, which had seemed, from the beautiful sketch in *The Women's Weekly*, to be the ideal shape for my backyard laundry but which had turned out not to fit through the wooden doorway.

'Didn't you think to measure it?' Mr Roper had asked me when he came round to erect a makeshift tarpaulin to protect the machine from the elements until the company could arrange its removal. He would ask something similarly incredulous when he saw Mary.

Mary. I thought the name was a sign when they first told me. Silly to invest so much in a name. And it came back to bite me, although I never imagined how. I never imagined she would do what she did to me. (*TH*^{*})

At this stage, I did not know what Mary would do to Grace. I placed this kind of sentence – ‘I never imagined she would do what she did to me’ – in my opening draft because it hinted at something dramatic to come, to make the reader intrigued. It was there to keep my imaginary reader with me. I did not know what would happen between these two characters but I knew it would be intense. I did not imagine it to be anything external, there would be no murder or mayhem, rather, there would be a confrontation of minds.

Writing in this instinctive way I found that snippets of family stories – for example, the story of my grandmother having to stand on a fruit crate to put out the washing – found their way into the narrative. At this stage, it was also necessary to do some historical research into the 1950s but what was of the most concern was character motivation. I found Grace was a hard ‘master’, unwilling to allow Mary any kind of humanity. Grace’s racism was not interesting *per se*. What became more intriguing as the writing went on was the way in which Grace had lied to herself and those around her about her identity: the fact that she was a widow when, in fact, her husband was alive (directly taken from my mistake about my great-aunt).² Mary’s arrival became the catalyst for Grace having to face up to her deception.

As I wrote, I felt the need to further challenge Grace’s belief in her own goodness (read, her whiteness/purity). Thus, I wrote a scene in which she was told that Mary’s mother was, in fact, alive. Grace had, by this stage, been revealed as also being

^{*}Please note that quotations from the novel *The Heaven I Swallowed* will be designated by the abbreviation *TH*. Page numbers will only be included for extracts that correspond to the final draft submitted for PhD examination.

² I should make it clear that my great-aunt never lied about being a widow. It was only my incorrect assumption that provided the idea for Grace’s deception.

an orphan and is acutely aware of the child's longing for a real mother. But she decides to hide the knowledge of her real family from Mary. Convinced as she is of her ability to deliver better opportunities to the girl, she had clearly become an advocate for the idea that the removal of children from their Aboriginal families was *for their own good*.

Yet while Grace was firmly convinced of her own superiority, and the benefits she was giving the child in taking her away from her natural family, I was aware of the need to find enough gaps for the reader to see the extreme damage being inflicted, not only on Mary but on Grace herself. I wanted to, as quoted from Morrison earlier, 'see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination and behaviour of masters' (12).

I wrote a scene in which Grace discovers that Mary has not used the penny given to her to make a wish at a fountain. Instead, Mary has hidden the money in the pocket of her dress where Grace finds it. In her anger at not being obeyed Grace slaps the girl and locks her in her bedroom telling her she must stand until Grace comes to get her. Here was a seemingly familiar interaction of white cruelty against an Aboriginal victim. To counteract this, I decided to maintain the perspective of Grace throughout the aftermath of her violence. She is shaken by the incident and broods in the lounge room:

Mary had lied to me, pretended compliance while hiding the penny away. She wasn't even clever enough to conceal the money when she got home. I never would have found it if she had sequestered it under her bed or somewhere else in the house. Why go to the trouble of stealing and then not even carry the crime through? Deception is an easy game to play, you just have to put in the effort.

I stopped shaking. Silly to let myself get so upset by something so trivial. I wanted a cup of tea and almost called out to Mary to make me one. No, she was not to be allowed out of her room, although it struck me that this meant I

would have to finish hanging out the washing and put on the kettle myself. Who, after all, was being punished? A typical trick, I realised. She had made me lock her in that room and God only knew what she would be up to. There was nothing I could do about it, my pride would not allow me to relent.

My whole body went tense again. Somehow, without raising a finger, Mary had won this round. (*TH*)

While I could be accused of giving Grace too much insight, I was determined to break down the binary of Aboriginal victim and white villain, primarily because this dualism left no room for a non-Aboriginal position that is not overwhelmed by unthinking cruelty. It soon became clear in writing the piece that a purely nasty and non-reflective 'master' was neither an interesting nor a useful voice to hear. Grace had to be given a complexity of feelings towards Mary or else the story would have nothing original to offer.

At the same time, the writing came to rely very heavily on the assumed binaries that, as Dyer points out, define notions of white femininity: 'light and dark, transparency and substance, Caucasian and not-Caucasian, female and male, sex-oriented and sex-indifferent' (142). As Grace clings to evidence of her own difference from Mary we, as readers, hopefully begin to see the absurdity of Grace's beliefs.

As the work progressed I continued to tread the fine line between interrogating racism and reiterating racist assumption. At one moment in the story, Mary runs away from Grace's home and is crying to be taken back to her mother. Grace's reaction is not completely un-sympathetic but she cannot see herself as racially anything like the runaway in front of her and her racism is expressed through the blood-related thinking of the time:

Her lack of restraint did not shock me. After all she was a baser creature, closer to the primal than myself, more connected to dances of passion and hunger. I knew it would take longer to turn her. The Sisters had had their work cut out with me when I was young and I had the blood of the pioneers flowing in me, strong, able-bodied men who slashed at the rugged terrain to make it their own, conquered mountains as if they were foothills, changed the way the rivers flowed. Mary was behind me by a thousand steps, her marrow tainted by those who had simply wandered the country, never settling, never taking control of their destinies. Was it any wonder she had no sense of direction, no heart to stop herself in one place and make the most of the opportunity given to her by me?
(TH)

Here, I hoped that the interventionist nature of the colonialists – the use of the words ‘slashed’, ‘conquered’, ‘changed’ – would be highlighted enough to problematise Grace’s interpretation of encounter history. One reader, however, pointed out to me that because we only have this one view coming directly from the narrator’s head the passage may serve to reinforce racial stereotype instead of undermining it. I may have been assuming an ideal reader, able to see the irony of the language used.

This decision to write inside the head of Grace felt, at times, then, to be an irresponsible one. How could I ensure that the reader saw the complexities that I, as a writer, was trying to explore? How could the story interrogate assumptions of racial superiority if the only perspective given was the one of assumed superiority? Was I, in fact, reiterating the assumption that the white character holds all the power of perception and sets ‘standards of humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others bound to fail’ (Dyer 9). Was I, in fact, losing sight of the indigenous character altogether?

Around the time I began *The Heaven I Swallowed*, I re-read Peter Read's book *A Rape of the Soul So Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generations* which argues that the dispossession and injustices of the past continue to have deeply felt reverberations on present generations of Aboriginal peoples. I noted that I had been staring at the front cover of this book for some time before I realised it had the face of a child on it. Only looking at the foreground of the picture – a destroyed humpy with black soil moving to the horizon – I had somehow missed the Aboriginal child's face altogether. This, it seemed, exemplified the problem I would have with writing from a non-indigenous point of view: the indigenous character could be a shadowy figure, used only to foreground the white protagonist.

By the time I had finished the first complete draft I was sick with the concern that, yes, indeed, I had lost sight of Mary completely. As I had feared when looking at the front cover of *A Rape of the Soul So Profound*, I could barely see the Aboriginal figure, so completely had Grace become the focus.

Thus, the shoes of the instinctive writer had begun to seem too tight. I stepped out of them for a while and turned to critical examination of other literature in order to find models of how, as a non-indigenous writer, I could reasonably represent an indigenous character.

Part II: Literary and Critical Inspiration

Looking for Models

As detailed in Part I, I had finished the first draft of *The Heaven I Swallowed* but I had nagging doubts about Mary, the Aboriginal character I was using. Using. This seemed the right word because she was not fully fleshed out. Though my white character, Grace, was not yet fully rounded – her back-story was hazy and her relationships with some of the other characters were not fully realised – I was not as concerned with her thinness. It was not that I could not imagine making Mary more three-dimensional, it was that I was actually terrified of doing so. I wanted her to remain a figure *only* seen through Grace's eyes, so that all the prejudice and ignorance could be assigned to the narrative voice. Mary, if a stereotype, would be so because this is how Grace sees her.

Somehow, though, this seemed unsatisfactory. Was it a cop out? What were contemporary white writers doing in terms of representing Aboriginality?

Through my Honours degree at the University of Newcastle in 1995 I had been introduced to postcolonial theory and knew that Aboriginal writers had re-claimed the right to speak in an indigenous voice. At that time the need to declare one's position in terms of gender, class, race and even age, had many academic articles I read beginning with a sentence along the lines: 'While recognising my privileged subjectivity as a white, middle-class, twenty-something female I will now deconstruct the subjectivity of the disenfranchised etc. etc.' This identity politics made the right to tell a story, or even examine someone else's story, extremely problematic. When completing my thesis

entitled 'The Site/Sight of the Aboriginal Woman: Representations of Race and Gender by Australian female playwrights' I was made highly aware of my position as a coloniser: as an educated, non-Aboriginal Australian I had participated, wittingly or not, in the dispossession of an entire race, and even my academic excursions were another form of cultural appropriation. Aborigines had not, as I had been lead to believe in my schooling, simply melted away into the landscape, leaving easily contained artefacts of their ancient culture for anthropologists to label and display in a museum. I had read Sally Morgan's *My Place*, published back in 1987 and was aware of the re-visioning of the past being undertaken by historians such as Henry Reynolds and Paul Carter.³ In 1991 the *Australian Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* report had been released and in 1992 the Mabo High Court ruling validated native title. In 1997 the *Bringing Them Home* report was national news, dominating the headlines of the mainstream press for a period.

While I left full-time university studies in 1995 I was ever aware of Aboriginal issues. Working in theatre, I saw the cultural expressions of these issues in such plays as *Stolen*, *Box the Pony*, *The Seven Stages of Grieving* and *Conversations with the Dead*. As time when on, the so-called history wars were debating the extent of the violence perpetrated at the time of colonial invasion and these acrimonious arguments were well and truly in the public eye.⁴ It seemed that 'the great Australian silence' WEH Stanner in the ABC Radio Boyer lectures of 1968 had declared regarding the near extermination of Aboriginal peoples by violence, disease and cultural desecration was being broken, the 'cult of forgetfulness' (25) finally undermined.

³ Here I am referring to Henry Reynolds's *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* and Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, both of which I read during my university History studies.

⁴ See Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark's *The History Wars*.

I had assumed, therefore, that when I went looking for recent Australian literary texts interacting with indigeneity I would find new, highly aware representations. Established Australian writers would have found interesting new ways to deal with the concerns I had. I went in search of texts. The contemporary non-indigenous Australian writers portraying indigenous characters or dealing with indigenous issues that I found included Alex Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country*, Nicholas Jose's *The Custodians*, Peter Goldsworthy's *Three Dog Night* and Andrew McGahan's *The White Earth*. All had similar themes in regards to white relations with Aboriginality: they emphasised white estrangement from the land and non-indigenous spiritual moribundity in comparison with indigenous peoples. While any of these texts might have, with detailed analyses, provided insights into contemporary white writing of indigenous issues, the two texts I chose to focus on were Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and Gail Jones's *Sorry*, not only because of the attraction of reading fellow female writers but also due to the similarities I saw between their writing and my own work.

Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* is dedicated 'to the Aboriginal people of Australia: past, present and future' and at the end of *Sorry* Gail Jones says that she 'would like to acknowledge that Aboriginal Australians are the traditional custodians of the land about which I write' (217). In contrast to other Australian writers of the past who use Aboriginal characters and Aboriginality within primarily white narratives Grenville and Jones flag their position as non-Aborigines in the meta-text of the book, perhaps reflecting the post-B. Wongar or Demidenko era.⁵ Here was a new sensitivity to cultural appropriation and I knew very early on with both books that neither writer

⁵ In 1978 B. Wongar's collection of stories *The Track to Bralgu* was hailed as the voice of authentic Aboriginality by Thomas Keneally. In 1981 Robert Drewe revealed that B. Wongar was, in fact, Stretan Bozic, a Yugoslavian immigrant. Ten years later Helen Demidenko claimed a Ukrainian heritage to justify the anti-Semitic narrative of her novel *The Hand That Signed the Paper* (1992). Prior to the discovery that her name was, in fact, Helen Darville and she came from a decidedly British background, the book won the *Australian/Vogel Award* and the Miles Franklin Award (see Nolan and Dawson).

would attempt to write inside the head of an Aboriginal character. Instead, their narrators are white protagonists whose interactions with indigeneity, whose viewings of Aboriginality, are constructions of their narrator's time and place in history. In Grenville's case this is the colonial past, for Jones the closer history of World War II.

These two models seemed ideal, then. Like myself, these writers were avoiding the problems associated with cultural appropriation by declaring that they would not dare to attempt to walk in an Aboriginal character's shoes. As I looked more closely, however, I found neither author could escape criticism in their dealings with Aboriginality. In engaging with this criticism I was curious to see if knowing any of these pitfalls would be of use when re-working the draft of my novel.

Ancestral Voices and Authenticity

Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* is the story of William Thornhill, a Thames lighterman whose death sentence for theft in London is transmuted into transportation to the Australian colonies. Thornhill is sent to Sydney Cove with his wife Sal and their young family, eventually taking up land on the Hawkesbury River. The familiar tale of the English battle with the strange Antipodean elements leads to ultimate success as Thornhill remakes himself as a man of means, with attendant wealth and privilege.

The area of the novel that aroused the most interest was Grenville's treatment of the 'contact zone', that is, the interactions between the white, convict characters and the Aborigines.⁶ The novel, published in 2005, received considerable praise and won several major awards, including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, the New South

⁶ Named as the Darug in *Searching for the Secret River*, the book Grenville wrote explaining her process, but only identified as "blacks" and "natives" in the novel *The Secret River*, obviously for historical reasons.

Wales Premier's Awards for Best Fiction and Best Book, the Fellowship of Australian Writers' Christina Stead Award and the Nielsen BookData Booksellers Choice Award, as well as being short-listed for the Miles Franklin Award and the Man Booker Prize (Sullivan 12). Such success suggested that the novel, and the writer, spoke in ways that were acceptable to a mainstream Australian readership and this in itself was interesting given Grenville claim, in a long interview with Ramona Koval on ABC Radio National's *The Book Show*, to be opening up 'cupboards in Australian history that we have just drawn a curtain over'. Personally, I was surprised to learn in this interview that the title of Grenville's book supposedly came from a line in the WEH Stanner Boyer Lectures of 1968: 'There is a secret river of blood in Australian history.' Grenville further claimed that she 'wanted to describe or suggest . . . the fact that Australian history does have a series of secrets in it'. Interestingly, I could find no reference to 'a secret river of blood' in the published Stanner lectures and understand Stanner's argument not to be about secrets at all, but about deliberate, and insidious, neglect. As an anthropologist Stanner is more concerned with the continuing 'disremembering' (25) of Aboriginal culture in mainstream, contemporary Australia, rather than with contact history. His references to streams are in regard to rivers of thought: 'for all the quickening and deepening of the national stream only a trickle of new thought ran towards the aboriginal field' (20) and 'the freshening flow from the great river of national imagination, private and corporate, into this little muddied stream is still only a trickle' (52).

I would argue that most Australians are, and have been, aware that their country has a Black history and that the most disturbing elements of *The Secret River* are not the poisoning and massacre of Aborigines but the way in which both the discourse

surrounding the book and the narrative itself contains various reassurances for the non-indigenous reader.

In terms of meta-discourse, this book came with a barrel-load. In the many interviews given at the time of the book's release, Grenville tied her work with research done into her ancestor, Solomon Wiseman. In fact, as Grenville discussed in a seminar at the University of Adelaide in 2006, she had originally set out to write a non-fiction account of her ancestor and her decision to fictionalise the story came from a frustration with the gaps in the historical record. The details of this decision are further laid out in her subsequent book on the writing of the novel, *Searching for the Secret River*.

While one can applaud Grenville's honesty in detailing the twists and turns of her decisions, the emphasis on her historical research into her ancestor seemed, to me, to be a thinly veiled authenticity claim. She said: 'I don't pretend to understand or be able to empathise particularly with a tribal Aboriginal person from 200 years ago' ('Interview') but she could empathise with a white person from 200 years ago, mainly because that white person was her ancestor. Grenville is a 'great believer in the experiential theory of writing' ('Interview') and she details in *Searching for the Secret River* the lengths she went to in order to experience her character's world, including camping in the bush alone one night, making a 'slush' lamp and taking a ferry trip to emulate Thornhill's journey down the Hawkesbury. These experiments add another layer of a claim to truth and seem to require a writer to literally step into the shoes of the historical character they are portraying. But, as Inga Clendinnen asked, why 'is it that we feel that authenticity in fiction depends on direct or directly communicated experience, an apostolic succession of veracity?' (181).

It seemed that two layers of justification were going on here: one based in identity politics that relies on bloodlines and the other in a contradictory claim to

veracity through universal empathy. That is, why was Grenville able to step into the shoes of her white colonial ancestor and yet, as she claims, have no empathy with the blacks who were also there at the time? Does making a slush lamp give you true insight into life in the late 1700s?

This link of the book with truth and history lead to Grenville's unfortunate answer on the ABC Radio National's *The Book Show* when asked where she would put her novel if she were laying out books on the history wars. Her response was as follows:

Mine would be up on a ladder, looking down at⁷ the history wars. I think the historians, and rightly so, have battled away about the details of exactly when and where and how many and how much, and they've got themselves into these polarised positions, and that's fine, I think that's what historians ought to be doing; constantly questioning the evidence and perhaps even each other. But a novelist can stand up on a stepladder and look down at this, outside the fray, and say there is another way to understand it. ('Interview')

Grenville's claim to the fiction writer's superior 'empathising and imaginative understanding of those difficult events' lead to a heated debate over the line between fiction and history. Historian Mark McKenna declared that 'a lawless literary rabble has opted to fill the vacuum left by bickering historians and taken unsanctioned control of Australia's past' (qtd. in Clarke 8), while Inga Clendinnen was less than impressed by any belief of historical fiction writers that they have some deeper insight into human behaviour. Clendinnen, in her long essay, 'Who Owns the Past?', beautifully illustrates the limitations of any so called empathic knowledge in a story on her own research into Aztec civilisation:

⁷ The web transcript has this word as 'on' but Grenville has pointed out she clearly said 'at'.

I could “follow” the typical Aztec childbirth scene easily enough . . . the newborn, naked, was handed around to each member of the family to be stroked and cuddled while the formula of welcome was recited . . . Then, if the baby were male, the chief midwife would take it, elevate it to the gods and dedicate it to a warrior’s death on the killing-stone. With that action a mist dropped: a mist which would only be dispersed, and then only partially, by long, cautious labour. Untutored “subjectivity”, “empathy”, was of not the least use to me inside the Aztec world. Indulged, it would have destroyed all hope of understanding. (22)

Grenville detailed her own ‘long, cautious labour’ in the production of *The Secret River* and posted an essay on her website in response to McKenna’s and Clendinnen’s articles stating: ‘I don’t think – and never have thought – that fiction is superior to history, much less that my own novel is superior to the work of historians’. Perhaps this should be enough to expunge her from accusations of inaccuracy or historical manipulation, and I do not want to undermine the extreme skill I thought Grenville displayed in seeming to get inside the head of a white settler. What interested me was that by placing her third person narrative within the boundaries of supposed historical reality and emphasizing the closeness of her narrator to a “real” person, Grenville was effectively telling the reader “This is how it really was”.

This was close to the original motivation behind my own work: to try and understand why white men and women acted the way they did in the past. However, I had decided very early on that the genre of historical fiction was a deathly trap. Surrounded by the intricate details of “how it really was”, the reader would be encouraged to believe in the inevitability of the white man’s actions, to be locked into a “there was no other choice” justification. Grenville claims to be asking: ‘What would I

have done in that situation, and what sort of person would that make me?' Clendinnen counters:

Grenville would not have been Grenville in "that situation". We cannot post ourselves back in time. People really did think differently then . . . Nor can we restrict our efforts towards understanding only to those people we guess to be approximately of our own kind, because that would condemn us to playing Blind Man's Bluff in a largely unintelligible world. (26)

The further problem with the genre of historical fiction is the limitations of character. William Thornhill is not a perfect man in *The Secret River*, but he is an everyman and his interactions with the Aborigines are, within the limits of the genre, to be regarded as typical. Most prominent contemporary Australian authors seem to have been drawn to our convict or pre-Contact past at one time or another, examples include Patrick White's *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976), *Remembering Babylon* (1993) by David Malouf, Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Kate Grenville's own *Joan Makes History* (1988), which opens on a convict ship. In fact, one might have thought that the typicality of Grenville's character might have been detrimental to the book's popularity, except that this familiarity might be its greatest comfort.

In the opening scene of *The Secret River*, Thornhill, already transported to the 'end of the earth' (3), stands in the dark outside his hut and has his first encounter with the natives:

It seemed at first to be the tears welling, the way the darkness moved in front of him. It took a moment to understand that the stirring was a human, as black as the air itself. His skin swallowed the light and made him not quite real, something only imagined. His eyes were set so deeply into the skull that they were invisible, each in its cave of bone. The rock of his face shaped itself around

the big mouth, the imposing nose, the folds of his cheeks. Without surprise, as though he were dreaming, Thornhill saw the scars on the man's chest, each a neat line raised and twisted, living against the skin.

He took a step towards Thornhill so that the parched starlight from the sky fell on his shoulders. He wore his nakedness like a cloak. Upright in his hand, the spear was part of him, an extension of his arm. (5)

Here, the Aboriginal spear-holding shadow is lurking behind the trees, ready to pounce and Thornhill, afraid for his wife and children asleep in the hut behind him, can only shout 'Be off!' (5) to the armed threat. Already, as in colonial narratives since 1788, we are encouraged to understand how the white man must have felt, all alone in the darkness, a darkness that hid 'a hundred black men with spears, a thousand, a whole continent full of men with spears and that grim line to their mouths' (6). I thought to myself, poor Thornhill!

This scene seemed to be drawing on constructions of the racial Other that I remembered from my reading of postcolonial theory. That is, we have the collation of blackness with darkness and the thriving continent full of unseen presences, a world recognisable from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; we have the threatened white woman⁸ and her equally vulnerable children⁹; and we have the description of the physical features of the black man closely resembling an anthropological text. I might have thought Grenville was aware of colonial narratives that constructed the racial Other and that the scene was meant to be read ironically. However, two things worked against this reading: 1) the narrative itself was too earnest and supposedly real to allow any room

⁸ ' . . . colonial fears of native rebellion, as Jenny Sharpe has argued in *Allegories of Empire*, find expression in the figure of the violated European woman' (Bahri 200).

⁹ Peter Pierce's *The Country of Lost Children* examines non-Aboriginal Australia's anxiety over their children at the time of settlement: 'writers and artists . . . would employ the figure of the lost child to explore the relations of European Australians with the landscapes that they were trying to settle and understand, and with the Aboriginal people with whom their contact was troubled, puzzling and destructive' (8).

for an interpretation that does not justify Thornhill's fear and 2) Grenville's own detailing of how she came to write her Aboriginal characters.

In *Searching for the Secret River* Grenville dedicates a chapter to 'The Aboriginal Characters' (192-200). She writes of how she had never really met any Aboriginal people and how she, therefore, made a trip to the Kimberleys to 'observe' Aboriginal people first-hand. While I am reluctant to become the sanctimonious defender of Aboriginal people, I read this chapter with increasing unease. Not only does Grenville eavesdrop on Kimberley residents but the reason for her trip – the opening of a photographic exhibition of Aboriginal subjects that had been taken to Sydney and New York and was now being shown to the people themselves – strongly smacked of colonialism. I ended up finding the writing quite offensive. Rather than allaying my belief that Grenville had almost no knowledge of the problematics of colonial viewing I found that she describes a group of elders in the following way: 'Nothing was disturbing or threatening about any of them, but there was a powerful sense of them as "other"' (195-6).

This stereotyped feeling (in the modern day) is then extrapolated to her character: 'For a man like Thornhill, out there in the bush, a day's boat ride from any help, that otherness might have seemed threatening. He might have been frightened, and fear might have made him do anything at all' (196). This seemed to echo the very heart of invader justification: the view of the destruction of Aboriginal society as a case of the invaders not knowing what they were doing.

I did note, when reading *Searching for the Secret River*, that Grenville seemed to believe primary sources from the time period – journals, letters etc. – were the most important source of information, as opposed to the history books which actually contain these primary sources. Thus, the chapter on 'Historians' is one of the shortest in the

book (122-126). Here Grenville refers generically to ‘books by historians’ (122) and talks about how ‘historians quoted document after document’ (123) without giving a source or reference to what these documents might be, or who these faceless historians are. She does not include a bibliography or endnotes in the book, thus not one single historian, historical source or theoretical study is named.

At the most basic level, Hodge and Mishra’s *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* emphasises that foundation texts – those diaries, journal and newspaper articles that Grenville seems so heavily to rely on – were steeped in discursive regimes. That is, either the ‘realist mode’ which was ‘concerned above all with the accurate representation on behalf of those who needed to know’ or the ‘subjectivist mode’ which was equal to ‘a strategy of displacement, since it foregrounds the subject who is constructing the images and meaning’ (Hodge and Mishra 32). Thus, the reading of foundation texts needs to acknowledge that the authors were most often out to ‘ensure moral superiority and the right of the founding fathers to beget bastards without responsibility or guilt’ (37). They were not simply reporting “how it really was” but were heavily influenced by colonial prejudices and anxiety.

In *The Secret River* there is no attempt to question Thornhill’s hysteria as a product of his own prejudices, there is no space for the reader to view the encounter with the Aborigine as ‘steeped in discursive regimes’. Instead, the reality, a reality that Grenville has drawn from modern day white paranoia, invites us to join with Thornhill, to feel his fear, and to shout ‘Be off!’ alongside him.

At the same time, Grenville does little to represent Aboriginal resistance. Her native characters continually melt and ‘recede into the flickering light and shade of the forest’ (147). One of them throws a spear, but the rest are poisoned or shot. Of course, this might reflect the historical records in this area of colonisation. However, since we

do not know which historical records Grenville is drawing upon, it feels like a reiteration of the “disappearing race” mentality which has conveniently dis-empowered Aboriginal peoples since 1788.

By the end of *The Secret River* Thornhill has participated in a massacre of Aborigines and the last pages of the book move between his own justification and poetic invocation of absent natives. Thornhill watches ‘the black shadow of the hill behind him – his own hill – move down across the garden, leaving everything behind in grey dusk’ (332). Similar to the opening images, the Aborigines are a threatening non-presence: ‘they could still be up there, in that intricate landscape that defeated any white man – still there, prepared to wait. If they wanted to be seen, he knew that he would have seen them’ (333). In the final sentence, Thornhill is left in his paranoia ‘watching, into the dark’ (334).

This representation of Aboriginality was no further along than my retrograde schooling, where Aborigines were always described in the past tense, seeming to have no corporeality in the narrative of our nation’s history, only a spirit to haunt the white man. If Grenville’s question was: ‘What choices would I have made?’ (*Searching* 126) she firmly answers that she would have done as her ancestor did. Afraid of the threatening black man, alone in the dark, with only a slush lamp to comfort you, wouldn’t you too? Thornhill has participated in something horrific and despicable, and yet *The Secret River*’s historically realist narrative asks for only empathy with him and his family.¹⁰ While Grenville is obviously trying to illustrate the cultural differences that led to colonial conflict, the strait jacket of an historical voice had tipped her over the fine line from illumination to reiteration of colonial and racist stereotype.

¹⁰ While presenting a version of this chapter at a conference it was pointed out to me that some readers did not feel at all empathetic towards Thornhill. I concede that there may be many other ways to read his character but, in my reading, Grenville makes us, at the very least, feel sympathy for his predicament.

The Allegory in the Closet

In contrast to *The Secret River*, Gail Jones's *Sorry* is written in a non-realist mode. Published in early 2007, *Sorry* is Jones's fourth novel¹¹ and has received mixed reviews. It has been short-listed for numerous Awards, including the new Prime Minister's Literary Award, but is yet to receive any. This different reaction on the part of the literary establishment – that is, those that review and those that judge awards – was enough to make me curious as to what kind of representation of Aboriginality was not so easily digested or embraced.

Sorry is about a young white girl, Perdita Keene, whose parents, an English anthropologist, Nicholas and his wife, Stella, leave England for the outback. Southwest of Broome, Nicholas finds work with the Chief Protector of Aborigines. Stella and Perdita are basically left to fend for themselves and the most important relationship they form is with Mary, an Aboriginal servant who comes to live with them after Stella has a mental breakdown. The subsequent murder of Nicholas is the central act of the book. The opening of the book takes us to this event:

At first there was just this single image: her dress, the particular blue of hydrangeas, spattered with the purple of my father's blood. She rose up from the floor into this lucid figure, unseemly, but oh! vivacious with gore. I remember I clung to her, that we were alert and knowing. There might have been a snake in the house, for all our watchful attention.

¹¹ The others are *Black Mirror* (winner of the Nita B. Kibble Award and the Fiction Prize in the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards in 2003), *Sixty Lights* (winner of the 2005 Age Book of the Year Award for Fiction, and the Fiction and Premier's Prize in both the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards 2004 and the South Australian Festival Award for Literature in 2006) and *Dreams of Speaking* (short-listed in 2007 for the Miles Franklin Award, the NSW Premier's Award and the Nita B. Kibble Award).

‘Don’t tell them,’ she said. That was all: *don’t tell them*.

Her eyes held my face, a fleck in watery darkness... when for comfort we held hands, overlapping, as girls do, in riddled ways, in secret understandings and unspoken allegiances, the sticky stuff of my father’s life bound us like sisters. (3)

Although the explicit details of the murder scene are deliberately obfuscated, the relationship between the two girls (who, we will learn, are black and white) has been established: they are bound together. Unlike Grenville, Jones chooses not to have the Aboriginal character lurking behind the trees but to be firmly placed within the centre of the narrative. However, perhaps as a consequence, Mary becomes a representative of her entire race and begins to sag under the weight of symbolic loading.

As a guest on ABC Radio National’s *The Book Show* in 2007, Jones described the novel as a ‘moral allegory’ and a literary version of the ‘sorry’ that Prime Minister John Howard had refused the Stolen Generations. The prose style of Jones’s work is dense and metaphor-laden. While the story is set against the background of 1930s and World War II Australia, there is little attempt to meticulously create this world. Rather, the majority of the book is seen through Perdita’s eyes, through a self-conscious mixture of third and first person and, as Michelle Griffin points out in her *ABR* review, this twelve year old has knowledge well beyond her age and era. At one point in *Sorry*, for example, Perdita, herself ironically (and deliberately, I would assume) reading Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, interrogates her own reading practises:

Since the first reader is the author, [Perdita thinks to herself] might there be a channel, somehow, between author and reader, an indefinable intimacy, a secret pact? There are always moments, reading a novel, in which one recognises

oneself, or comes across a described detail especially and personally redolent;
might there be in this covert world, yet another zone of connection? (145)

While Griffin takes exception to ‘passages as unlikely and anachronistic as this’ and claims that you ‘either buy into it or you don’t’ (10), the novel has not invited you to suspend disbelief. From the opening moment of the book– ‘A whisper:sssshh. The thinnest vehicle of breath’ (3) – Jones creates a heightened reality where layers of symbolic meaning are heaped upon objects, moments and characters. Her concern with what can and cannot be spoken, in essence, the same concern as Grenville’s in terms of the ‘secret’ histories of Australia, is manifest in an obsessive use of characters that draw attention to language and silence. The most obvious examples are Stella, who gradually begins to speak only in the words of Shakespeare; the character of Billy, who is a deaf mute; and Perdita’s physical struggle to talk – she develops a stutter – after the trauma of her father’s death. In the “real” world such extreme symbolism would be absurd but, as Jones has maintained, the book should be read as an allegory, rather than an historical, realist narrative. This interested me a great deal as it seemed to open up the possibility of a self-conscious use of Aboriginality and I therefore looked closely at the symbolic use of the Aboriginal figure, Mary.

The central allegory of *Sorry* is the murder of Nicholas. He is stabbed one afternoon in the living room, with Stella, Billy, Perdita and Mary all present. The scene itself is deliberately hidden from view to ensure the reader has no clear sense of what really happened. What we do know is that Mary is taken away and jailed for the murder of Nicholas. Jones is very clear as to the consequences of an extreme act of violence but chooses to employ the repression of trauma as a useful narrative device. We are encouraged to keep reading by the simple strategy of the whodunit.¹²

¹² In *Black Mirror* Jones employs the same technique when the central character, Victoria, does not remember she was at the scene of her mother’s death.

By the time Perdita remembers that it was she, not Mary, who stabbed her father, the young black girl has become the sacrificial lamb. The reasons for her selflessness are couched in religiosity: ‘Back in those days, [Mary says] I wanted to be a saint . . . pure and well loved’ (203). Perdita’s blocking out of her own guilt has a clear link to White Australia’s repression of its bloody history but the supreme self-sacrifice of Mary is a more problematic gesture. Mary continues in her justification to Perdita:

‘. . . I also knew that I was much stronger than you, Deeta. And Stella, too. I was stronger than Stella. She wouldn’t have survived if you’d been sent away to a home . . . mothers and daughters, they need each other.’ (203)

The loss of her own familial ties that underpins this position is tragic: Mary’s theft from her mother makes her all too aware that mother and daughter connections should not be broken (although the outcome is not as Mary would have hoped for Perdita as she loses Stella to mental breakdown anyway).

The extremity of Mary’s action undercuts any emotional reader response, for who would really put up their hand for murder on the basis of ‘wanting to be a saint’? Like the excessive use of symbols of silence and speech, this excess seems deliberate. Yet, if we are supposed to read it in purely allegorical terms, as Jones wants us to, what are the implications of Mary’s action when placed in the larger terms of black/white relations in Australia? To read Mary’s sacrifice as allegory is to place indigenous peoples as willing victims of white brutality, idealised heroes who were able to see past their own oppression to a “greater good”. Jones, in an article entitled ‘Speaking Shadows: Justice and the Poetic’, wrote that ‘the Aboriginal girl is not the “shadow” of the white girl; rather she is a “surer presence”’ (84). Despite this reassurance, Mary’s character and actions are exhausting to witness. She is a sainted victim and, not surprisingly, cannot survive the story. Perdita and Billy are no longer able to visit her

when she is moved to a women's detention centre at the age of twenty and, a year later, she dies of appendicitis. Perdita laments that she should have said 'sorry, my sister, oh my sister, sorry' (211) but, unlike Mary, she and Stella and Billy continue on in the world of the book, with Billy marrying and procreating.

In killing off Mary, Jones completes the convenient erasure of the Aboriginal "problem" for Perdita and leaves her to mourn her loss, rather than having to deal with the reality of the present presence. This is not to say that Aboriginal characters should not die if the narrative calls for it but I found the final image of *Sorry* quite disturbing in the light of the race relations Jones had been exploring:

I willed myself to think instead of Stella's snow dream: a field of flakes descending, the slow transformation of the shapes of the world, the slow, inconclusive, obliteration. I saw a distant place, all forgetful white, reversing its presences. I saw Mary, and Billy, covered in snowflakes. I saw my mother's bare feet beneath the hem of her nightgown. Everything was losing definition and outline. Everything was disappearing under the gradual snow. Calmed, I looked at the sky and saw only a blank. Soft curtains coming down, a whiteness, a peace. (214)

What are we to make of this imagery? While Grenville left her character staring into the darkness, Jones leaves her character in a white peace. It was hard not to feel that the reader was being invited to equate whiteness with peace and, given it is Mary who has been lost, doesn't a landscape of snow conveniently cover blackness? Of course, this might be the point: this is a manifestation of white Australia's continuing erasure of Aboriginality, a blanket of forgetfulness. Yet, for me, reading this ending did not evoke

protest. Rather, it was a portrait of closure. As with Grenville's novel, I was left with the impression that "This is how it is".¹³

Learning the Lessons and Limitations

Reading both Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and Gail Jones's *Sorry* after the completion of the first draft of my novel I was confronted with the overwhelming feeling that non-Aboriginal authors were yet to find a way to engage with Aboriginality that did not reinforce stereotype or engage in well-meaning, misguided symbolism. How could this aid me in the process of re-writing? Was being aware of this any help in preventing me from doing the same? How much good did it do to know the pitfalls while going on the journey?

My Aboriginal character, another young girl called Mary, was in just as much danger of becoming a symbol: the manifestation of my white narrator's fears and desires. While I had not written a historically realistic novel like Grenville, I had also not created a self-conscious narrator like Jones's Perdita. Grace, the first person narrator of *The Heaven I Swallowed*, was an attempt at a voice that sat somewhere between these two extremes.

Thus, I had learned three major lessons from going in search of recent models of representing Aboriginality: 1) if my Aboriginal character, Mary, was to be the manifestation of my white narrator's fears and desires, there must be space for the reader to see this; 2) the narrative would be richer if Mary had a chance to counteract

¹³ In *White* Richard Dyer draws our attention to Herman Melville discussion of whiteness in *Moby Dick*. Melville writes, in Chapter 42: ". . . whiteness is not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour, and at the same time the concrete of all colours; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows – a colourless, all colour atheism from which we shrink?" (qtd. in Dyer 212). This could be another way to interpret Jones's final scene but it is not the way I thought of it in terms of re-writing my own work.

Grace's stereotypical viewing of her, even if this is not done via her own voice but by her actions and; 3) the plot outcome for Mary should not reassure the white reader that Aboriginality can be contained or erased. Of course, learning the lessons was easier than applying them and the process of re-writing was a combination of attempting to re-shape the narrative towards these objectives and finding other literary modes and models that might offer clues on how to do this, both with and without regard to race.

I had hoped to find models with which to re-write *The Heaven I Swallowed* so as to counteract the eclipsing of the indigenous character I had been concerned with from the very beginning of the project but both Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and Gail Jones's *Sorry* had problematic representations of Aboriginality. In examining these problems, I began to come to terms with my own narrative's limitations. Unlike Grenville, I had no desire to make the piece more historically "real" and, unlike Jones, I had reduced my ambitions for the narrative in regards to the larger picture of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations. I no longer saw the piece as needing to atone for 'the sins of non-Aboriginal Australians or their forebears' (Attwood 204). I now wanted the narrative voice to be free of historical straitjacketing to avoid the story being read as inevitable.

By the time I came to re-writing I no longer wanted Grace to be typical, for her journey to be that of a real white woman steeped in the mores of the times. I had, in fact, moved a long way away from the original motivation of examining the historical reality of the situation. And it was at this point that the term Gothic was applied to the manuscript by a number of readers and I decided to explore this side of the writing.

Going Down *The Well*

A friend had recommended I read Elizabeth Jolley's *The Well* after she had read the first half of *The Heaven I Swallowed*. I was reluctant at first, given it did not seem to be directly related to my topic area. However, when I finally picked up Jolley's novel, I soon realised why my friend had felt its relevance to my own work. Jolley beautifully and skilfully creates a hermetic world in which two women – the spinster Hester and the young Katherine – become completely and utterly entwined. As they deal with the consequences of hitting “something” on the road and hiding it/him down the well, the book becomes a mixture of the Gothic and self-conscious postmodernism.

The Well begins with disembodied voices:

‘What have you brought me Hester? What have you brought me from the shop?’

‘I’ve brought Katherine, Father,’ Miss Harper said. ‘I’ve brought Katherine, but she’s for me.’ (i)

This conversation, between Hester and her soon-to-be deceased father, sets up a familiar, yet eerie, world. I have no hesitation in admitting that I borrowed¹⁴ this idea in *The Heaven I Swallowed*, for I felt an enormous relief after reading *The Well* that, in writing realistic Australian prose, I did not have to shy away from the Gothic. I realised what Jolley had done so well was to frame the text, from the beginning, outside the confines of a known reality. It was at this point that I removed the traces of history I had originally placed on the text (the chapters had previously begun with dates) and began to work towards re-positioning the narrative into a more obviously “other” world. Thus, my narrative now began with disembodied voices:

‘Are you really sick, Mary?’

¹⁴ Rather than using the term “borrowed” I could argue for the inevitability of this kind of homage. As Moya Costello, in her article ‘Textuality, Mutability and Learning to Write’, argues: ‘Texts are bumping into other texts and holding conversations, changing themselves and the other texts and the readers, writers, readings and writings of them, in a continuous global convention’ (n.pag.).

‘Yes, Auntie Grace.’

‘Shall I leave you?’

‘If you have to, Auntie Grace.’ (TH 9)

And this was now followed on by Grace’s visitation from the Virgin Mary:

When I was twelve I believed the Virgin Mary had visited me in bed at night, hovering over my face. It was not a clear vision, just the overwhelming sense of her presence. I could not say she was there, as in an image of painted beauty like one of the statues in the chapel, rather, I felt the outline of her, her shimmering essence. (10)

Both these new beginnings aimed to create reader expectation of something other than a tale of post-World War II Australian reality. Grace’s voice was to be a voice from the past, yes, but hers would be a voice that came from the extremities of the past, an extraordinary character who, like Saint Teresa, was visited by angelic manifestations.

In many ways, this served to undercut the concerns I had had about authenticity or veracity. Clendinnen succinctly analyses the differences between the novelist and the historian. Quoting Henry James, in *The Art of Fiction*, when he claims that ‘The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel . . . is that it be interesting’, Clendinnen concludes that ‘It need not, indeed ought not, be “true”, because truth inhibits art’ (32). In freeing myself from a concern with the historical minutia of the work, I was also able to indulge my own particular literary tastes, including my love of the Gothic works of the Brontë sisters, most obviously Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. A quote from each would now head Part I and Part II of *The Heaven I Swallowed*, respectively. What I felt Gothic literature offered was ‘an intense blend of the supernatural, family romance and gloomy atmospherics’ (Gelder and Weaver 2) which I discovered, in an Australian context, was

most often associated with 'the return of the repressed' (Gelder and Weaver 9).

Australian Gothic

Gerry Turcotte claims that the Gothic as a mode 'has been a consistent presence in Australia since European settlement', not only because, even before the continent itself was discovered, it had been imagined 'as a grotesque space, a land peopled by monsters' but because the rise of the Gothic form in the eighteenth and nineteenth century lent itself to the articulation of the colonial experience 'inasmuch as each emerges out of a condition of deracination and uncertainty, of the familiar transposed into unfamiliar space' (1). If the Gothic began with Ann Radcliffe's series of Gothic romances, from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794, and onward to Poe and Hawthorne in the USA in the 1830s and 1840s then it is little wonder that many new Australian writers from the 1850s were bound to draw on those elements of the landscape which Marcus Clarke dubbed 'weird melancholy' (qtd. in Gelder and Weaver 3). In *The Anthology of Colonial Australian Gothic*, Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver find examples of Australian 'stories of death and brutality . . . as graves are dug up, sacred burial grounds uncovered, murder victims are returned from the dead, secrets are revealed and past horrors are experienced all over again' (9). Primarily, these early Gothic tales are located on the outskirts of civilisation with protagonists who are 'lost or disorientated or abandoned' (5).

Interestingly, the supernatural elements are often an exercise in showing how colonial wealth is haunted by 'the violence of the past' (6) not in relation to Aborigines, but in relation to one another. In John Lang's 'The Ghost Upon the Rail' a landowner is visited by the sceptre of the neighbour he has killed in order to gain his land, while

Marcus Clarke's 'The Mystery of Major Molineux' links excessive wealth with transformation into a literal monster whose appetites cause young women to die of fright.

When looking at my own work in the light of these kinds of work I discovered Grace inhabited a haunted space. She has visions, is aware of ghosts and suffers from guilt-induced insomnia. Her world is quite claustrophobic, with only a few central characters around her and her home is inherited from her husband's father, a man whose traces exist only as reminders of past miseries. Gothic was there in the manuscript but I felt the need to make it a more obviously manipulated element of the narrative. Subsequently, I inserted inter-textual references to *Jane Eyre* – with Grace actually reading the Charlottë Brontë work to Mary – to actively encourage the reader to see Grace as constructing her own life along such lines. Thus, Grace muses:

How fortuitous it was for Jane Eyre that, after running away from Thornfield, she stumbled out of the rain into a family that turned out to be her own relatives. What an amazing chance! I can recall looking out the windows of the convent on wet days and wondering if I did the same, if I followed the wildness of my heart, whether I would also fall upon kindly strangers who would transform into my long-lost cousins. (*TH* 94)

A comment from a reader that Grace's voice was almost like someone from the nineteenth century had convinced me that I could exploit this disjointedness rather than see it as a failing. That is, what if Grace's rather old-fashioned tone was a product of her own histrionic imaginings? For example:

That night, yet again, I could not sleep. Too much inside my head to evacuate into the tunnel of slumber. Every time I was almost there, drifting, bumping into innocuous images and words, Mary would reappear, sitting there in the sunroom

reading of the evil aunt, a woman whom Jane Eyre would not forgive until she lay dying in her bed. (131)

This retreat to the Gothic was, also, I admitted to myself, a way of diverting away from the racial issues I was still grappling with and introducing a whole other mode of writing to investigate. In taking *The Well* as a model of postmodern Gothic, I began to wonder if my piece needed further framing in the way that Jolley had done at the end of her novel, when she introduces a novelist character who Hester meets in the grocery store. The unnamed novelist talks about her current project, a novella, and effectively sums up the action of *The Well* itself:

‘As a novelist,’ the new acquaintance continued, ‘I need an intruder to distort a relationship. The action goes forward but is governed by the events of everyday life. Perhaps using the seasons as a kind of hinge of fate and with an understanding of events being inevitable because that’s what life’s all about isn’t it – the rich dark fruit cake of life’. (157)

This character draws our attention to the action of writing itself, highlighting the manipulative nature of the work or, as Sue Gillett puts it, the writer-figures in Jolley’s work ‘emphasize the otherness of writing, the distance between world and word, self and self expression, the illusion of an untransformed presence of life in art’ (35). In this way ‘the story points to a world outside of its pages, the world we live in, a world to which language tries to refer, yet remains turned in upon itself, undermining its representational nature’ (Gillett 35). We are directed toward a reading that focuses on the constructions within the story, drawing our attention away from “what really happened” towards ‘an individual’s construction of the narrative, the meaning, of her life, her desire’ (41). This reminded me of Gail Jones’s self-conscious narration.

Was there a way, then, to introduce the same kind of self-reflexivity into my own work? Could I frame the text with a modern character who is remembering the tale? Could I have an alternative ending where the voice of the author intrudes and explains Grace's haunting from a contemporary perspective, to highlight the constructed nature of the narrative? How, though, would this solve the problem I still felt existed in Grace's relationship to Mary?

My excursion into the world of the Gothic, while providing a, perhaps, necessary respite from representational concerns had, nevertheless, brought me back to Mary. While Grace's link to a tradition of Australian Gothic repression were helpful in shoring up her voice and the Other-worldliness of the narrative, the positioning of Mary, and her relationship with Grace, remained central to *The Heaven I Swallowed*. At every turn, I found myself asking, "But how does this relate to Mary?" In doing so, I finally came to the realisation that Grace was, in fact, always asking the same question.

Towards a New Ending

Part II of *The Heaven I Swallowed* was, on the surface, primarily about the return of Fred, Grace's "dead" husband. His reappearance was un-expected, as much of a shock for me as it was for Grace:

Here was my undead husband! He had stepped from the grave intact, even though he had never actually gone to his tomb. I thought of those I had wanted to return – my mother, Auntie Iris, Mary – and could barely believe it was my never-dead husband who had, instead, come home. (*TH* 182)

Indeed, the return of Mary would have been a more logical turn for the story to take.

The constraints, however, of a realistic return for the stolen child seemed to be

outweighed by the freedoms and mythical opportunities that could be laid upon Fred. This, no doubt, related back to those continued concerns I had about representations of Aboriginality. Fred's return was also 'the return of the repressed' for it related to Grace's sexual repression and challenged the central lie of her life: that she was a widow. The return of one of the many 'damaged men'¹⁵ of World War II was also an opportunity to dig below the surface of the returned soldier, the weakness and disorientation of Fred a necessary counterpoint to Grace's obsession with noble sacrifice and sentimental heroism.

While Fred's return had cropped up in an instinctive way, Mary's return was a harder reconciliation to negotiate. In the original completed draft, Grace and Mary find one another via the sickly, yellow-hued boy that mistakes Grace for a nurse. The encounter is witnessed by the matron, who Mary introduces to Grace and we are given information about Mary's position within the hospital:

I learnt that 'Sister' was an honorary title for Mary, that she was not yet a fully fledged nurse, that she was, in fact, only in training. The matron talked of her as a paragon of patience. We stood in the ward, at the end of the yellow boy's bed, and Mother Charity beamed out her appreciation of my one-time daughter like the girl herself was not there to hear. Mary did not blush – or not enough so that I could see – and seemed un-embarrassed by the attention, her gaze continuing to scan down the other beds, as if ready to go to a patient's aid without hesitation. She introduced me only as Mrs. Grace Smith. (*TH*)

The conversation between them then continues under the flame tree:

'You have grown,' I said, another statement of fact that could not be misinterpreted.

¹⁵ I have borrowed this term from the title of Michael Ackland's *Damaged Men: The Precarious Lives of James McAuley and Harold Stewart*.

‘I should hope so!’ She laughed and interlaced her fingers, hanging her hands below her waist. Her shoulders visibly dropped, as if, out here, she could let go of her eternal vigilance.

‘I have grown old.’ I did not say it with any sense of wanting pity. Again, it was the simple truth.

‘Not so old, Auntie Grace,’ she said. Not so old, no. But not so old for what exactly?

‘You work here?’ she asked.

‘Yes, as a clerk.’

‘Under the dreaded Mr. Anderson?’

‘Under the dreaded Mr. Anderson.’

... ‘I should probably get back,’ Mary said.

‘Can I see you again?’ I asked.

‘Yes,’ and this time she did sound surprised and she stared at me, a small crease between her eyebrows. ‘I’m on afternoon shifts all this week.’

She smiled a polite smile. She walked past me, arms softly swaying. *(TH)*

Here was a Mary without rancour or bitterness who does not seem to hold Grace accountable for the past. She is almost without any personality, the appearance of Auntie Grace having little effect on her. While this was one way to, perhaps, enact a bland form of Reconciliation, it effectively let Grace off the hook. I asked myself how could I make the encounter between the two less easy for the white character? That is, how could I complicate the seeming erasure of Grace’s guilt? What I wanted to avoid

was all that I had criticised in Grenville's and Jones's work – too much realism and too much symbolism.

Black/White

Around this time I read Joyce Carol Oates's *Black Girl/White Girl*. The white narrator of this book, Genna, tells the story of her one-time roommate, Minette Swift, a 19-year-old black girl enrolled as a scholarship student in an exclusive liberal arts college in the US. The relationship between the black girl and the white girl is characterised by an intense desire to connect with Minette on Genna's side – as the daughter of activists she feels the obligation to prove her goodness towards black people – and, on Minette's side, an almost pathological need to stay separate from everyone. Genna laments, 'I think that I must be just a white girl in her eyes, I can never be a sister' (166). Minette is uninterested in being part of the black social network and fabricates her own racial discrimination as a means of explaining her failing grades. Eventually, she is killed in a fire that may or may not be accidental.

Oates's interest in the white liberal view of blackness is explicit. Genna's father is a radical whose teachings are scattered throughout the book:

Maximilian Meade had written in the 1960s that "skin-consciousness" determines vision. Virtually all Caucasians are born blind, even those who are victims of capitalism, we must be educated to *see*. (87)

One of the most interesting aspects of *Black Girl/White Girl*, however, is Oates's ability to keep the reader guessing as to the motivations behind Minette's actions. She remains an ambiguous, undefined character who is hard to sympathise with. In digesting the book I was struck by how crippled we often are in Australia when it comes to writing

complicated race relations. The thought of writing an Aboriginal character who was both deceptive and un-likeable had never crossed my mind.

While I could not see my way to such a re-visioning of Mary, the question *Black Girl/White Girl* I wondered why the black character has to carry the burden of her race? Why does he/she need to be all knowing, as Mary is in Gail Jones's *Sorry*, willing to do the right thing by everyone? If, in *The Heaven I Swallowed*, Mary has become a symbol for Grace, a projection of Grace's guilt, than Mary need be neither sinner nor saint. She could be a deliberately unknowable character. This would have to entail a different approach from the notion of the unknowable Other of postcolonial representation and take a step towards the freedom of ambiguity.

When I looked closely at Mary, she was already visually racially ambiguous. I had not set out to write a story of 'passing' but perhaps my Grandmother's story, learnt through my mother's PhD thesis (discussed in Part I), had subconsciously filtered through. My character, Mary, was quite clearly of Aboriginal descent but, intriguingly, the visible signs of her blackness were continually changing. On first being seen by Grace, Mary is 'so, so black' (*TH* 14) that she is almost sent away by the white woman. One of the women at the church then sees her as 'beautiful', claiming that 'you wouldn't even know she was . . . well . . . [Aboriginal]' (42). Later, Mary is rejected by the school Principal and his sidekick because she is too obviously black (59-60), while Mrs Bishop declares she is 'Certainly not as dark as they can be' (124). The obvious conclusion is that Mary's blackness is an unreliable signifier, linking back to the notion that definitions of Aboriginality have been continually changed, dependent on the fears and desires of non-indigenous society. By Part II of the novel, the nurse Grace takes to be Mary does not seem to be distinguished from her fellow workers at all and her dark skin could be a manifestation of Grace's own need to believe she is Mary.

Yet it could not be just physical attributes defining the parameters of Mary's identity. In my investigations of the Gothic the notion of 'the Uncanny' struck a chord and it was this that, finally, provided a rendition of Mary, and the ending of the novel, that I was comfortable with.

In Ken Gelder and Jane M Jacobs's *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*, the authors hypothesise that Australia, as a postmodern, postcolonial nation is in a state of 'unsettled settledness' (25). Using Freud's 1919 essay, 'The Uncanny', they propose that being a white Australian is a continually "uncanny" experience' where 'one's home is rendered, somehow and in some sense, unfamiliar; one has the experience, in other words, of being in place and 'out of place' simultaneously' (Gelder and Jacobs 23). Rather than using the overused trope of white Australia being haunted by its Black past they ask the questions – following on from Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves*¹⁶ – 'How familiar is Australia with its own ghosts? Who 'smiles' at them and who 'worries' about them?' (Gelder and Jacobs 30). Instead of looking for ways to lay the ghosts to rest – a state which, they contend, no colonial nation can ever reach – Gelder and Jacobs advocate for an 'entangled kind of haunting', that is:

A structure in which sameness and difference solicit each other, spilling over each other's boundaries only to return again to their respective places, moving back and forth in an unpredictable, even unruly manner – a structure in which sameness and difference embrace and refuse each other simultaneously: this is where the 'ghosts' which may cause us to 'smile' or to 'worry' continue to flourish. (42)

¹⁶ Kristeva writes: 'To worry or to smile, such is the choice when we are assailed by the strange; our decision depends on how familiar we are with our own ghosts' (191).

This notion of the ‘uncanny’ appealed to me a great deal because it seemed to offer an ending between Mary and Grace that neither relied on realistic expectations nor conclusive feelings of forgiveness and absolution. What I could, perhaps, strive for was a character that is both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. That is, Mary could have traces of the girl we met in Part I but her interaction with Grace could be more ambiguous: does she or does she not recognise Grace? Is she or is she not *the* Mary? Thus, in the final draft, there is no clear indication that Mary is not just another one of Grace’s visions:

The nurse straightened herself up and, with the bed and the young man’s pain between us, directed honey-brown eyes at me.

‘Yes?’ she asked.

I couldn’t keep looking at her. I glanced down at the patient.

‘You came back,’ the boy said. He smiled.

‘You’re a relative of Luke’s?’

I shook my head, unable to say anything.

‘A friend?’

I nodded.

‘It’s lovely of you to visit,’ the girl said.

She spoke simply, without a trace of surprise in her voice, and I was warmed to think that even after all these years, I was perfectly incapable of disconcerting someone like her. (*TH* 209-210)

This encounter, for me, offered both a positive and negative outcome for the Aboriginal character. That is, if the reader chooses to believe the nurse who Grace latches onto is

the grown-up Mary, then Mary has struggled through to success in material terms and her time with Grace has had little effect. However, if this is not *the* Mary who has been found, we are left to only hope for her fate.

In *Forgetting Aborigines*, Chris Healy examines the paradoxes of the construction of Aboriginality as both absence and presence:

Settler Australians have, since the beginning, too often thought of indigenous people, and hence Aboriginality, as either absent or present – imagining that they were once in place but are now gone, belong somewhere else or out of place, because they are out of time, finished or done for. (10)

Non-indigenous cultural imagination relies on such contradictions: ‘on the one hand, an Aboriginal presence was real, and it had to be reckoned with; on the other hand it had to be imagined away’ (Nicholas Thomas qtd. in Healy 10). In creating a moment between Grace and Mary in which memory is always present, in which the past is being enacted in an unreliable way and where the Aboriginal presence is real, and, at the same time, perhaps imaginary, I was treading a fine line. Was I repeating the delegation of the indigenous character to the shadows? Was Mary as a possible fantasy simply another rendering of the white denial of Aboriginal embodiment? These were questions that, I now knew, were almost impossible to fully answer. Interpretation would, no doubt, vary but in my mind the final meeting was as close as I could get to being at ease with both character’s representation.

In re-examining the interactions between Grace and Mary in Part II of *The Heaven I Swallowed* I came to see ambiguity as crucial to my understanding of both characters. Most importantly, what I wanted to reveal was the impact of Mary on Grace as in complete disproportion to the impact of Grace on Mary. In a deliberate attempt to counteract the white narcissist belief of centrality to Aboriginal lives I had denied the

reader 'the fantasy of a fully embodied reconciliation' (Gelder and Jacobs 38) and Mary, while perhaps not a "real" presence, was given the ability to walk out of the story's frame. In the final interaction between the white woman and the black girl, there is only a trace left in the air:

The girl did not wave as such, only raised her palm and spread her fingers as if making a print in the air.

I raised my own hand, letting the fingertips rest lightly on the pane. In the time it took for the glass to lose its coldness, the girl's arm had already dropped back down to her side. (*TH* 219)

This had moved the story a long way away from the original impetus of trying to understand the actions of the historically real white perpetrators of the Stolen Generations policy and towards a more symbolic or allegorical narrative where anxiety is inherent and the problematics of indigenous and non-indigenous relations continue indefinitely.

Conclusions

On February 13, 2008, the newly elected Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, officially apologised to the Stolen Generations in parliament. During a long speech he expressed a sentiment based on empathy:

I say to non-Indigenous Australians listening today who may not fully understand why what we are doing is so important, I ask those non-Indigenous Australians to imagine for a moment if this had happened to you. I say to honourable members here present: imagine if this had happened to us. Imagine the crippling effect. Imagine how hard it would be to forgive.

Here, empathy is the key to bridging the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. We are asked to step into the shoes of those who have suffered, to try to feel the shape of their suffering, and empathise enough to be transformed to a level of understanding.

In *The Heaven I Swallowed* I had deliberately set out to make my white narrator, Grace, part of the genocidal intent of white Australia in removing Aboriginal children from their families. I had begun the project with the intention of exposing the perpetrators of past policies as delusional: Grace, convinced of her own racial and cultural superiority, was determined to erase any traces of Mary's Aboriginality via the white standard-bearers of sexual repression, obsession with cleanliness and distorted notions of religious goodness.

In writing the story, though, I came to create a character who was more complicated than this: a woman who is longing for a child, an orphan who understands a desire for family, a liar who knows her own deceptions. Grace's racist attitudes stop

her, initially, from seeing past her own sense of what is proper and she judges Mary through her prejudices against Aboriginality. She is not, however, blind forever and, hopefully, in allowing the story to move beyond the binary of villain and victim, *The Heaven I Swallowed* sits outside of stereotypical narratives. Grace's relationship with Mary is an attempt to open up the possibility of both understanding prejudice and, then, undermine the logic of racialised assumptions.

I had come to this justification via adopting various personas along the way: at one point a politically motivated “do-gooder”, at another an aware representational critic, at one moment inspired by my grandmother's life, at another copying (or paying homage to) the style of Elizabeth Jolley. These varying identities – always overlapping and only artificially separated by the process of writing an exegesis – lead me to my own sense of peace with the narrative. Yet it was not as simple as Kevin Rudd's call for empathy, ‘to imagine for a moment if this had happened to you’. Instead, it was the step beyond limiting empathy. Grace, in accepting her complicity in inflicting pain on Mary and Fred, begins to recognise her own delusions of importance. In writing her, I was also able to see beyond my own sense of self-importance, to reconcile myself with the limits of being a non-indigenous writer writing Aboriginality.

Reading the almost-final draft of *The Heaven I Swallowed* after re-writing, I noticed how many times Grace seemed to be seeing things out of the corner of her eye. I went back and reduced this repetition, for the sake of the reader. As I was doing so I was struck by this as an analogy for the writing of a novel. That is, you cannot look it straight in the face or it will lose all its beauty and all its faults will be exposed. You have to try and catch at it, out of the corner of your eye, finding moments that work and reworking the moments that do not. Although every writer wants to magically rearrange everything so the pieces fit into place immediately, every writer knows this is not the

work of one day. It needs to be done over time. One cannot get the whole in one glance and on each re-examination, one requires a different pair of shoes.

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