

CATAclysmic REDEMPTION IN  
ANNE MICHAELS' *FUGITIVE PIECES*

A BACKWARD GLANCE:  
CATAclySMIC REDEMPTION IN  
ANNE MICHAELS' *FUGITIVE PIECES*

By

GERALDINE D. OSHMAN, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

Copyright by Geraldine Oshman, August 2002

MASTER OF ARTS (2002)McMaster University

Hamilton, Ontario

**TITLE:** A Backward Glance: Cataclysmic Redemption in Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*

**(English)**

**AUTHOR:** Geraldine D. Oshman, B.A. (Towson University)

**SUPERVISOR:** Dr. Roger L. Hyman

**NUMBER OF PAGES:** vi, 104

## Abstract

Five decades after the event, portraying the Holocaust continues to be a precarious and controversial endeavor. The overall posture of Holocaust representation has been to underline the nonsensical and destructive nature of the event as it extends into the post-Holocaust generation's collective memory. While traditional representations of Jewish catastrophe have relied on ancient Biblical and non-biblical archetypes, originating with Adam's fall from God's grace and mankind's eventual restitution from his fall to be delivered in messianic time, Holocaust narratives have in general not carried a message of redemption, nor have they offered any closure to the event.

Not only does Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* render a transformative narrative, but the closure in Part I of the novel reaches a level of redemption. This work addresses the problems with the restorative nature of the novel through untangling the dense metaphors, the plot structure and characterization, and by drawing on survivor accounts, psychoanalysis, historiography and literary criticism. I look closely at how Jakob recovers his past, reaches redemption, and how he ultimately comes through the trauma of the Holocaust while remaining on the edges of the event. Likewise, I discuss how the tenuousness of Ben's potential recovery from the transmitted past of his parents deconstructs the restorative closure offered in Jakob's story. That the novel is structured into two parts is significant to my reading; this work shows how the first part of the novel with its rich, lyrical discourse and fulfilling outcome is complicated by the second part which is notably less poetic and does not culminate in explicit restoration. This thesis demonstrates how the novel's parts complement each other, structurally forming a unified story that ultimately offers no real closure. I suggest a possible solution to the problem of redemption in *Fugitive Pieces* by reading Jakob's story as a myth based on the traditional Judaic archetypal restitution and Ben's story as an interpretation of the actual experience of the post-Holocaust generation.

## Acknowledgements

Mostly for Saulius, whose faith in me could only be surpassed by his love.

For Lois Devereux Oshman, 22 July 1926-14 July 2001

Joseph Martin Oshman, 15 September 1963-16 December 2000

and

Bronė Valkūnienė, 10 March 1910-14 November 1999

*In Memoriam*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter One: The Efficacy of Redemptive Language 10

Chapter Two: Responsibility to the Other 40

Chapter Three: The Recover-ability of Memory and the Past 61

Conclusion 91

Bibliography 100

## List of Abbreviations

- Des Pres, Terence. “Holocaust Laughter?”— “HL”  
The Survivor — *S*
- Friedländer, Saul. Probing the Limits of Representation — *PLR*  
“Trauma, Memory, and Transference” — “TMT”
- Langer, Lawrence L. Admitting the Holocaust — *AH*  
The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination — *HLI*  
Holocaust Testimonies — *HT*
- Levinas, Emmanuel. Ethics and Infinity — *EI*  
God, Death, and Time — *GDT*
- Rose, Gillian. Love’s Work — *LW*  
Mourning Becomes the Law — *MBL*
- Roskies, David. “The Library of Jewish Catastrophe” — “LJC”  
The Literature of Destruction — *ID*
- Scholem, Gershom. Kabbalah — *K*  
On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism — *OKS*
- Steiner, George. Language and Silence — *LS*  
“The Long Life of Metaphor: An Approach to the ‘Shoah’” — “LLM”

## Introduction

Recording the Jewish experience has long been a history of recording violence. Beginning with the First Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 587 BCE., then the Second in 70 C.E., one cycle of violence gave way to another. Among them was the Moors' expulsion of the Jews from Spain in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Tsarist Russia's 19<sup>th</sup>-century pogroms and the countless pogroms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. Then came the First World War, and the most devastating catastrophe in recent memory, the Holocaust. As David Roskies points out, "The immediate problem facing the survivors of these catastrophes [of the 20<sup>th</sup> century] was not how to mourn but simply how to preserve a record of the unfolding disaster. For it was now possible for the modern nation state to wipe out entire populations and hide the fact" ("LJC" 33). And the fact of possible concealment has been coupled with an anxiety and urgency to record events.

Roskies explains that traditionally there has been an approach to recording catastrophes, writing what he calls "the literature of destruction," by presenting the event in terms of the ancient archetypes of previous catastrophes. "Thus, the modern library of Jewish Catastrophe both grew out of Jewish collective memory and fed back into it" (35). Throughout the centuries and throughout numerous exiles, the Jewish response to catastrophe has been governed by the Hebrew Bible and the covenantal scheme,



sanctioned rituals for mourning, and ancient archetypes, biblical and post-biblical. The Jewish literature of destruction was a three-way dialogue engaging the writer, the Jewish people and the God of Israel, with the basis of this dialogue being the covenantal idea of sin-retribution and sin-restoration (Roskies *LD* 4).

With modernity, the use of archetypes endured but without the traditional faith in the old covenantal scheme. Nonetheless, such responses, rooted in a paradigm linked to Judaism's archetypal catastrophe — the Fall of Adam — still carry the seed of messianic redemption. Understanding catastrophe by infusing it with a redemptive quality or potential has existed on a sort of literary continuum up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Roskies shows that as late as World War I, Jewish literature of destruction was still relying on an archetypal framework for recording the events of catastrophe. However, there was a fundamental change in the Jewish archive of destruction: no longer did Jewish writers compose dirge-like, poetic songs after the fact. The literature of destruction would draw on eyewitness accounts, and “would render the concrete and sensual particulars of modern violence,” essentially *literalizing* literature (“LJC” 35). When the Germans reinstated ghettos, far too familiar to Jews from medieval times, the approach to recording catastrophe began to rely on tools of the social sciences. A modern Jewish archive was developed in ghettos, the most notable being from the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos. Emmanuel Ringelblum, founder of the Warsaw ghetto archive, described the “new” approach to recording catastrophe: “Every redundant word, every literary gilding or ornamentation grated upon our ears and provoked our anger. Jewish life in wartime is so

full of tragedy that it is unnecessary to embellish it with one superfluous line” (quoted in Roskies “LJC” 37-38). Yet, for all its stubborn attention to historical positivism and for all its desire to leave nothing out, the archive named *Oneg Shabbes*,<sup>1</sup> had become in archivist Chaim Kaplan’s words “a sacred task analogous to the building of the Tabernacle” (Roskies “LJC” 38). The archives continued to document events in the ghetto until the Great Deportation in the summer of 1942 when 275,000 Jews were shipped off to Treblinka in cattle cars.

David Roskies and Saul Friedländer have very different views on the response to the Holocaust. Friedländer insists that with the advent of the Final Solution, the response to catastrophe incorporating the redemptive messianic age became less convincing when writers confronted the Shoah both during the war and after it. However, Roskies makes reference to examples of secular Jews employing the traditional response of a redemptive stance to the events of the Shoah. He writes, “The eyewitness chroniclers of modern Jewish catastrophe . . . [d]espite their loss, or lack of faith in a God of History, . . . revived the archetypal reading of that history” (“LJC” 40).

This dichotomy of the literature of destruction, or to use Lawrence Langer’s phrase, “literature of atrocity”, is clearly discernable in survivor accounts, from Elie Weisel’s expression of utter despair to Viktor Frankl’s assertion that the camps held an existential meaning and purpose. As well, this dichotomy has established itself in a genre

---

<sup>1</sup> *Oneg Shabbes* means “Enjoyment of the Sabbath.” The Warsaw ghetto archive acquired this clandestine nickname during the first month of the German invasion.

of literature — “Holocaust literature” — exacerbating the problems associated with the dichotomy and the limits representation. These limits stem from the effect the events have had not only on the victims of the Holocaust, but on the whole of society. Whether one views the Shoah as a unique event or one of a series of atrocities in Jewish history, whether one perceives the event as specifically Jewish or as affecting all of mankind, the phenomenon has had its effect on historians, sociologists, theologians, scholars, students — people from virtually all corners of the globe. The “rupture” so often referred to can be seen as historical, ethical, cultural and linguistic. And so Maurice Blanchot begins *The Writing of the Disaster*, “The disaster ruins everything” (1). The response to “the disaster” has come under scrutiny, particularly since Theodor Adorno’s frequently quoted phrase, to “write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (34). When he posited this dictum, he raised the question of how one can speak about the unspeakable experience of the Holocaust. But not only does the directive for silence fit in dangerously with revisionist claims, it has been impossible to keep, even by those advocating it, writers like Adorno and George Steiner. The “new language” Langer has called for has remained obscure. No wonder the debates over the limits of representation continue. But how can these limits be defined? Saul Friedländer in his introduction to *Probing the Limits of Representation* describes an almost intuitive quality which sets such guidelines:

It may be that we feel the obligation of keeping the record [of the Holocaust] through some sort of “master narrative,” without actually being able to define its necessary components. The reason for the sense of obligation is clear, but the

difficulty in establishing the elements of such a master narrative (except on the simplest factual level) may stem from the impression that this event, perceived in its totality, may signify more than the sum of its components. Our problem thus appears to center on intangible but nonetheless perceived boundaries. The dilemma we are identifying is *not* one of gross transgression (the denial of the Holocaust, for instance). The intractable criterion seems to be a kind of uneasiness. The problem is neither narrowly scientific nor blatantly ideological: one cannot define exactly what is wrong with a certain representation of the events, but . . . one senses when some interpretation or representation is wrong (PLR 3-4).

Undoubtedly, I too fall into this category of “sensing” that something is wrong, because my reaction to much of Anne Michaels’ celebrated 1996 novel *Fugitive Pieces* has been one of uneasiness. However, I intend this thesis to offer an explanation of how the novel transgresses these obscure limits by reading the text closely and by introducing such diverse materials as psychoanalytical essays, works of philosophy, survivor accounts and literary criticism. I will show notwithstanding the notable representations of trauma, mourning, and ethics, *Fugitive Pieces* wavers on its most critical attempt at representation, the Holocaust.

*Fugitive Pieces* is first and foremost a novel of survival, but a survival of a very specific kind based on redemption. The principle of redemption runs through the novel and is a present theme in all three chapters of this thesis. In Chapter One, I discuss the



representation of the Holocaust in *Fugitive Pieces* and the problems that arise when attempting to narrate atrocity. I juxtapose Jakob's "testimony" with that of Holocaust survivors in an attempt to elucidate Friedländer's "intractable criterion." Jakob's survival is complicated by the fact of his belatedness, by his absence: he tells us, "I did not witness the most important events of my life" (17). Jakob, as a first-hand survivor of the disaster, must bear witness for "all who have no one to recall their names" (75), but as a witness who has not literally witnessed, he must construct the past and "blaspheme by imagining" (167). Furthermore, Jakob's archetypal role as golem, "the unredeemed, unformed man; the Jewish people" (Scholem *K* 354), situates him in the additionally precarious position of representing all Jews and carrying the weight of the traumatic Jewish past. Michaels alludes to various stages in the long history of Jewish exile: Egypt, Spain, Eastern Europe, North America. Finally, in her representation of the ultimate persecution of the Jews during the Third Reich, Michaels establishes Jakob as victim, and survivor. A lifetime of grief is reconciled by the love and empathy of his godfather and saviour, Athos, and his second wife, Michaela. The problematic issue I untangle in Chapter One lies not so much in the fact of his redemption, but the way in which it is completed.

In Chapter Two, I offer a reading of *Fugitive Pieces* as a novel of ethics. The moral component of the novel, a key facet to untangling the dense prose and metaphor, stresses mankind's interdependence and responsibility to the Other. Through Jakob's supportive relationships, he is able to work through his grief, letting others bear it as well. Primarily Athos and Michaela, but Maurice and Irene Salman too, *respond* to his suffering

which helps him move toward redemption. Jakob is fortunate, not just to have survived, but to have been saved by someone capable of preservation. He tells us, “If you’re lucky, you’ll emerge again in someone’s arms; or unlucky, wake when the long tail of terror brushes the inside of your skull” (5). And, he is furthermore lucky to be safe in Greece during the war, able to emigrate to Canada afterwards, and to have made lasting and meaningful relationships. The sheer fact of such luck in the face of Jakob’s archetypal role is, if optimistic, problematic. The golem that was Jakob is no longer — he is redeemed. If Athos insists Jakob’s survival and their meeting relied on choice and reason, then how are we to read Jakob’s death, which cuts short his fulfilled life by a freak accident? Is Jakob’s life guided by fate or serendipity?

The final chapter of this thesis looks at *Fugitive Pieces* as a trauma novel, culminating in Jakob’s healing and Ben’s potential for recovery. I show how the novel’s illustration of the bereavement process is developed by way of the characters and Michaels’ use of language. I again address the issue of Jakob’s somewhat suspect recovery by closely examining his relationships. The metaphoric representation of grief and memory in the novel is explicated in this chapter; in *Fugitive Pieces*, memory keeps Jakob’s past alive through stories within the narrative — biography, history and the stories of the past metaphorically held in stone, the “second history” offered to Jakob by Athos (20). In *Fugitive Pieces*, through a movement towards Athos’s and Michaela’s love, Jakob is able to live with his past and integrate his memories into his present. Remembrance is written into grief itself: the dead live on through the memory of those

left living. His memories keep all the victims alive, keep the past alive — essentially disrupting linear time. This disruption of time is key to grief, key to redemption in the novel. As Efraim Sicher notes, “Redemption, as the great Hasidic mystic Ba’al Shem Tov said, is to be found in remembrance” (32). The act of recording history presupposes a certain distance between the interpreter and the past that is to be interpreted. It is precisely because Jakob’s and Ben’s pasts are not distant, they are a part of the present, that we see a collapse in time. Just as the SS-Ahnenerbe manipulated history, the disputation of which is Athos’s life’s work, history offers a possibility to manipulate time, to conquer it by cementing it in the past. For to understand historical time is to understand what is no longer, what is gone, what has passed: in *Fugitive Pieces* the history of the past merges with the present. In this chapter, I ask what are the inevitable problems that occur when fictionalizing history, particularly a history so rife with anxiety over its representation. I examine the novel’s self-awareness of this issue and how history keeps the past open in memory of the future.

If we recall that Jakob, who through his name and implied allusions in the novel, comes to embody Israel, then his fortunate survival, his recovery from the trauma of the Holocaust, and his ultimate redemption demand a closer look. “Redemption through cataclysm; what had been transformed might be transformed again” (101). The optimism of such a statement stands out in stark contrast to the reality of genocide. Michaels herself admits that “I didn’t want to leave the reader in a dark place” (Gladstone  interview). But transforming the Shoah into an event which can be transcended, from 

which one can recover, is a risky endeavor. Does the unease which I feel with the celebratory tone of Jakob's redemption have to do with the *what* of representation in *Fugitive Pieces*, or does it have more to do with the *how*? It is not Michaels' choice to *use* metaphor to represent the Holocaust — James Young persuasively argues the impossibility of leaving metaphor outside of language: what I attempt to reveal in this thesis is not the *what* of her choice, but the *how*, and that the metaphorical language of beauty, of complete recovery and ultimate redemption, are suspect in the novel.



## Chapter One: The Efficacy of Redemptive Language

*Imagination and memory are but one thing, which for divers consideration*

*hath divers names.*

— Thomas Hobbes

The ability and inability of art to represent atrocity has become the launching point for much Holocaust literary criticism. Theodor Adorno's proclamation on art and Auschwitz raised the question of how one can speak about the unspeakable experience of the Holocaust, leaving many critics to ask if there is no alternative but to keep silent. However, Adorno's somewhat cryptic statement has not been taken literally: fifty years of writing have produced the genre of Holocaust literature, and as well, critics of that genre. According to Lawrence Langer, "if art, as Adorno concedes, is perhaps the last remaining sanctuary where [the suffering of the victims] can be paid honest homage . . . the danger also exists of this noble intention sliding into the abyss of its opposite" (*HLI* 1). What Adorno worried about was that a sense of meaning and purpose could possibility be created out of the Holocaust by way of art. Moreover, that art provides aesthetic pleasure can be seen not only to dishonour the victims, but an impossibility if the events are to be offered truthfully. With regard to narrative, James Young warns that the narrative may

supplant the events, making representation and symbols relative — essentially mediating versions of events, thereby calling into question the truthfulness of the representation. However, he does not claim that mediated versions are less valuable than “historical facts”; Young’s concern is with the “difficulty of interpreting, expressing, and acting on these facts outside of the ways we frame them” (3). This brings us to the crux of post-Holocaust literary criticism: If one is to represent the Holocaust, how can the “possibility of aesthetic pleasure as Adorno conceives of it [be] intrinsically eliminated” (Langer *HLI* 2-3)? What kind of language can be used in a narrative of tragedy to represent the horror conscientiously, with the necessary care, yet without numbing the reader? Langer writes “Since such evidence clearly *disorients* whatever human faculty might respond to it, piling atrocity on atrocity . . . without providing an *imaginative orientation* for the development of this faculty could only paralyse it further” [italics Langer’s] (32-3).

Young offers some guidance in grappling with the issue of fictionalizing the Holocaust. He espouses a critical approach to Holocaust representation that takes into account the events, national myths, religious archetypes and ideological models. This approach is not new to representing Jewish catastrophe, as I laid out in the introduction. Specifically with regards to Holocaust literature, Young’s approach offers a way of understanding why and how some narratives are successful at representing the atrociousness of the events without demeaning the victims’ suffering or numbing the reader. Victims of the Holocaust were dependent upon archetypes and paradigms of other epochs in order to grasp the events going on around them. They responded to these

events in terms of the available tropes and figures of their time, just as those now representing the events do with the altered figures available in the post-Holocaust era. Young contends that the Holocaust itself has become its own trope, forming a metaphorical basis for post-Holocaust authors like Sylvia Plath and John Berryman.<sup>2</sup> Young sees the role of metaphor in Holocaust literature as “an agent in both our knowledge of the Holocaust and our responses to it” (84). He goes so far as to say that there can be *no* language outside of metaphor. I will deal with this issue later, but for now it bears keeping in mind.

In his article on the writing of the post-Holocaust generation, Efraim Sicher refers to the “difficulties of metaphor and language, its risks of desecration and trivialization” (19). Through the deconstruction of previously innocent terms, the most notorious being *der Endlosung*, or “The Final Solution,” the writer is faced with the difficulty of remaining aware of the connotations of language, and at the same time, of the limits of language to adequately conceptualize Auschwitz. This deconstruction, even *destruction*, of language is the most profound issue the author attempting to represent the Holocaust must face. The sensitivity towards what is represented and even more *how* the events are represented cannot be stressed strongly enough. Summing up Adorno’s statement, George Steiner says, succinctly: “Eloquence after Auschwitz would be a kind of obscenity” (“LLM” 156). So what to do with a novel like Anne Michaels’ *Fugitive Pieces*, whose prose is more

---

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 7 “The Holocaust Confessions of Sylvia Plath” in Young’s *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*.

than eloquent, even “lush”? What are some of the problems that inevitably spring out of the aesthetizing of what Langer calls “literature of atrocity”? Young insists that “to leave Auschwitz outside of metaphor would be to leave it outside of language altogether” (91).<sup>3</sup> In consideration of Langer's concern and Young's approach, this chapter will examine Michaels' metaphoric representation of the Holocaust in the novel. I will attempt to expose the problematic use of language in some areas of *Fugitive Pieces*, and show why and how Ben's story in Part II better represents the sensitive issues surrounding the Holocaust than does Jakob's story in Part I.

The novel opens with an epigraph which sets up the story as a memoir and announces the death of its author, Jakob Beer. His narrative begins with his re-birth from the marshy ground of the once ancient city of Biskupin. Recounting his life five decades later, he describes himself as coming from the earth: “Bog boy,” “Tollund Man” (5) and “a golem” (12). The Hebrew word for earth is *adama*, hence the myth of Adam Kadman, the first man. In Gershom Scholem's *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, he explains that “the central plan of Creation originates in the lights which shine in strange refraction from the eyes of *Adam Kadman*” (112). In Scholem's interpretation, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century kabbalist Isaac Luria's doctrine of creation culminates in restoration. Scholem goes on to say that “for Luria this process takes place partly in God, but partly in man as the crown of all created being” (OKS 113). That Jakob is reborn out of the earth situates him as this

---

<sup>3</sup> Even while giving testimony, witnesses very often will use metaphorical language in order to express themselves. See Claude Lanzman's *Shoah* and Filip Müller's *Auschwitz Inferno*.

archetype — the first man.<sup>4</sup> The archetype becomes clear when we read in *Fugitive Pieces* of “the new Adam” (167). From Jakob symbolically descend all Jews, and with him lies the hope of restoration.

Although Jakob is not overtly searching, he is indeed restored. A lifetime of grief is reconciled through love, begun by Athos and fulfilled by Michaela. Athos professes to be Jakob’s *koumbaros*, his godfather, but the distinction between the savior and the saved becomes blurred. Jakob says of his relationship with Athos, “We were a vine and a fence. But who was the vine? We both would have answered differently” (108). Their mutual support is representative of all mankind’s interdependence, an issue I will examine thoroughly in the next chapter. Throughout Jakob’s story, Athos proclaims, “We must carry each other. If we don’t have this, what are we. . .” (14). In contrast to Jakob, Ben // is neither able to support nor respond to those in his life. His emotions are restrained and he rejects, indeed avoids, any authentic contact — he functions like an automaton. Unlike Ben, Jakob does not turn away from love. In fact, all his relationships, save his first marriage to Alex, support his much-needed healing. And the demise of his first marriage is explained not by way of any malevolence on his wife’s part, but of something lacking: “When we were first married I hoped that if I let Alex in, if I let in a finger of light, it would flood the clearing. And at first, this is exactly what happened. But gradually, through no fault of Alex’s, the finger of light poked down, cold as a bone,

---

<sup>4</sup> See Annick Hilger’s essay “‘Afterbirth of Earth’ Messianic Materialism in Anne Michaels’ *Fugitive Pieces*” where she develops this issue further.

illuminating nothing, not even the white point of contrast that burned the ground it touched” (139). Although Jakob does not blame Alex for her inability to help him, he explains why she fails with him while Athos is able to reach him. “Athos replaced parts of me slowly, as if he were preserving wood. But Alex — Alex wants to explode me, set fire to everything. She wants me to begin again” (144). Alex’s vitality, her attempts to force Jakob back to life are counter-productive and cannot heal him. Jakob needs the slow, accumulated growth of Athos’s geology : “Athos had a special affection for limestone — that crushed reef of memory. . . . Limestone that develops slowly under pressure into marble” (32). Jakob’s rebirth literally into Athos’s arms sets him on the path of healing. Jakob says, “Athos’s backward glance gave me backward hope. Redemption through cataclysm; what had once been transformed might be transformed again” (101).

But a closer look at Jakob’s “cataclysmic redemption” reveals some fundamental problems with him as a representative survivor of the Holocaust. Athos inasmuch instructs him to bear witness: “Important lessons: look carefully, record what you see” (44). This advice sounds remarkably similar to that given to Filip Müller, who while working as a *Sonderkommando*<sup>5</sup> in the “special unit” at Auschwitz was told by a fellow prisoner, “It is vital that you should see everything, experience everything, go through everything and record everything in your mind. Maybe one day you are one of those who will be free” (114). But what is it Jakob actually sees? To what does Jakob bear witness?

---

<sup>5</sup> *Sonderkommando* were members of the “special unit” who worked in the crematoria.

As Adrienne Kertzer points out, "Michaels stays on the edges, unwilling for the most part to enter the death camps, preferring instead to imagine a survivor as listener, as the one who does 'not witness the most important events of [his] life' (*Fugitive Pieces* 17)" (202).

Yet Jakob *is* a witness, but more to the point is *how* Jakob offers his testimony; when Athos tells Jakob to bear witness, he advises him to "[f]ind a way to make beauty necessary; find a way to make necessity beautiful" (44). Kertzer rather sardonically points out that *Fugitive Pieces* "goes to great lengths to distract readers from the non-necessary and non-beautiful events that bring Jakob and Athos together" (199). The main problem with *Fugitive Pieces*'s representation of the Holocaust is *how* Jakob's testimony is given: very beautifully. Furthermore, in regards to approaching the Holocaust with sensitivity and care, the redemptive nature of his narrative, to my mind, is suspect. It is one thing to read about the atrocities in a survivor's testimony like Müller's, but, as Langer has written, Holocaust literature needs an imaginative orientation.

This is not to say that *Fugitive Pieces* is devoid of imagination; it is a work of striking imagery. Meira Cook describes Michaels' writing as "lyrical, highly poetic and densely metaphoric" (12). Nonetheless, Cook argues that "Michaels' lush, poetic discourse jars uneasily with the horrors she is narrating and so contributes to our discomfort as readers, at the same time that it provides a way of thinking about metaphor and metonymy as figurative devices that alternatively reveal and conceal the materiality of the event" (15-16). I would agree with parts of this statement, specifically that of Michael's choice of language in narrating the events, but for reasons other than Cook's.

She singles out the passage on page 40 of the text where Jakob relates how the Jews of Zakynthos “vanished” when the Nazis invaded. Cook maintains that the image of the Jews wrenched like coral from its element is a “highly romanticized icon of what actually happened to these people.” She then points out what she calls “the prevailing flatness” resulting from the lyric discourse Michaels uses to narrate brutality, love-making and everyday life. She says that the “over-written” love scenes fail to move the reader “because the elegiac tone in which they are described has already been used to effect in scenes of violence and horror” (16). I find the problem here potentially more menacing: it is not the love scenes that are rendered less effective by this sometimes extravagant and even verdant discourse; the scenes of atrocity are somehow less atrocious. When Michaels leans more toward minimalism, for example, as she does in the description of the Jews of Zakynthos, she more sensitively represents the events of the Holocaust sensitively, leaving the reader appropriately *unsatisfied*. Langer puts it thus: “If art is concerned with the creation of beautiful forms, Holocaust testimony, and perhaps Holocaust art as well, deals with ‘malforms’” (AH 19). He writes about a type of disorientation that emerges from attempting to make sense out of that which is inherently non-sensical. Kertzer writes that “by choosing to tell a transformative story about the Holocaust, . . . Michaels risks adopting a strategy that tends, not surprisingly, to distract and console many readers with the ‘beauty’ of her story, the pleasure of her woven language” (203). Therefore, the effect on the reader is quite possibly not a disorientation in regards to the events themselves, but rather Michaels’ choice of language, the *how* of her representation, that unsettles the



reader with its questionable appropriateness, specifically in Part I. The “malforms” in *Fugitive Pieces* are not to be found in the “lush, poetic discourse,” but rather in the more sparsely written passages and in Ben’s story.

A glance at other Holocaust literature offers some insight into how language operates as a vehicle for effectively (and consequently, *ineffectively*) representing Auschwitz. In Tadeusz Borowski’s short story *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, the narrator offers stark and disturbing details of the life of a *Sonderkommando* in *Kanada*<sup>6</sup>. The cynicism which runs through this story, and others in the collection of the same title, creates a discomfort in the reader which affords him no relief of the heroic or redemptive. The language used in *This Way for the Gas* is highly “malformed,” leaving the reader perplexed at having to confront the events Borowski describes. Leslie Epstein and Terence Des Pres, while calling Borowski’s writing humorous, qualify the adjective with “ferociously” and “wryly.” Epstein calls *This Way for the Gas* “perhaps the finest imaginative rendering of the Holocaust in literature” (268). However, Irving Howe differs in opinion. He says that Borowski’s “hammering factuality” seems so close to those “relentless Holocaust memoirs which show that there need be no limit to dehumanization,” and therefore his stories “‘work’ mainly as testimony” (192). Whether Borowski’s writing is more imaginative or testimonial, his writing is most surely not restorative. Des Pres refers to his discourse as “a kind of self-

---

<sup>6</sup> *Kanada* referred to members of the labor gang who helped to unload the incoming transports of people destined for the gas chambers.

conscious ridicule devoid of redemptive power except for the vigor of mockery itself” (“HL” 222). In this sense, Borowski faces Langer’s challenge to the artist: to transcend language by producing a “new” language which can metaphorically represent atrocity in all its factual atrociousness without providing the aesthetic pleasure traditionally associated with literature.

Nonetheless, in narrating the Holocaust, the literal representation of events is a risky approach. Interestingly enough, despite (and sometimes even *within*) Michaels’ poetic prose, she attempts to relate the atrocities factually. However, I am not claiming that form and content can be separated in fiction, or for that matter in any narrative. In fact, the following passage offers evidence to the contrary. Describing the dead in his dreams, Jakob says,

Their hair in tufts, open sores where ears used to be, grubs twisting from their chests. The grotesque remains of incomplete lives, the embodied complexity of desires eternally denied. They floated until they grew heavier, and began to walk, heaving into humanness; until they grew more human than phantom and through their effort began to sweat. Their strain poured from my skin, until I woke dripping with their deaths (24).

The philosophical speculation of the dead (“the embodied complexity of desires eternally denied”) within the graphic nature of this passage sits uneasily with any reader familiar with only a few of the explicitly horrifying survivor accounts. But even more indicative of the uneasy alliance between form and content are Michaels’ images of the gas chambers:

When they opened the doors, the bodies were always in the same position. Compressed against one wall, a pyramid of flesh. Still hope. The climb to air, to the last disappearing pocket of breath near the ceiling. The terrifying hope of human cells.

The bare autonomic faith of the body.

Some gave birth while dying in the chamber. Mothers were dragged from the chamber with new life half-emerged from their bodies. Forgive me, you who were born and died without being given names. Forgive this blasphemy, of choosing philosophy over the brutalism of fact.

We know they cried out. Each mouth, Bella's mouth, strained for its miracle. They were heard from the other side of the thick walls. It is impossible to imagine those sounds (168).

Yet Michaels does imagine them and presents these images to the reader. I am not ★ convinced that in passages like these, Michaels has chosen "philosophy over the brutalism of fact." While the density which runs through much of Michaels' prose is missing here, the necessity of the directness of the language comes into question. Not only is there no outlet, no imaginative orientation here,<sup>7</sup> but one is compelled to wonder if the danger Young talks about is present. In this instance, perhaps the narrative in its direct representation, and to my mind *too* direct for such an otherwise metaphorical text, has

---

<sup>7</sup> For survivor testimony which describes these events from a first-hand witness, see Müller's *Auschwitz Inferno*, pages 116-117 and 24-26.

displaced the events themselves. Young points out the irony in writing violent events because

The violent event can exist as such (and thus as an inspiration to factual narrative, it seems) only as long as it appears outside the continuum, where it remains apparently unmediated, unframed, and unassimilated. For once written, events assume the mantle of coherence that narrative necessarily imposes on them, and the trauma of their unassimilability is relieved (16).

Furthermore, I question the legitimacy of the apparent meaning Michaels has assigned to the events, the “mantle of coherence,” by way of the paragraph following the passage about the gas chambers:

At that moment of utmost degradation, in that twisted reef, is the most obscene testament of grace. For can anyone tell with absolute certainty the difference between the sounds of those who are in despair and the sounds of those who want desperately to believe? The moment when our faith in man is forced to change, anatomically — mercilessly — into faith (168).

The type of faith to which Michaels here refers is elusive, to be sure. Elie Weisel, in his memoir *Night*, affirms that his faith was so profoundly shaken that he “did not deny God’s existence, but . . . doubted His absolute justice” (58). Weisel’s faith is not so optimistic as Michaels seems to be. I offer an alternative reading of this passage in the following chapter, but nonetheless, aphorisms like this one in the novel invoking redemption and resolution, comforting though they may be, tend to deflect the reader from the very

existential nature of catastrophe.

Redemption is a difficult issue in Holocaust literature. Many have asked how there can be anything redemptive about the experience of the Holocaust. The complex memories of survivors and witnesses are disturbing. For the survivors, according to Langer, "life goes on, but in two temporal directions at once, the future unable to escape the grip of a memory laden with grief." And, he notes that this condition "unfortunately, is exemplary rather than exceptional in these testimonies. Their importance will be considerably diminished if we gloss over or disregard that shadow in search of more enlightening brightness" (*HT* 34). This condition of which Langer speaks describes Jakob's experience: he is tortured by his memories and by his grief. But there is a crucial difference: in most, if not all, survivors' testimonies, there is no redemption from their memories because there is no reconciliation of them. Let me offer a few words from survivors recorded in the 1980's. "I have children. I have my family. But I can't take full satisfaction in the achievements of my children today because part of my present life is my remembrance, my memory of what happened then, and it casts a shadow over my life today" (quoted in Langer *HT* 34). One surviving victim speaks of "emerging from a cocoon, not in order to celebrate a miraculous transformation but to lament the missed and unrecapturable childhood that passed during his 'absence'" (75). Holocaust testimony readily calls into question how Michaels deals with redemption in *Fugitive Pieces*.

Is there a way to reconcile Jakob's redemption from what David Rousset has

called *l'univers concentrationnaire*? There is an approach that places the Holocaust within the larger Jewish tradition of integrating catastrophic historical events with a set pattern of archetypal responses, for example, A. M. Klein's *The Second Scroll*. Like Jakob in *Fugitive Pieces*, Melech is a kind of archetype: he represents, among other things, the entirety of the messianic condition of Judaism. Following the Lurianic doctrine of creation and restoration, the immolation of Melech completes the restoration of the Jewish people. To be sure, messianic overtones can be seen in *Fugitive Pieces*; this can be seen even in the title. In Luria's myth of redemption, history always embodies a state of brokenness. The Lurianic kabbalistic creation myth is threefold: *zimzum* (where God contracts himself to make room for the creation of beings, the forms that are to give shelter to the emanations of God, otherwise called "vessels"); *shevirah* or "the breaking of vessels" (where the "divine light" which floods into the vessels preserving God in the world is too strong and the vessels break); and finally, *tikkun* (the restitution of the vessels brought about by messianic time). (Scholem *K* 128-144). *Fugitive Pieces* can be read as the shattering of the vessel producing "the scattering of the holy sparks" which must be restored in messianic time (167). Jakob, representing the chosen people, must gather the sparks, and restore his people by way of his own redemption. Reading Jakob's story as a sort of myth, as a return to the archetypal approach to literature of catastrophe set in the framework of sin-retribution and sin-restoration, Jakob's redemption becomes more tenable.

In his article "Unfinished Life: Canadians Write the Holocaust," Norman Ravvin

offers a chronological survey of Holocaust literature from A. M. Klein's *The Hitleriad*, to Leonard Cohen's "Flower for Hitler" up to *Fugitive Pieces*. He attempts to show the changes in certain attitudes toward the Holocaust and that this shift from the approach taken by historians, religious scholars, and artists in the immediate post-war years have contributed to the type of artistry found in a novel like *Fugitive Pieces*. "Gone is the artist's feeling of impotence before the difficulty of her subject. Gone, as well, is the sense, summed up in Theodor Adorno's famous remark, that after Auschwitz there could be no poetry" (17). Ravvin goes on to question the efficacy of Jakob Beer's poems, pointing out that only fragments of his poetry are found in the novel: "Where are these poems? . . . [A]re they mere phantoms — unwritable and unreadable? Poems better left unsaid?" (18) Perhaps Ravvin is right when he says that "*Fugitive Pieces* may represent the state of the art of Canadian Holocaust fiction with its seeming willingness to poeticize and visualize what we've come to know as the worst of our era" (18), but in his essay, he barely touches upon the second part of the novel, which is crucial to an accurate reading of *Fugitive Pieces*.

Michael's poems?

I have attempted to show how the issues of redemption and language in the novel are problematic. Michaels herself seems to be aware of this when she writes, "Forgive this blasphemy, of choosing philosophy over the brutalism of fact" (168), that philosophy being Jakob's choosing the lie of imagining his sister's voice and her experience in the camps, of imagining "the meaning of the sounds he could not hear" (Kertzer 210). Steiner's statement on Auschwitz and eloquence is called to mind when Jakob recounts

Kostos and later Athos: “How can [one] write such awful news with such a beautiful hand?” (103) This is precisely what one wonders at times with Michaels’ discourse.

However, the minimalism and metaphor in Part I, and a reading of Jakob’s story as myth present a viable representation of the Holocaust. The problems discussed, the richness of prose and the protagonist’s redemption, as I have alluded to before, do not figure in as much in Part II, Ben’s story. And while Jakob’s story can be read as a myth or fable, Ben’s story is far more realistic. Nonetheless, the parallel metaphors of Parts I and II contribute to the overall effect of *Fugitive Pieces*, essentially allowing for Ben’s story to deconstruct Jakob’s.

Part II also begins at an “archeological dig,” this time in Toronto along the Humber River. But while the destruction of Biskupin is done by the Nazis, the fragments along the Humber River are deposited there by an act of nature — a hurricane. Weather will be Ben’s “azimuth,” just as the earth with its potential for preservation is Jakob’s. Jakob comes from the ground, from *adama*, and just as his role is symbolic, Ben’s role is also archetypal. Naomi reveals to Ben after his parents’ death their reason for naming him merely Ben, not Benjamin: *Ben* is the Hebrew word for son. Ben says of his parents, “They hoped that if they did not name me, the angel of death might pass by” (253).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Kertzer argues that Ben’s parents are only referred to as mother and father and this fact reinforces their function as parents who have no other identity but as traumatized survivors. That Ben’s parents are not given names is another structural similarity to Jacob’s parents, which enhances and contributes to the reading of other similarities. Kertzer’s argument is much the same as mine: she maintains that Ben’s name, meaning “son,” further inscribes him as the archetypal son of archetypal survivors.



Jakob represents the first man, and Ben, through the completion of Jakob's biography and the discovery of significant symbols of his life,<sup>9</sup> fulfills Jakob's legacy and is situated as his son.

Another link between the two narrators is their struggle with silence. In Part I, silence is not associated with peace and tranquillity, but with an intense fear. Looking back as narrator to his experiences, Jakob says, "Since those minutes inside the wall, I've imagined that the dead lose every sense except hearing" (6). His memory is reconstructed through the entrance of sounds: "The burst door. Wood ripped from hinges, cracking like ice under the shouts. Noises never hear before, torn from my father's mouth. Then silence" (7). On the one hand, sound, particularly coerced sounds like those "torn" from Jakob's father, is painful to remember. Yet sound that is known has the potential to be understood. On the other hand, silence, the sounds *not* known, becomes what he so fears. Jakob goes on, "I couldn't keep out the sounds: the door breaking open, the spit of buttons. My mother, my father. But worse than those sounds was that I couldn't remember hearing Bella at all. Filled with her silence, I had no choice but to imagine her face" (10). And not hearing, not knowing Bella's fate, keeps her alive for Jakob. Since he has not seen Bella's body, he carries her with him, even after he accepts that she is dead.

---

<sup>9</sup> In his return to Jakob's house on Idhra, Ben finds mementos from Jakob's past -- the black slate globe Athos used to instruct him, the replica of Wilson's "Paraselena at McMurdo Sound," *Pliny's Natural History*, Athos's father's watch which had been passed down to Jakob, his collection of doorknockers in the shape of hands, and an assortment of buttons. The discovery of these symbols of Jakob's life situate Ben as heir to Jakob's legacy and, in consideration of Jakob's archetype, the legacy of all the Jews of the Holocaust.

He is tormented by the loss of his loved ones; while sunk into the forest floor, Jakob longs to either rise with the dead or sink into the ground. At this point he experiences a communion of sorts with his mother.

Then — as if she'd pushed the hair from my forehead, as if I'd heard her voice — I knew suddenly my mother was inside me. Moving along sinews, under my skin the way she used to move through the house at night, putting things away, putting things in order. She was stopping to say goodbye and was caught, in such pain, wanting to rise, wanting to stay. It was my responsibility to release her, a sin to keep her from ascending. I tore at my clothes, my hair. She was gone. My own fast breath around my head (8).

Jakob has heard his mother's death and has seen her body; Jakob is therefore able to let his mother go. Although the memory of Jakob's parents stays with him, and indeed he attempts to incorporate them, an issue I will develop more fully in Chapter Three, Jakob is not haunted by them throughout his life, at least not as profoundly as Bella's ghost haunts him. Jakob's almost metaphysical vision of his mother, at once comforting and disturbing, juxtaposes domesticity with the sickening image of his mother physically crawling around inside his flesh. This type of language tends to produce anxiety and discomfort in the reader, to my mind much more so than the jarring of lyrical and horrific discourse to which Cook refers. Precisely because the reader associates the maternal and domestic with comfort and security, Michaels disruption of this traditional connotation of symbols distorts the language and its meaning. This unusual use of language and the tension it ✱

creates is one of the ways in which the novel fulfills Langer's call for a new way to address the Holocaust.

Michaels uses this same theme to produce a tone of malaise later in the novel. In his relationship with the Salmans, Jakob again feels the loss of "home," home defined as an emotion rather than a place. He is so moved at the ordinary sight of Irena in the kitchen stirring a pot, that he has to turn away (120). Domesticity, or the lack thereof, represents anguish for both Jakob and for Ben. For Ben's parents, and Jakob too, "there was no ordinariness to return to" after the Holocaust (205); therefore, they long for the familiar. And because Ben asserts, "My parents' past is mine" (280), he too cannot cope with the familiar. Before Ben leaves for Greece, he lies with Naomi in their bed and the simple touch of her stockinged feet on his calves, what he calls "a gesture of intimacy . . . filled [him] with hopelessness" (254). When Ben tells Naomi he will soon be leaving, "Naomi pressed her palms into the kitchen table and stood up. The imprint of the chair was on the back of her thighs. This made me so sad I had to close my eyes" (255). In retrospect, Ben sees the significance of the moment, but, like "the ship in the middle of the ocean [that] won't perceive the tsunami," he remains torpid and does not react. Specifically the ordinary, everyday sights of his wife leave him lost and struggling. And herein lies a highly significant facet of the novel: While Jakob struggles with loss in his marriage to Alex, he is able to develop fulfilling relationships with everyone else in his life — Athos, Kostas and Daphne, Maurice Salman, and, of course, the healing and happiness which culminates in his relationship to Michaela. Jakob represents the Jews of the Holocaust, and

in consideration of this weighty symbolic role, this sort of “healing” is controversial. ✱

Contrary to those of Jakob, Ben’s relationships do not provide him, or the reader, with such fulfilment.

Compare Ben’s words about his father’s touch to Jakob’s reaction to Athos’s physical affection. Jakob recalls being in Athens as a child with Athos, Daphne and Kostas: “The luxury of their affection brought feeling to me, my hair tousled by a passing hand, the squeeze of Daphne’s spontaneous embrace” (73). Ben also remembers his father’s physical affection.

Leaning against him, his arm around me — or, when I was very young, lying with my head on his lap — his hand on my hair absentmindedly but, for me, feral. He stroked my hair to Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Beethoven, Mahler’s lieder: “Now all longing wants to dream,” “I have become a stranger in the world” (215-16).

Ben’s memory of the relationship he had with his father is not as idealized as Jakob’s to his adoptive parent. Ben goes on to say that “As long as the symphony lasted, the song cycle, the quartet, I had access to him. I could pretend his attention to music was attention to me” (217). Ben does not have an idyllic relationship with either parent; he is the inheritor of their trauma, “born into absence” (233). If Jakob represents all survivors, and Ben represents all children of survivors, then Ben can be seen as Jakob’s figurative son. Ben as the inheritor of trauma and of Jakob’s legacy complicates Jakob’s all-too-perfect relationships, and therefore complicates Part I.

Beyond Ben’s own reticence lies the silence of his parents. He says, “There was

no energy of a narrative in my family, not even the fervour of an elegy. . . My parents and I waded through damp silence, of not hearing and not speaking” (204). Like Jakob, Ben uncovers his past through books on the Holocaust; however, Jakob’s preoccupation with the event stems from his own need to construct his past, while Ben’s father thrusts the information on him. Ben is offered pieces of his past, yet with a crucial piece of family history missing, and like Jakob, he does not have the language to address “the images planted in him” (218): Ben searches for a “new vocabulary” (225) to replace the “dark words” (217) of his childhood, and he finds a new language in science. While Jakob has Athos as his teacher and guide, Ben educates himself in this new language. But, just as Jakob discovers, Ben learns there are limitations to language when he “realize[s] that knowing the right words might not be enough” (225). Jakob resolves this dilemma through writing poetry, while Ben remains searching for “the right words.”

In the stories he tells his mother while she is making dinner, the domestic collides with the destructive again as parallel memories are evoked. The tornado’s devastating force signals the memory of events she lived through: mounds of personal possessions — “the camp.” Smashed glass — “Kristallnacht.” Lightning — “the sign of the Ess, Ess, Ben, on their collars” (224-5), her response a macabre play on language in translation.<sup>10</sup> Ben learns that language is no longer innocent; Jakob, on the other hand, describes the restorative power of language. “I already knew the power of language to destroy, to

---

<sup>10</sup> In English, “Ess Ess” translates from the German imperative “eat, eat” evoking Ben’s father’s obsession with food and eating.

omit, to obliterate. But poetry, the power of language to restore: this is what both Athos and Kostas were trying to teach me” (79). Even though Jakob struggles with language, he ultimately finds deliverance in it: “Silence: the response to both emptiness and fullness” (194). Ben does not find such a dichotomy in his own silence. And although Ben has a profound appreciation for Jakob’s poetry, Ben sounds almost cynical as he reflects upon his first and only meeting with him: “You listened, not like a priest who listens for sin, but like a sinner, who listens for his own redemption. What a gift you had for making one feel clear, for making one feel — clean. *As if talk could actually heal*” [italics mine] (208).

This loss of language and questioning of its efficacy is also represented in the novel by the absence of language. *Fugitive Pieces* is structured into the brief, momentary memories of Ben and Jakob, marked within the text by physical spaces separating the recollections into fragments. The silence that follows these fragmented images and memories is present in much the same way that it is in video testimony. James Young writes that in video testimony “silence remains as much a presence as the words themselves” and that “unlike literary testimony, video testimonies can also represent not telling a story, the point at which memory will not enter speech” (161). In *Fugitive Pieces*, silences exist in narrative form; they exist in the pauses the reader is forced to take. In this way, Michaels metaphorically achieves “the prolonged silence” Aharon Appelfeld insists is necessary to discuss a kind of experience that cannot be expressed in words (90).

Music plays a key role in the novel, substituting for language when traditional discourse fails. The music of Bella’s maestro, Beethoven, crosses the Atlantic and

linguistic barriers in Ben's memory. Music is a link between Ben and his father: "Music inseparable from his touch" (217). Kostas and Daphne fall in love while listening to a *rembetiko*, which "always tells a story full of heartache and eros" (58). The "stories" told by music are outside Polish, Hebrew, Greek and English. Jakob uses music as a means of escape after Athos's death, and thereby he meets Alex, the "professional listener" (130). Her penchant for jazz contributes to Jakob's depiction of her as modern, a "perpetual-motion machine" (131), in comparison to Jakob and his friend Maurice, who "were already hopelessly out of date and would remain so" (112). Yosha, Maurice and Irena's son, plays the piano "slow as geology rather than hit a wrong note" (174). As Jakob listens, he notes the broken melody, the silences between the notes. However, he says of Bella's playing, "I was lost; no longer aware of a hundred accumulated fragments but only of one long story, after which the house would fall silent for what seemed a very long time" (138).

Music represents both a fracturing and a unity, alluded to in the title of the novel. For Jakob, there is an order and a harmony in music; the language of music seems to fill in some of the gaps created by Jakob's loss as he attempts to put the pieces of his life, and the pieces of his loved ones' deaths, back together. Like Jakob's memories, Ben's memories are intertwined with music, but once again, there is a stark difference in the way this metaphor works in the two parts. For Ben, music is associated with the pain of his relationships. Naomi, true to her childlike character, has an extensive knowledge of lullabies, including ones from the ghetto. When Ben asks her which song came to her mind

when she thought of his parents, she inadvertently reveals a ghetto song that Ben's mother shared with her. That Ben has been excluded from another one of his parents' well-guarded secrets, including the shattering secret of the siblings born and dead before him, is crushing; his resentment towards Naomi grows. And although music ties Ben to his father, Ben experiences guilt at his own failure at the piano. Ben says of his father:

His demand for perfection had the force of a moral imperative, each correct note setting order against chaos, a goal as impossible as rebuilding a bombed city, atom by atom. As a child I did not feel this as evidence of faith or even anything as positive as summoning of will. Instead I absorbed it as a kind of futility (210).

Ben struggles with the futility of his relationships, void of purpose and meaning; he does not find the symbolic unity in music which Jakob does, he does not have Jakob's faith, and he does not experience Jakob's cataclysmic redemption.

Kertzer also argues that the music metaphor is linked with the issue of silence, but more pointedly with "the novel's obsessive attention to listening" (196). Kertzer is also concerned with *how* the novel is read, indeed, "asks" to be read. Her uneasiness with *Fugitive Pieces* is that the novel delivers too easy a resolution for readers, offering a way out of the dilemma of language after Auschwitz by "hearing . . . 'a language of the dead'" (200). She finds Jakob's passionate redemption and his eventual accidental death symbolically untenable, when the murder of so many millions was no accident. Her reading situates Jakob not as a first-generation survivor and witness, but more as part of the second-generation. Kertzer, herself a child of survivors, asks "what do we hear if we



read *Fugitive Pieces*, not as a novel about surviving the Holocaust, but as a novel about the children who come after, the children who listen” (196). She maintains that by placing Jakob behind the wall, by not allowing him to actually *witness* his family’s murders, Michaels has created a protagonist who “repeatedly emphasizes his belatedness, the inadequacy of the visual, and the necessity of the aural” (205). And by not seeing, Kertzer argues, Jakob resembles not so much a survivor as a child of survivors, “the one whose knowledge is so dependent on the aural” (205).

Kertzer’s analysis of the title is also intriguing: she argues that the meaning of the title in translation illustrates another problem with language: the “pieces” in *Fugitive Pieces* can neither refer to the musical metaphor nor to fragmented memory without evoking the German word for pieces, *stücke*, the Nazis’ term for their victims of extermination. I agree with the point she makes here, and her overall argument that “[p]erhaps we need to rewrite Adorno: after Auschwitz, poetry may well be possible; it is perhaps our nostalgia for a particular form of fiction that seems inappropriate” (207). Yet she admits that placing Jakob as an aural witness and “[r]eading Jakob as Michaels’ figure for the image-haunted listener of the second generation,” a tension is found between the popular reading of the novel as a romantic and redemptive story and “an anguished poetic voice” more appropriate to the text’s topic (201). Kertzer writes that in *Fugitive Pieces*, Michaels is searching for meaning and by placing the novel on the edges of the events, “it may be that [she] is simply acknowledging that the transformation she longs for is even harder to imagine in a novel set within the camps” (202). But the fact stands that *Fugitive*

*Pieces* is a story about survival and what comes “after Auschwitz.” I agree that questioning the appropriateness of the choice and use of language in the novel is warranted, but Michaels’ exploration into memory and time is substantially developed and congruent with the genre of Holocaust literature. As well, Kertzer does not mention the ethical component of the text, a component I see as crucial to an understanding of the text as a sustained metaphor for survival. Both this issue and the former I will address in detail in the following chapters.

With Kertzer’s argument in mind, one can see that Jakob’s direct link with the Holocaust through his escaping and aurally witnessing his family’s fate is complicated by Ben, whose life is closer to the actual experience by way of his parents. For Jakob, the grim events of the Holocaust are replaced by Athos’s more benign lessons: Athos’s geographic instruction replaces for Jakob the horrors taking place throughout Europe during those same years. When Jakob wants to learn more, he must search out information through books, but Ben’s father presses him with accounts, “planting images” in him. If Jakob is more representative of a second-generation survivor because of his reliance on the aural, Ben may be closer to first-generation precisely because of the visual, because of his “witnessing” the effect of the experience on his parents. Ben says, “The images my father planted in me were an exchange of vows. He passed the book or magazine to me silently. He pointed a finger. Looking, like the listening, was a discipline” (218). Considering that Ben’s story is closely interwoven with Jakob’s, structurally and metaphorically, and Ben’s and Jakob’s roles as first- and second-generation survivors can

be interchangeable, Part II becomes even more significant. The way Ben's story ends is the way the novel ends.

The two parts of the text complement each other, but they also complicate each other. The lives of both protagonists are fused with the natural sciences: While Jakob's lessons are learned by way of stone, water and salt, Ben's connection is to the sky. As a child, Ben is fascinated by tornados and the "random precision of their malevolence" (224). The apparent oxymoron underscores the complexity of trying to make sense of the Holocaust, responding to Langer's insistence that malforms in Holocaust literature result from the attempt at making sense out the inherently non-sensical. Ben is transfixed by the destruction and the sparing power of nature, and in noting the tornado's merciless "whims," Michaels blurs the distinction between man and nature. The safety that is part of Jakob's identification with the ground does not exist in the sky for Ben. Even his biographical research into his subjects' experiences with weather is always violent and painful: the raging snowstorm that detained Boris Pasternak; Madame Curie "refusing to come out of the rain when she heard the news of her husband's death"; the boiling heat of the first summer that Jakob spent alone in Greece (213). Ben's "objective correlative" of weather and biography does not lead to the quotable aphorisms so prevalent in Jakob's story: logic eludes Ben. He is unable to find the harmony in music which Jakob does; while the images Athos planted in Jakob were of a recoverable geologic past, Ben's father fills the void with survivor accounts. Even Ben's substitute for his wife, "Petra, earth. Salt" (275), is less ardent and authentic than Jakob's grounding force, Michaela. With

Petra, although their relationship is intensely physical like Jakob and Michaela's, there is no homecoming – he does not “experience the colour yellow” (184). Jakob says of Michaela, “Her hands carry my memories” (192), and although Ben knows Petra's body, it is of Naomi that he says, “I know her memories” (285). And although Naomi may not “carry” his memories, she does shoulder some of his past through knowing his family's secret.

There is a self-destructiveness in Ben that can only be compared to a languor in Jakob. Neither Ben's relationship with Naomi nor with Petra affords him any comfort: Jakob accepts the love he is offered, albeit somewhat passively, but love is a burden for Ben. Naomi's familiar body is “cold as wet sand on top of him” and his love-making with Petra is quite questionably a rape.<sup>11</sup> And like the almost imperceptible violence of this scene, Petra enacts her own calm and composed “rape” and rips through Jakob's belongings, before storming from the house and Ben. By way of the gaps left from Petra's rampage, Ben's sought-after treasure is revealed: Jakob's manuscripts. The “random precision” of Petra's malevolence has allowed Ben to complete his quest. This episode raises the question of how one can find meaning in destruction, but this is part of the optimism of the novel as a whole, only more tenuously presented in Ben's story. And this is one of the lessons which Athos tried to teach Jakob: “We must carry each other.” The same lesson finishes Part II, and the novel. Returning home, Ben is steeped in thoughts of

---

<sup>11</sup> See *Fugitive Pieces*, page 279 and note the language “pounded” and “tears streamed down her face.”

his wife and the love of his parents, “like a miraculous circuit, each draws strength from the other” (294). The stress on mutual need and care can be found in the text which Michaels’s acknowledges as “renew[ing] [her] resolve in the course of writing,” Terence Des Pres’s *The Survivor*. In his conclusion, Des Pres writes, “What remains to us now is simple care, a care biologically inspired and made active through mutual need” (209). This is no meagre call, and of this Ben is aware when he says, “I see that I must give what I most need” (294). Instead of the relief of a passionate redemption, the reader is left with the burden of responsibility to his fellow man.

In this chapter I have attempted to outline the problematic issues of language and redemption in *Fugitive Pieces* as a novel representing the Holocaust. Redemption is a heavy theme in the novel. Yet no less heavy, and I believe a precondition to the redemption offered here, is the theme of responsibility. In his essay “Responsible for Every Single Pain,” D. G. Myers says that “it is not that some interpretations [of Holocaust literature] are ‘incorrect,’ but that they fail to respond adequately or appropriately to human need” (3). This is the problem with Michaels’ interpretation of the Holocaust: I believe that because of her choice of language and the consolation she offers her readers, she does not “respond adequately or appropriately” to the subject of Auschwitz.

However, Michaels’s exploration of relationships, while sometimes too idealized, successfully addresses the matter of mutual human responsibility: Athos’s philosophy of “remote causes”; the Scott expedition to Antarctica; Jakob’s survivor guilt. Although

Jakob maintains that the Nazis failed at the attempt to dehumanize their victims,<sup>12</sup> he does not neglect his own responsibility in remaining alive: “To survive was to escape fate. But if you escape your fate, whose life do you then step into?” (48). By way of her narrators, Michaels is asking the same question posed by Primo Levi in *The Drowned and the Saved*: “Are you ashamed because you are alive in place of another?” (62) *Fugitive Pieces* underscores the world’s complicity, the significance of living in the post-Holocaust generation and the legacy of the event. However controversial the issue of redemption is here, and however questionable the appropriateness of language may at times be to the subject matter, *Fugitive Pieces* poignantly examines trauma and man’s responsibility to man. Furthermore, in consideration of Ben and Jakob’s archetypal roles, *Fugitive Pieces* asserts that every human being who has survived the Holocaust bears a responsibility to the memory of all of the victims who did not.

---

<sup>12</sup> I am referring here to page 166. This is another example of Michaels’ minimalism better serving the function of representation. “If the Nazis required that humiliation precede extermination, then they admitted exactly what they worked so hard to avoid admitting: the humanity of the victim. To humiliate is to accept that your victim feels and thinks, that he not only feels pain, but knows that he’s being degraded.” \*

## Chapter Two: Responsibility to the Other

*We are all guilty of all and for all men before all, and I more than others.*

— Fyodor Dostoevsky

Governing all the metaphors in *Fugitive Pieces*, making possible Jakob's redemption and Ben's struggle to find redemption, is the theme of responsibility. This theme also underlies Terence Des Pres' *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*, a text to which Anne Michaels expresses her indebtedness in the Acknowledgments. In *The Survivor*, Des Pres explores "the capacity of men and women to live beneath the pressure of protracted crisis, to sustain terrible damage in mind and body and yet be there, sane, alive, still human" (*S* v). He goes on to say that his concern is not with the concentration camps, but with the people who survived them. To be sure, Michaels's concern in *Fugitive Pieces* is concurrent: first and foremost, Michaels has written a story about survival. And, as I will show, Michaels's thesis, like Des Pres', is that the survivor's struggle is "depended on fixed activities: on forms of social bonding and interchange, on collective resistance, on keeping human dignity and moral sense active" (Des Pres *S* vii).

Primo Levi has also written about survival, but he is concerned with the "true

witnesses," those who did not survive the camps. In *The Drowned and the Saved*, he meditates extensively on the shame and guilt prisoners felt *after* liberation, and concludes that, while shame results from having witnessed injustice and being utterly impotent, one also feels guilty when the chance to help others was rejected. He explains that a newly arrived or lesser-abled prisoner's demands for help was a constant in the camps, but that "his simply being there — itself an entreaty" was an appeal which was rarely satisfied. "There was no time, space, privacy, patience, strength; most often, the person to whom the request was addressed in turn found himself in a state of need, of credit" (59). The choice to turn away from one's fellow human being, to *not* respond was traumatic for prisoners. He writes about the ethical responsibility all survivors have to "the drowned" to speak as their proxy, not simply because they no longer have a voice, but because it is only thanks to their dying that others have survived.

Emmanuel Levinas asserts that ethics come before any ontology and this ethics lies in our responsibility to the Other. According to Levinas, we have a purely emotional connection with the Other, as opposed to purely knowable. This is a non-intentionality and a *non-static* state, meaning that this relationship is not reducible to a dialectical system, or to a state that an Ego experiences. For Levinas, this connection is immediate once we are shown the Other's face: "access to the face is straightaway ethical" (EI 85). The sixth commandment forbids us to kill, and it is precisely because we have access to the face of the Other (and all the ethical responsibility associated with turning towards the Other) that this law can be upheld. "The first word of the face is 'Thou shalt not kill.'"



(89). But our responsibility to the Other does not end at merely letting him live — the Other is higher than I am, and at the same time, destitute. “[I]t is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all. And me, whoever I may be, but as a ‘first person,’ I am he who finds the resources to respect the call” (89). The “first person” is always I, and the call beckons us to respond to the Other in our perpetual debt to the Other. This always unpaid debt concerns me, and me only. In this sense, the Other’s debt and responsibility is his affair: “the intersubjective relation is a non-symmetrical relation . . . I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it” (98). As Zygmunt Bauman has put it, “It is because of our loneliness that we open up to the Other and allow the Other to open up to us. It is because of our loneliness . . . that we turn into moral selves” (71). Although we are dependent upon our fellow human beings, our responsibility to them is our singular affair. In exploring the role of mutual care and responsibility in *Fugitive Pieces*, this chapter will draw primarily on the work of Levi, Des Pres and Levinas.

— *Fugitive Pieces* begins with Jakob Beer’s “rebirth”: “No one is born just once. If you’re lucky, you’ll emerge again in someone’s arms; or unlucky, wake when the long tail of terror brushes the inside of your skull” (5). As we know, Jakob is one of the lucky, one of “the saved,” born again into the arms of Athos Roussos, Jakob’s *koumbaros*. But before recounting his life with Athos, Jakob relates the aural memory of his parents’ murders and sister’s abduction. He expresses his empathy with the dead, “imagin[ing] that the dead lose every sense but their hearing” (6) and he further imagines what happens in

1. w =  
- not  
mutual

death: "The soul leaves the body instantly, as if it can hardly wait to be free" (7). He flees the traumatic scene and while in the forest he tells us that the dead "flew up," "the colour of flesh transforming into spirit" (7). Jakob writes of the struggle of his mother's spirit: "It was my responsibility to release her, a sin to keep her from ascending. I tore at my clothes, my hair. She was gone" (8). Jakob's rending of his clothes establishes him as a mourner, and, the only one left of his family, he is situated as the sole survivor. As a mourner and a survivor, Jakob is in need of care, a need epitomized by Athos who says, "We must carry each other. If we don't have this, what are we. . ." (14). This mutual care, Des Pres argues, is how people could live "in extremity." "Reports by survivors regularly include small deeds of courage and resistance, of help and mutual care" (S 94), and although the monstrosity of the camps would seem to overshadow any goodness, according to Des Pres, one of the elements that enabled survival in the camps was the support of others.

Jakob also reflects Levi's survivor: the mnemonic record is traumatic in itself and is dense with emotions, not the least of which is shame. Jakob tries to convince himself: "It's right, it's necessary to run. . ." (13), but his memories haunt him, and he is particularly plagued by what he cannot remember. "I can no longer remember their faces, but I imagine expressions trying to use up a lifetime of love in the last second" (19). His responsibility to the dead goes beyond commemoration to imagination by way of his not completely allegorical incorporation of his lost loved ones. Des Pres expresses it thus, "It is not an exaggeration, not merely a metaphor, to say that the survivor's identity includes

the dead" (S 38). This sounds remarkably close to Jakob's words, "It's no metaphor to feel the influence of the dead in the world" (53), which he quite literally does when he feels Bella on the edge of his bed, or watching him "with curiosity and sympathy from her side of the gossamer wall" (31), or when he waits for the ghost of his sister to pass through the doorway. And just as Levi asks with his question, "Are you ashamed because you are alive in place of another?" (62), Jakob reflects, "While I hid in the radiant light of Athos's island, thousands suffocated in darkness" (45). As if echoing Levi's question, he speculates, "To survive was to escape fate. But if you escape your fate, whose life do you then step into?" (48)

Underlining Bauman's assertion that "[d]ilemmas have no ready-made solutions" (2), Jakob's book of poetry, aptly entitled *Dilemma Poems*, stresses the ambivalence of responsibility, of choosing goodness and evil. Jakob's inability to recall his loved ones' faces and his insistence that "one learns nothing from a man's face" (93), dismissing Athos's attempt to convince Jakob of his love and caring would seem to posit him outside of Levinas's ethics. But Jakob is not necessarily disputing that the face, as Levinas maintains, is what reveals man's *human-ness*; after all, Jakob says that when he emerged from the archeological dig, Athos only knew he was human when Jakob's "mud mask cracked with tears" (12). When Jakob asks, "If truth is not in the face, then where is it? In the hands! In the hands" (93), he is not rejecting the Levinasian face, but rather rejecting an ethics in terms of a Manichean split: Man is neither simply good nor simply evil; one cannot see into a man's soul through his eyes, through his face. That is how the

Nazis could perform their duty with “no perversion of features while they did their deeds” (93). It is precisely in a man’s deeds, that is, his hands, where the complexity of the ambivalence of responsibility lies. And not only what a man does, but does *not* do: “what is the smallest act of kindness that is considered heroic? In those days, to be moral required no more than the slightest flicker of movement — a micrometre — of eyes looking away or blinking, while a running man crossed a field” (162).<sup>13</sup> The freedom of choice and responsibility are echoed over and over in the text: “To be proved true, violence need only occur once. But good is proven true by repetition” (162). Des Pres emphasizes this dilemma when he writes, “People still free must decide how much their ‘freedom’ is worth: how many lies they will live by, how far they will acquiesce while their neighbors are destroyed. The choice is always there” (S 17).

On the first night Athos and Jakob are in Athens, Kostas and Daphne relate their experience of the war years. They tell of the kindness of a British soldier and then about the senseless cruelty<sup>14</sup> of the German soldier whom they were forced to take in. They further emphasize the extremity of human action when they relate stories of townspeople giving the last of their food to help others and also of “whole families being killed for a case of currants or a sack of flour” (66). This passage underlines the disintegration of

---

<sup>13</sup> For an extended look at the ambivalence of morality, see Philip Hallie’s essay “Writing about Ethical Ambivalence during the Holocaust” in *Writing and the Holocaust*.

<sup>14</sup> Levi dedicates a chapter of *The Drowned and the Saved* entitled “Useless Violence” to senseless cruelty, making the point that some violence is in fact *useful*, but that the Hitlerian years “were characterised by the sole purpose of creating pain, occasionally having a purpose, though always redundant, always disproportionate to the purpose itself” (83).

community, which consequently approaches the concept of collective responsibility, wherein members of a community are held responsible for things they may not have participated in, but which were done in their name. Levinas asserts "I am responsible even for the Other's responsibility" (*EI* 99) meanwhile stressing that one's subjectivity is incumbent on one's responsibility: "I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me. Such is my inalienable identity of subject" (101). Therefore, responsibility for one's deeds solely lies with each and every individual. As Jakob reminds us, "There were the few, like Athos, who chose to do good at great personal risk; those who never confused objects with humans, who knew the difference between the naming and the named. Because the rescuers couldn't lose sight, literally, of the human, again and again they give us the same explanation for their heroism: 'What choice did I have?'" (167).

Athos's lessons in "remote causes" emphasize the significance of cause and effect, deeds and responsibility. Athos, as teacher, trauma therapist and rescuer, is the embodiment of the responsible being. He responds to Jakob, recognizes his humanness through the mud mask and provides a physical and emotional haven in Greece for him throughout the war and afterwards in Canada. He is his "brother's keeper," but aware of their interdependence: "If you hurt yourself, Jakob, I will have to hurt myself. You will have proven to me my love for you is useless" (45). And indeed Jakob is required to look after Athos when his depression strikes. But Athos also stresses to Jakob the loneliness of responsibility and the power of choice. "I can't save a boy from a burning building.

Instead he must save me from the attempt; he must leap to earth” (45). These ethical lessons of Athos’s grant Jakob his “second history” (20), and Athos too provides Jakob with the new language he so desperately longs for “to cleanse [his] mouth of memory” (22). Athos teaches him Greek, the “twisting twin of Hebrew” (21), without letting Jakob forget the language of his past, marking it as his future heritage. D. G. Myers points out that for Levinas, the fact that responsibility precedes understanding would seem to be paradoxical “since the response to another usually takes the form of speech and speech is usually taken to designate a meaning” (7). However, Levinas observes that speech has a moral purpose distinct from a linguistic purpose: along with disclosing a semantic content, you speak to another to initiate and to deepen relationships. And, as always with the Other, you await a response. “All speech is testimonial before it is propositional” (7). Therefore, not only does language hold a destructive power in the novel, but it also contains the potential for genuine human contact, evidenced by the healing aspect of Athos’s stories, and later Michaela’s: “It seems to be absolution simply to listen to her” (179).

Part of the healing induced by Athos’s stories is an element of instruction and edification. After again professing to be Jakob’s godfather and marriage sponsor for his sons, Athos stresses Jakob’s and his interdependence in a kabbalistic-like analogy,<sup>15</sup>

The spirit in the body is like wine in a glass; when it spills, it seeps into air and

---

<sup>15</sup> *Zimzum* and *tikkun* represent the broken vessel and its restitution in the Lurianic creation myth. See Chapter One of this thesis.

earth and light. . . . It's a mistake to think it's the small things we control and not the large, it's the other way around! We can't stop the small accident, the tiny detail that conspires into fate: the extra moment you run back for something forgotten, a moment that saves you from an accident — or causes one. But we can assert the largest order, the large human values daily, the only order large enough to see (22).

Predicting Jakob's and Michaela's accidental deaths, Athos's guidance encapsulates the moral of his lessons, including the stories of the Roussos family, the Scott arctic expedition and Athos's account of the natural sciences: the large, human values are care, mutual aid and responsibility for the Other. As Des Pres writes, "Survivors do not choose their fate," but collectively, humankind is responsible for that fate and the fate of all individuals (S 13). Athos's understanding of responsibility extends to all Jews, witnessed by such actions as his hiding their neighbor's Jewish grandson and the belated kaddish which he, Kostos, Daphne and Jakob say "for [Jakob's] parents, for the Jews of Crete, for all who have no one to recall their names." This collective responsibility is the motive behind another of Athos's lessons to Jakob: "look carefully; record what you see" (44). The responsibility to bear witness, according to most, if not all, survivor accounts, is of paramount importance. But this too is part of Jakob's struggle with language: "And even if an act could be forgiven, no one could bear the responsibility of forgiveness on behalf of the dead. No act of violence is ever resolved. When the one who can forgive can no longer speak, there is only silence" (161). Or, as Des Pres writes, "Silence constitutes the

silence of the dead

realm of the dead.” But Des Pres, like Michaels in *Fugitive Pieces*, resolves this dilemma: “In the survivor’s voice the dead’s own scream is active.” He asserts that “[t]his is a primary source of the will to bear witness: the survivor allows the dead their voice; he makes the silence heard” (S 36). This Jakob does, at first hearing the voices of the dead and later supplying them, even if he has to “blaspheme by imagining.”

Jakob’s experience of Athos’s death profoundly affects his understanding of human relationships. His discovery of Athos’s and his wife Helen’s letters delineates what can be known, or imagined, about another and what remains private. Jakob tells us, “I know only fragments of what Athos’s death contains. . . . When a man dies, his secrets bond like crystals, like frost on a window. His last breath obscures the glass” (114). After Jakob discovers that Athos had continued his search for Bella right up until the end of his life, he takes it upon himself to finish Athos’s life’s work. For three years, he incorporates Athos by way of consuming his work, so much so that his godfather’s ghost looms present. “Working in his study, alone now in our flat, I felt Athos’s presence so strongly I could smell his pipe, I could feel his hand on my shoulder. . . . In his research, Athos descends so far that he reaches a place where redemption is possible, but it is only the redemption of tragedy” (119-20). The redemption of tragedy is redemption because it is *truth*, untangling the manipulation of the Germans’ abuse of history, and likewise it is tragic because it is true. For Jakob, as he tells us, his own descent would continue in the seemingly unending task of mourning. Jakob, who has spent so many years in hiding haunted by ghosts, is closer than ever to being completely alone. “I wept with emptiness



as I typed his dedication, for his colleagues at Biskupin: ‘Murder steals from a man his future. It steals from him his own death. But it must not steal from him his life.’” (120).

This is Heideggerian in tone; Jakob seems to be asserting that one’s death is one’s own and cannot be experienced by another, our own being-towards-death, if it were not for the fact of murder. But Jakob is more Levinasian, for as Levinas maintains, our relation with

our own death is first and foremost made up of the emotional and intellectual repercussions of the knowledge of *the death of others*. The experience of the Other is not reducible to the recognition of ourselves in the face of the Other: our experience of the Other’s death lies beyond experience, it cannot be understood by analogy, it is beyond the self, and *precisely therefore* it is dreadful. This is the final lesson Jakob learns from Athos: “I know I must honour Athos’s lessons, especially one: to make love necessary. But I do not understand that this is also my promise to Bella. And that to honour them both, I must resolve a perpetual thirst” (121).

After years of dedicating himself to Athos’s work, Jakob’s memories and visions of Bella begin to fade and, with Bella slipping away and his duty to Athos complete, Alex comes into Jakob’s life. Jakob is attracted to Alex’s freedom, vitality and directness, in short, everything he does not have, including her ease with language. She is a lover of words and puzzles and a creator of palindromes; Jakob “ache[s] with tenderness for all the frustrated innocence of her extravagant tongue” (132). However, Jakob is still thirsting for missing information, *terra incognita*, and this Alex cannot fulfill. As he searches to find exactly what he has lost, Alex disrupts this process “with her shameless vitality” in an

attempt to rescue him. But she cannot help him with his traumatic past as Athos did. The result of her impotence is a fracturing of their relationship, and she ultimately turns away from him. For Alex, Jakob is like the dead that haunt him: He is not able to respond to her. Levinas writes “Death is the disappearance in beings of those expressive movements that are always responses,” therefore, death is a non-response (*GDT* 9). This non-response of the Other masks his face, that is, the human-ness of the Other. Jakob seems less than human to Alex; he is emotionally unmovable. And indeed, when Alex leaves him, he is physically unable to “move a muscle or cell” (148). So he falls further in to his descent and begins imagining not only his sister’s voice, but constructs stories of other victims of the Nazis. “One can look deeply for meaning or one can invent it” (136), and Jakob has chosen to invent it.

Jakob writes, “There’s a precise moment when we reject contradiction. This moment of choice is the lie we will live by. What is often dearest to us is dearer than truth” (166). What we simply cannot fathom, what goes beyond the imagination, we reject as being true. For Jakob, this is the destruction caused by the Holocaust, including his sister’s death. Therefore, he chooses his lie. His imaginings concern not only spirit but flesh, for as Jakob tells us, “We look for the spirit precisely in the place of greatest degradation” (167), and that place is the body. It is as if Jakob hopes to find truth at the absolute limit of body and soul. Des Pres explains that the body is too vulnerable for us to believe that it is any more than a vessel for the spirit; therefore, we assert that the death of the body, in all its frailty, cannot be the end, “the body is *not* the self” (*S* 41-2). In the

final chapter of *The Survivor*, Des Pres argues that survival depends on life literally, drawing on C. H. Waddington's phrase, "biological wisdom." He insists there is nothing transcendental, no teleology, no fate or grand design to survival: "Life has no purpose beyond itself; or rather, having arisen by chance in an alien universe, life is its own ground and purpose, and the entire aim of its vast activity is to establish stable systems and endure" (193-4). Life in extremity strips the human self of spiritual and physical mediations, until there is literally nothing left to persist through the suffering of the camps but the body itself (181). When Jakob describes the victims in the gas chambers so vividly, passages I have referred to earlier as being problematic, he concludes with what seems to be an explanation of "[t]he bare autonomic faith of the body" (168).

At that moment of utmost degradation, in that twisted reef, is the most obscene testament of grace. For can anyone tell with absolute certainty the difference between the sounds of those who are in despair and those who want desperately to believe? The moment when our faith in man is forced to change, anatomically — mercilessly — into faith (168).

This moment is a turning point for Jakob because he sees the promise he must keep to Athos and Bella revolves on this faith: Jakob sees that Athos's faith, a faith a younger Jakob found "unbearable" (59), issued from the understanding that faith in God has become complicated by the deeds of men, but what remains is faith in the continuity of life itself. And this is when Jakob's poetry begins to emerge in the text; he realizes "*To remain with the dead is to abandon them*" (170). Des Pres writes that the "survivor turns

back to life because a process of healing, of inner repair, has had the time to complete itself" (S 85), and he continues, "the moment of waking coincided with the resolution to bear witness" (86). Jakob is able to respond to Athos's lessons, including bearing witness, for Bella and all Jews. This "obscene testament of grace" can be understood in relation to a feature of Jewish mysticism as described by Levinas. Levinas explains that in certain very old prayers, the faithful begin by saying to God *Thou* and finish by saying *He*,

as if, in the course of this approach to the 'Thou' its transcendence into 'He' intervened. . . . Thus, in the 'Here I am!' approach of the Other, the Infinite does not show itself. How then does it take on meaning? I will say that the subject who says 'Here I am!' *testifies* to the Infinite [italics Levinas's] (EI 106).

It is through this testimony (and *not* the testimony of knowledge and thematization), that the "Infinite glorifies *itself*," but this mode of revelation gives us nothing (107).

Therefore, the goodness, the God, in man should not be searched for; rather the *human* in man must give us faith — a faith like the Stone Carriers, to which the allusion to Sisyphus cannot go unnoticed, whose "insane task was not futile only in the sense that faith is not futile" (53).

The majority of critics maintain that Jakob is saved by "the ardent and glorious" Michaela, as phrased rather sarcastically by Kertzer. Indeed Jakob credits Michaela with his salvation: "To be saved by such a small body" (183). However, although Jakob's redemption may be completed once he finds Michaela, Athos has initiated his healing and the companionship of Jakob's friends Maurice and Irena Salman, almost as a substitute

couple for Kostas and Daphne, also save him (120). To be sure, if Alex is unable to move Jakob, if he is unable to respond to her, then Michaela represents to the fullest a responding to Jakob's pain the moment "she has heard everything" and "is crying for Bella." He writes, "The joy of being recognized and the stabbing loss: recognized for the first time" (182). Michaela has taken on Jakob's pain, "her hands carry [his] memories" (192), and by her response to him and his ghosts, Jakob's redemption is complete.

In Chapter One I argued the viability of redemption in a Holocaust text, particularly the way it unfolds in *Fugitive Pieces*. Maintaining that the themes of redemption and responsibility are connected, I find some of the same problems here as they concern Jakob's and Ben's stories. First and foremost, *Fugitive Pieces* is a story about survival, but Jakob is not a typical survivor. What does Jakob actually witness? He was never in the camps; he spent most of the war in hiding on Athos's island. Jakob tells us, "I did not witness the most important events of my life. My deepest story must be told by a blind man, a prisoner of sound" (17). So to what is he able to bear witness? His "witnessing" often amounts to imagining, which he also tells us, as well as alerting us to his struggle over that imagining. But the guilt he feels as a survivor cannot be fully equated with Levi's, or even Des Pres' survivor, in the latter's hesitancy to use the term "guilt," for the simple reason that Jakob's traumatic experience revolves around a void, what he has *not* undergone because he was not there. And finally, if Jakob's redemption comes about due to the responding of others, where is the loneliness in responsibility that Bauman and Levinas insist must also exist? Certainly Jakob's attempt to speak *for* the

dead illustrates his responsibility to the non-living, but there is no evidence of his reciprocating the dependency he has on others in his life. It is significant that Jakob's story is being told fifty years after the events: he has already worked through the traumatic events in his life and he has reached his state of salvation. Perhaps this explains the brighter overtone of his story compared to Ben's. But it is the unmistakable idealism of all of his relationships, even including his first marriage to the vivacious Alex, that strikes a cord of dissonance. To my mind, the parallel structure of the text complicates Jakob's story and, although I hesitate to use the term, Ben's story somewhat redeems the first part of the text.

Ben is the literal son of survivors, Jakob's figurative son and, as his name indicates, he represents all second-generation survivors. While Jakob's loss consumes him, true to Ben's role as survivors' son, absence dominates his life. Jakob receives his legacy, his "second history," from Athos, who replaces what is lost or missing with valuable life's lessons in the more benign form of the natural sciences. Ben's father too provides him with his "history," but through the raw truth of the events of the Holocaust. Jakob's childhood stories are of expeditions and geology, but for Ben, "Instead of hearing about ogres, trolls, witches, I heard disjointed references to kapos, haftlings, 'Ess Ess,' dark woods; a pyre of dark words" (217). In some ways Ben's parents possibly reflect Jakob's parents, for example, they have no names in the novel, but Ben's parents' past, unlike Jakob's parents' to him, is directly related to Ben. Jakob's nightmares stem from his imaginings, but Ben's nightmares emerge from his father, specifically his damaged

psychical relationship to food. For Jakob, his relationship to his father-figure is based on empathy and support; Ben's father is far too traumatized to offer Ben anything other than fear and pain. During Jakob's childhood, Athos is willing and able to empathize with him, but it is the young Ben who makes the effort to identify with his father. When Ben and his parents are at a cottage in the woods, he attempts to purge his fear by walking through the forest at night, asserting "[i]f my father could walk days, miles, then I could walk at least to the road" (220). Ben creeps through the woods in an attempt to connect with his father, but this act strengthens more Ben's symbolic bond with Jakob, of whom he writes, "You died not long after my father and I can't say which death made me reach again for your words" (255). Ben's parents die without ever revealing their secrets to Ben. Athos takes his secret with him too, but not completely; Jakob knows that Athos had a wife, but nothing about their relationship. That Athos was married is not directly related to Jakob's life the way that Ben's parents' secret is: Ben learns only belatedly that the secret of his siblings had colored his entire life: "I'll never know whether the two names on the back of my father's photograph, if they had ever been spoken, would have filled the silence of my parents' apartment" (280).

But the destructive power of his parents' secret is not limited to affecting Ben's past. By telling their secret to Naomi, Ben's mother has created a painful rift in their already tenuous relationship: "Privacy is the profundity of marriage, the place my mother's story invaded" (253). It is as if Athos's words in his letter to Helen needed to be read by Ben and Naomi, not Jakob: "a real marriage must always be a secret between two people.

... Our secrets will be our courage when we need it" (116). Ben's mother's "story" does not heal the way Athos's stories do for Jakob. Ben has felt the sting of the truth after years of bearing his parents' shame and paranoia, resulting in his own fear of intimacy.

When he sees that his earlier "defection" of moving away from his parents pales by comparison to this breach of trust, he flees from the painful domesticity of life with Naomi to search for Jakob's past.

When he arrives in Greece, the change in climate has an effect on Ben: he has left the cold, wet Toronto winter for the cool, invigorating, breezy atmosphere of Athos's family home. Although Ben figuratively is a "descendant" of the Roussos line, and in this sense he belongs there, the radiance of the place is not his, but Jakob's. Ben's search for Jakob's notebooks become less important to him than the search for Jakob *himself*: "The idea seized me: you're still alive. You're hiding to be left alone in your happiness" (269). However, this time Ben is the one in hiding and his search for Jakob's words becomes a quest for the key to Jakob's serenity. But Ben's search for redemption is complicated by his parents', that is, *his*, trauma, for as his mother asks, "Who dares to believe he will be saved twice?" (247) Ben's work in biography, ironic because of the gaps in his own life, has taught him that facts, places, events all amount to nothing "if you can't find the assumption your subject lives by" (222). If "Jakob Beer looks like a man who has finally found the right question" (234), then Ben is looking for the right answer. Jakob tells us that "Questions without answers must be asked very slowly" (159), but Ben notes upon meeting Jakob that "[o]nly a remarkably simple truth or a remarkably simple lie could put



such peace in a man” (207). We know that Jakob has chosen the lie he will live by and that Ben has had to face the very difficult and brutal reality of his parents’ near annihilations and the murder of his siblings. In a sense, Ben’s search for the answer to Jakob’s peace and serenity is doomed from the start.

Inevitably, Ben’s pursuit for Jakob’s equanimity, his transformation, must include “Michaela,” whom he finds in Petra. Like Jakob and Michaela, Ben and Petra have “an impressive physical life” (206), but, crucially, it is devoid of the spirituality the former shared. Ben and Petra’s affair is purely physical — after Petra rampages through Jakob’s house, she leaves Ben without any of the typical lover’s remorse. When Ben sees her in town, she is still wearing the jewelry with which he adorned her, but she is with another man. And Ben is unmoved by this display of anti-affection; he is more touched by the couple making love that he comes across in the field.

Ben’s memories catch up with him after Petra uncovers Jakob’s journals and Michaela’s secret note of her pregnancy, and these tokens of the past are symbolized by “Naomi’s scarf.” The significance of the reappearance of the scarf, first Jakob’s mother’s, then Michaela’s, Naomi’s and then Petra’s, ties the storyline together and brings it to its conclusion. Although Jakob’s journals are what Ben has been searching for, it is his wife’s words of interdependence that he recalls on his last night in Greece:

When we married, Naomi said: Sometimes we need both hands to climb out of a place. Sometimes there are steep places, where one has to walk ahead of the other. If I can’t find you, I’ll look deeper in myself. If I can’t keep up, if you’re

too far ahead, look back. Look back (292).

In his looking back, Ben asserts what Jakob could not: the loneliness of responsibility. )  
 He says, “At last my unhappiness is my own” (292). Ben’s thoughts for the first time delve into the future; for the first time, *he* imagines. But he promises to himself that the stories he tells Naomi will be of the wonder and fascinating facets of weather, not of the “random precision” of its violence. And in his tenacious optimism, he sees Naomi at home, notices her pain and accepts responsibility for the damage he has done to her: “I’m )\*  
 frightened by the way she looks down at her hands on the table” (293). Ben has learned the value of secrets, the destructive potential they have, and he chooses the lie he will live by not to save himself, but to spare his wife: “I will stop myself from confessing I was on Idhra with a woman, that her hair fell from the edge of the bed to the floor. . .” (294). Like Naomi as a child, who “wanted to eat everything” (294), Ben is finally on the verge of overcoming his emptiness as he faces the challenge of responding to Naomi and learning that the mutual care which enabled his parents to cling to life so desperately is what he needs in order to be redeemed.

As I have shown throughout this work, the structure of *Fugitive Pieces* is a significant key to unraveling this densely woven novel. Notably, while Jakob’s story ends with “The Gradual Instant,” in which he meets Michaela and then returns to Greece, his redemption complete, this chapter is missing in Ben’s story. The tragedy of the epigraph ) \*  
 telling of Jakob’s and Michaela’s deaths, and the fact that they had no children, is felt when he ends his story with his wish for his unborn child: “My son, my daughter: May

you never be deaf to love" (195). The full force of the epigraph's ironic twist is felt when we learn of Michaela's intention to announce her pregnancy to Jakob on the day of his death. However, Jakob's wish for his child is fulfilled through Ben, Jakob's figurative son, with Ben's story ending with the *hope and possibility* of redemption. The final chapter in Part II is "The Way Station," a crossroads, where Ben moves from his past memories to the potential of his future. And most significantly, unlike Jakob, he faces this crossroads alone. Perhaps in the end Ben finds some sort of faith, but it is not Jakob's "faith of the body," and he is not saved by anyone other than possibly himself. His understanding of mankind's interdependency is first and foremost preceded by an understanding of his own solitude and the necessary isolation of his responsibility as a being. And as the next chapter will show, his recovery comes about in isolation as well.

### Chapter Three: The Recover-ability of Memory and the Past

*Reaching far back into the years, they touch simultaneously epochs of their lives — with countless intervening days between — so widely separated from one another in Time.*

— Marcel Proust

In *Holocaust Testimonies: the ruins of memory*, Lawrence Langer describes the stories of the victims he interviews as “narrative[s] of ‘deprivation,’ not survival” (16). He writes, “If I have discovered anything in my investigation, it is that oral Holocaust testimonies are doomed on one level to remain disrupted narratives, not only by the vicissitudes of technology but by the quintessence of the experiences they record” (xi). For the former victims whom Langer interviews, the past bridges the present by way of the speaker’s narrative and the listener’s response; in a sense, the witness “returns” to the past (16). The present and the past are unreconciled for the survivor: “[their stories] do not function in time like other narratives, since the losses they record raise few expectations of renewal or hopes of reconciliation” (xi). Langer’s study concludes that although survivors live in the present and as well for the future, they are “hostages to a humiliating and painful past that their happier future does little to curtail” (xi).

Likewise, Cathy Caruth maintains that while traumatic recollection is a record of

the past, it is also a precise register of “the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned” (151). She points out that traumatic recollection is not a simple memory: although the images of traumatic re-enactment remain absolutely accurate, for the most part, they are inaccessible to conscious recall (151), hence nightmares, flashbacks, and involuntary memory. In her concise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder, Caruth writes:

there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event (4).

In consideration of Caruth’s definition and Langer’s research into survivor memory, this chapter will show how *Fugitive Pieces* can be read as a trauma novel, specifically by examining how memory works to disrupt time, blurring the characters’ present and past. Furthermore, I will explicate the roles history and historiography play in the novel in relation to time, that is, how past events and experiences extend into the present by way of Jakob’s testimonial-like story and Ben’s second-generation narrative. To discuss these issues, I will be looking closely at the metaphors of natural sciences, drawing on the work of Caruth, Langer, Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, and Geoffrey Hartman.

Jakob’s emergence from the ground, covered in the “[a]fterbirth of earth,” (5) does not correspond to his emotional and psychological rebirth: he encounters a lifetime of

grief burdened by trauma and, like all victims of trauma, he must “work through” his past before he has the chance of recovery. Having lost all his family and community, and having seen his parents’ bodies, result in traumatic memories which haunt Jakob, further complicated by the fact that he has not visually witnessed his family’s murders. Like the majority of the victims of the Holocaust, at that traumatic moment, he was unable to act or to influence the disastrous outcome. Van der Kolk and van der Hart explain that “a feeling of helplessness, of physical or emotional paralysis, is fundamental to making an experience traumatic: the person was unable to take any action that could affect the outcome of the events.” Therefore, physical or psychological immobilization can be a central feature, a result of the traumatic experience (175). And indeed Jakob is in hibernation for most of his adult life, remaining inert throughout his childhood, rousing himself only on the occasion when Athos is in need of his care and later for a short time during his brief marriage with Alex. He continues to find safety in the figurative “ground” on Athos’s island in Greece where Jakob and Athos “would come to share [their] secrets of the earth” (49), and later in their tiny apartment in Toronto, venturing out only rarely to travel back in geological time. Through Athos’s stories, Jakob is able to begin recuperating from trauma by way of the natural sciences, which are analogous to the preservation and recovery of his past. Athos passes on to Jakob his passion for paleobotany and geology, and natural history begins to relieve Jakob of his past, too recently experienced and too traumatic for him to face. Athos shows Jakob the recoverability of the past; he offers him preservation, but at a distance. Jakob recounts his

fascination with the archeological past: “To go back a year or two was impossible, absurd. To go back millennia — ah! that was . . . nothing” (30). Jakob faces the problem of how to talk about a past that is not *in* the past, that is still a living past. As Langer notes, “there is no need to revive what has never died” (*HT xv*). The “second history” Athos provides for Jakob is a logical, understandable history which can be explained in terms of cause and effect. Hence, Athos’s lesson in “remote causes” plays a large part in Jakob’s healing; these lessons, as Jakob tells us, replaced parts of him slowly, offering Jakob an initial “flexibility” over the past, what van der Kolk and van der Hart call “alternative scenarios” (178).

As the initiator of these alternative scenarios, this second history, Athos takes on the role of therapist to Jakob. Jakob recalls, “For years I was confined to small rooms. But Athos gave me another realm to inhabit, big as the globe and expansive as time” (29). Van der Kolk and van der Hart, drawing on the work of Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet and William James, explain that certain memories become obstacles that keep people from going on with their lives. By implanting alternative scenarios in Jakob, Athos enables Jakob gradually to come to terms with his past. Jakob says, “Athos was an expert in buried and abandoned places. His cosmology became mine. I grew into it naturally. In this way, his task became mine” (49). Athos’s stories do not replace Jakob’s past as much as accompany it, which is why when the Jews of Crete are drowned and the ancient community destroyed, Athos is unable to withdraw from what is happening. “All his stories went wrong halfway through, and reminded us of the sea” (43). He does not want

Jakob to forget his past: like Athos's stories of preservation, Jakob's past must be integrated into his present. This disruption of time through preservation is seen in Athos's story of the bog men. "Time stopped. And that is why, Athos explained, the bog men are so serene. Asleep for centuries, they are uncovered perfectly intact; thus they outlast their killers — whose bodies have long dissolved to dust" (49). Jakob, like the bog men, after his long hibernation, eventually finds the serenity which later becomes central to Ben's quest, and indeed through Jakob's poetry and "ghost stories," his loved ones "outlast" their killers, arresting time, preserving the past through the power of words. Significantly, Athos explains this to him and offers him this possibility; Athos is the initiator of Jakob's healing, and like a competent therapist, he suggests alternative scenarios to Jakob, but does not let him forget his past. And it is no coincidence that Athos is a specialist of preservation; he is naturally able to set Jakob on his path of redemption.

Symbolically, the earth provides another way for Jakob to work through his trauma regarding the past and time: "I learned the power we give to stones to hold human time" (32). The weight and burden of the past lies with Jakob, and like the stone-carriers described in the chapter named after them, who "carried their lives in their hands" (53), Jakob carries his future in his past; the potential for his redemption lies in his memories. Caruth explains that in traumatic memory's necessary belatedness, the history of that trauma can only take place through the listening of another. "The meaning of the trauma's address beyond itself concerns, indeed, not only individual isolation but a wider historical isolation that, in our time, is communicated on the level of our cultures" (11). For many



survivors, this results in a testimonial narrative, and for Jakob, his testimony takes the form of poetry. Characteristic of his own psychic work, his first book of poems is entitled *Groundwork* which “recount[s] the geology of the mass graves” (209), which, we learn later, sits on Ben’s desk. When Jakob writes that “[a]ny given moment — no matter how casual, how ordinary — is poised, full of gaping life” (19), he is speaking of moments in the past which acquire meaning only in retrospect. This is why scenes of domesticity are so painful to him: moments lost forever, except in memory. Further traumatic for Jakob is what he *cannot* remember and what he has never known: the struggle to fill in the blanks, the gaps in his memories, *terra nullius* (the uninhabited, unowned land), and to discover missing information, *terra incognita* (the unknown land), become the foci of Jakob’s writing.

Through the act of writing his memoirs, Jakob sets out to record his past. As he recalls the images of that past, he experiences it as alive, as the “now,” disrupting chronological time. Ben, whom we see largely in the present, pieces together Jakob’s biography, memoirs written by Jakob in the past, memoirs that in turn go back to a more distant past; and Jakob experiences an even more distant past, of involuntary memory. Like many of the memories throughout the novel, Jakob’s recollection of Athos reading at his desk in the evenings parallels the image of his past family evenings together. Objects take on a special significance whereby they figuratively embody the memory of their owner: Athos’s possessions are later found by Ben in Jakob’s study, the full meaning of which only the reader knows; Alex’s hairbrush on the sink calls to mind Jakob’s sister

Bella's brush. The physicality of the lost loved ones' objects become a sort of commemoration to them. Jakob's fascination with hands, and his assertion that "truth is not in the face," but "[i]n the hands," (93) resurfaces when Ben discovers Jakob's extensive collection of door-knockers, all shaped like hands, echoing "[t]he burst door" preceding his family's slaughter (7). Jakob's appreciation of an object's connection to its owner is seen by his respect for the explorer Edmund Wilson's persistence in carrying a borrowed book of poetry all the way to the end of his expedition. "I could easily imagine carrying a favoured item to the ends of the earth, if only to help me believe I'd see its beloved owner again" (36). The dead are incorporated in objects and Jakob's poetry, but nowhere is the dead more alive than in Jakob himself. To elaborate on this, I will now turn to Freud's seminal work on mourning, *Mourning and Melancholia*.

Freud explains that the normal reaction to the death of a loved one is mourning, opposing this reaction to melancholy, which he cites as being pathological. He defines the distinguishing features of melancholy as being "a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings" (244). He maintains that the features remain the same for profound mourning, with the disturbance of self-regard absent. Freud's definition describes closely Jakob's state of profound mourning, or more likely, melancholy, even to the degree of "self-revilings" in the form of survivor guilt. But what about Freud's insistence on "the work which mourning performs" ? (244) Reality proves to the mourner that the loved one

is gone, but to abandon a loved one causes understandable opposition. “This opposition can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the [lost] object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis” (244). Freud’s explanation of the mourning process allows that it requires “a great expense of time and cathectic energy” for the mourner to return to reality (245), a position also held by Jakob when he tells us, “Grief requires time” (54). But, according to Freud, grief also requires a cathecting, which Jakob never seems able to do. Instead, Jakob’s incorporation of the dead results in their remaining alive with him; this is why he waits for Bella to pass through the door before him; this is why his godfather’s ghost looks over his shoulder as he finishes his book on the Nazis’ destruction of archeology. Jakob offers an explanation for these hallucinatory visions: “Our relation to the dead continues to change because we continue to love them” (165). The only way for Jakob to maintain relationships with Athos and Bella is by keeping them alive within his imagination, by “devouring” them. Freud explains, “The ego wants to incorporate this [lost] object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it” (249-50).

In *Mourning Becomes the Law*, Gillian Rose defines the above two conditions of melancholy and mourning as “aberrated” and “inaugurated” mourning. Referring to the work of literary critic Laurence A. Rickels, Rose defines aberrated mourning as resulting from death which is unable to be ritually committed or mourned, therefore the lost ones become ghosts or the living dead to the mourner. In such mourning there is no release

into grief and the mourner is trapped in the state of having been deserted by the loved one, unable to work through the “contradictory emotions aroused by bereavement” (*MBL* 70). In this condition of incomplete mourning, Rose also maintains that an incorporation of the remains of the dead occurs. Unlike aberrated mourning, inaugurated mourning acknowledges the death of the other, the need to release the dead, and the turning back towards everyday life and relationships, away from the desolate inner grief and pain of death. In her essay entitled “. . . to give . . . death a place’ Rejecting the ‘ineffability’ of the Holocaust: the work of Gillian Rose and Anne Michaels,” Ann Parry considers “a fictional representation of the mourning arising from Holocaust experience in critical relation to Rose’s reflections on the process” (356). Parry concludes that “[i]n the case of Jakob inaugurated mourning is unequivocally achieved, whilst Ben’s condition remains at the end of the narrative still ‘aberrated’.” For Jakob, there is no possibility that any of his lost loved ones “can receive proper burial and they are entombed, unappeased, within Jakob himself. In particular, Bella, . . . who ‘clings’ to him as he flees the scene of terror.” Having all of those dear to him destroyed by “massive violence he is unable even to lay them to rest and so he cannot separate himself from them and let them go” (356).

Although Jakob begins to see the need to accept the loss of his loved ones and to release them when he says, “*To remain with the dead is to abandon them*” (170), Jakob’s ultimate healing lies in his movement toward Michaela’s love. In another reference to Pierre Janet, van der Kolk and van der Hart point out that “the successful action of the organism upon the environment is essential for the successful integration of memories.” In

fact, they note that “[Janet] even viewed active memory itself as an action” (175). Parry, using Rose’s model, maintains that although Jakob is locked into the painful dejection that characterizes aberrated mourning, there are forces simultaneously at work (Athos’s instruction and the healing power of time itself) that lead him to the state of inaugurated mourning. And this inaugurated mourning as defined by Rose (or integration of his memories as defined by van der Kolk and van der Hart) reaches its completion when Michaela cries for Bella, taking on Jakob’s memories and recognizing the past which so damaged him (Parry 359). This recognition is something which Alex could never give to Jakob: she “barges in with her shameless vitality” dispelling his past. “But each time a memory or story slinks away, it takes more of me with it” (144). To recover from trauma, Jakob’s past must be faced and made part of the unified whole of his present.

Athos lays the “groundwork” for Jakob’s healing which is fulfilled by Michaela’s love, empathy and acceptance. Jakob tells us, “We think that change occurs suddenly, but even I have learned better. Happiness is wild and arbitrary, but it’s not sudden” (185), hence, “the gradual instant.” Jakob is no longer tormented by his past, but can find consolation in it through Michaela, whose “hands carry [his] memories” (192). As Jakob watches Michaela bake a pie, parallel memories of Jakob’s mother emerge; Michaela’s mother’s stories call to mind those of Jakob’s family, but now no phantoms, no living dead are part of Jakob’s memories. He no longer needs to imagine to make sense of his memories; they now stand as a record of his past, not as *terra incognita*. “There’s no absence, if there remains even the memory of absence. Memory dies unless it’s given a

use" (193). By integrating his past with his present life with Michaela, Jakob has developed a constructive use for his memories.

Parry's eloquently stated argument offers an angle into untangling this densely constructed novel. By drawing on the philosophy of Rose, Parry categorizes Part I of the novel, Jakob's story, as modern because of his arrival at inaugurated mourning, propelled by the reason of Athos and Michaela. In contrast, in Part II Ben's aberrated condition corresponds to Rose's definition of post-modernism in its rejection of reason and tradition. "The ineffability of the Holocaust, asserted so often by philosophers associated with post-modernism, finds its echo in Ben's refusal to admit Naomi into his sorrow and allow it to be dissolved. Whilst adhering to such a position mourning can only produce 'disgrace of revelation',<sup>16</sup> that is no hope of redemption" [sic] (363). Parry attempts to show that Ben's story, with its lack of closure, its rejection of logic and refusal to allow for a full recovery situate Part II as post-modern. On the other hand, Jakob's story is modern because of its resolution and its aim to assert a purpose in suffering. I would argue that the text, specifically Jakob's story, is not representative of modernism; it is far too optimistic. Perhaps isolating the romantic tone of Jakob's story better suits Part I and the scepticism of Part II might very well situate Ben's story as modern. Nonetheless, by delineating the dual outcomes of the novel, Parry offers a concise reading that makes sense of a highly metaphorical and symbolic text. However, by relying on a non-fictional

---

<sup>16</sup> This quotation is from *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* by G. Rose, page 183, Oxford: Blackwells (1993).

event as its background, *Fugitive Pieces* is somewhat constrained as to the limits of its representation. As Rose herself has said, “The limits of representation are not solely quantitative. . . More profoundly, the limits of representation are configurative: they concern the relation between configuration and meaning” (*MBL* 48). My concern, as I stress elsewhere, is with precisely this relation: how events figure into representation within the text and what the ultimate outcome is of such a representation. After all, *Fugitive Pieces* is not an analogy of the Holocaust, it is a narrative relying on the event, or more to the point, representing the outcome of the event via survivors. To look at the novel only as a work of mourning, as Parry has, or as a trauma novel, as I have in this chapter thus far, is to my mind myopic. *Fugitive Pieces* is a story about fictional Holocaust survivors, first and second-generation. Therefore, a reading of the text would be incomplete without taking into consideration the experiences of actual Holocaust survivors and their interpretation of the event.

Rose suggests that working through loss entails not only acceptance of the loss, but acceptance of the love that enabled one to experience the pain of bereavement.<sup>17</sup> This acceptance is grounded in reason and a return to the reality of the living. Rose explains, “In the title, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, ‘Becomes’ entertains the gradual process involved, and connotation of ‘suiting’ or ‘enhancing’ the law in the overcoming of mourning” (12). Succinctly put, the “Becomes” is the process, the “work” of mourning to

---

<sup>17</sup> See *Love's Work* by G. Rose, especially Chapter 5, London: Chatto & Windus (1995).

which Freud refers. Completed mourning means integrated memories where “respect for reality gains the day” (Freud 244). Although van der Kolk and van der Hart tentatively suggest that supplying the victim of trauma with “alternative scenarios” and “flexibility” of memory can provide many patients with the ability “to soften the intrusive power of the original, unmitigated horror” (178), they also point out that “[b]eing unable to reconcile oneself to the past is at least in part dependent upon the nature of the trauma.”

Furthermore, they question whether it is not “a sacrilege of the traumatic experience” to play with the reality of the past. They ask, “Can the Auschwitz experience and the loss of innumerable family members during the Holocaust really be integrated, be made part of one’s autobiography?” (178) To address their unanswered question, I will turn to some words offered by “former victims,” a phrase Langer prefers to the term “survivor.”

One former victim of Auschwitz tells of his family who were all “sent to the left” except him and his older brother, who were instead chosen to be sent to a factory at Gorlitz. He decides to risk his own life and pulls his younger brother into the group destined for the factory, thus “saving” his brother from probable death at Auschwitz. One day his brother is late for role call and is beaten to death. Later, marching from Gorlitz as the Russians approach, his older brother drops from hunger. As the Russian advance slows, they return to Gorlitz, though his brother, who is too weak to walk, is sent back by truck. He learns later that his brother, apparently deemed not worth saving, had been left outside the barracks and froze to death. In his testimony forty years later, he asks,

How can you live with that? Everybody was gone from me. Since then I couldn’t



get somebody (sic). I live in torture all these years. Suicide was on my mind. But I had family [meaning his *present* family]; I loved them so much. How do you explain that? How do you tell? (*HT* 94)

As Langer notes, this type of illogical juxtaposing of contradictory positions, i.e., “Since then I couldn’t get somebody” and “But I had family”, does not seem to occur to the witness. He simply has not been able to assimilate his past into his present life (94).

Langer writes “There is no closure, because the victims who have *not* survived — in many ways, the most important ‘characters’ in these narratives — have left no personal voice behind. They can only be evoked, spoken *about*” [italics Langer’s] (21). And indeed this is what Jakob does, he speaks about his parents, sister, community, the drowned Jews of Greece, those murdered in the gas chambers, and when their fate is unknown to him, he turns to his imagination. He as well turns to survivor testimony, and it is at this point in his memoirs, *Phosphorus*, that we first begin to see Jakob’s early poetry and two of his “ghost stories” in italics interspersed throughout the narrative. But unlike Ben’s father, who reads “another survivor account, another article with photographs” (231) because of his inability to integrate his past with his present life – a survivor who is living, in Langer’s words, “a permanent duality” (*HT* 177) – Jakob is trying to fill in the missing information of his past. His own trauma is compounded by survivor guilt as he realizes that while he was safe, others were being murdered: “Every moment is two moments” (143). Jakob becomes consumed with not just the survivors’ testimonies of the event, but of the “personal voice” of the victims who did not survive: “I couldn’t turn my anguish from the

precise moment of death. I was focused on that historical split second: the tableau of the haunting trinity — perpetrator, victim, witness” (140). But where does Jakob fit into this trinity? And what about the role of “survivor”? In the first four chapters of Part I, Jakob would appear to be a victim; although he indeed is the sole survivor of his family, he is undoubtedly a victim of trauma. But a transformation takes place in Jakob once he sets his words down, once he writes poetry. At this point, he becomes a witness, albeit a unique kind as he tells us “I did not witness the most important events of my life” (17). The reconstruction of his memories — *terra incognita*, and construction of missing information about his past — *terra nullius*, as well as the act of writing poetry, all contribute to his recovery from trauma. Caruth’s insistence that the victim of trauma needs to have a means of address, a way to come through the isolation of the event, is evident in Jakob’s writing, beginning with the completion and release of Athos’s work on the SS Ahnenerbe’s manipulation of history and later through his own stories and poems. The action of writing, of witnessing, leads up to Jakob assuming the role of a survivor when he meets Michaela and she takes on his memories.

In Chapter One, I argued that Jakob represents all Jews and all Holocaust survivors. However, as we know, Jakob was not there; he was not in the camps and although it can be assumed he was in the ghetto, these are not the memories that haunt him. Indeed, the memories that trouble him and further complicate his trauma are the ones which he labels as *terra nullius* — missing information. Nonetheless, we know Jakob to be a first-generation survivor, which is further suggested by his dilemma over choices:

“For years after the war, even the smallest decision was an agony” (77). This inability to confirm decisions or make choices is repeated by survivors and concisely phrased by Langer. “The events [camp inmates] endured rudely dispels as misconception the idea that choice is purely an internal matter, immune to circumstances and chance.” Langer notes that when former victims insist that the predicaments in which they found themselves in the ghettos and camps were “different,” they are “making a specific appeal to us to abandon traditional assumptions about moral conduct and the ‘privileged’ distinctions between right and wrong that usually inspire such assumptions” (*HT* xii). Although Jakob can understand the idea of cause and effect in geology, he is unable to grasp any sort of agency in his life until in retrospect when he recalls Athos’s words: “There was luck in our meeting, Jakob, but first you had to run” (84). Parry sees Athos as the quintessential modern voice of reason: “He insists that the boy recognise ‘a reasonable explanation’” (361). But what reasonable explanation can be given for the catastrophe dubbed “the Holocaust”? I do not think for a moment that Michaels is attempting to offer an all-encompassing explanation for the Holocaust, but is it feasible to believe that Jakob, the representative “first-generation survivor” of the narrative, can integrate his past with his present, a feat which Langer asserts is not possible, and that he can recover from the trauma of Auschwitz? Perhaps in order to offer a positive response to this question, we must consider again the fact that Jakob, although he may represent all survivors, is not the typical survivor. Adrienne Kertzer argues that Jakob is more of a second-generation survivor due to the emphasis on the aural in Jakob’s witnessing. Kertzer writes that

children of survivors “construct their relationship to their families’ stories primarily in terms of the partial knowledge produced by listening.” She asks what do we hear then if we read *Fugitive Pieces* to be a novel of the second-generation, “a novel about the children who come after, the children who listen” (196).

The term “second-generation witness,” which I am using interchangeably with “second-generation survivor,” was used in Geoffrey Hartman’s *The Longest Shadow*. Since then the phrase has been broadened to the term “secondary witness,” a concept, Hartman says, “without generational limit” which includes “all who could be called witnesses because they are still in touch with the first generation or who look at the Shoah not as something enclosed in the past but as a contemporary issue requiring an intensity of representation close to eyewitness report” (36). Hartman stretches this nomenclature even further with the term “intellectual witness.” He writes, “The passing of the survivor does not mean the passing of the witness. Many have become witnesses by adoption and investigate what happened with religious fervor” (38). Taking Hartman’s expanded concept of witness, Jakob, in his “fervor,” to investigate and replace his memories, for as Hartman notes, “Memories that do not exist have to be replaced” (38), indeed fits the definition of the “intellectual witness.” By “intellectual” Hartman is referring to the Enlightenment’s “impartial spectator,” meaning that the role one plays is that of a bystander who observes the event from an ambiguous position. But, however much “detached and belated” this individual is, once he learns of the event and does nothing and remains indifferent, he becomes like the observer who failed to react (39); the bystander

then becomes the third element in Jakob's trinity: perpetrator, victim, witness. Jakob can be seen as this type of witness. He (or perhaps Michaels) would also seem to be the type of writer described by Hartman who "often transgress[es] a boundary. Imaginative power can push [a writer] across a threshold into over-identifying with victims or a victimized generation, to the point of *seeking a mystical correspondence with the dead*" [italics mine] (41). As well as "recover[ing] some of that lost density of life (or specifically of death) through the imaginative recreation" (40), in his search to commune with the dead, Jakob may well have crossed the boundary of over-identification.

Which brings me back to Jakob's story and what I have called his "redemption" elsewhere and what here would be better termed his "recovery." Although the language on which Langer focuses in his study precludes any such recovery, other writers like Terrence Des Pres and Viktor Frankl, the latter himself an inmate of several camps, discuss the "purpose" of overcoming such a profound trauma. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, his work on life in the camps, Frankl even asserts that "[i]f there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering" (106). He talks about "knowing how to die" (132) and it being one's "fate to suffer" (123), but, like Primo Levi, he nonetheless expresses his indebtedness to "the best [who] did not return" (7). And like Levi, Frankl stresses the "delusion of reprieve" (14) at having survived, and Frankl himself describes haunting and lingering memories which would seem for him to have never been "integrated." Caruth explains that "for those who undergo trauma, it is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic; that *survival itself*, in

other words, *can be a crisis*" [italics Caruth's] (9).

Ben, the representative second-generation witness, shares much in common with Jakob; he is the figurative son of all survivors, including Jakob. His story is also a search for a past riddled with gaps, and like Jakob, Ben carries the burden of memory. But how does one "remember" an event not experienced? This question applies to both protagonists in the novel, but Jakob's and Ben's stories offer up different answers. In "Transmission of Memory, The Post-Holocaust Generation in the Diaspora," Ellen Fine discusses two types of memory for the generation that comes after: collective memory and absent memory. "[T]he members of [the post-Holocaust] generation have been marked by images of an experience that reverberates through their lives. They continue to 'remember' an event not lived through." This defines not only Ben's experience of the Holocaust, but also Jakob's. Although Kertzer's argument stresses that Jakob's story can read as a second-generation narrative because of its emphasis on listening, to my mind it is first and foremost his *absence* that posits him as part of the generation after. In contrast to the presence of transmitted collective memory, another form of memory manifests itself — absent memory. Fine writes, "The 'absent memory' is filled with blanks, silence, a sense of void, and sense of regret for not having been *there*" [italics Fine's] (187). She explains that absent memory often results in "appropriating the Holocaust and allying [oneself] with the persecuted victims." The individual may also be critical of himself for usurping an identity and memory that is not his (192). This is precisely what Jakob does: his memories are incomplete, yet he "blasphemes by imagining," and asks forgiveness for

doing so. Fine even suggests that this feeling of exclusion which evokes a sense of guilt, what she calls the “guilt of nonparticipation,” manifests itself in the writing of child survivors hidden during the war (192). Furthermore, she notes that “[w]hile the author is obsessed by his passivity and his nonparticipation . . . , it is by writing about the event that he participates in it over and over again” (193). Therefore, Jakob’s guilt at surviving his family and his community can be read as being compounded by his *not being there*.

Reading Jakob’s condition as a consequence of absent memory complicates the role of collective memory in Part I, particularly in the novel’s illustration of history.

Fine explains that the post-Holocaust generation feels obliged to accept the burden of collective memory passed onto them and “to assume the task of sustaining it” (186-87). However, Fine asks if there is such a phenomenon as *true* collective memory. She points out that there is not one memory alone, but many memories, depending on which group is interpreting the past. This is a concern of Holocaust historians: Raul Hilberg writes that the Holocaust “is a process, willfully shaped by perpetrators, suffered by victims, and observed by bystanders. . . . There is no commonality in the form of these accounts” (17-18). How is one to have an accurate historical picture of an event so monumental on so many levels when we have at least three very different views of it? The intrinsic anxiety in this question lies in the consequence of Holocaust historical revisionism. It has as well been argued that society’s perception of its past has been at times manipulated to suit one purpose or another. For the sake of brevity, I will mention only a few leading figures.

Historian Eric Hobsbawm has coined the term “‘invented traditions’ to mean a set

of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1). He gives examples of the production of invented traditions in monuments, holidays, commemorative societies, religious practices, all of which, according to Norman Knowles, “allow citizens to identify with an earlier, more heroic age” or to make sense of a seemingly distant past (7). This is the major and ongoing debate in historiography today: the relationship between “fact” and the shaping power of narrative. For example, in his compelling study of the Loyalist tradition, Knowles maintains that the evolution of the Loyalists over the decades was “produced” and “legitimized” due to “the roles particular social groups and localities played in constructing different versions of the Loyalist past” (5). He asserts that different meaning is assigned to the past according to the needs and circumstances of the present. Knowles contends that “tradition is treated not as a unified, static, and independent body of inherited ideas, values, and behaviours, but as a product of social and cultural negotiation continually shaped and reshaped by contemporary conditions and concerns” (6).

According to this line of thinking, the traditions evoked in present-day society have more to do with the current social situation than the historical past from which the tradition is thought to have emerged. And in the same way, society’s perception of history can be seen as springing out of contemporary concerns and attitudes, rather than perceiving objective facts of the past. Indeed, Emmanuel Levinas has expressed this very same phenomenon in his reflections on the Holocaust and the nature of memory:



It is not memory itself which is essential but the reading, the interpretation of the facts of memory. The work of memory consists not at all of plunging into the past, but of renewing the past through new experiences, new circumstances, new wonders or horrors of real life. And from this point of view, it is the future that is important and not purely the past. . . . The essential is to always find the actuality of the lessons of the Holocaust (quoted in Fine 185-86).

In this context, it is important to note the relationship between the events of the past and the present telling of those events, a relationship which, as Hayden White argues, lies in story *elements*. In “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” White examines history not as a recalling of events, or even as a memory, but as a narrative. Building on R. G. Collingwood’s assertion that the “historian was above all a story teller” and that the reader makes sense out of any work of history not from facts, but from the *construction* of that fragmentary information, White goes on to say that a story is never constituted out of a given set of “casually recorded historical events” (397). The events are understandable, made tellable, by the highlighting of some events and the suppression of others. Hence, we get various *tellings* of history. And these tellings of history, these stories, fall into the same types of categories as literature: tragedy, comedy, romance and satire. According to White, this tendency to follow the plot structures of literary genres is natural and intrinsic to history because a technical language does not exist for history as a discipline; the language that must be used to record any historical event is the same language as literature — that of tropes such as metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. White asserts

that a work of history *or* literature becomes understandable depending on the author's crafting of the text into a genre appropriate to the story and on his skillful use of figurative language.

Therefore, the narrative elements of history and, at times, history's *re-invention* by various groups contribute to the perception of particular tellings of history. However, that same power to re-invent or use the past is even more powerful, and in the case of the Holocaust, more anxiety-ridden, in a novel specifically *because* it is a work of fiction. But, as Efraim Sicher asks, is the Holocaust (or any massive violent event) a "usable past" for the generations that come after and what exactly is the place of the Holocaust in their personal and collective identity? (9) Hayden White asserts that the historian is first and foremost a story-teller, but what can be said when the story-teller acts as historian, like Jakob in *Fugitive Pieces*?

In *Fugitive Pieces*, Jakob shares this anxiety over the shaping power of narrative and the potential for collective memory to distort the past. In "'Afterbirth of Earth' Messianic Materialism in Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*," Annick Hilger sees Jakob's role not as primarily a survivor, but as a historian. Her argument draws on Walter Benjamin's discussion of the past, envisioning the historian not as merely gathering facts about the past, but "as someone who finds traces of hope in the past in order to achieve a redemption of the present" (29). Through a comparison to the Lurianic doctrine of creation in the novel, Hilger concludes "[t]he analogy is explicit: images of geological rupture echo notions of social rupture" (33). She points out that in portraying Jakob as

the author of *Groundwork*, Michaels envisions a historian who rather than discerning historical knowledge as relative or revisionistic, retrieves a “history of matter” (Michaels 119) which has been “obscured by idealist thought in the history of philosophy” (36). Jakob knows that there is not one single memory, that collective memory depends on which group is doing the collecting. “History and memory share events; that is, they share time and space. Every moment is two moments.” He catalogues the atrocities committed and the very different way which they were experienced by perpetrators and victims (138). Jakob is obsessed with hearing all the voices of the past, of knowing all the “tellings.” He contemplates why “[w]hen citizens, soldiers, and SS performed their unspeakable acts, the photos show their faces were not grimaced with horror, or even with ordinary sadism, but rather were contorted with laughter” (166); he wants to know whether or not the victims were “silent or did they speak? Were their eyes open or closed?” (140); he lists the witnesses, including “those born a generation after” (162). Jakob compares these two moments, that is, the moment of atrocity with that same moment in his own life, safe on Athos’s island. George Steiner writes about the ungraspable time relation: “The two orders of simultaneous experience are so different, so irreconcilable to any common norm of human values, their coexistence is so hideous a paradox. . . . that I puzzle over time” (LS 146).

Jakob stresses the priority of memory and its ability to capture the past over history’s cataloguing of facts.

History is amoral: events occurred. But memory is moral; what we consciously

remember is what our conscience remembers. History is the Totenbuch, The Book of the Dead, kept by the administrators of the camps. Memory is the Memorbucher, the names of those to be mourned, read aloud in the synagogue (138).

This is why Athos's book *Bearing False Witness* "plagued [him]. It was his conscience; his record of how the Nazis abused archaeology to fabricate the past" (104). Jakob knows that the past is "usable," and furthermore, like Levinas, he is aware of the relationship between the present and the past. He tells us, "History is the poisoned well, seeping into the ground water. It's not the unknown past we're doomed to repeat, but the past we know. Every recorded event is a brick of potential, of precedent, thrown into the future" (161). Jakob warns of the potential for history to corrupt the past, rather than to preserve it. Likewise, he cautions us about biography and its limitations: "Never trust biographies. Too many events in a man's life are invisible. Unknown to others as our dreams" (141). And we see this in Part II when Ben comes across the various objects in Jakob's study in Greece; ironically, and underlining Jakob's caveat, his own biographer does not and cannot know the significance of these treasured personal possessions.

Jakob's concern over the manipulation of history, and his distress over filling in the gaps of his absent memory are alleviated by Michaela. He tells us, "Her mind is a palace. She moves through history with the fluency of a spirit, mourns the burning of the library at Alexandria as if it happened yesterday" (176). Michaela holds the treasures of history, as if her mind were like the museum where she works. Jakob's longing "for memory to be

spirit”(170) is fulfilled by Michaela’s physicality. Jakob says “it is my body that remembers them” (170), and when he “cross[es] over the boundary of skin into Michaela’s memories” (185), Jakob begins to move from the past into the future, furthering this movement by sharing with her his own haunting past. “I knew then I would show her the land of my past as she was showing me hers” (186). The dreams that remain unknown to the biographer are shared in love: “Each night heals gaps between us until we are joined by the scar of dreams” (183).

But it is particularly the way in which Jakob reaches recovery that I find problematic. He is assuredly a fortunate survivor, not just by the fact of survival itself, but that he is surrounded by caring and loving people who are willing and able to initiate his recovery. Jakob’s gradual recovery, his (re)construction of his past, integration of memories, and working through of trauma, the authenticity of which is somewhat compromised by Michaela’s coming on to the scene. Michaela, working in a museum, a “preserver” of the past like Athos, seems too ideal a savior for Jakob. She is not only fully capable of taking on his past, but opens herself up to Jakob completely and “offers her ancestors to [him]” (179). Jakob’s adoration of her and his description of her perfection creates a much less convincing relationship than Ben’s complicated emotional attachment/detachment to Naomi. Furthermore, the final transformation of Jakob from victim to survivor is problematic in that it distracts readers from the fact that *Fugitive Pieces* is a representation of atrocity where redemption and recovery have not been the general overall experience of those involved. Kertzer phrases it thus: “It is so tempting to

slip from our understandable desire for transformation to a belief that it has occurred” (198).

Transformation is key to the reconfiguration of time in *Fugitive Pieces*, keeping the past open through memory; the relationship with the past is intricately tied not only to the present, but to the future. Jakob tells us “what had once been transformed might be transformed again” (101). However, the operative word here is the “might,” indicating uncertainty regarding transformation, an uncertainty which we see in Part II, Ben’s story. Jakob’s absent memory is paralleled by Ben’s struggle with collective memory. Although Ben is also “missing information,” he does not learn this until after his parents’ deaths. The memories he must cope with are seared into him by his father’s own obsession with the collective past. Ben knows very little about his family history, and this he learns from his mother. The stories she passes on to him bring together the family ghosts, whilst his father remains “unaware of these revenant encounters under his roof” (223). Fine distinguishes between what collective memory is for first-generation survivors and for the post-Holocaust generation. The differentiation between “the lived experience” and “the account of the experience” is relevant in the ways that the post-Holocaust generation assumes collective memory. “Some affirm their role as part of history; others suffer from the weight of the past and are unable to come to terms with the anguished legacy handed down to them” (189). The “damp silence” of Ben’s parents’ house (204) is his family legacy, one which he carries out through his work in weather and biography:

· The hindsight of biography is as elusive and deductive as long-range forecasting.

Guesswork, a hunch. Monitoring probabilities. Assessing the influence of all the information we'll never have, that has never been recorded. The importance not of what's extant, but of what's disappeared (222).

And what remains unknown to Ben is precisely what has disappeared — the secret his parents almost keep to their dying day of the siblings killed in the Holocaust. Ben's own statement underlines the irony of his work and Jakob's warning about biography: "the search for facts . . . amounts to nothing if you can't find the assumption your subject lives by" (222). This is what Ben ultimately searches for on Ihdra — the key to Jakob's profound serenity, that is, the assumption he lived by.

Jakob locates the past in the ground, but for Ben, the sky contains memory: "We think of weather as transient, changeable, and above all, ephemeral; but everywhere nature remembers" (211). However, there is no safety in the sky for Ben, only "bizarre violence" and "the random precision of [its] malevolence" (224). The vast expanse of sky is how Ben confronts his past, rather than the solid, stability offered by the earth. Both Ben and Jakob are intrigued by the bog men, and like Jakob, Ben "derives a fascinated comfort from their preservation" (221). But while both protagonists are concerned with the bog men's past, Ben is interested in the time they spent living: "It was my responsibility to imagine who they might be" (221). Jakob and Ben also share this propensity to try to imagine the dead, but Jakob's obsession is with those killed in Auschwitz; for Ben, the bog men "were not like the bodies in the photos my father showed me" (221). Jakob actively pursues his past and attempts to construct his relationship to the Holocaust, but Ben's past

transmitted to him by his parents ensnares him. He tells us, “The memories we elude, catch up to us, overtake us like a shadow” (213). Even when Ben becomes determined to be on his own, he sees his assertion of independence from his parents as a “defection” (231). The burden of the past is a literal weight on Ben: “For a long time I felt I had expended all my energy walking out my parents’ front door” (232).

As Ben delves into Jakob’s past, he finds himself caught up in his own; he recalls his childhood, his father’s reticence, his mother’s determination “to impress upon [him] the absolute, inviolate necessity of pleasure” (223). Echoing Athos’s advice to Jakob to “[m]ake necessity beautiful,” I nonetheless find the tentative optimism of Ben’s story more tenable as far as the novel in its entirety goes: tempered by his self-destructive nature, Ben’s potential, but as yet incomplete, redemption works to deconstruct the at times overly-simplified first part of the novel. Kertzer insists that Ben does not represent all children of survivors and “that [while] some children of Holocaust survivors are traumatized,” she questions “the assumption that all such children are traumatized” (213, fn 2). Although her point is well taken, no one narrative can encompass all the stories of children of survivors; Ben’s story is representative because it transmits the complexities of living in the post-Holocaust generation and the difficulties of coming to terms with collective memory. Indeed, Ben’s father is far more characteristic of survivors than is Jakob. D. M. Bentley’s assertion that “both of [Ben’s] parents have won through their darkness to sunlight” (12) is, of course, absurd: despite the possible moment which Ben sees his father as having found peace, and it should be stressed that this is Ben’s



interpretation, after a lifetime of solitude and silence, Ben's father finally commits suicide. And Ben is a far more typical child of survivors than Jakob, specifically in Ben's inability to form relationships: he transfers his father's silent and suppressed anger into his marriage, unable to respond to the attentions of Naomi and is even suspicious of her. Furthermore, although Ben tells us, "I was born into absence" (233), expressing his struggle with absent memory, he is as well plagued by the collective memory transmitted by his parents.

Kertzer's reading of the novel as a narrative about children of survivors perhaps helps to untangle the problematical redemptive issues in Part I; after all, it is more likely that those who live in the shadow of the event have the distance to work through collective trauma, rather than first-hand trauma, and recover. But although *Fugitive Pieces* is a novel about survival, Jakob is not a child of survivors; he is not of the post-Holocaust generation. Therefore, his recovery from the trauma of the event, like his idyllic relationship and redemption from the nightmare of the Holocaust, remains suspect.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have attempted to untangle the dense metaphors of *Fugitive Pieces* and as well I have offered an interpretation of the text concerning the representation of the Holocaust and the redemptive nature of Jakob's story. Although my analysis undoubtedly at times takes on a prescriptive nature, the issues reflected in these chapters have been an attempt to look descriptively at *Fugitive Pieces*, a result of many close readings. Nonetheless, to solely describe what is taking place within the novel, say, in the style of structuralism or post-structuralism, is an approach I did not take for the simple reason that I do not believe that reading to be a viable one. Fictionalizing history does not allow for an isolation of that history; the reader always brings too much with her to the text.

Although the "limits" of representing events in history are not determined limits, nor are they solely qualitative, these limits clearly exist, and writers, readers and critics continue to debate them. Why these limits exist is decisively less clear. To be sure, representation is always fallible and contestable; this has been the main reason for the initial silence with regards to representing the Holocaust. The event itself is a symbol for a breakdown in either humanity, the Divine or both. Many critics, theologians, philosophers, psychoanalysts and historians have argued that this break was so unique in its unnaturalness that a rupture in history took place, delegitimizing language and

narratives, hence delegitimizing representation. The search for an adequate response to those “inhuman” events has led to the insistence that although it may not be utterly impossible to represent the events, then at least what we cannot understand, we cannot explain. However, Gillian Rose holds a fundamentally divergent view which, for me, eerily cuts through any notion that atrocity is not representable:

the witness of “ineffability’, that is, non-representability, is *to mystify something we dare not understand*, because we fear that it may be all too understandable, all too continuous with what we are — human, all too human” [italics Rose’s] (*MBL* 43).

Keeping Rose’s thoughts in mind, it becomes clear that the limits of representation are not only “How much violence, or even, what kind of violence, can I, and should I, tolerate?” (48) We as readers and critics of literature of atrocity must also ask “How does this representation affect me?” Perhaps herein exists the possibility to acquiesce the “intractable criterion” Saul Friedländer insists lies within the limits of Holocaust representation. A glance at the evolution of Holocaust representation over the past five decades may offer us some insight.

Since the end of World War II, the range of reaction to the Holocaust has been diverse and at times controversial. The first decade after the war was marked by a stunned and sustained silence and only a few artists offered their own representations of the event while it was still going on. In 1940, Charlie Chaplin produced the film *The Great Dictator*, a parody of fascism, his reaction to what he saw as the overblown persona of Adolf Hitler. Similarly using a wryly, comical twist, in 1944 A. M. Klein wrote “The

Hitleriad,” satirizing the Nazi ideal. Norman Ravvin remarks that with this poem, Klein’s “aim is to belittle: to deny Hitler the stature of a true historical figure” (2). The fifties saw a surge in response to the Shoah; artists were no longer paralyzed with silence, and the fictionalization of the event grew. John Hershey wrote the novel *The Wall* about the Warsaw Ghetto; Klein produced his novel, *The Second Scroll*, extolling his Zionist beliefs; Eli Wiesel’s *Night*, a fictionalized description of his brutal experience in Auschwitz, appeared in 1958, with Tadeusz Borowski’s book of short stories *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* coming out a year later. The sixties and seventies saw their own kinds of representation, for example, Mordecai Richler’s *St. Urbain’s Horseman* published in 1971, where his stark and matter-of-fact description of the dead after the gas chamber is opened is to some degree echoed in *Fugitive Pieces*. Probably one of the most notable changes around this time in Holocaust representation is exemplified in Richler’s novel: the presence of the Holocaust is an everyday concern for the main character, and unworked-through nightmare, surreally present for one who had no experience of the war. And so the post-Holocaust generation, according to Geoffrey Hartman’s definition, was born.

The acceptability of certain representations of the Holocaust marks a significant shift in attitudes taken by historians in the immediate post-war years. The silence Adorno advocated in 1967 was not only broken, but the need to respond to, and to transmit, collective memory took on a new urgency. The eighties and nineties saw a growth in film representation with Jerome Greenspan’s television mini-series *Holocaust*, and in 1985, Claude Lanzmann produced his epic work, the nine-hour documentary *Shoah*. Then, in

1993 Steven Spielberg came out with the enormously popular, critically acclaimed, and lambasted, *Schindler's List*. Clearly artists *would* respond, but the issue that remained was *how*.

The early anxiety over representation of the Holocaust was due to the fact that the event might be forgotten, not represented at all. With the passing of victims of the catastrophe, and the burden of memory being transmitted in its entirety to the post-Holocaust generation, more recent concerns have emerged. These concerns stem from historical revisionism and an uneasiness with how the memory of the victims will be honoured. As well, a bone of contention with critics over the representation by the post-Holocaust generation has been the issue of closure. For example, let us look at the ending of the film *Shoah* and the body of the film *Schindler's List*. Not taking into account the epilogue, *Schindler's List* ends with Oskar Schindler fleeing from the retribution of the Allies with a letter extolling his innocence, signed by all "his" Jews, but not before they present him with a gold ring made from Jews' dental work,<sup>18</sup> inscribed with a passage from the Talmud, "Whoever saves one, saves the world." Contrary to this celebratory ending, Lanzmann concludes *Shoah* in Israel interviewing Itzhak Zuckerman, second-in-command of the Jewish Fighting Organization in the Warsaw ghetto. When Lanzmann asks him to comment on the event, Zuckerman slowly replies, "Mr. Lanzmann, if you could lick my heart, it would poison you." (196). Certainly, it should be noted that *Shoah*

---

<sup>18</sup> In the book, we know the Jews to be dead; in the film, the mouths from which the gold is extracted comes from living Jews.

is a documentary, a supposed “true and realistic” representation of the Holocaust, while *Schindler’s List* is a film based on a novel. However, this underlines my point: in testimony we do not find the type of closure, and comfort derived from it, that we find in fiction. And this brings me to the redemptive nature of the Holocaust narrative at hand, *Fugitive Pieces*.

In Chapter One of this thesis, I discussed the problems I see with the *what* of Michaels’ representation: the directness of some descriptions and the beauty of the language depicting scenes of both love and death. However, form and content cannot be separated and therefore, the *how* of her representation is at issue here too. Likewise, the theme in Chapter Two of man’s responsibility to man is also complicated by *how* this is expressed in the novel. Similarly, in Chapter Three, where I offer a reading of *Fugitive Pieces* as a trauma novel, I also see a problem of *how* Jakob’s recovery is reached. Redemption is still a controversial theme in the context of the Holocaust and clearly is so in a novel like *Fugitive Pieces*.

Although Jakob’s redemption is not necessarily easily come by, the fact that he is able to integrate his memories, work through the process of mourning, and ultimately achieve peace with the past and the dead, alleviate his guilt, and recover so utterly and completely is suspect in the context of his particular trauma. However, as I have further argued, Ben’s story complicates any such easy resolution offered by way of Jakob’s story. The beautiful language so present in Part I is not as evident in Part II, hence the story seems darker and Ben’s recovery and redemption do not seem so imminent. The fact that

Ben is the inheritor of Jakob's legacy, and by extension the Jewish legacy, and that Michaels has chosen to end the novel with Ben's story which lacks the closure that Jakob's story offers, complicates any answers offered in Part I. In his memoirs, Viktor Frankl refers to a "purpose in suffering," and although we might find this "purpose" in Jakob's story, it is notably absent in Ben's; the reader is left on the same existential precipice as Ben is, wavering between nihilism and meaning. So why has Michaels constructed the novel in such a way? Why is the completed redemption in Jakob's story missing in Ben's? Why is the reader left comforted by Part I and left questioning and unsettled by Part II, and the end of the novel?

An answer may lie in the theme with which I began my discussion: the traditional approach to representing Jewish catastrophe, based on ancient archetypes from previous catastrophes, the first being the Fall of Adam. If Michaels' representation of the Holocaust may seem untenable at times to some readers, and it clearly is to me, then perhaps an alternate reading is required that takes into consideration the traditional recording of Jewish history. Saul Friedländer points out that catastrophic events over the course of history have developed into a collective memory in Jewish tradition. He writes that such patterns, "rooted in a paradigm linked to Judaism's archetypal catastrophe, the destruction of the Temple, yet carrying the seed of messianic redemption, are said to have contributed to its 'creative survival'" ("TMT" 255). Yet Friedländer also points out that up until the time of his article's publication, 1994, there had been "no mythical framework [which] seems to be taking hold of the Jewish imagination, nor does the best of literature

and art dealing with the Shoah offer any redemptive stance” (255). Perhaps not until

*Fugitive Pieces.*

So how can we offer a plausible reading for Jakob’s rescue and recovery? How can the redemptive nature of Part I, even if we view its deconstruction through the story in Part II, be defended? Because of the nature of Jakob’s completed mourning and recovery, I find myself viewing the first part of the novel as an allegory, a fable, a tale of potential. This appears through portraits of Athos, for example, his fascination with “the magic of salt” (28): like the snow of the Antarctic, Jakob and Athos’s “azimuth,” salt is clean, pure and capable of preserving. But Athos’s ultimate fascination with and attraction to salt lies in its ability to dissolve in water rather than sink. This explains the mystery of wood: “The great mystery of wood is not that it burns, but that it floats” (28). The healing, restorative, preserving nature of these metaphors are missing in Ben’s story, at least in their totality. Ben has a taste of the ancient wisdom of the Greek archeologist during the time he stays on Athos’s island, but Ben’s azimuth is not grounded, it is ethereal and unearthly. Ben does not have the grounding forces in his life that Jakob has; his life as the child of survivors is much more tenuous, represented by the “random malevolence” of weather and the traumatic collective past of his family.

To my mind, a reasonable way to reconcile the issue of Jakob’s all-too-complete redemption is to read his story as a tale of potential, and Ben’s story as one of actuality. Finishing the novel with Ben on the path of recovery, but with no real closure gives weight to Friedländer’s observation that the cataclysmic redemption which has been part of



Judaism has still not been fully integrated into narratives of the Holocaust. However, a reading of *Fugitive Pieces* taking into consideration the ancient archetypes of traditional Jewish representation, upholding the apocalyptic view in which catastrophe is not only a possible but even necessary and quite genuine end, offers a tentative solution to the problems discussed in this paper.

What could this type of reading, and indeed writing, mean for artists of the post-Holocaust generation attempting to represent the event? By relying on historical theorists like Terence Ranger, Norman Knowles and Hayden White, I have argued that the collective memory of the past and interpretations of that past have as much, if not more, to do with the present as the with the historical time being represented. Certainly with the explosion of the media in the last fifty years, world-wide atrocities have been made more “accessible” to us. Not only have we been exposed to images of the Holocaust, but we have been inundated with news coverage and documentaries of the conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia, to name but of few of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century catastrophes. It remains to be seen whether the instantaneousness and ubiquity of these images will inspire, or simply deaden, artistic response. Perhaps literature of atrocity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will reflect a worldview of catastrophe whereby the Holocaust is no longer its own trope, as James Young contends, but is a trope for all catastrophes. The silence that came after the Shoah, which preceded the outpouring of artistic responses stimulating discussions on the limits of representation, exists no longer. *Fugitive Pieces*, with its willingness to poeticize and visualize one of the worst atrocities of our era, may be paving

the way for a new response to catastrophe, grounded in old archetypes.

## Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor W. Prisms. Trans. Samuel and Sherry Weber. London: Neville Spearman Ltd., 1967.
- Appelfeld, Aharon. "After the Holocaust." Writing and the Holocaust. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 83-92.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995.
- Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.
- Bentley, D. M. "Anne Michael's *Fugitive Pieces*." Canadian Poetry. 41. Fall/Winter 1997: 5-20.
- Blanchot, Maurice. The Writing of the Disaster. Trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1986.
- Borowski, Tadeusz. "This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen." This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen and Other Stories. 1959. Trans. Barbara Vedder. New York: Viking Press, 1967. 9-29.
- Caruth, Cathy. "Trauma and Experience: Introduction" and "Recapturing the Past: Introduction." Trauma: Explorations in Memory. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995: 3-12 and 151-157.
- Cook, Meira. "At the Membrane of Language and Silence: Metaphor and Memory in *Fugitive Pieces*." Originally published in Canadian Literature. Spring 2000. Internet: <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, November 2001.
- Des Pres, Terence. "Holocaust *Laughter*?" Writing and the Holocaust. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 216-233.
- , The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps. 1976. New York: Quokka, 1978.

- Epstein, Leslie. "Writing about the Holocaust." Writing and the Holocaust. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 261-270.
- Fine, Ellen. "Transmission of Memory: The Post-Holocaust Generation in the Diaspora." Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz. Ed. Efraim Sicher. Chicago: University of Illinois Chicago Press, 1998: 185-200.
- Frankl, Viktor. Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy. 1939. Trans. Ilse Lasch. New York: Beacon Press, 1963.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." Joan Riviere, trans. The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. 1959. Vol. 14. London: Hogarth Press, 1975: 239-258.
- Friedländer, Saul. "Trauma, Memory, and Transference." Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory. Ed. Geoffrey Hartman. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994: 252-263.
- . Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution". Ed. Saul Friedländer. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992.
- Gladstone, Bill. "Michaeals creates extraordinary piece." Review of *Fugitive Pieces*. Canadian Jewish News. 39:3. May 7, 1998: 36.
- Hartman, Geoffrey. "Shoah and the Intellectual Witness." Originally published in Partisan Review. Winter 1998. Internet: <http://lion.chadwyck.com>. August 2002.
- Hilberg, Raul. "I Was Not There." Writing and the Holocaust. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988: 17-25.
- Hilger, Annick. "'Afterbirth of Earth' Messianic Materialism in Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*." Canadian Literature. 160. Spring 1999: 28-45.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger. The Invention of Traditions. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Howe, Irving. "Writing and the Holocaust." Writing and the Holocaust. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988: 175-199.
- Kertzer, Adrienne. "*Fugitive Pieces*: Listening as a Holocaust Survivor's Child." English Studies in Canada. 26.2. June 2000: 193-217.

- Knowles, Norman. Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1977.
- Langer, Lawrence L. Admitting the Holocaust. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- , The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination. 1975. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- , Holocaust Testimonies. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Lanzmann, Claude. Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust, the Complete Text of the Film. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Levi, Primo. The Drowned and the Saved. 1986. Trans. Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Simon, 1988.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. Ethics and Infinity. 1982. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh: Dusque University Press, 1985.
- . God, Death, and Time. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Michaels, Anne. Fugitive Pieces. 1996. New York: Vintage Books. First Vintage International Edition, 1998.
- Müller, Filip. Auschwitz Inferno: The Testimony of a Sonderkommando. Trans. Susanne Flatauer. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.
- Myers, D. G. “Responsible for Every Single Pain: Holocaust Literature and the Ethics of Interpretation.” Internet: <http://www.english.tamu.edu/pers/fac/myers/responsible.html>, January 2001.
- Parry, Ann. “. . . to give . . . death a place’ Rejecting the ‘ineffability’ of the Holocaust: the work of Gillian Rose and Anne Michaels.” European Studies. 30:4, December 2000: 353-368.
- Ravvin, Martin. “Unfinished still life: Canadians write the Holocaust.” Originally published in Books In Canada. 28: 6. Summer 1999: 15-18. Internet: [www@linx1.mcmaster.ca](http://www@linx1.mcmaster.ca). June 2002.

- Rose, Gillian. Love's Work. London: Chatto and Windus, 1995.
- . Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Roskies, David G. “The Library of Jewish Catastrophe.” Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory. Ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994: 33-41.
- . The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe. First Edition. New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989.
- Scholem, Gershom. Kabbalah. 1974. New York: Meridian, a division of Penguin Books, 1978.
- , On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism. Trans. Ralph Manheim. 1960. New York: Schocken Books, 1965.
- Sicher, Efraim. “Introduction” and “The Burden of Memory: The Writing of the Post-Holocaust Generation.” Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz. Ed. Efraim Sicher. Chicago: University of Illinois Chicago Press, 1998. 1-16 and 19-88.
- Steiner, George. Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman. New York: Atheneum, 1967.
- . “The Long Life of Metaphor: An Approach to the ‘Shoah’.” Writing and the Holocaust. Ed. Berel Lang. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988. 154-171.
- van der Kolk, Bessel A and Onno van der Hart. “The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma.” Trauma: Explorations in Memory. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995: 158-181.
- Weisel, Elie. Night. 1958. Trans. Stella Rodway. New York: Discus Books, a division of Avon, 1972.
- White, Hayden. “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact.” Critical Theory Since 1965. Eds. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle. Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1986: 394-407.
- Young, James. Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust. 1988. Indiana University Press:

Bloomington, 1990.