CONTENTS

John Docker
Recasting Sally Morgan's *My Place*:
The fictionality of identity and the
phenomenology of the converso 3

Klaus Neumann
Cropped images 23

1998 CCR staff 47
ARC Fellows at the HRC 51
1998 HRC Visitors 52
HRC Conferences 61
CR Conferences 71
1998 Work-in-progress seminars 74
Forthcoming conferences 76
From the desk of the Librarian 78
JOHN DOCKER

RECASTING SALLY MORGAN’S *MY PLACE*: THE FICTIONALITY OF IDENTITY AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE CONVERSO

‘Aboriginality’, therefore, is a field of intersubjectivity in that it is remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people create “Aboriginalities”...

Marcia Langton, *Aboriginal art and film*...

In the last quarter of this imminently ending century contemporary Australian Aboriginal visual and performing artists, film-makers, and musicians (as with Yothu Yindi) have gained a world wide reputation and acclaim. The cultural critic and leading Aboriginal spokesperson Marcia Langton suggests that traditional Aboriginal visual and oral expression, along with multilingualism and dance, were always more elaborate than the material culture used in everyday life. Langton argues for continuity between old and new, that in recent art and music the non-Aboriginal world is continuously incorporated into the Aboriginal worldview and cosmology. What is made available for the West to appropriate in Aboriginal painting, for example, is only exterior decorative features, not the body of hidden meaning and sacred secret knowledge that remains inaccessible behind the abstraction (secret knowledge which is in any case restricted within Aboriginal society).

*My Place* (1987), the autobiography of Western Australian writer and artist Sally Morgan, evoking the upbringing of a young woman told by her mother and grandmother from childhood that she was Indian not Aboriginal, also has earned a worldwide reputation and remarkable sales, becoming a bestseller. Yet its scholarly reception has been rancorous, angry, passionate and bitter. Success with a national and international readership has been matched by hostility from many critics, non-Aboriginal as well as Aboriginal (including Marcia Langton). As is not unusual in the history of literature, particularly in the modernist construction of popular genres as the low, other and female, its very popularity appears to have provoked, in many cases, immediate suspicion, patronizing disdain, cold dissection; repudiation was accompanied by lofty speculation on the motives and intentions of both the writer and her readers.
I encountered the international reputation of My Place in mortifying circumstances in the early 1990s, while talking as a guest to a university class taking Australian Studies in Budapest. What, the students eagerly asked, did I think of My Place, which they'd all read and enjoyed and felt moved by. I will never forget, and always regret, the shadow of disappointment that passed over their young faces when I admitted I hadn't yet read it. I think I hadn't then read My Place and caught up with the surrounding acrid controversy because I hadn't seen ways of connecting the text and its reception to my own research and theoretical interests in exile and diaspora—exile suggesting the omnipresent weight of pain of displacement from one's own land, of being an outsider in a new; diaspora indicating belonging to more than one place and time, more than one past and future. Exile and diaspora suggest both lack and excess, of enforced loss and separation, yet the continuing imagining of unconquerable countries of the mind. I'm trying to develop such perspectives in the book I'm writing, currently and tentatively entitled The Poetics of Diaspora, an argument concerning the implications, for the history of European and Western notions of ethnic and cultural identity, of a utopian desire (which I share) to re-imagine and recover a medieval pre-1492 Judeo-Islamic trading and social world of plurality and convivencia that stretched from Moorish Spain to India and China. 

I've now realized that Sally Morgan's My Place does indeed connect closely to these themes. Concepts of exile and diaspora are now being productively deployed in relation to Aboriginal histories of dispossession and displacement. Here I would like to explore notions of diasporic sensibility in relation to My Place as a literary text; I would like to draw in and spread out surprising analogies to European and Jewish cultural history. By so doing, I wish to alter the terms of the debate so far.

It's worth reprising the historiography of the debate at this distance to observe the pattern and shape it assumed. In an early shot replete with influential moves, the ethnographer and cultural theorist Eric Michaels consigned Sally Morgan and My Place to a certain tradition of popular textuality, especially that of television serials like Return to Peyton Place, Dallas, and Dynasty. In Michaels' view, such serials are a variation on the roman à clef, because their narrative strategy, driven by genealogies of kin and exchange, constantly reproduce gossip and revelation which lure the reader/viewer into a detective novel kind of relationship, attempting to match characters with identities in a community. Michaels urges that we avoid the trap set by this subgenre, of being drawn into treating characters as if they have documentary reality, rather than viewing them as constructed and interpreted. In another formative move, Michaels sees no point in distinguishing between Sally Morgan and her text: to talk.
of one is simultaneously to be talking of the other. In these terms, *My Place* is a journey of discovery that culminates in her ancestral country: 'she traces relatives there and completes the picture'; she claims the 'discovery' of an 'authentic, lineally descended Aboriginal identity'. In contrast, Michaels reminds us of the capacity of the ethnographer always to be suspicious of an informant's words as data—a capacity for and training in forensic detachment of which a popular readership is apparently incapable. Michaels will unmask *My Place* by pointing out that we should pay attention to non-documentary features like its Peyton Placeish narrative frame and its literary conventions, features which textually invent identity. Then we will see that *My Place* is constructing a modern autobiographical notion of personhood that is culturally syncretic. It is Christian and more precisely Protestant, as well as drawing on elements of theosophy and New Age astrology. In terms of Aboriginality, such individual literary invention can be contrasted to Western Desert oral traditions of story telling that are collective and culturally constrained.¹¹

In classic modernist fashion, Michaels makes a comforting distinction between an avant garde of theorists like new-style self-reflexive anthropologists, and a credulous popular readership that innocently takes *My Place* as documentary realism; a popular readership about whom he can readily psychologize. Oddly, he asserts *My Place* to be part of generically akin to work like *Dallas* and *Dynasty,* which he says do not observe 'any classical form of plot'. Michaels is himself innocent of a large cultural studies body of work theorizing the history and aesthetic of melodrama and serial fiction as genres which aim for the reverse of realism; genres calling attention to themselves as melodrama and fantasy, as a poetics of excess.¹²

In a 1988 essay and again in his *Textual Spaces* (1992) cultural critic Stephen Muecke took upon himself the burden of advising and admonishing on behalf of the other. Travelling in Eric Michaels's tracks, Muecke praised *My Place* in Bakhtinian terms as polyphonic, because the inclusion of the directly told stories of Arthur Corunna, Daisy Corunna and Gladys Milroy made the book into an occasion of collective narration, thus deferring to traditional textual conventions, where there is deferment of narrative authority to the correct custodians of parts of stories. Here, *My Place* is open, Muecke approvingly nods, to Aboriginal or Aboriginalizing readings. But, he feels, in too many other ways, the book is over-determined by available reading strategies of a European kind: as quasi-documentary autobiography promising historical truth-effects; its detective narrative; its romance of overcoming repression of identity in self-expression and self-discovery; and in its pursuit of the grandmother to confess, while Daisy herself resists such importuning as Aboriginal people in general must resist missionaries and
anthropologists and suchlike who try to secure confessional knowledge from them. Muecke recommends to writers like Morgan, and to practitioners of Aboriginal literary politics in general, that they pursue an Aboriginal discursive strategy of non-disclosure, and an observance of traditional Aboriginal genres. For Muecke, writers, if they wish to be truly Aboriginal, should abide by their own traditions, of which he is a kind of non-Aboriginal guardian, a supportive scholar at the gate of authenticity, a watchful cultural guide armed with canonical criteria of indigeneity.

In another important intervention the historian Bain Attwood in 1992 acknowledged and followed Eric Michaels and Stephen Muecke in suggesting in Foucauldian fashion that Morgan's Aboriginality is really but an assemblage of effects of European discourse. Like Muecke, Attwood is drawn to the trope of over-determination: Morgan's book 'mirrors' pretty well everything that surrounds her, the bourgeois individualism of the age in general as well as institutional frameworks, epistemologies such as traditional anthropology, radical and oral history and behavioural psychology, numerous literary genres (not only detective but classic realism, quest, autobiography, family saga, Gothic novel, family history, genealogy, genesis story, and Aussie-battler), and the counter-culture of the 1960s and 70s.

Amidst an agitated wave of responses, Tim Rowse pointed out that Attwood identifies My Place with the presumed biography and subjectivity of the author, which Attwood claims to know more intimately than she does. Attwood's magisterial rhetoric and reflectionist methodology ('mirrors' indeed!) are moved by a desire to master Morgan and her text, to explain her biography and her consciousness and unconsciousness totally, to leave her and My Place no mystery, no refuge, no freedom, no dignity; no place beyond the contexts he has chosen. Indeed, throughout Attwood's panoptic analysis there is a faint but discernible tone of near-derision of Morgan for being a kind of second-hand European, a predictable simulation, a mere Same.

In her impassioned testimonio Jackie Huggins, writing as one of those who 'never ceded their identity no matter how destructive, painful or bad the situation was', substantially agreed with Attwood in doubting Sally Morgan's claim to Aboriginal heritage, values, and identity beyond a genetic inheritance. My Place, Huggins feels, reads like the story of a middle class Anglo woman, and its only strength lies in the family testimonies, which should have been placed at the front. Writers like Morgan have jumped on the bandwagon, naively thinking they can instantly acquire Aboriginality. They are individuals who have not earned the right through years of sensitivity, hard work, effort and attention to protocols and ethics, to be accepted back into the
RECASTING SALLY MORGAN'S *MY PLACE*

community. The greatest weakness of *My Place*, Huggins writes, is that it presents Aboriginality as something that can be easily understood by a white audience and white literary world. It therefore represents an act of passing which is a horrendous crime in Aboriginal circles: 'We vindictively remember those who have passed and ... can never forget nor forgive these traitors'. Sally and her mother and grandmother have cooperated with the enemy. Jacky Huggins is also disappointed that overseas readers assimilate *My Place* to a North American slave narrative and also that Alice Walker could acclaim it as representative of the oneness of all Australian Aboriginal people: 'It might', Huggins responds, 'be the oneness of slaves and Afro-Americans but how do the Native Americans deal with *My Place*?'

Subhash Jaireth took issue with earlier contributors to the debate like Attwood and Huggins for what he saw as lack of attention to the textuality of *My Place*. He quotes Bakhtin to the effect that even in autobiography the author is other to the 'I' who is constructed in the text, who belongs to narrative not biography. He also agrees there is a certain degree of heteroglossia in the independence of the testimonies from the principal narrator. Nevertheless Jaireth's judgement is firm: *My Place* is not polyphonic because her voice is a monologic force that frames and controls the text. There is insufficient difference between the consciousness of the author and the subjectivity of the principal character, who is created as one who discovers herself during the course of the narrative as complete, rounded, and essentialized.

It was an interesting debate, revealing perhaps how debates flow and ebb, their start-stop rhythm, their tidal movement. The controversy seemed to settle in the sand because its participants and contestants agreed that *My Place* is occupied by the desire for and uncovering of the principal narrator as a homogeneous, unitary and unified subject; the apparent heart of the book is her quest for her true identity, her authentic Aboriginal heritage, a pilgrimage towards her real self, an absurd return to her original being while ontologically she belongs to European modernity. The debate was also freely prescriptive, anxious to tell Sally Morgan what she should have done. Eric Michaels felt she should have 'more frankly' acknowledged the duality and contradictions of her story and history, she should have described the part played by the whites in her ancestry, upbringing, and present life. Sounding like a Marxist of old, Stephen Muecke also felt her work should have dealt with 'social contradictions', in particular, to confront European agency. Attwood, too, believes she should have addressed her white heritage, for she only discusses her past in terms of the prism of Aboriginality. Huggins called on Morgan to pay recompence to her community rather than being a self-centred self-serving ego.

Jaireth asked her to pay heed to the messy
fragmentary nature of one's subjectivity and to the necessity of a more ruptured narrative. The debate also agreed that, despite the inserted stories of Arthur, Gladys and Daisy, text and author, My Place and Sally Morgan, are substantially one; her particular use of autobiography had closed off the possibility of disjunction and so of decentring and polyphony in the main narrative.

The question I'd like to ask the participants is: why did they marginalize the non-Aboriginal narratives in the text? In what follows I will deploy Walter Benjamin's allegorical method, fragmenting the object of analysis to reconstitute My Place's narratology as dispersed, complex, and densely intertextual. The novel explicitly and openly suggests that the ethnic and cultural identities of the narrator and her family are multiple, and here My Place can reprise by analogy the historical experience of forced assimilation and conversion in Europe of Moors and Jews, especially in the history of the conversos and marranos of medieval and early modern Spain, Portugal and Holland; and in European colonizing across the globe, beginning with the Catholic Spanish in the Americas. I do not see the novel's generic connections and literary conventions as a sign of the failure of her alleged claim to authentic Aboriginal identity. Rather, such textuality and intertextuality constitute a major part of its interest and richness as an autobiographical novel, a novel which is no less a novel for referring to actual names, a novel which foregrounds and highlights rather than attempts to mask and conceal cultural syncretism.

A NEW LOOK

Since the narrator of My Place grows up conscious of herself as a storyteller and artist, the novel is a kind of künstlerroman, where the text maintains a more or less gentle distance from the narrator. Certainly Sally Morgan is the author and she is the principal narrator of her childhood and growing up and of interactions with various characters and events. Even so the novel is not necessarily to be equated with her consciousness: in Bakhtin's terms, there cannot be a coincidence of author and hero, they belong to different moments of time and space, and they represent different constitutive aspects of the text.

Sally, for example, more than once tells us that as a child she was an outsider figure who missed school if she could. To her surprise in her last year at primary level, in Grade Seven, she wins the 'coveted Dick Cleaver Award for Citizenship': 'The whole school', she notes with surprise, 'voted, and, for some reason, I won.' Sally sillily wonders if her sister Jill has bribed someone.

The novel is suggesting that there are gaps between Sally's perceptions of herself and the perceptions of others: she can misperceive, her self-knowledge is suspect, the explanations she reaches for can be obviously unsatisfactory. She thinks
of herself when a schoolchild as an idler, a romantic dreamer, and is perplexed when others see her as clever. When she is fifteen, after an outburst from Nan, she finally becomes conscious of her grandmother's colouring. Jill chides her for her naivety in ever thinking they were not Aboriginal rather than Indian. Paul, her future husband, himself the son of missionaries who had been brought up with Aboriginal people, implies to Sally that some of her attitudes 'were very immature'.

My Place, then, in various places offers enough clues to establish that her attitudes, opinions, and self-knowledge can be questioned: she is not a wholly reliable narrator.

Narratives abound in My Place of white people who are recognized as significantly influencing Sally's formation and character, not least her father Bill the returned soldier. There are descriptions of visiting him in his long stays in hospital; his aversion to killing anything including the chook for Christmas (Nan would have to do it); his not caring what the neighbours or anyone else think; his drinking himself to an early death, and his suicide. Sally's mother Gladys says that Bill was 'more worldly' than other men she'd met when she was young. Bill will never tell Gladys all that happened to him during the war. He'd have nightmares: 'He'd scream and scream at night'. In better times he enjoyed mixing with and talking Italian with the Italian market gardeners in Perth, often doing plumbing jobs for them free of charge.24

In terms of a narratology of stories within stories—recalling eighteenth-century decentred narration rather than the narrative of unified self-becoming of the nineteenth century bildungsroman—Gladys's testimony interpolates an account of Bill's wartime experiences contructed from what he had told her. Bill, it appears, fought in the desert in the Middle East, was captured at El Alamein, and survived a torpdoing to the ship that transported him to Greece and Italy, where Allied prisoners like him were publicly humiliated. In Italy Bill escapes, hides out with a family supportive of the partisans, and learns to speak Italian fluently and drink vino while trying to keep out of sight of the Germans. He is captured and handed over to the SS who question and torture him for days, and then is transferred to Germany to camps where he is again mistreated. In the end Gladys realizes that the Nazis had broken not his spirit or will to live but his mind: 'He had a sensitive side to him; they'd destroyed that, degraded him. ... He couldn't escape from his own memories.' Unless it was the shock treatment the doctors in Perth hospital gave him.25

Compared to the public timidity of her grandmother and mother, where does Sally acquire her boldness, independence, forthrightness, lack of dread in relation to society? In her childhood Sally more than the other children feels an affinity with her father, an affinity he recognizes even in her speaking back to him, as do Gladys and Nan. When he has drinking bouts that
sometimes end in rages with the family fleeing to a neighbour's house, it is Sally who is sent to talk to him.\textsuperscript{26}

The portrait of the father involves sympathy and empathy, for Sally feels he is part of her, she entwines aspects of her father's will and spirit into her will and spirit, though she rejects his drinking. At school Sally regards the teachers as akin to the army officers her father disliked; like him she feels herself to be a nonconformist opposed to regimentation, comparing herself to her more conventional sister Jill. She listens eagerly to his stories of precarious life with the partisans in Italy and his friendship with the Italian family that sheltered him; she learns to share his tastes that were a wartime legacy, a love of seafood and vinegar. Bill teaches her to sing the Communist anthem in Italian, and she later stuns her teacher and class not only by singing 'The Internationale' in that tongue, but by her 'sudden show of theatrical talent'. She feels cursed for being a girl and not being able to be a soldier, but she is proud that she can defy authority just as her father defied the Gestapo, not telling them anything. As Gladys says of Sally and her father: 'In some ways, they were similar, they were both rebels.'\textsuperscript{27} It was because of the public insouciance and worldliness Sally absorbs from her white father that she feels impatient with the timidity of her mother and grandmother and is so confident in launching her quest for knowledge of her Aboriginal ancestry.

Sally may also have derived from her father some of her theatricality, her desire to dramatize her story as a theatre of fragmented identities. Her talent here suddenly emerges when she sings 'The Internationale' in class. Sally and the other children also love going to the local outdoor theatre to see films; on television they are fascinated by 1920s, 30s, and 40s movies. Enraptured by the magic of performance, Sally at high school had 'very romantic notions about running away to join a circus'. Jill and her mother think that Sally is always being 'dramatic', she 'should have gone on the stage', so excited does she become by her new awareness of an Aboriginal heritage.\textsuperscript{28}

Other white people, the wealthy 'upper class' colonial pastoralist family the Drake-Brockmans, are major obstacles in Sally's path towards knowledge of that which she seeks, the history of her body. The female Drake-Brockmans, Aunty Judy in Perth and Alice in Sydney, whom Sally talks to about who might have fathered Nan and Gladys, construct for Sally an imaginary kinship involving a cook called Maltese Sam and an Englishman called Jack Grime. The Drake-Brockman women brutally disavow any kinship with Sally, though the strong suggestion emerges through the various stories and evasions, feints and lures, that the owner of Corunna Downs station in the north of Western Australia, Alfred Howden Drake-Brockman, both fathered Nan and later when she was a teenager forced incest on her to produce Gladys.\textsuperscript{29} Here is a story
common in the history of European colonialism and its associated literature, a continuation in new situations of aristocratic desire for the low and other, their female servants, yet explosively intensified in colonial situations of an erotics of the exotic.

*My Place* is part of a contemporary literature that explores how fictional kinship can be in human societies, how much it involves silences, gaps, creation of kin, hierarchy, exclusions, violence—that kinship is always torn, always wounded. What wounds Sally is that in her family it is not only the white women who refuse knowledge but her immediate matriliney, her mother and grandmother. Her mother is reluctant to find out who fathered her, while Daisy insists on withholding unto her death what she regards and guards as her secrets, presumably the horror of incest, rape, and sexuality with and by her own father.

**SCOTT'S IVANHOE**

In Sally's consciousness, it is the women in her family, black and white, who should maintain, preserve and transmit genealogical knowledge. As Sally says to a reluctant Gladys: 'You're as bad as Nan, sometimes! You've got to help me, you're my mother, it's your duty.' Yet race and racism have created in *My Place* a tension between women as bearers of family history, and women forced to conceal kinship connections or create false genealogies. Curiously, it is uncle Arthur who provides crucial genealogical information, not Sally's female line. Daisy's withholding of such knowledge suggests an interesting intertextual relationship with Walter Scott's historical romance *Ivanhoe* (1819), set in the late twelfth century at the time of the Crusades. In *My Place*, the name Ivanhoe occurs often; it refers to 'a grand old house' in Claremont on the banks of the Swan River in Perth where Daisy as a young girl of fifteen or sixteen is taken by Howden Drake-Brockman and where she spends most of her working life as the family nursemaid, servant and cook, feeling like the white family's captive and slave: the family that was also her family but was never acknowledged as her family. One might hazard that it was because of the remarkable popularity of Scott's *Ivanhoe* in the nineteenth century, in literary imitations as well as paintings, dramatizations and operas, that it spread as a house name across the British Empire.

Scott's *Ivanhoe* is a predecessor novel concerned with invasion, colonial relations of domination and subordination, race, and destructive desire for the other; a novel which has already had a long history of response and influence in both English and American literary history. Recall in *Ivanhoe* Sir Reginald Front-de-Bœuf's castle to which the Jewess Rebecca and her father, and Wilfred of Ivanhoe and the other Saxons, captured in the forest, are led by a party of
predatory Norman knights. In the castle is an old servant called Urfried. Urfried tells her story, briefly to Rebecca and later more fully to Cedric, the Saxon patriot still smarting under Norman rule. Urfried says that in a previous generation the Norman invaders had stormed this castle, and after killing all the Saxon male nobles had raped the women, including herself, who was once a Saxon noblewoman. Urfried is the Norman name the invaders gave her; once she had a Saxon name, Ulrica, the daughter of Cedric's old friend the Thane of Torquilstone. But once her beauty had gone, she was no longer the sport of her masters' passions and was treated henceforth as servant and slave, object of their contempt, scorn, and hatred; she in turn despises the Normans, and hates and despises her wretched self. Cedric the Saxon is repulsed by her story of 'horror and guilt', that she should have survived and slept with the enemy while her male relatives in the very same castle had been brutally slain. He reviles her, tells her she should have killed herself, that she deserves the 'hate and execration' of 'each true Saxon heart'. He can only look upon Ulrica, in her guilt, wretchedness, and despair, with 'abhorrence' and 'disgust', accusing her of possessing a 'leprous of soul'. He must get away from her presence. In a moment of high melodrama, Ulrica will die having set alight the accursed castle with its encrypted stories of spilt blood and shameful secrets.35

In My Place it would appear that Howden Drake-Brockman the white station owner took Daisy to Ivanhoe in Perth for his sexual pleasure, even though he'd also fathered her back in the north where Daisy had been born with and was known by her Aboriginal name Talahue. There is mention, too, of Daisy giving birth to another child who died, possibly also fathered by Howden. Daisy at the end of her life warns Sally to be watchful of Sally's daughter Amber: 'Some men can't be trusted. They just mongrels. They get you down on the floor and they won't let you get up. ... You watch out for Amber. You don't want her bein' treated like a black woman.' Howden may have had affection for Daisy. We recall that he insisted on holding his and Daisy's daughter Gladys just before he died; Howden had also promised money to Daisy and her brother Arthur, and sent photos to Arthur.36

Does Daisy formerly Talahue fear that she can never face her Aboriginal kin back in the north nor her daughter and granddaughter in Perth, with a narrative of sexuality that will repulse and disgust them as Cedric the Saxon was repulsed and disgusted by Urfried formerly Ulrica? Isn't her grumpiness and temper when Sally and her siblings are growing up reminiscent of Urfried in the castle? Does she, like Urfried, despise herself?37 Daisy appears to fear her story will blight them, will extinguish hope in and bring horror to their young eyes. She can't seem to believe that Sally her bold young granddaughter, who has already heard her father's war stories, will not at all be horrified.
CONVERSOS AND MARRANOS

As historical romance Scott's *Ivanhoe* draws on both Gothic and melodrama, related genres that evoke allegories of desire in relation to secret knowledge, in stories that strain both to conceal and to release the repressed into open theatre and theatricality; the kind of melodrama that Sally and her family relished in transformed form in Hollywood movies on television. Gladys relates that in her schooling (her mother Daisy had never been taught reading and writing), she had fallen asleep while the teacher read Jane Austen to the class. Gladys recalls that same teacher, whose fiancé had been killed in World War One, becoming tearful as she read out 'old romantic novels, especially *Wuthering Heights*'.

Indeed, rather than in Jane Austen’s gentler narrative toning, Gladys’ narration does construct key moments of crisis in her life in heightened ways reminiscent of the Gothic melodrama of that incest novel *Wuthering Heights*, with its fantastical happenings and uncanny visions. Such is especially so in the nightmares she reports having about her future with Bill before she marries him, and his own nightmare attempted stranglings of her later when, suddenly a terrifying stranger, he screams 'SS, SS' with his hands around her throat, imagining she was a particularly brutal Gestapo officer. The year before Bill dies, Gladys wakes suddenly, seeing a light in her bedroom, which she interprets as the spirit of Christ. His arms outstretched as though He’d come for someone: 'I screamed and told him to go away, I knew I was looking at death.' Later the following year she thanks God for giving her and Bill extra time together, feeling that God was preparing her for his death. After he dies she begs God to tell her where Bill had gone. She closes her eyes, and opens them to see herself surrounded by light, and then notices Bill being beckoned by Jesus in a long white robe to join others seated on a lawn: 'When that vision finished, I was surrounded by a glow of pure love, I was so happy. I knew Bill was all right.'

If in Scott's *Ivanhoe* there's a prominent Jewish narrative concerned with the exclusion, violence, and othering faced by Rebecca and her father Isaac in medieval Christian England, in *My Place* there's also a Jewish narrative, though one threaded through scattered references, and apparent also in certain similarities—so in any case I’m now going to argue—to a particular diaspora, the conversos of sixteenth and seventeenth century Catholic Portugal. The conversos, descended from the Sephardic Jews of Spain expelled in 1492, had come to Portugal where they were forcibly mass-baptized in the late 1490s; for the next several generations, now formally Catholic and frequently rising to high positions in the society (until discriminated against as New Christians), the conversos could also be marranos, or secret Jews. Because, however, of the watchful care with which the Inquisition policed identities, the marranos possessed only fragmentary,
distorted memories of Judaism, and they often mixed Jewish with Catholic beliefs and cosmologies in individual, distinctive, idiosyncratic, hybrid, imaginative ways. The marranos experienced a double consciousness, both Catholic and Jewish, both participating in and conforming to the society about them yet sustaining a secret consciousness of difference. They were suspicious of any institutional authority, religious system, and church bureaucracy, trusting to their own inner journeys of thought and reason, their own inner awareness, one's own spirituality, your own path, however eccentric.

Marrano consciousness prefigured modernity in many ways. Their subjective individualism was a prelude to Protestantism. Proto-modernist outsider figures, they were simultaneously both inside and outside the society and any cultural context. Justifiably afraid of persecution, they were ever cautious and prudent in their accommodations to the society they found themselves in. At the same time, they sustained an interiority of independence and skepticism, a secret consciousness that could be multicontradictory; could be confused, dissonant, ambivalent, paradoxical, incomplete, doubting, self-doubting, potentially and actually heretical. Marrano culture emphasized disguise, a play of masks, a multiplicity of personae; the leading of a double life, always negotiating the dualities of public and private, outer and inner.

I wish to set into play a metaphoric relationship between converso and marrano diasporic culture, a culture that was neither Jewish nor non-Jewish, and Sally Morgan's family history and upbringing, that was neither Aboriginal nor non-Aboriginal. Nan surprises Sally one day by saying to her: 'You don't know nothing, girl. You don't know what it's like for people like us. We're like those Jews, we got to look out for ourselves.' Sally feels she knows 'a lot about the Jews because of the war and Dad'. Some of Bill's wartime stories concerned being in POW camps near Jewish concentration camps, and his also teaming up with a POW who was 'half-Jewish' and was badly treated by the Nazis. In response to her eccentric grandmother's outburst of affinity, Sally thinks to herself that there 'was no possible comparison' between Jews and her family. The novel as a whole, nevertheless, does create Sally's matriliny as comparable to the culture and consciousness of the conversos and marranos.

Sally's mother and grandmother had led lives of fear and caution, always attempting to conform to the white colonialist society around them in Perth so that the Inquisition-like government would not declare them to be Aborigines who would be subject to curfew, surveillance, and apartheid-like restrictions. They wish to be whites, to succeed in the society, and for Sally and the other children to go well at school and
university, which indeed they will do, qualifying to become part of the professional middle class (in psychology, medicine, law).

Yet their attempted conformity never quite works, reminding us of the conversos, who even when they disavowed the Jewish religion and sincerely sought to assimilate into Christian society, found they were still discriminated against because of their ancestry and taint of blood, however much they might attempt to conceal their own history. When as a teenager Sally, after a vision of God, becomes a churchgoing Christian (though she dislikes the regimentation of church), and joins a local youth group, she is told by a friend's father, one of the deacons of the church, to stay away from his daughter: 'I don't want her mixing with you', says the deacon with a quiet sinister smile, 'in case she picks up any of your bad habits'. On one occasion at school Sally ingenuously tells one of the girls in her class how ordinary her family is. Her classmate bursts out laughing, happy to confide to Sally that she has 'the most abnormal family' she'd ever come across: 'Don't get me wrong, I like your mother, I really do, but the way you all look at life is weird.'

Gladys shares a converso and marrano interest in masking and personae; 'Mum always worried about what to tell people. It was as if the truth was never adequate, or there was something to hide ... She had been inventing stories and making exaggerated claims since the day she was born.' Gladys's Christianity, seeing Christ as both a frightening figure of death and a deliverer of Bill her suicide husband into paradise, has the idiosyncrasy of marrano religious phenomenology. Nan, brought up as a child in her own people's country, though forced to be a 'house native' separated from the 'camp natives', maintains notions of what she feels are Aboriginal beliefs, in her love of nature and her non-perspectival drawing skills (that Sally learns from her for her own conceptions of art that will scandalize her teachers).

Yet Nan mixes such memory and imagining of traditional knowledge with other kinds of consciousness. Sally observes that Nan is suspicious of any kind of authority, including that of doctors, and that her 'view of the physical world was a deeply personal one'; in particular, her obsession with observing the weather revealed Nan's 'rather pessimistic view of the frequency of natural disasters'. Daily, she checked the sky, the clouds, the wind, and, on particularly still days, the reactions of our animals. Sometimes, she would sit up half the night, checking on the movement of a particular star, or pondering the meaning of a new colour she'd seen in the sky at sunset.

Nan's consciousness here, her fear of storm and earthquake, a fear that terrifies the children when young, is akin to a strand of Jewish messianic consciousness. I'm thinking of Adorno's comment on Benjamin: 'Sadness ... was his nature, as
Jewish awareness of the permanence of danger and catastrophe... 47

It is also akin to the philosemitic radical and romantic millennial culture towards the end of the long eighteenth century that Iain McCalman discusses, in enthusiasts and seekers ranging from Joseph Priestley to William Blake. Appearing dangerously deranged to their conservative opponents, millenarians focussed on apocalyptic biblical prophecies that the end of days would come with the restoring of the Jews to Palestine, though they agreed that the millenium would not arrive without cataclysm and violence. Millenarians would devote much time to studying the world’s phenomena for allegorical hints, equivocal figures, enigmatic signs.48

It’s her grandmother’s fear of history as the nightmare that is always near that Sally fights to overcome, finally insisting the rest of the family, though Nan tries to sabotage the trip, travel north to find their Aboriginal relatives (the Mulbas of the Port Hedland/Marble Bar area of Western Australia). Just how much the family had lived as conversos and assimilados becomes clear when Sally reports that her children were convinced that ‘going north was as adventurous as exploring deepest, darkest Africa’. It is during this journey that Sally makes the annunciatory statements that have so angered her critics, that she instinctively knew her kin, that she and her family had come home, that they now had a sense of place and belonging: ‘We had an Aboriginal consciousness now, and were proud of it.’ They would have survived, ‘but not as whole people’.49

Sally, we might say, is as granddaughter influenced by Daisy’s messianic consciousness, though in an apocalyptic way. Out of disaster—the disaster of her family history, with its forced removal, forced sexuality, forced separation of mother and child (Gladys from Daisy), forced conformity, white relatives who refuse to be kin, incest, suicide, and deception—may come announcements of the new. From such disaster may come rebirth in the journey to the north and knowledge of her Aboriginal genealogy, just as English radical dissenters like Priestley looked for signs of catastrophe followed by hoped-for rebirth in Palestine. In this reading the north of Western Australia is her redemptive Palestine, her New Jerusalem, with which, living in the city far away, she will now have a diasporic relationship.

Sally, I suggest, can be compared to the marranos who—like Spinoza’s parents—managed in the seventeenth century to leave Portugal, coming to a newly liberalised Amsterdam, where they attempted to re judaize, becoming known as New Jews. But it was a process more tortuous than smooth. Some of the returning marranos posed problems for Amsterdam’s Jewish community and leadership, concerned to assist the
marranos recover their torn religion and a stability of faith and identity rooted in daily observance of the ancient customs of Israel.59

Some marranos, however, wished both to rejoin the community yet continue, if with difficulty and anguish, their independent thinking, their individualistic rationalism and skepticism, their own inner journeys, their distinctive consciousness. Such marranos, or child of marranos like Spinoza, were excommunicated by the community. Here is the wording of the herem (ban) on Spinoza, then aged twenty-four:

By the decree of the Angels and the word of the Saints we ban, cut off, curse and anathemize Baruch de Espinoza ... Cursed be he by day and cursed by night, cursed in his lying down and cursed in his waking up, cursed in his going forth and cursed in his coming in ... We warn that none may contact him orally or in writing, nor do him any favour, not stay under the same roof with him, nor read any paper he made or wrote.59

Now think of the excommunicatory harshness of Jackie Huggins' response to My Place, accusing Sally Morgan of cooperating with the enemy and a traitorous individualism, a refusal to observe continuing ancient custom and tradition, acts that will be neither forgotten nor forgiven.

CONCLUSION

I believe such harshness involves a misreading of the textual movement of My Place. Like the marranos in relation to their receding Jewish heritage, Sally at the beginning of the novel knows little to nothing about Aboriginality and Aboriginal people: 'What did it really mean to be Aboriginal? ... I'd lived all my life in suburbia and told everyone I was Indian.' Like the marranos, she distrusts the authority of state institutions. Yet she has what the marranos had, confidence and pride in her own capacity to think independently. Like the marranos, she grows up in a family that, she learns, puzzlingly mixes Christian beliefs and visions with other beliefs and visions that suggest hidden histories. Like the marranos, she knows that pasts are being kept secret because of a fear of racism and state surveillance. Like the marranos, she experiences ruptures of identity, now Indian, now New Aboriginal.59

Launched on her quest, she is moved by finding her lost ancestry, discovering much about the Aboriginal history of her family. It brings her great joy. She makes excited, exaggerated claims. But such excitement and knowledge is not the telos, the consummatory end, of her journey, the acclamation of a rounded essentialized Aboriginal identity. The joy and genealogical knowledge is a vital addition to her identity in process, as process; her identity as a verb not a noun (to adapt Judith Butler). In terms of the novel as a whole Sally develops a complex diasporic sensibility that is not centred on recovering a single totalized ersatz Aboriginality. She continues to belong to more than one place, more than one
chronotope, more than one history, more than one genealogy. The textuality of the novel does precisely what Eric Michaels and its other critics said it should do. It creates Sally's identity as always involving the exploring, probing, negotiating of multiplicity. It creates the autobiographical theatre of observing diverse contradictory elements and fragments of herself. Sally Morgan the author looks with great interest at the 'I' called Sally Morgan—someone who is at once both Same and Other, someone who is Many rather than One, someone who is always between the Many and the One. My Place raises in disturbing ways the difficult, baffling issue of the relationship between notions of biological or genetic inheritance and constructions of cultural identity. In 1990s Australia the relationship has been brought to public notice and controversy by the suggestion that the prominent Aboriginal writer, critic and dramatist Mudrooroo (born Colin Johnson) has no Nyoongah ancestry and kin. According to a newspaper report, Mudrooroo's sister has publicly stated her belief that their grandfather was an American migrant from North Carolina, apparently of African-American descent. The same report quotes Mr Robert Eggington, the co-ordinator of the Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation in Western Australia, expressing his anger at Mudrooroo's long-held claim to Aboriginal identity: 'His deception is an example of the on-going and continued spiritual colonization of our people ... a continuation of genocide'. Mr Eggington felt that any determination of Aboriginality must include analysis of bloodlines as well as acceptance of the person by the elders (whom, he suggests, Mudrooroo was unwilling to face). 'Unless you've got Aboriginal blood, you can't claim to be Aboriginal ... I, as an Aboriginal person, with English blood as well, can't declare myself to be Japanese.'

In his turn Mudrooroo has suggested that his identity had always been textually created by others, a designating by whites and the white government ('I had to go along with that'). He feels that the Nyoongah people who now repudiate his Aboriginality and call on a language of blood are speaking in the violent accents of Western race classifications that culminated in Nazism. In this defence Mudrooroo comes perilously close, I think, to constructing a victimological narrative, claiming the status of a passive victim. Such a claim is all the more odd given that in his past critical writings Mudrooroo has appeared very actively, not least in disdainful comments on Sally Morgan's My Place, to be policing the white/black borders of who was truly authentically Aboriginal, who had the right to speak; the claiming of certain knowledge of essential Aboriginality by which he could judge, evaluate, and condemn degrees of Aboriginality in others. As an act of self-making he also very actively constructed a Nyoongah genealogy of descent and cultural knowledge transmitted matrilineally ('It was from my mother that
I got most of my culture ...'). Mudrooroo’s sister, however, claims that their mother comes from a family of white settlers who arrived in Western Australia from Britain in 1829.

In further destabilizing incidents it has been publicly claimed that the writer Archie Weller, born into a Western Australian pastoralist family, also apparently bases his claim to Aboriginality on a photo suggesting that his paternal great-grandmother may be Aboriginal (his mother Helen Weller has said that she used to think the great-grandmother in the photo was Malaysian). Controversy has also been inspired by the elderly white artist Elizabeth Durack’s creation of an Aboriginal painter, Eddie Burrup, in whose name she has chosen to exhibit.

There is also the very interesting autobiography *An Australian Son* (1996) by Gordon Matthews, an Australian diplomat. As he tells it, Matthews was adopted as a baby, brought up by a white professional family, and educated in middle-class schools in Australia and England. Dark of skin, he was subject to racist abuse when young, and grew up thinking he must be Aboriginal; he was so believed, and became part of the Aboriginal community. In his early thirties, however, he discovered through a genealogical search that his father was Sri Lankan. Matthews no longer feels he can call himself Aboriginal; he wishes actively to acknowledge that his ancestry on his father’s side is Sri Lankan (his mother is white Australian). Torn and tortured, Matthews nevertheless does not retreat into claiming the status of victim. Rather, more in the spirit of Benjamin’s allegorical method, he fragments his relationship to identity in terms of various histories, genealogies, and tense tentative perhaps failing relations with his biological family that he has discovered living in the United States: his identity is now the writing of the narrative.

In this context of revelation and controversy, of identity as performance and adventure, of vigorous claim and counter-claim, of hurt and bewilderment, amidst heated media attention, in a nervous febrile *fin de siècle*, Sally Morgan’s *My Place* remains a flashpoint and a challenge, not only to local Australian arguments concerning the body, ethnicity, and identity, but to the wider unresolved centuries-long post-1492 colonial and post-colonial histories of conversion and assimilation, exile and diaspora.

---

**REFERENCES**

This essay is based on a seminar paper given to the ANU Women Studies series on Race, Place and Identity, 4 September 1997, and to ANU’s NARU, Darwin, 8 September 1997. I would like to acknowledge valuable...
discussions of *My Place* with Radhika Mohanram (who inspired my belated interest in the novel), Rosanne Kennedy, and Fiona Paisley. My thanks to Deborah Bird Rose for her email comments, which I'm still thinking about. I'm grateful to Marsha Rosengarten for the phrase 'neither Jewish nor non-Jewish'.


9 'Aboriginal art and film...', pp.89-93.


6 For another account of this journey to Hungary, see John Docker, 'Rethinking Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism in the fin de siècle', *Cultural Studies* 9 (3), 1995: 419-422.


9 Cf. the video documentary *Dhuway: an Australian diaspora and homecoming* (1996) concerning the forced dispersal of the Yidhuwarra people of Cape York from their homelands, and their desire to return. See also Deborah Bird Rose, 'Rupture and the ethics of care in colonized space', in Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths (eds), *Prehistory to Politics: John Mulvaney, the humanities and the public intellectual* (MUP. Melbourne, 1996), and Ann Curthoys, 'Entangled histories: conflict and ambivalence in non-Aboriginal Australia', in Geoffrey Gray and Christine Winter (eds), *The Resurgence of Racism: Hanson, Howard and the race debate* (Monash Publications in History, Melbourne, 1997), and 'Who were the nomads? Expulsion, exodus, and exile in white Australian historical mythology', in Margaret Jolly and Nicholas Thomas (eds), *Race, Person and Gender Beyond Europe* (Duke University Press) forthcoming.


Michaels, p.168; Muecke, pp.126, 129; Attwood, pp.305-8; Jaireth, pp.70, 75, 77; Rowse, 466; Huggins, p.461.

Michaels, p.169; Muecke, p.126; Attwood, 315, 318; Huggins, 460; Jaireth, pp.70, 77.


Cf. Ella Shohat, 'Taboo Memories and Diasporic Visions: Columbus, Palestine and Arab-Jews', in Jennifer Fink and Mary Joseph (eds), Performing Hybridity (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997).


Sally Morgan, My Place (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1987), pp.23-78.

My Place, pp.83, 97-8, 112, 132.

My Place, pp.31, 33-5, 52, 275, 277, 288.

My Place, pp.285, 295.

My Place, pp.31-2, 44, 135.


My Place, pp.40, 55, 83, 134, 138, 149.

My Place, pp.152-3, 155-56, 327.


My Place, pp.149, 173.

My Place, pp.149, 152, 158-9, 247, 263, 267, 325.


Ivanhoe, chs.XXIV, XXVII, XXX.

My Place, pp.200, 234, 317, 329, 332, 335.


My Place, pp.274, 288-9, 296-7.


My Place, pp.105, 283.

My Place, pp.80, 88, 104, 107, 111, 114, 121, 135, 140, 146, 299-300, 304.


My Place, pp.102-3, 106-7.

My Place, pp.96, 99, 135, 323.

My Place, pp.61-3, 67, 74.


10 *Spinoza and Other Heretics...*, pp.12, 64-5, 67, 71.

11 *Spinoza and Other Heretics...*, pp.3, 6, 42-50, 57-80, 178.

12 *My Place*, pp.100, 102, 112, 134, 139, 259, 296, 336, 341.

13 The following thoughts on Mudrooroo and also on Gordon Matthews owe a great deal to discussions with Gerhard Fischer, and reading of his essay 'Imagined Identity: On Mudrooroo's dilemmas', shortly to be published in Germany (Yearbook of the Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English).

14 *The Weekend Australian* 5-6 April 1997.


16 On the importance of a victimological narrative in white Australian history, see Ann Curthoys, 'Who were the nomads? Expulsion, Exodus, and Exile in white Australian historical mythology'.

17 Cf. Mudrooroo's comment in *Writing from the Fringe*, p.149, that *My Place* is 'an individualised story and the concerns of the Aboriginal community are of secondary importance', and that it is now 'considered O.K. to be Aboriginal as long as you are young, gifted and not very black'.
The image reproduced above depicts a holocaust memorial on Hermann-Ehlers-Platz in Berlin-Steglitz, a suburb of Berlin (formerly, of West Berlin). The so-called Spiegelwand (mirror wall) is inscribed with the names, dates of birth and local addresses of 230 Jewish inhabitants of Steglitz who were deported to ghettos and concentration camps between 1942 and 1945. It is one of numerous memorials which have been built since the early 1980s in the Federal Republic of Germany to commemorate the victims of Nazi Germany. This proliferation of public memories of the Nazi past—given material form in museums and monuments—is specific to Germany, but it is also a symptom of what Andreas Huyssen has called the 'memory boom' of the past two decades. The memory boom has sparked a boom in memorial criticism, that is, in critical readings of tangible manifestations of public memory. I could now adopt the role of the memorial critic and embark on a semiotic reading of the Spiegelwand. You would be able to critique my interpretation on the basis of having an idea of what the memorial looks like. In a sense, what I would then be doing would be the equivalent of interpreting a poem as well as reading it. But wouldn't I be cheating by presenting only this image?

There are many other angles from which I could have depicted the mirror wall. While taking pictures of the memorial, my angle of vision was much wider than that of my camera. By illustrating a semiotic reading of the Spiegelwand with the image reproduced above, I may be pretending that the view encapsulated in it is the view that allowed me (and, by
extension, my readers) to grasp the meaning and significance of the memorial. A wider angle, after all, would include other aspects of Hermann-Ehlers-Platz, which presumably do not belong to the memorial.

In most cases, the person interpreting a poem would only have to read it out to allow her audience to appreciate her interpretation. She may of course contextualize the poem by referring to related works of literature or to the historical circumstances of its creation. Rarely would she mention the typeface of the edition she read. She would not describe the texture of the paper on which the poem is printed, nor the table on which her arms rested while she savoured the poem for the first time. How useful is it to 'read' memorials as if they were texts? Is the difference between what I could see when taking this photo, and what is depicted on the photo, irrelevant to an interpretation of the memorial?

While looking at many different memorials throughout Germany, I became increasingly worried about what usually gets left out in readings of memorials. Although I was initially not able to put my finger on why exactly I was worried, my worry turned into an obsessive longing to document and grasp the seemingly superfluous contexts of memorial texts. I became obsessed with such contexts to the extent that memorials themselves sometimes mattered less to me than their seemingly irrelevant surroundings. My heart beat faster when I felt that these surroundings talked to me, revealed themselves as part of a memorial ensemble.

The city of Hannover also has a holocaust memorial. It displays the names of 1892
local Jewish victims of the Nazis. Earlier this year, I visited the memorial, located in the centre of the city, opposite the opera house. While my attention was focussed on the monument, I registered half a dozen men and women who were sitting on the grass in a small park across the road. Their appearance suggested that they were what most Germans refer to as Penner, people living on the street. While I took pictures of the memorial, a squad car pulled up. Two police officers got out of the car and approached the group. It was only then that I remembered.

The appearance of the squad car jolted a memory which was inscribed on Hannover's holocaust memorial but which may otherwise have remained mute. 'The true image of the past flits by,' Walter Benjamin writes. 'The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.' Elsewhere Benjamin talks of the images produced by such flashes of recognition as 'dialectical images': 'The dialectical image is like lightning. The past must be held like an image flashing in the moment of recognition. A rescue thus—and only thus—achieved, can only be effected on that which, in the next moment, is already irretrievably lost.'

My next example comes from Saarbrücken, capital city of the state of Saarland in southwestern Germany. The Memorial Against Racism, Mahnmal gegen Rassismus, by the artist Jochen Gerz, is also referred to as the 'invisible memorial'. Between 1991 and 1993, Gerz and a group of students from the Saarbrücken College of Fine Arts inscribed 2146 cobble stones taken from the public square in front of the Saarbrücken palace—which had once housed the Nazi secret police, the Gestapo—with the names of Jewish cemeteries in Germany. They then put the stones back with the inscribed side facing down. The square now 'remembers' 2146 sites, but those crossing the open space will neither know which of the 8000 cobble stones used to pave the square have an inscription nor will they be able to read the inscriptions. The project began without the consent of Saarbrücken's city council; Gerz and his students secretly replaced the first few stones at night.
When the proposal for the Memorial Against Racism was made public, a lively debate ensued about whether or not the project should be realized. As in the case of the Steglitz Spiegelwand, the conservative parties represented in Council voted against the project.6

I had sought out Gerz’s memorial, one of Germany’s most prominent ‘counter-monuments’.7 I was interested in the square in front of the palace only because of the inscribed cobble stones; likewise, I was interested in the place in front of the opera house in Hannover only because of the holocaust memorial. The Saarbrücken palace is situated near the river Saar on a small hill which affords a good view of the centre of the city on the other side of the river. One of the landmarks of the city, as it presents itself from the top of that hill, is a tall building with a rotating Mercedes emblem on its roof.

It was this view of the city, with the star of Mercedes slowly turning, which allowed me to recognize what was on the underside of the cobble stones in front of the palace. In a metaphorical sense, the stones’ underside is not necessarily obscured: recognition is not paramount to the discovery of a deeper meaning. To the contrary, the search for deeper meanings often makes us blind to reflections on the surface. The stories I am telling here are phenomenological. In fact, I wish I could lighten the burden they carry by being classed as signifiers, and divest them of their meaningfulness, to make them as smooth and shiny as the mirror wall in Steglitz.

The police car heading for the homeless people in the park may have reminded me that harassment by police is one of the symptoms of ostracisation and exclusion directed against the homeless in German cities. These practices have a long tradition.8 The star of Mercedes may have reminded me of how the Daimler-Benz Company was implicated in the use of slave labour under the Nazi regime.9 There is a fundamental difference, however, between being reminded of something one knows already, and recognizing something, as if in a flash. It isn’t that the past casts its light on the present or the present casts its light on the past; rather, an image is that in which the past and the now flash into a constellation.10

Writing about the memorialization of ‘Auschwitz’, is a way of writing about ‘Auschwitz’. Writing about German memories of the Nazi past is a way of writing about that Nazi past. To approach ‘Auschwitz’ through an investigation of a collective historical consciousness and public memories of ‘Auschwitz’ could be
more than an epistemological makeshift (which would allow the historian to gain a mediated view of a past too horrendous to contemplate directly). To approach the past as it manifests itself in the present could be a way — and at times, the only way — of knowing the past. But there appear to be occasions when the focus on the obvious — monuments, rituals and written texts — obscures rather than illuminates the complex issues of 'Auschwitz' and of its memory. It has seemed to me that when writing about 'Auschwitz', I need to train myself to become sensitive to what is not obvious.

Surely there must be limits to how far my gaze could stray from the actual memorial I want to write about and to how useful a heightened sensibility could be? My fourth example concerns a little-known monument in the town of Celle. Celle's establishment had — and, to some extent, still has — a reputation for finding it difficult and/or unnecessary to dissociate itself from its Nazi past. For a long time, Celle has been a lawyers’ town. It has accommodated one of Germany's courts of appeal (Oberlandesgericht); many of its post-war judges were dispensing 'justice' before 1945.12 Fittingly, Celle's most (in)famous son is Roland Freisler, president of the People's Tribunal, and responsible for the death of many of the Nazi's opponents. The town is also associated with, and proudly claimed, Hermann Löns (1866-1914), a poet who represented perhaps more than anybody else the sentiments of the Nazi Party's reactionary rural constituency in the north of Germany.

At the beginning of April 1945, as part of a frenzied attempt to move all prisoners held in concentration camps away from the approaching Allies, the SS disbanded several satellite camps of Neuengamme and Buchenwald in the south of Lower Saxony.13 The prisoners were made to board cattle trains which were supposed to deliver them to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp some one hundred kilometres further north, not far from Celle. On 8 April the train arrived in Celle and was parked at the freight terminal, where the engine was to be changed. In the afternoon of 8 April, three American bomber squadrons attacked Celle's rail facilities. The train with the prisoners was hit; many of the prisoners died in the raid. The majority of the survivors tried to flee both the scene of destruction and their guards. Members of the SS, police and army then combined to recapture or kill the escapees. The security forces were assisted by members of the public, 'ordinary Germans', to use a term made famous by Daniel Goldhagen's Hitler's Willing Executioners.14 Jointly they engaged in what became known as the 'Celler Hasenjagd', the Celle hare hunt, the hunting down of the survivors of the air raid. The 'Hasenjagd' extended until 10 April. Two days later, British troops met no resistance when they occupied the town. The bombing raid on 8 April resulted in the only casualties Celle's civilian
population suffered during the war, and in the only substantial damage to the town itself.

During the so-called 'Celle massacre trial' in 1947-48, a British military court convicted some of the perpetrators of the atrocities of 8, 9 and 10 April 1945. As far as the overwhelming majority of Celle's citizens was concerned, the events had thus sufficiently been dealt with. They became part of history, albeit a history hidden from public view. Rather than thinking of themselves as victimizers, people in and around Celle remembered April 1945 as a time when they had become victims—targetted first by Allied bombers, and then harassed by former forced labourers and by prisoners liberated at Bergen-Belsen.6

The events of April 1945 were first mentioned again publicly in a book published in 1982, whose authors were highly critical of the apparent longevity of Celle's Nazi past.7 In 1983, the dead of April 1945 were commemorated publicly in a ceremony organized by trade unionists at Celle's main cemetery, where many of the victims of the 'Hasenjagd' were buried. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the bombing raid, in 1985, Celle's daily, Cellesche Zeitung, published a detailed account of the events.8 That same year, Celle residents aligned with the union movement and the left again commemorated the victims of the 'Hasenjagd' in a ceremony at the cemetery.9 Eventually, in 1989, the city council's Standing Committee for Cultural Affairs decided to hold an open competition for a memorial to commemorate the victims of April 1945.20 The memorial was to be located in a park, the so-called Triftanlagen, halfway between the town centre and the railway station.

Of 281 models submitted for this competition, the judges chose that of Johnny Lucius.21 Lucius's memorial consists of a beech tree which is enclosed by a square horizontal frame of steel, set in a square bed of gravel.

The terms of the competition had stipulated that a lengthy prescribed text about the events which occurred between 8 and 10 April 1945 be integrated into the memorial. Lucius used raised letters to write the text on one side of the steel frame. The work 'evidences a great earnestness and a desire for peace,' said Dieter Ronte, director of a museum of modern art in Hannover and chairman of the committee adjudicating the competition in 1990.22 The memorial was
unveiled on 7 April 1992. Celle's mayor, the chief rabbi of Lower Saxony, the local head of the Lutheran Church, and a Polish survivor made speeches. The picture accompanying the newspaper article which reported the ceremony depicts a total of about thirty onlookers.23

In the context of the park, the memorial is rather inconspicuous. Children mistake it for a sandbox. As the steel frame and the bed of gravel are slightly raised, anybody walking on the path closest to the memorial would fail to become aware of the text which is part of it. Of all the models submitted in 1990, Johnny Lucius's was perhaps the least offensive. Only on one other occasion so far, in 1995, has the city of Celle organized a ceremony at the memorial to commemorate the anniversary of the bombing raid and subsequent killings.24 The monument has thus become a memorial to the town's unwillingness to confront the past, as much as to the past itself.

The memorial's nondescript appearance would perhaps not provoke reflections on Celle's relationship to its past if it was not for another monument in the same park, for the dead of World War I. Unlike other designs, which tried to address and challenge the war memorial's presence, Lucius's design appears to be deliberately deferential, as if to respect the seniority of the earlier monument. For me, the war memorial's proximity sparked an act of remembering which—according to those initiating the memorial—Lucius's tree alone was supposed to have elicited.

I do not know what I expected to find when I headed away from the memorial, to Celle's central railway station. In a diffuse way, I was drawn to the tracks and
trains and platforms. I was, however, aware that the train carrying the prisoners had been parked at the freight terminal rather than at the railway station which I now sought out. The past appeared seemingly from nowhere, propelled by a force disguised as the power of the now.

Celle’s claim to fame are its half-timbered houses. They would be less remarkable if it was not for the fact that the historic town centres of most other German towns fell victim to Allied bombing raids. ‘Celle: die romantische Fachwerkstadt’, ‘Celle: romantic town of half-timbered houses’, the sign at the railway station reads.

In Celle’s railway station, billboards warn us against littering. In 1997, Celle presented itself as a clean city. It has supposedly shed the image of a town with lots of skeletons dating from its Nazi past in its closet. The city maintains a small museum in the local synagogue, which survived the Reichskristallnacht pogrom, and is proud of its Jewish heritage—to the extent of granting Jews from Hannover the right to use the synagogue, but not to the extent of inviting Jews from the former Soviet Union to settle in Celle. Instead of continuing to pride itself on its links with Hermann Löns, Celle now honours Arno Schmidt (1914-1979), whose avant-garde writings could not be more antithetical to Löns’s: in 1994, the square in front of the Celle Public Library was named after Schmidt.

I am concerned about contexts which are easily left out of our field of vision when we focus on memorials: homeless people in a park in Hannover, the star of Mercedes on the roof of a tall building in the centre of Saarbrücken, and signs and billboards at Celle’s central railway station. They help me to remember the subject matter of the actual memorials: of the holocaust memorial in front of Hannover’s opera house, of the Memorial Against Racism in front of the Saarbrücken palace, and of the memorial to commemorate the prisoners killed in Celle in April 1945. My approach is perhaps reminiscent of that of Jochen Gerz in his earlier project, EXIT, an exhibition of photographs of various signs he found in the Dachau concentration
camp memorial (‘Please do not write on the walls’, ‘Please do not damage the exhibits’, ‘Not recommended for visitors below the age of 13’, ‘Exit’, etc.).

So far I have talked about spatial digressions from a memorial’s immediate context. Before moving on to a digression which is also temporal, let me say a few words about the relevance of toying with supposedly irrelevant contexts. For the past three years, Germans have debated the question of whether or not Germany should have a national holocaust memorial in Berlin, and if so, what kind of memorial would be appropriate. Opponents of the memorial have pointed out that as long as the federal government is not willing to guarantee sufficient funding for the existing memorials at authentic sites, it would be hypocritical to spend 15 million mark on a new memorial which is situated far from these authentic sites. Authentic sites are sites of persecution such as concentration camps or collection points for deportations to ghettos and camps in Eastern Europe. Memorials are sometimes placed in close relation to them: the Memorial against Racism is situated opposite Saarbrücken’s former Gestapo headquarters. The Spiegelwand in Steglitz was intended to be also a reminder of a former synagogue which since 1992 has been hidden behind a new apartment block facing Hermann-Ehlers-Platz. Neither Celle’s railway station nor the park where the monument to commemorate the victims of the ‘Hasenjagd’ stands, would be considered particularly authentic, although it was argued that the latter is more authentic than other potential sites in Celle. Whether or not a site is authentic can be a hotly contested issue. As the Steglitz example demonstrates, developers tend to have particularly narrow views about which area could be classified as an authentic site.

By establishing seemingly random connections between a memorial and a logo, or between a memorial and a billboard, I am downplaying the importance of the site of the memorial. Flashes of recognition are not predicated on the whiff of authenticity supposedly emanated by a site, although in some cases a site’s aura could trigger such flashes. The past is never already there—neither on Hermann-Ehlers-Platz in Berlin nor in front of the Saarbrücken palace. Potentially, however, the past lurks behind every corner—if, and only if, it is recognized. Potentially, all of Germany is an authentic site.

In my last example, I will briefly recount the history—or what James Young calls the ‘biography’—of a memorial but also tell an incidental history thereby aiming to construct a seemingly irrelevant but parallel past. I am from Hildesheim, a city of about 100,000 inhabitants some 25 kilometres south of Hannover. Hildesheim’s townscape is dominated by its churches, and so is much of its political and social life. Hildesheim has been a Catholic enclave in the protestant North of Germany, although since 1945 with the
city accommodating many refugees, Hildesheim's Catholics have been outnumbered by its Protestants. Growing up in Hildesheim, I learned to associate my home town with its churches. At some stage during my high school years, I found out that Hildesheim also had had a synagogue. I may have learned of its former existence from a memorial stone at Lappenberg, where the synagogue had stood until it was burned down on the night of 9 November 1938. Then, I read the memorial (which is depicted on the cover of this issue of *Humanities Research*) in the light of what I knew about the nation-wide pogrom in November 1938. I did not understand, or even imagine, it in the context of a local German-Jewish history—the church steeples of Hildesheim seemed to be too imposing to allow for anything but a fleeting and marginal Jewish episode in my town. Thus the memorial appeared as a reference to events which had happened elsewhere.  

By the time I returned to Hildesheim to explore the way the Nazi past has been memorialized in Germany, a second monument had been erected at Lappenberg to draw the attention of passers-by to the burning of the synagogue.

Its location and size are more conspicuous than that of the old memorial stone, which I had known as a teenager. The new monument is a cube of red marble, 2 by 2 by 2.3 metres, which sits on a bronze base. A bronze model of the temple of Jerusalem, carried by four lions, rests on top of the cube. Motifs from Jewish history are depicted in bronze or marble bas-relief on the four sides of the cube. One of the
sides depicts scenes related to the persecution of Jews: the imprisonment of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans, the burning of Hildesheim's synagogue on the night of 9 November 1938, the deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto, and the killing of a Jewish mother and her child by a member of the SS. The last three bas-reliefs are based on well-known photographs. The image of the burning synagogue has a smaller inset which shows Hildesheim on fire as a result of an allied bombing raid on 22 March 1945. A low wall marks some of the foundations of the synagogue.

The decision to fund the first memorial was made at a council meeting on 14 March 1947. According to the minutes, 'Council voted unanimously to provide 3600 Mark in the next budget for a memorial stone at the site of the synagogue ... A motion by Alderman Hanne to involve the public by way of a subscription was defeated to one vote.' The monument's inscription reads, in Hebrew, German and English, 'This was the place of the synagogue destroyed by sacrilegious hands the 9th of November 1938.' By neither naming the owners of those hands, nor mentioning the wider context of the 1938 pogrom, the aldermen had chosen a conventional solution. The open space created when the synagogue was burnt down was made into a small park and planted with trees.

Alderman Louis Hanne was a Social Democrat and thus likely to have been an opponent of the Nazi regime. I assume that his proposal was rejected because his colleagues did not think that a public subscription would yield the funds required for the monument. The other aldermen would have been right to be more skeptical about the enthusiasm for such a memorial among Hildesheim's citizens. A newspaper report about the unveiling of the monument on 23 February 1948 notes a 'good turnout of representatives of the churches, political parties and trade unions but the nearly total absence of the population of Hildesheim'.

The synagogue was built in 1849 in the part of Hildesheim referred to as the Neustadt, 'new town'.

Then, most of the houses in this part of Hildesheim dated from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the Neustadt was 'new' in relation to the older town centre. The half-timbered houses in Hildesheim's Neustadt were considered not nearly as attractive as those in the older part of the town, which gave Hildesheim the reputation of being the 'Nuremberg of the North'. The gem among Hildesheim's
secular buildings was the Knochenhaueramtshaus, a seven-storey half-timbered house facing the town square. It had been completed in 1529 and was initially owned and occupied by the butchers guild. In 1884 a fire destroyed the upper storeys of the building. Council did not hesitate to allocate the sizeable sum of 30,000 mark for its restoration. Like most of the 'old' Hildesheim, the Knochenhaueramtshaus, then held to be the most beautiful half-timbered building in Germany, if not in the world, fell victim to the bombing raid seven weeks before the end of World War II (and two weeks before Hildesheim was occupied by the American army). A pile of ash was all that remained of the famous building.

After the war, various groups of citizens lobbied for the reconstruction of the Knochenhaueramtshaus. While the city council was not openly opposed to such a plan, it was obvious that with seventy per cent of Hildesheim in ruins, there were more pressing needs on the council's agenda. Rather than deciding against a reconstruction of the Knochenhaueramtshaus, the majority of aldermen voted in favour of an enlargement of the town square, partly in order to provide additional parking space. This solution, which implicitly prevented the reconstruction of Hildesheim's erstwhile symbol, was also approved by a majority of voters in a referendum in 1953. Ten years after the referendum, a seven-storey hotel was erected where once the Knochenhaueramtshaus had stood.

Eighteen years after the bombing raid, Hildesheim's new town square was finally complete. While most of the old secular buildings in the centre of Hildesheim had gone for good, its main churches—also heavily damaged during the war—had been restored to their former glory. By 1963, samples of bland post-war architecture contrasted sharply with the imposing symbols of the Catholic and Protestant presence.

While demands for the reconstruction of the Knochenhaueramtshaus had been subdued, particularly after the 1953 referendum, they never ceased. In 1970, with the twenty-fifth anniversary of Hildesheim's destruction approaching, a group of fifteen local citizens, most of them journalists, commenced a new campaign for the reconstruction of the building which had once contributed so prominently to Hildesheim's fame. This time both the city's administration and the majority of council were favourably disposed to the idea, which also had considerable popular support. All parties concerned agreed, however, that for obvious reasons the Knochenhaueramtshaus could not be rebuilt on its former site.

Thirteen years later, plans to reconstruct the Knochenhaueramtshaus no longer sounded utopian when Council decided to return the town square to its original size. The vote had been preceded by discussions about the reconstruction of the facade of another historical building.
facing the old town square, the Wedekindhaus. As it became apparent that this project was feasible, not the least because Hildesheim's citizens demonstrated their support by donating more than 600,000 mark for the reconstruction of the facade, the reconstruction of the entire former square suddenly appeared to be an option. The conservative majority of Council voted in favour of funding the reconstruction of the Wedekind facade. One of those speaking in favour of this project was the city treasurer, Hermann Siemer. On 2 March 1983 he was quoted as saying: 'The Wedekind facade has to offer more than if the funds went into social projects. Building the Wedekind facade is in fact a measure of social policy. You have to see these things in economic terms.'

While Hildesheim's old centre was nearly completely wiped out in the Allied bombing raid of 22 March 1945, much of the Neustadt, including the immediate neighbourhood of the synagogue, had been spared. The site of the former synagogue, the so-called Lappenberginsel, was a small park of triangular shape flanked by two narrow streets with small half-timbered houses on two sides and a large red-brick building from the late nineteenth century at the third. In the first twenty-five years after the war, little attention was paid to the old houses, which date from the sixteenth century. Many of them were run down and lacked basic sanitation. They were often inhabited by poor and old people. At one stage it looked like some of these houses would be pulled down in order to widen the existing streets and provide room for new houses. But from the 1970s, the Neustadt was slowly gentrified. Public opinion demanded to save what was left of the old Hildesheim. Council was under some pressure to redevelop the Lappendorn neighbourhood while at the same time preserving the buildings dating from Hildesheim's early modern past. In the 1970s, however, neither the foundations of the synagogue nor the memorial featured in public debates about what to do with the Lappendorn.

Only since 1978 have ceremonies at the site of the former synagogue marked the anniversaries of the pogrom of 9 November 1938. The 1983 commemoration was attended by the mayor of Hildesheim, the deputy town clerk, and a group of students. A few months later, the idea to commission a larger memorial was born. The old memorial was now considered too small. The chairman of the council's Standing Committee for Town Planning and Construction described it as 'a pathetic and pitiful stone' ('ein mickriger und jämmerlicher Stein'). And, as early as 1984, some local politicians were apparently concerned about the need adequately to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the pogrom.

Funding for the new memorial was provided by a trust belonging to the city of Hildesheim, the Weinhagen Foundation.
The board of directors and board of trustees of the Foundation were largely identical with Hildesheim’s most senior public servants and key members of the city council. The town clerk and the city treasurer were ex-officio managing directors of the trust. Treasurer Hermann Siemer, then a man in his early forties, who had studied philosophy and theology before embarking on a career as a public servant, became the driving force behind the new monument.

The Foundation’s board of trustees decided very early on that they wanted a representative and conspicuous monument which could be easily ‘read’ by passers-by. They approached several artists who had worked in Hildesheim on previous occasions. Of the four designs submitted to the Foundation, the board of trustees chose that of Elmar Hillebrand, an artist and professor at the College of Arts in Cologne, who proposed a cube with motifs from Biblical History. Hillebrand then agreed to involve the three artists whose designs had been rejected. The four of them drew lots and each designed one side of the cube, with Hillebrand also providing the overall design and the model of Jerusalem at the top. Each side of the cube has a theme: the Jews as the Chosen People; Jewish Law; Jewish cult; and persecution. A series of motifs represents each theme. To accommodate several different motifs as well as texts, a star of David divides each side into thirteen segments.

The memorial cube alone cost 700,000 mark; the total costs of the memorial amounted to 1.1 million mark. According to Hermann Siemer, the memorial was funded by the Weinhagen Foundation rather than directly through the city’s budget because it could have proven difficult to elicit the support of the majority of Council for the project. Hildesheim’s politicians were not enthusiastically in favour of a new memorial, Siemer explained to me, but neither were they openly against the proposal because people do not like to say things that can be interpreted as antisemitic. Now if you propose to build a Jewish memorial [Judendenkmal], then the local politician won’t say, ‘I’m against it’. Because then he would be shown in a bad light. Therefore he needs to oppose [the project] cautiously.

While the city’s politicians were not openly against a new memorial as such, its erection was by no means uncontroversial. Before the space where the synagogue had once stood was redesigned, the city commissioned an engineer to excavate the foundations of the synagogue. After reviewing the results of the excavation, the Chief Curator of Monuments in Lower Saxony asked: ‘Why should there be a memorial here—after all the whole area is already a memorial?’

As in many similar cases in the Federal Republic of Germany, the initiative to commemorate the victims of Nazi Germany was taken by the descendants of
the victimisers rather than by survivors or the relatives of victims. While the (non-Jewish) artists sought the advice of a Jewish scholar, Pinchas Lapide, who has written several books which argue for an acknowledgment of Christianity's Jewish heritage, 'there was no Jew among those who designed or realized the monument, nor among those who had the idea to build the monument', Hermann Siemer admitted.

There weren't any Jewish participants, not even indirectly. My efforts to get the Jews in Germany interested, more or less failed. I rang the chairman of the Central Council [of Jews]...but I could not deduce any real interest from this conversation. This is something I regretted because it dampens your spirits a bit. You think, if there was any interest at all, then those who suffered [under Nazi rule], or whose parents or brothers and sisters suffered, they would support [such a project].

Apparently, today's non-Jewish Germans need the Jewish victims and survivors of Nazi Germany to legitimate their peculiar ways of atoning for the crimes committed or condoned by their parents and grandparents.

Those responsible for commissioning the memorial made an effort to obtain a public consensus among Hildesheim's citizens before the artists embarked on the actual construction of the monument. A life-size model of the memorial was exhibited at the designated site in March 1987, partly to alleviate fears about the memorial's size.

The comparatively modest public dissent regarding the memorial, which had been most pronounced when the foundations of the synagogue were excavated in November 1987, dissipated in the couple of months preceding the unveiling of the monument. Yet the authorities remained wary of opponents of the project. Once completed the cube was encased in a large wooden box for fear that right-wing extremists would damage it before its official unveiling. As with similar memorials in other German cities, the discussion about the form of the memorial had been influenced by anticipations of its defacement. (From the perspective of anxious politicians and administrators, Gerz's Mahnmal gegen Rassismus should be the perfect memorial, its defilement seemingly impossible.)

The memorial was officially handed over to the city of Hildesheim and its citizens in a ceremony on 9 November 1988. There were speeches by the mayor, by Hermann Siemer (representing the Weinhagen Foundation), by two Jewish survivors who were then living in the United States, by a non-Jewish writer who described his witnessing the pogrom in two other German cities, and by a representative of the Ecumenical Judaeo-Christian Association, a group of Hildesheim Christians who have been particularly interested in the Jewish origins of Christianity.

Whereas the controversies about whether or not this particular memorial should be built, had either not been carried out in
public, or had been rather subdued, the ceremony on 9 November 1988 was followed by a heated and very public debate. This was due to a passage in Siemer's speech:

_Auschwitz begins or can begin everywhere, where children are mistreated or just neglected. Auschwitz begins in those laboratories, where experiments are made with human embryos, allegedly in the name of progress. And Auschwitz also begins here, may God have mercy on us, where we have come to an agreement that no human being has the unconditional right to birth and life. Auschwitz didn't first begin with Auschwitz and Auschwitz need not end there. Auschwitz begins in our hearts._

Siemer had made an unmistakable reference to the West German abortion laws, which permit abortions up to the third month of pregnancy under certain, closely defined conditions. The debate about these laws, which had been liberalized in the 1970s, has divided Germans for decades. Conservative politicians, who have been backed by the Catholic Church, had opposed any liberalization of the old, more restrictive, laws and have indeed demanded that abortion should again be made illegal, whereas feminists have denied Parliament's right to legislate women's bodies.

The efforts of Hildesheim's citizens to commemorate Jewish victims cannot be seen in isolation from the post-war history of Jews in Hildesheim. In fact the peculiarly Christian appearance of the memorial and of the commemorative ceremonies conducted at the site until recently were only possible because of the successful eradication of a Jewish presence in Hildesheim more than fifty years ago. After the war, some Jewish survivors returned to Hildesheim. But the number of Jewish citizens steadily declined. In 1957 there were still seventy Jewish families in the district of Hildesheim, and nine in the town itself; by 1988, probably only one Jew was living in Hildesheim. Now there is again a sizeable Jewish community in Hildesheim, comprised mainly of Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine and other countries which emerged from the Soviet Union.

Peter Hirschfeld is the chairman of the Jewish congregation which was founded in February 1997 in Hildesheim. I interviewed him the day after the 1997 Yom Hashoah commemoration at Lappenberg which once again had been organized by the Ecumenical Judaeo-Christian Association:

_I think it is appropriate to keep alive [the memory] of what has happened ... If the Jews are not in a position to organize that themselves, then it's O.K. for the city or the churches to take over this task ... Now that a [Jewish] congregation has been set up, we have to approach this in a fundamentally different way ... For example, there are lists of the Hildesheim Jews who perished in the concentration camps.[59] So we might say: 'O.K., dear Church, please write placards with..."_
the victims’ names, and carry them through town. And then we meet on that day [that is, Yom Hashoah] with these placards at the memorial. So the Church is given an assignment, to demonstrate in a tangible way: ‘we are standing here on behalf of those who were murdered.’ Or we could put the leaders of the city or the church in prisoners’ clothing and let them say: ‘We are standing here on behalf of the Jews whom we murdered.’

The 1998 Yom Hashoah and Reichskristallnacht commemorations will probably be organized by Hildesheim’s Jews rather than by the Christians from the Association. Should non-Jewish Germans insist on commemorating the pogrom in Hildesheim, then they could perhaps recall the names and deeds of local perpetrators and bystanders, rather than those of their victims.

The erection of the new memorial in 1988 became an integral part of the redevelopment of the Lappenberg. The old houses were renovated. The red brick buildings were demolished and replaced by a row of two-storey houses which fit into the sixteenth-century streetscape. Plans for a widening of the existing streets were shelved; in fact, the Lappenberg became a cul-de-sac. In the 1990s, however, the Lappenberg and other parts of the Neustadt are no longer considered the most obvious showcases of the old Hildesheim. In 1984, the city of Hildesheim reacquired the block of land formerly occupied by the Knochenhaueramtshaus. Three years later, the hotel built in 1963 was demolished, and the foundations were laid for the new Knochenhaueramtshaus. In 1989, a restaurant opened its doors in the new building. On 22 March 1990, the citizens of Hildesheim celebrated rather than mourned as they had done on the previous forty-four anniversaries of the bombing raid which had destroyed the Knochenhaueramtshaus. The day was chosen to open the new local history museum in the reconstructed Knochenhaueramtshaus. Forty per cent of the total cost of this and of the building next door, the former offices of the bakers guild, were raised by Hildesheim’s citizens and businesses.

At the end of the 1980s, Hildesheim had finally recovered from the effects of war and Nazi rule—or so many of its political
leaders suggested. The redevelopment of the market square and of the Lappendberg were projects which had the support of Hildesheim's citizens. Unlike in 1948, many of them attended the unveiling of the memorial at Lappendberg in 1988. Hildesheim's citizens are proud to have undone the symbolically most important damage inflicted in the bombing raid of 22 March 1945 by rebuilding the Knochenhauermartshaus. And, I believe, they are also proud to have mastered (bewältigt) the Jewish aspects of Hildesheim's past.

In retrospect it seems as if the people of Hildesheim needed to make a conclusive statement about the holocaust before they could address the issue of the town's destruction by Allied bombers. Six years after the erection of the new memorial at Lappendberg, a memorial plaque dedicated to the 'victims of war and terror' was unveiled in the market square. It commemorates the raid of 22 March 1945 and 'is meant to express the joy of the people of Hildesheim about the reconstruction of the historic market square'. The first memorial in Hildesheim explicitly to commemorate the victims of the Allied bombing raid of March 1945, however, was the monument at Lappendberg: the burning city—by then long judenrein—is depicted on the side of the cube dedicated to the theme of persecution.

In lieu of a conclusion I shall return once more to the Spiegelwand in Steglitz. The image at the beginning of this essay, I suggested, is a cropped image of what I could see when standing in front of the memorial. I did not yet refer to its irrelevant context (which could be glimpsed but was not emphasized in my first image). Before doing so, I will retrace some of my steps. A memorial can, to use Robert Musil's words, '[cause] the glance to roll off, like water droplets off an oilcloth, without even pausing for a moment'. A textual reading of memorials, I am arguing, does not get us very far. The memorial as such does not remember; the person standing in front of it may, or may not, do so.

My current project, of which this essay is but a small part, has two aims: first, to grasp and portray the extent and nature of social and public memories of the Nazi past in Germany, and second, to remember that past by writing about memories of it. In order to achieve the first aim I have done interviews and listened to public discourse to the limited extent to which that has been possible for someone living in Australia. As this essay may have demonstrated, the first aim and the second aim cannot always be easily reconciled. I am not as disinterested a reporter as would be desirable if I was intent on pursuing the first goal only. In my writing I conceal and disclose information in order to surprise and disturb and provoke my audience. There are many other stories that could be told about Celle and Hildesheim.
I contend that the parallel histories of the restoration of Hildesheim's historic market square and of the erection of a holocaust memorial, are linked. More importantly, my telling of a history incidental to the history of the new Lappenberg memorial was to divert my readers' attention from the image of the marble cube. It was to enable them to draw connections, and to allow me to ask: what do you remember? In asking this question, I am counting on your, my readers', associative imagination. I have been explicit about links I see between the two histories. Conceiving of my role as that of a facilitator rather than a mere provider of knowledge, I have also constructed juxtapositions to provoke you to make links beyond my immediate control.

The achievement of the second aim of my project, the remembering, and eliciting of memories, is dependent on my own flashes of recognition, which I try to translate into stories that are intended to engage my audience. It may not be possible to spell out the dialectical images produced by these flashes other than by offering juxtapositions which are inspired by them. It may not be necessary for my purposes that I spell out or conjure what I sense to be dialectical images. My project is nevertheless reflexive. My writing needs to shuttle back and forth between the 'I', my audience, and the people I am writing about. In doing so, it attempts to negotiate and respect incommensurabilities and thrive on differences and similarities. In its reflexivity, this second aim is necessarily autobiographical. I have been interested in the moral dimensions of writing about the colonial past in the South Pacific and of writing about the Nazi past in Germany. Thus I have been searching for an ethics of writing history.

As Zygmunt Bauman has argued so eloquently, for such an ethics to be convincing, it can only be formulated in the first person singular. By leaving the safety of the didactic 'we', the 'I' can engage a 'you', by teasing and prodding, introducing decoys and offering allusions. This is admittedly a tenuous position. Readers may after all choose to decline, or fail to read, the author's invitation. To use one of the examples I introduced earlier: they may stroll towards the Saarbrücken palace without paying any attention to what is inscribed on the underside of the cobble stones which were used to pave the square. And what if they did follow the invitation? What I find so fascinating about the Steglitz mirror wall is that while I can hardly look at it without also looking at myself, I can't look at the mirror without also looking at something else. This 'something else' is not necessarily the text inscribed on the mirror but could be something behind me. It is as if I was inserting my self-image into a picture that was there before I arrived (as if the mirror had absorbed its surroundings).

This 'something else' could disturb any attempt to use the mirror to recognize yourself, and your self only. My last image is not only to draw attention to the self-
reflexive side of my project, to the blurring of boundaries between spectrum and spectator, but to make it just a little more difficult for you, to assume the position you may have presumed was allotted to you in this essay. 

NOTES:

This essay is part of a larger project which will result in a book about the German memorialization of the Nazi past. I would like to thank the many people in Celle and Hildesheim who talked to me about their or their community's remembering of the Nazi past. The photograph of Hildesheim's synagogue is reproduced courtesy of Stadtarchiv Hildesheim (Best. 952 Nr. 154-1-1). All other photographs are my own. Audiences at the Australian National University, University of Technology Sydney and University of California Berkeley, and two anonymous reviewers responded to earlier versions of this essay with helpful suggestions. So did Paul Magee, whose comments I gratefully acknowledge.

1 Its history has been documented in Horst Seferens, *Ein deutscher Denkmalstreit: Die Kontroverse um die Spiegelwand in Berlin-Steglitz* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1995); the memorial is by the artists Wolfgang Göschel, Joachim v. Rosenberg and Hans-Norbert Burkert, and was erected in 1995. See also Richard Chaim Schneider, *Fetisch Holocaust: Die Judenvernichtung—verdrängt und vermarktet* (München: Kindler, 1997), 132-138.


3 For the Hannover memorial, see Peter Schulze, *Namen und Schicksale der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus aus Hannover*.
(Hannover: Verein zur Förderung des Wissens über jüdische Geschichte und Kultur e.V., 1995).


6 For the Memorial Against Racism, see Jochen Gerz, *2146 Steine• Mahnmal gegen Rassismus Saarbriicken* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1993).


8 For such practices under the Nazi regime, see, for example, Wolfgang AyaB, 'Vom "Pik As" ins "Kola Fu": Die Verfolgung der Bettler und Obdachlosen durch die Hamburger Sozialverwaltung' in *Verachtet—verfolgt—vernichtet: Zu den vergessenen Opfern des NS-Regimes*, edited by Projektgruppe für die vergessenen Opfer des NS-Regimes in Hamburg e.V., 2nd revised edition (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 1988), 152-171.


10 Benjamin, 'N', 7.


"For the following see, Mijndert Bertram, *April 1945: Der Luftangriff auf Celle und das Schicksal der KZ-Häftlinge aus Dritte* (Celle: Stadt Celle, Stadtarchiv, 1989).


17 Georg Eyring, 'In Wehr und Waffen: Celle und sein Militär' in Hinter den Fassaden: Geschichten aus einer deutschen Stadt, edited by Werner Holtfort, Norbert Kandel, Wilfried Köppen and Ulrich Vultejus (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 1982), 42. The reference to the events in April 1945 in Eyring's article was supplied by local artist and radical amateur historian, R. W. L. E. Möller.


21 'Große Ernsthaftigkeit erwächst einer sehr einfachen Form', Cellesche Zeitung, 19 December 1990; 'Damit die Unmenschlichkeit nie wieder vergessen wird', Celler Kurier, 24 February 1991. All 281 models were documented; the relevant files in Celle's municipal archives are a wonderful source for the artistic engagement with the Nazi past in the Federal Republic just prior to Reunification.


23 'Der wachsende Baum—die Hoffnung auf ein weiteres Leben', Cellesche Zeitung, 8 April 1992.

24 'Tätern nicht den Triumph über Opfer lassen': Vor Krieg als Mittel zur Konfliktlösung gewarnt', Cellesche Zeitung, 10 April 1995.


27 The Triftanlage was the place closest to the town centre where prisoners were sighted on 8 April; the Nazi party's local headquarters were in a street adjoining the park (Standort Trift', Cellesche Zeitung, 2 May 1989). Initially the memorial was to have been located at Celle's freight terminal, as close as possible to where the train was hit (Gedenktafel als mahnende Erinnerung', Cellesche Zeitung, 31 August 1988). Aleida Assmann distinguishes traumatic sites from other memorial sites—this strikes me as a far more useful category than that of authentic sites ('Erinnerungsorte und Gedächtnislandschaften' in Erlebnis—


I was not the only one who couldn't imagine Jewish life in Hildesheim: of forty-six guide books of Hildesheim that were published between 1949 and 1992, nearly half mention the burning down of the synagogue in 1938, but only two refer to aspects of Jewish life in Hildesheim other than those immediately related to the 1938 pogrom; see Barbara Thimm, *Spuren des Nationalsozialismus in Hildesheim: Ein Städtführer als Beitrag zur politischen Bildung, Diplomarbeit, Studiengang Kulturpädagogik, Universität Hildesheim* (1993), 11.

Council minutes, session of 14 March 1947, Stadtarchiv Hildesheim, Best. 103 Nr. 1.


For the campaign to reconstruct the Knochenhaueramtshaus, see Gerd Rump, 'Ein immerhin merkwürdiges Haus': Eine Dokumentation zum 25jährigen Bestehen der Gesellschaft für den Wiederaufbau des Knochenhauer-Amtshauses (Hildesheim: Verlag Gebruder Gerstenberg, 1995).

Hermann Siemer quoted in Rump, 'Ein immerhin merkwürdiges Haus', 145.

See, for example, H. Faltz, 'Strukturpflege am Lappenberg', *Hildesheimer Heimatkalender* (1973), 58-65.


This foundation, a brainchild of City Treasurer, Hermann Siemer, was the result of the amalgamation of numerous small foundations, some dating back to the Middle Ages, in 1979. See Hermann Siemer, 'Die Friedrich Weinlagen Stiftung' in *Stiftungen aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, edited by Rolf Hauer, Jürgen Rossberg and Winfried Frhr. v. Pölitz-Egloffstein (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1982), 405-412.


Taped interview with Hermann Siemer, Hildesheim, 29 August 1996. Another member of the Weinlagen Foundation's board of trustees, former deputy mayor Lore Auerbach of the Social Democratic Party, confirmed that there was much subtle opposition to the memorial (taped interview with Lore Auerbach, Hildesheim, 15 June 1997).


Taped interview with Hermann Siemer, Hildesheim, 29 August 1996. In fact, the Department of Town Planning asked an outspoken member of Hannover's Jewish community to comment on the proposed memorial. His comments emphasized the importance of the former synagogue for the memorial ensemble. Although they were generally positive, they could not be read as a ringing endorsement of the proposal (Aram Tuvia, Die Bewertung des Planes für die Errichtung eines Denkmals am Lappenberg in Hildesheim, unpublished report [December 1987], Stadtplanungsamt Hildesheim).


In a survey of Holocaust memorials, Hubertus Adam notes approvingly that Gerz's memorial is schändungsresistent—it repels any attempt to defile it ('Bestimmtheit, Unbestimmtheit, Unsichtbarkeit: Wirkungen und Wirkungsbedingungen neuester NS-Mahnmäler' in Denkmäler: Ein Reader für Unterricht und Studium, edited by Eberhard Grillparzer, Günter Ludig and Peter Schubert [Hannover: Verlag Bund Deutscher Kunsterzieher, 1994], 36).

For the text of the speeches and prayers, see Hermann Siemer, Hoffnung voll Unsterblichkeit: Das Mahnmal für die Synagoge am Lappenberge in Hildesheim: Entstehung, Gestaltung, Deutung (Hildesheim: Bernward-Verlag, 1989).

Siemer, Hoffnung voll Unsterblichkeit, 93; for the debate which followed Siemer's speech, see, for example, "Typische konservative Fehlleistung?", Hildesheimer Allgemeine Zeitung, 15 November 1988.

Hildesheimer Allgemeine Zeitung, 29 July 1957.


Taped interview with Peter Hirschfeld, Bockenem, 5 May 1997.

See 'Klinkerbauten sollen kleineren Häusern weichen', Hildesheimer Allgemeine Zeitung, 10 February 1986.


Notes about memorials in Hildesheim, provided by Kulturamt der Stadt Hildesheim, n.d. [1996].


See, for example, Klaus Neumann, 'Remembering victims and perpetrators', UTS Review (forthcoming, 1998).