WITNESSING THE PAST FROM THE POSTMODERN PRESENT:
INTERTEXTUALITY IN NICOLE KRAUSS’S THE HISTORY OF LOVE AND ANNE
MICHAELS’S FUGITIVE PIECES

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Introduction: Tracing a Literary Genealogy of Jewish American Holocaust Fiction

As we move further away from the historical event of the Holocaust in chronological time and cultural space, maintaining what Eva Hoffman refers to as a “sense of living connection” with the past challenges the current debates over memory politics and Jewish literary criticism (xi). This “living connection” is no longer limited to unearthing historical documents and creating monuments to the past. Today’s art and literature increasingly work to maintain this connection. As Historian Yosef Yerushalmi contends, “the Holocaust has already engendered more historical research than any single event in human history, but I have no doubt whatever that its image is being shaped, not at the historian’s anvil, but at the novel’s crucible” (98). The abundance of literary devotion to the Holocaust, however, does not emerge without conflicting opinions regarding the ethics of representing this trauma from a postmodern present. In turn, the conversation generates controversy regarding the interrelationship of representation and misrepresentation sixty years after the event.¹

From Adorno’s famous dictum “no poetry after Auschwitz” to Elie Wiesel’s self-professed doubt, as he asks, “Could the wall be scaled? Could the reader be brought to the other side? I knew the answer to be No, and yet I also knew that No had to become Yes,” the place of fiction in the wake of the Holocaust has long been formally debated (15).² In this introduction, I will first examine the evolution of American literary responses to the Holocaust, reviewing the shifts that define its periodicity. Next, I will focus on developing the theoretical frame relevant to the
postmodern moment in Holocaust fiction marked by Nicole Krauss’s *The History of Love* and Anne Michaels’s *Fugitive Pieces*.

In her expansive look into American literary responses to the Holocaust in *By Words Alone*, Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi notes that initial postwar responses in the United States tended to convey American soldiers as heroic or martyrly, in accordance with Christian tradition (185). Following the events of 1933-45, the fear of anti-Semitism and its growth in America proved greater than the empathy for the actual victims, Ezrahi explains (197). To locate this fear, one needs only to note the scarcity of literature in the fifties that dealt with the Holocaust from a Jewish perspective, as well as the self-consciousness that dominated literary journals and public forums during those years (197). Although *The Diary of Anne Frank* was first performed on American stages in 1955, Ezrahi argues that if attempted to portray Jewish suffering, “it did so after purging it of its particularity” (204).

It was not until after Adolf Eichmann’s trial aired on U.S. television when the literature reflected a more profound personal engagement with both the historical events and the implications of these events for non-survivors (Ezrahi 204). As Lillian Kremer discusses in the introduction to *Witness Through the Imagination*, early in the decade of the sixties Holocaust depiction was virtually absent from Jewish American literature (15). By decade’s end, however, “it was an ever present, though subdued, component of the fiction” (15). Eichmann’s trial, which was televised in American homes, as well as the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six Day War both appear to have stimulated American interest in the Holocaust (Ezrahi 205; Kremer 16). Largely due to Hannah Arendt’s interpretation of the trial, American Holocaust
literature now reflected a larger concern over the banality and bureaucracy of the Nazi evil (Kremer 205). American writers also became concerned not with the Holocaust as a historical event but rather as a "complex of psychological possibilities" (Kremer 205). However, Ezrahi points to this literature’s propensity to develop universalized perspectives; writers who relied on evidence of the Eichmann trial to enrich their stories attempted to extract the moral and emotional messages from the extreme conditions (213).³

With the integration of evidence from the Eichmann trial into an American cultural consciousness, writers emerged who borrowed loaded symbols or Holocaust imagery to achieve an emotional pitch only possible by such fraught representations (Ezrahi 213). However, in another reaction to the trial’s evidence, a group of writers evolved in the mid-seventies that “conferred a kind of familiarity on events totally outside the realm of the authors’ experience” (215). These writers relied on meticulous reconstruction of the events based on research and previous literary models (215). The group included the work of Susan Fromberg Schaeffer’s Anya, a novel that Ezrahi argued could not have been written before scholarship and testimony “had provided compensation for the existential distance” and Ilona Karmel’s An Estate of Memory had provided a sound literary model (Ezrahi 215).

I would suggest that Cynthia Ozick’s novella The Shawl similarly could not have been written until sufficient research and testimony reconstructed the historical facts. Ozick’s short story “The Shawl” was first published in The New Yorker in 1981 and “Rosa” was also published independently in the magazine in 1983; the two were published together as a novella in 1989. As a fiction that deals
seriously with the events in Europe and “explicitly with the survivor experience”

itself, possession of the specificity of trauma itself pervades *The Shawl* (Budnick 215). Reflecting the consensus among critical responses to *The Shawl*, Joseph

Alkana argues that Ozick’s work reveals a “more-complex literary aesthetic in a shift

away from victimization and sentimentality” (965). Marking this shift away from

earlier fictional accounts framed by overt moralizations, *The Shawl* serves as a

prime example of what Ezrahi terms the heart of the dilemma of Holocaust

literature in America: “the tension between internal accountability to the

imagination and external accountability to the victims” (216). While the narrative of

a work of fiction that treats the subject of the Holocaust is forever to be held

externally accountable to the victims, I suggest that the tensions central to Ezrahi’s

argument relay that of a particular historical and cultural moment. Children of

survivors and the larger second generation to which they are part define this

particular context. In addition to marking movement away from earlier

universalizations in the literature, the movement from “The Shawl” to a reflective

mode in “Rosa” and Rosa Lublin’s desire to shift from the label of “survivor” to

“human being” marks a break with first generation accounts concerned with

possession of the event. As Geoffrey Hartman argues in *Holocaust Remembrance*,

the survivor generation of victims or eyewitnesses incorporates within their stories

a return to the traumatic event in spite of their suffering (18). Survivors invoke the

places and trauma of first-hand experience to which they have a direct relationship

(18). For Hartman, the first major shift in the literature occurs as second-generation

writers witness the event only through accounts related by survivors, the first
generation (HR 18). Ozick’s text marks this shift not only in the progression of Rosa Lublin’s independence from traumatic memory, but also through the intertextual relationship developed in her reference to the work of survivor Paul Celan.

In the 1989 printing of *The Shawl*, Ozick frames her novella with the last two lines of Celan’s “Todesfuge” and relies on the literature of a first-generation survivor to mark her writing’s distance from the event. The epigraph, left in its original German reads: “Dein goldenes Haar Margarete/Dein aschenes Haar Sulamith.”

Widely discussed in critical responses to Ozick, the epigraph’s original German is often at the forefront of these debates. Alan Rosen, writing on Ozick in *Sounds of Defiance*, argues that Ozick deliberately prints the epigraph in German for her presumably English audience, although the translation she uses is from side-by-side German-English volume (125). Ozick wanted only the German to appear; thus, Ozick allows the English to shadow Celan’s German, just as the English shadows the Polish and Yiddish of “Rosa” (Rosen 125). The intertextual relationship suggests that like the relationship between Schaeffer and Karmel’s texts, Celan’s work provided a sound literary model for Ozick’s novella. Traces of Ozick’s character “Rosa” also appear in *The History of Love*, along with references to other postmodern and Holocaust literature that precedes Krauss’s work. While the intertextual shadowing between Ozick and Celan grounds much of the literary analysis that attends to Ozick’s text, curiously, discussions surrounding intertextuality in contemporary Holocaust novels are often absent from the literary criticism.
Extending the poetics of Holocaust survivor Celan’s “Todesfuge,” Ozick’s work confronts its own remove from survivor testimony and first hand fictional exploration. As Hartman argues, the second generation expresses “the trauma of memory turning in the void” as they reflect on an event that greatly affects them, but at “one remove” (Longest 18). Marking her novella with Celan’s poetry, Ozick explicitly calls attention to the “one remove” of her text. My analysis assumes that in the ensuing, and contemporary generations, narratives self-reflexively attend to the accumulation of text and space from the event, engendering more complex intertextual frames. Hartman reflects this conception as he notes: “[i]ncreasingly, the younger generation writing about the Holocaust incorporate a reflection on how to write it, a reflection on representation itself” (Longest 9). Reflection on representation surfaces in The History of Love and Fugitive Pieces through enunciative, metafictional frameworks. Additionally, fiction of previous generations comes to serve alongside historical documents and first-generation testimony as a historical referent. This tendency is first evinced in Ozick’s epigraph, and complicated in work like that of Krauss and Michaels. In an interview with Elaine Kauvar in Contemporary Literature, Ozick explained that she had wanted the research and first generation accounts to be enough: “I don’t want to tamper or invent or imagine. And yet I have done it. I can’t not do it. It comes, it invades” (qtd. in Furman, 87). Ozick implicitly suggests that just the facts—“those documents”—are ultimately not enough (qtd. in Furman 87). “Those documents,” the survivor testimony and first generation accounts of witness from which Ozick’s fiction substantiates its narrative, constitute the historical backdrop of the narratives of
second-generation authors like Ozick writing in the seventies and eighties (qtd. in Furman 87). However, Ozick’s work also represents the past through its non-witness, as it relies on Celan’s work to constitute her space of remove from the event itself.

In the contemporary moment of Holocaust literary responses, the work of third-generation writers Krauss and Michaels marks another shift. As Holocaust literary scholar Jessica Lang suggests, “the Holocaust fiction of the last decade exhibits a still broader range of themes and is written by authors who are both personally and thematically difficult to quantify” (45). Third-generation writers today do not have the privilege of direct memory; yet, the Holocaust persists in prominently shaping the American and Canadian Jewish literary imagination. Nicole Krauss’s *The History of Love* and Anne Michaels’s *Fugitive Pieces* are no longer concerned solely with the “possession” of Holocaust trauma, or even with what Hartman refers to as pressing, but more abstract representation characteristic of second-generation literature (Longest 18). Rather, these writers are concerned with the historical past in terms of the postmodern present. Krauss and Michaels integrate Holocaust narratives into larger frames, or, paradoxically, position stories of Holocaust trauma among competing narratives. In so doing, the postmodern moment in Holocaust fiction is fraught not with the tension between fictional imagination and historical truth; but, this tension is re-contextualized as third-generation writers foreground complex intertextual relationships in retelling Holocaust trauma. As Jessica Lang argues in her work on Krauss’s novel:

the representation of the Holocaust in this novel may be read as an early witness to the end of a generation of Holocaust memoirs and to a
future of Holocaust literature where imagination and history—both Holocaust and non-Holocaust history—are interpolated. (44)

Lang emphasizes the strategies unique to Krauss’s voice as a third-generation writer, such as themes of Jewish American identity, or humor and playfulness, in order to formulate Krauss’s contribution to the third-generation literary context. Looking at both Krauss’s and Michaels’s texts, I aim to extend Lang’s analysis by understanding how intertextuality shapes the interpolation of Holocaust and non-Holocaust history, and in turn, how this blurring of histories determines a new ethical dilemma for the contemporary reader.

What are the risks involved in such a project? Scholarship on third-generation Holocaust literature relays one challenge for the contemporary literary critic relevant to this analysis: a near over-abundance of fiction without a corollary of moral or ethical clarity. In Hoffman’s personal and historiographical approach to the Holocaust, she cautions that collective memory evinced in Holocaust fiction is swiftly approaching what she calls “hypermemory” (177). For Hoffman, the Holocaust is in danger less of “vanishing into forgetfulness” than of “expanding into an increasingly empty referent” (177). Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer’s argument in Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust elaborate Hoffman’s notion. Concerning the problem of representation, Donals and Glejzer note that as scholars and writers concerned with the Holocaust, our interest now lies in “representations of witness rather than representations of the event itself” (qtd. in Sundquist 68).
Thus, I ask, how does re-contextualizing the Holocaust through disparate histories function apart from “hypermemory”? Pressed with the urgent responsibility of transmission of memory and transference of the Holocaust, *The History of Love* and *Fugitive Pieces* are novels from third-generation authors that deal not only with Holocaust trauma, but curiously ask their readers to contemplate narrative threads outside of the disaster. Emily Miller Budnick in “The Holocaust in the Jewish American Literary Imagination” provides a helpful model to distinguish “hypermemory” from the types of productive memory at work in third-generation literary texts: the notion of Holocaust-inflection. In a comprehensive review of American Holocaust literature, Budnick defines three types of Holocaust fiction: the first regards the popular and often epic war novels that appeared in the decades immediately following 1933-45; the second includes fictions “that deal explicitly with the survivor experience”; and the third are “fictions that are Holocaust-inflected rather than about the Holocaust per say” (215-7). In this third group we find writers like Michael Chabon, Dara Horn, Thane Rosenbaum, among others, in their pursuit of “their often different but collectively Jewish – and most importantly *American* – concerns” (216). Delineating the characteristics of a “Holocaust-inflected” text, Budnick explains:

For the way that the Holocaust gets taken up in Jewish American writing is part and parcel of the project of creating a Jewish *American* tradition distinct from any other national Jewish (or, for that matter, ethnic American) tradition. (216-7)
Retelling Holocaust narratives as they contribute to forming a Jewish and American, or Jewish and Greek sense of literary history, *The History of Love* and *Fugitive Pieces* come to fall under Lang’s designation as “Holocaust-inflected.”

According to cultural critics, Walter Benn Michaels and Dominick LaCapra among them, Jewish Americans have been inclined to turn “history into memory” in an attempt to sustain their Jewish identity (Budnick 218). Budnick explains that “what becomes threatened in the extinction of Holocaust memory for these American Jews is Jewish identity itself” (218). Thus, faced with this anxiety, Jewish Americans have a tendency towards what Lawrence Langer names “preempting the Holocaust” (qtd. in Budnick 218). By this term, Langer means:

> using – and perhaps abusing – its grim details to fortify a prior commitment to an ideal of moral reality, community responsibility, or religious belief that leaves us with space to retain faith in their pristine value in a post-Holocaust world. (qtd. in Budnick, 218)

Given this tendency among contemporary Jewish American fiction to “preempt” the Holocaust for an ulterior purpose – whether to fortify Jewish identity or otherwise - Budnick persists in asking the question: “Yet, how can Jewish writers construct identity without recourse to the Holocaust?” (qtd. in Budnick 218). Thus, according to Budnick, contemporary Jewish American fiction is trapped in a lose-lose bind: forget the past and forego the Jewish component, or remember the past in terms of a European, rather than American, fiction (Budnick 218). For Budnick, the best American Holocaust fiction reveals the underlying tensions of this dilemma. Given that national histories and stories of a specifically Jewish migration and diaspora, take on formative roles in Krauss’s and Michaels’s texts, I consider their intertextual
histories Holocaust-inflected as they embody stories of Jewish adaptation in their respective contexts.

In the chapters that follow, I would like to argue that intertextuality often serves as a bridge between literary and human history in these texts. Krauss’s and Michaels’s stories are told if not by other texts, then in the presence of fiction and non-fiction both internal and external to the narrative. *The History of Love*, for example, confronts the reader with the death of Alma and Bird’s father through Leo Gursky’s novel, while *Fugitive Pieces* carries natural destruction and geological transformation at its narrative core. These intertextual networks explore historical frames as diverse as Borgesian notions of “narrative truth” and geological rock formations. Structural complexities, such as the reliance on a text-within-a-text, and narrative double-voicings, all serve to break down a monologic frame of Holocaust history as new voices and perspectives enter Holocaust discourse. In contemporary retellings of the Holocaust that, as Donals, Glezer, and Hoffman remind us, are concerned now with “representations of witness” rather than witness themselves, intertextuality lends a self-conscious awareness to these texts cognizant of their own mediated construction. Through intertextual structure, the Holocaust becomes a historical event through the literary imagination aware of its production in a postmodern present.

Whether through traces of other texts, or layers of textualized poetics, both *The History of Love* and *Fugitive Pieces* call attention to their own ability to reconstruct history through language. This type of literary self-consciousness is a central tenant of postmodern writing. As Linda Hutcheon argues in “Historiographic
Metafiction,” “what we tend to call postmodernism in literature today is usually characterized by intense self-reflexivity and overtly parodic intertextuality” (Historiographic 3). For Hutcheon, fiction does not mirror reality nor produce it, but instead, “fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality” (Poetics 41). Reality, here, also applies to history. Speaking in a historiographical context, Hutcheon explains that the postmodernist novel “stresses the contexts in which the fiction is being produced – by both writer and reader” as it foregrounds both the construction of fiction and need for it (Poetics 40). This claim becomes increasingly significant in the context of contemporary Holocaust writing that bears only an indirect relation to the historical event it explores. Intertextual, self-reflexive narrative construction in historiographical fiction like that of Krauss’s and Michaels’s work enacts an ironic distance from the Holocaust; its form literally effects “representation of representation.” In so doing, Krauss and Michaels reveal postmodernism’s double-consciousness at work: the tension between the form and a content that is also mediated by indirect experience.

Julia Kristeva’s reworking of the Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of the text’s double voicings, polyphony, dialogism, and heteroglossia, is largely responsible for conceptualizing postmodern double-consciousness in terms of intertextuality. Noting Kristeva’s contribution to Bakhtin’s work, Hutcheon explains:

she developed a more strictly formalist theory of the irreducible plurality of texts within and behind any given text, thereby deflecting the critical focus away from the notion of the subject (the author) to the idea of textual productivity. (Poetics 126)
In Kristeva’s reworking of Bakhtin, the author is no longer the “originating source” of fixed meaning in the text (Poetics 126). Like the traces of Holocaust and postmodern narratives behind Krauss’s narrative, or the layers of Ovid’s poetry amidst Michaels’s frame, interactions among texts beyond authorial intent thus become central to a text’s meaning bearing capacity. In this re-positioning of Bakhtin’s scholarship, Kristeva contributes to a formalist theory where a text is defined not by its author, but by its own textual open-endedness, or what Hutcheon would refer to as the “irreducible plurality of texts within and behind any given text” (Poetics 126). Kristeva notes: “what allows a dynamic dimension to structuralism is his [Bakhtin’s] conception of the ‘literary word’ as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning)” (Desire 65). In Krauss’s text, for example, the intersections of postmodern literary figures with the Polish writer Bruno Schulz comes to resist any notion of fixed meaning as the reader mediates between postmodern and Holocaust literary discourse. These textual surfaces function as a dialogue among different writings: the writer, the addressee or character, and the contemporary or earlier cultural context (Hutcheon, Poetics 65).

By interpolating Holocaust stories in terms of larger, or alternative histories, and a myriad of textual voices, Krauss and Michaels create layers of “ambivalence” within their utterances. In Kristeva’s re-reading of “Discourse in the Novel,” she notes that according to Bakhtin, there are three categories of words: the direct word, referring back to its object; the object-oriented word, the direct discourse of “characters”; and the “ambivalent” (Desire 73). In this last instance, a writer can use another's word, “giving it a new meaning while retaining the meaning it already
had” (72). The result is an ambivalent word with two significations and thus “the result of a joining of two sign systems” (72). Kristeva goes on to outline various categories of ambivalence, including repetition, parody and the hidden interior polemic (Desire 73). Ambivalence occurs as characters and narrative threads resurface in the works under consideration. Specifically, I will return to the notion of ambivalence in the concluding chapter as I discuss how Krauss and Michaels extend the notion of “survivor” discourse.

It was especially through his idea of dialogism that Bakhtin began to formulate the framework for intertextuality that surfaces in the postmodern works like The History of Love and Fugitive Pieces. At their most basic level, all Holocaust novels are dialogic in so much as they exhibit tension between the literary and the historical, a notion to which both Sue Vice and Linda Hutcheon point. Dialogism is essential to the analysis at hand in two ways: in the first, as traces of previous texts resurface; and in the second, as tensions among narrators and characters refuse to privilege a particular voice. According to Bakhtin, dialogism is a philosophy of language where “everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole—there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others” (426).

The intertextual nature of dialogism comes to bear as an utterance or even a written work refuses a singular meaning (426). In the reoccurrence of the name “Rosa” from Ozick to Krauss, for example, the reader cannot approach the significance of this rhetorical gesture without reference to the original Rosa; the word is always connected to previous and future utterances or works. It is still
possible to analyze any utterance, but only after “having exposed it as a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language” (272). For Bakhtin, these clashes of meaning made possible through dialogic utterances condition the form of the novel. The converging centripetal and centrifugal forces of meaning, however, do not exist as external to discourse, as they do in the function of “dialogue,” but dialogism functions internally to the word or utterance. As such, dialogism “cannot be isolated as an independent act, separate from the word’s ability to form a concept [koncipirovanie] of its object” (Bakhtin 279). Here, the word not only responds to prior language, but has “the potential of conditioning others,” and vice versa (Bakhtin 426). Hutcheon later extends this position as she argues that dialogic texts demand of the reader “not only the recognition of textualized traces of the literary and historiographic past but also the awareness of what has been done—through irony—to those traces” (Historiographic 8). As I will discuss in chapter one, in The History of Love, traces to Ozick’s Rosa are self-consciously enunciated as Zvi stalls in the act of naming. Thus, one cannot approach the Rosa in Krauss’s text without reference to the original; in turn, analyses that turn to Ozick in the future should not discount the character resonances at work in The History of Love. In this sense, and for the purposes of chapters one and two, I will consider “postmodern intertextuality” in terms of Hutcheon’s designation of these narratives “as a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context” (Poetics 118).
While traces of Holocaust narratives resurface in Krauss’s text at the level of character, Holocaust and non-Holocaust histories intermingle through layered narration, metafictional structures, and polyphonic voicing. The existence of these simultaneous dialogues at work is encased in the larger frame of what Bakhtin calls heteroglossia. Rather than a traditional stylistic relationship where the “word relates to its object in a singular way,” heteroglossia determines the word or utterance as language’s ability to contain within the word or utterance many voices (276). Bakhtin asserts:

> at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These ‘languages’ of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new typifying ‘languages’. (291)

In the form of the novel, a multiplicity of social voices, including authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, and the speech of characters are those “fundamental compositional unities” that permit heteroglossia to enter the novel (263). The dual focalization of Jakob as character and narrator, or Leo as writer and subject constitute just two of the “fundamental compositional unities” at the focus of chapters that follow.

Only recently has attention to Holocaust narratives turned to the function of intertextuality. In Holocaust Fiction, Sue Vice’s attention to the intertexts of Holocaust literature turns to why fictional representations of the Holocaust are always greeted with such a mixture of acclaim and dismay (2). Vice emphasizes texts that are the focus of “scandal,” such as D.M. Thomas’s The White Hotel and
Benjamin Wilkomirski’s *Fragments*, to argue that intertextuality and reliance on anterior sources may very well be the defining element of Holocaust fiction (2). She insists on literary criteria, as opposed to the non-literary categories of “truth-value,” or “authenticity,” in order to avoid the conventional dynamic that privileges testimony over literature (7). Rather, for Vice, whose work is largely influenced by Bakhtin, meaning is constructed not by authorial fiat but by “the clash of discourses” (7). This is especially characteristic of Holocaust fiction in which critics and readers may not want to read a polyphonic text because they wish for the clarity of moral certainties (9, emphasis mine). Thus, according to Vice, polyphonic testing of such certainties and intertextual relationships is just what gives Holocaust fiction its particular representational power (Vice 7-9).

In chapters one and two, I focus on the intertextual frames of *The History of Love* and *Fugitive Pieces* to consider how contemporary Holocaust fiction is both shaped by and repositions the fictional and historical narratives that constitute their texts. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma* historian Dominick LaCapra asserts: “postmodernism can also be defined as post-Holocaust; there’s an intricate relationship between the two” (179). As postmodern fiction foregrounds the intertext, these narratives complicate an already “intricate relationship” (LaCapra 179). Specifically, in the chapters that follow, given a postmodern present already saturated with “representation of witness,” I ask how texts that foreground their own constructions of representation through intertextuality challenge the contemporary reader to reconstruct the past.
As I discussed in my introduction, Cynthia Ozick’s novella *The Shawl* is both an attempt to preserve and illuminate the events of the past as well as an attempt to restore “individual voice and identity to those who lived them” (Budnick 219). Krauss’s 2005 novel marks yet another departure; *The History of Love* moves away from the possession of the trauma itself that constitutes frameworks of the first and second generation.\(^8\) I suggest one way that Krauss marks the shift from second- to third-generation fiction is through her foregrounding of intertextuality; *The History of Love* witnesses the historical event through the fictionalized survivor testimony of Leo Gursky, as well as it witnesses Holocaust and postmodern literary history.

Jessica Lang, in “The History of Love, the Contemporary Reader, and the Transmission of Holocaust Memory,” specifically uses the term “third-generation” to refer loosely to authors born in the 1960s or later (45). According to Lang’s designation, this fiction refers to and incorporates events from the Holocaust, but it “also balances and counters these references with other narrative strategies or counterpoints” (45). She continues:

> While for the first- and second-generation Holocaust writers the historical experience ‘conveys’ a sense of immediacy and impact, the third-generation writer views these events as an indirect part of the narrative, one balanced by other, also important histories (45).

The historical balancing act among characters and narrative threads within *The History of Love* becomes the feature that distinguishes this text as part and parcel of the third generation. In contrast to a novella like Ozick’s and fictions “that deal
explicitly with the survivor experience,” Krauss’s text falls under Holocaust literary critic Emily Miller Budnick’s designation of more recent “fictions that are Holocaust-inflected rather than about the Holocaust per se” (215–217). Here, intertextuality serves as a link between the specific coming-of-age story of Alma Singer, Krauss’s fourteen-year-old Jewish American protagonist, and a post-war history representative of the Jewish Diaspora. In this chapter I will focus on the multiplicity of voices that comprise the larger literary, historical and social frames surrounding a novel that is “Holocaust-inflected” rather than canonically Holocaust in nature. First, my analysis will explore the various tensions encircling narrative hierarchy in the History; secondly, I will discuss the traces of Holocaust and non-Holocaust literature that surface in the text.

The following is a brief summary of the novel’s plot that will distill some of the overlapping fictional frames and dialogic tendencies of the text; as I argue, these methods of double-voicing are a major component of this text’s exploration of a third-generational frame. The History of Love is a novel that imagines the Holocaust in the survivor narrative of two primary, first-person narrators. The first is Leo Gursky, a Holocaust survivor from Slonim, his alternatingly Russian and Polish hometown. This second is fourteen-year-old Alma Singer, who lives with her mother Charlotte, a translator, and her younger brother Bird in New York City. As her mother explains, Alma was named for the young girl Alma who is the central character to a book her father picked up while traveling in Chile: “The History of Love.” Before the war, Leo wrote three books in homage to his love Alma Mereminski; “The History of Love” was his last. In a Poland on the verge of war, Leo
entrusts his manuscript to his friend Zvi Litvinoff with the instructions: “To be held for Leopold Gursky until you see him again” (153). Eventually, Zvi reaches Chile and taking his friend to be murdered by the Nazis, Zvi is encouraged by his lover Rosa to publish The History of Love in his own name in Spanish. Leo survives the war by hiding in the woods of Slonim, but when he finally reaches the love of his childhood, Alma, in New York she confesses that she has borne their son, Isaac, and married. When the novel opens, Leo is a retired locksmith in his mid-seventies who lives in New York City, alone, except for the company of his friend from Slonim, Bruno, who lives above him.

Alma, too, is also a loner, whose mother has been asked by a Jacob Marcus, actually Isaac Moritz using a nom de plume, to translate “The History of Love” from Spanish to English. Alma, convinced that Jacob could hold her mother’s future happiness, intercepts his letters and with the help of her brother, Bird, pieces together the real facts of The History of Love: the relationship of Leo to the real Alma – Alma Mereminski. As Alma reads the pieces of her mother’s translation, the reader, too reads from Leo’s “History.”

One of the central challenges Krauss’s text posits for the reader is how to untangle the commingled losses of Holocaust survivor Leo Gursky and his unlikely narrative parallel: fourteen-year-old Alma. Within these disparate, yet uncanny parallel traumas marked by loss and abandonment, the reader confronts an unresolved tension that oscillates throughout the pages of The History of Love. The text requires that the reader contemplate the question, is this a story of the contemporary loss of Alma Singer or the history of Leo Gursky’s Holocaust survival?
Both Leo and Alma share the narrative spaces of loss and survival. Alone in his son Isaac's kitchen just after his death, Leo reaches out to the memory of his Tateh – Yiddish for father: “I lost you. You’d gone to collect specimens for a theory you were hatching about rainfall, instinct, and butterflies. And then you were gone. We found you lying under a tree, your face splashed with mud” (168). Alma, too, is a survivor: she survived the death of her Israeli father to cancer. As Leo recollects his father in terms of the Yiddish “Tateh,” Alma recalls of her father: “He spoke to me in Hebrew, and I called him Abba” (37). Memories of “father” for both Alma and Leo are expressed in the mother tongue of the preceding generation. The Spanish of Alma and the English of Krauss’s prose shadow the Yiddish and Hebrew of the older generation as they mark the text’s remove from spaces and languages of the past. And while Leo literally survived in the wild during the Nazi genocide in Slonim, after her father’s death, Alma decides that she is going to learn how to survive in the wilderness like her father (her uncle Julian informs her) knew how: “I decided I would learn to survive in the wild like my father. It would be good to know in case anything happened to Mom, leaving Bird and me to fend for ourselves” (42). Separated by fifty years and disparate experiences of loss, Krauss marks both Leo and Alma as survivors.

Within these overlapping narrative frames, Krauss refuses to privilege any single narrative. Neither does the discourse of first-generation survivor and witness nor third-generation non-Holocaust survivor move to a position of centrality. In Holocaust Fiction, Sue Vice refers to this type of narrative conflict in terms of polyphonic uncertainty. Here, Vice argues for a dialogism which “successfully frees
up its constituent languages and calls on the reader – not the narrator or author – to make sense of them” (9). Lacking the presence of authorial fiat, Krauss’s text requires that the reader actively juggle the narrative intertexts in order to create meaning. The structure echoes Hutcheon’s argument in The Poetics of Postmodernism as she discusses that in historiographic metafiction, the author is no longer the “originating source” of fixed meaning in the text (Poetics 126). Refusing to privilege neither any single narrator’s voice, nor her own, Krauss’s dialogic structure privileges only engaged reader participation in order to construct of meaning.

Tensions concerning narrative hierarchy similarly confront the reader through Bird’s story. Bird is on the cusp of solving the mystery of Alma’s real father after he speaks to Isaac’s brother, Bernard Moritz, who calls the Singers upon discovering the note Alma left for Isaac. Bird reflects, “inside I was going crazy because even though I didn’t understand everything I was sure I was very close to solving the mystery about Alma’s father” (217). Under the guise of solving this mystery, Bird brings Leo and Alma together; intertextually, Bird’s transmits Leo’s Holocaust narrative, although, as he admits, “I didn’t understand everything” (Krauss 217). In his diary entry “October 7,” Bird marks the day on which he prints Leo’s manuscript from his mother’s computer: “I put it in a brown envelope and on the front I wrote FOR LEOPOLD GURSKY” (217). The narrative echoes the earlier exchange between Leo and Zvi; Zvi describes the brown paper package he’d been holding inside his coat that was “sealed, and on the front, in his friend’s familiar handwriting, was written: To be held for Leopold Gursky until you see him again”
(152). While Bird completes the circular exchange by delivering Zvi’s version of the manuscript back to its original author, Leo, Bird serves as an explicit participant in Holocaust retelling.

The religious and historical threads that come to characterize Bird echo Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of dialogic conversation explained in *Discourse and the Novel*. According to Bakhtin, once heteroglossia is incorporated into the novel, language constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse that serves two speakers simultaneously: “the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (324). Bakhtin continues, noting in such discourse, “there are two voices, two meanings, and two intentions” (324). The text is both a fictional detective story with Bird as its protagonist trying to uncover the “mystery of Alma’s father” and an unveiling of the chapters of Leo Gursky’s *The History of Love*. Bird may wish to “do good things” because he believes himself to be one of the “lamed vovniks,” or thirty-six holy people. Inevitably, however, Bird aids in the transmission of Leo’s Holocaust narrative.

Bird’s divine altruism and the historical circumstances behind his name also reveal Krauss’s refracted intention as a third-generation Holocaust writer (52). Within the text’s intertextual frame, Krauss inserts various motivations for Bird’s detective work; again, no one narrative is privileged. Krauss marks Bird’s detective story explicitly through the language of the divine; God’s eternal name *Yod-Hey-Vav-Hey* frames Bird’s diary entries as he does God’s work. Lawrence Langer has criticized the tendency for contemporary Holocaust scholars and writers to
“preempt the Holocaust” for ulterior purposes (qtd. in Budnick, 218). Langer cautions that preempting the Holocaust indicates:

> using – and perhaps abusing – its grim details to fortify a prior commitment to an ideal of moral reality, community responsibility, or religious belief that leaves us with space to retain faith in their pristine value in a post-Holocaust world. (qtd. in Budnick 218)

Ostensibly, Bird would be a character susceptible to “preempt” the Holocaust for a higher religious purpose; however, Bird is blind to his narrative's place in the larger historical retelling of Krauss's text. To return to the question of the author's refracted intention, as Krauss names Bird a lamed vovnik, who “did not understand” the larger implications of his detective quest to solve the mystery of Alma's father, Krauss positions the metanarrative frame against Bird’s individual knowledge. Thus, this tension protects Bird's religious altruism from being subject to Langer's critique of narratives that preempt the Holocaust.

Krauss also embeds the burden of history within Bird's name. The historical markings render explicit what Bird, unaware, accomplishes in terms of solving the narrative mystery: bringing together the narrative frames of Holocaust and non-Holocaust survivors. Alma explains that her mother named Bird:

> Emanuel Chaim after the Jewish historian Emanuel Ringelblum, who buried milk cans filled with testimony in the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Jewish cellist Emanuel Feuermann, who was one of the great musical prodigies of the twentieth century, and also the Jewish writer of genius Isaac Emmanuilovich Babel, and her uncle Chaim, who was a joker, a real clown, made everyone laugh like crazy, and who died by the Nazis. But my brother refused to answer to it. (35)

In Jewish thought, a name is not merely an arbitrary designation. As Tracy Rich explains, “the name conveys the nature and essence of the thing named.
It represents the history and reputation of the being named” (Rich). This concept is evinced when God responds to Moses’s question, “What is your name?”. God replies “that He is eternal, that He is the God of our ancestors, that He has seen our affliction and will redeem us from bondage” (Rich). The history of Bird’s name, in terms of Jewish philosophy, thus encompasses the essence of Jewish history, past and present. Overlaying Bird’s name with those of Jewish historians, intellectuals, and members of family folklore, Krauss indicates alternative sources of meaning for Bird’s journey to find Alma’s real father. Bird’s Jewish spirit conveys the “nature and essence” of his detective narrative as one that shares in the company of preserving Jewish testimony, memory and culture.

Bird aids in returning “The History of Love” to its rightful owner, while Alma and Charlotte’s narratives allow the reader access to this text-within-a-text. Through this intertextual framework, dialogism aids in fiction’s retelling of history. As Krauss’s Leo Gursky enters the canon of fictional survivors alongside characters like Rosa Lublin and Jakob Beer, he is doubly interpolated as the original author of his novella, “The History of Love” and a character in Krauss’s larger narrative frame, *A History of Love*. The notion of individual authorship over the past, however, is confounded as Zvi Litvinoff copies the writing of “The History of Love”; in fact, for much of the novel Alma, Bird and Charlotte take Zvi to be the text’s original author. On his last morning in Poland, Zvi had received the brown paper package containing Leo’s coveted manuscript (153). Taking his friend for dead, Zvi eventually resorts to copying Leo’s original Yiddish manuscript into Spanish. He does so not with the original Alma in mind, but his new love, a young woman, Rosa, who immigrated to
Chile with her family before the war and, per my discussion in the introduction, shares her name with Ozick’s Rosa Lublin. Curiously, in Zvi’s Spanish version, Alma retains the name Alma, and thus, Zvi’s Rosa retains a textual presence as external to Leo’s story:

It wasn’t until he [Zvi] got to the third page that Alma’s name appeared. He paused. He had already changed a Feingold from Vilna to a De Biedma from Buenos Aires. Would it be so terrible if he switched Alma to Rosa? Three simple letters—the final “A” could remain. He’d already gone so far. He brought the pen to the page. Anyway, he told himself, Rosa was the only one who’d read it (183).

Within the dilemma Zvi faces of replacing the three simple letters “Alm” to “Ros” rests Krauss’s larger task of how to alter and maintain historical accounts to suit her contemporary fictional aim. For whom is Zvi’s history, and by extension, Krauss’s, accountable? The intertextual play of Zvi’s translation within a larger set of translations and texts that bear the same name allows Krauss to ironize Zvi’s thought that anyway, “Rosa was the only one who’d read it” (183). Readers of any one account of the “history of love” inevitably read all accounts. And thus, as Alma Singer is named after the “real Alma,” an Alma that is at once “real” in terms of Zvi’s fiction, Leo’s history, and of course, its signification as “soul” in Spanish, Zvi and Krauss’s stories become implicated in the histories of subsequent generations, and thus accountable to them.

Ultimately, the truth Zvi adheres to is not that he deliberately sat down at his drafting table, a table a sacred space “onto which the most important of all Jewish prayers had been carved by his landlady’s son” and, decided: “I am going to plagiarize my friend who was murdered by the Nazis” (183). Rather, Zvi attests that
“he simply copied the first page, which, naturally, led to copying the second” (183). The process of retelling “The History” in Zvi’s own hand was one he could not resist; however, the choice to leave Alma’s name in tact was deliberate. Although Zvi mindlessly begins to copy his friend’s manuscript, Zvi’s frozen hand, his stalling in the act of naming, alerts him to consciousness:

But if, when he went to write a capital R where there had been a capital A, Litvinoff’s hand stalled, perhaps it was because he was the only person, aside from its true author, to have read The History of Love and know the real Alma. ... And if, when he tried a second time to replace her name with another, for the second time his hand froze, perhaps it was because he knew that to remove her name would be like erasing all the punctuation, and the vowels, and every adjective and noun. Because without Alma, there would have been no book. (183-4)

Zvi is incapable of overwriting the “A” of the girl he once loved with the “R” of the woman he presently loves. Through Zvi’s hesitation, the reader senses the profound import of naming central to Jewish philosophy previously discussed. As Alma bears relation to a pre-war history for Zvi, deliberately erasing A-l-m-a for Zvi becomes synonymous with erasing not only rules of text, but the larger sign system of history. Thus, Krauss resists the tension of erasure of which so much Holocaust fiction is fraught. For Zvi, to remove Alma’s name from the pages of a “history,” however fictional or magical that history may be, is synonymous with “erasing all the punctuation, and the vowels, and every adjective and noun” (184). Through the act of Zvi’s plagiarizing ostensibly outside his own control, Krauss tests the limits of fiction to retell a history; appropriation becomes the boundary Zvi refuses to cross – a boundary that once crossed, silences language.
The decision to leave Alma’s name in tact also invokes the controversy surrounding plagiarism that is specific to Holocaust fiction. Sue Vice focuses on “over-reliance on other texts” in works like Benjamin Wilkomirski’s *Fragments* or D.M. Thomas’s *The White Hotel.* Ultimately, Vice argues that the common theme of the charge of plagiarism in these works is far too crude for a method which is so widespread, as she notes, either to “back up a novelistic plot or to give an authentic, documentary aspect to the novel” (2). In *The White Hotel,* Thomas lifts passages from Anatoly Kuznetsov’s *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel,* a work based on the survivor testimony of Dina Pronicheva, the sole survivor of the Babi Yar massacre in Ukraine on September 29-30, 1941. Although there is no delineation where Thomas’s narrative ends and Kuznetsov’s begins, Dina remains Dina in Thomas’s text. And in a novel surrounded by charges of plagiarism, the fiction bears witness to Dina’s survivor testimony, however removed from the actual factual events of the Babi Yar massacre.

While Kuznetsov’s text maintains an extra-literary connection to history through its reliance on Dina Pronicheva’s story, the connection Zvi maintains with the figure of Ozick’s Rosa is still encased within the literary. Thus, how is it possible to consider the intertextuality underpinning Krauss’s fictional realm in terms of its ability to bear witness? One way to approach this question is by situating Edward Said’s work on “worldliness” in terms of postmodernism and intertextuality. In the introduction to “The World, the Text, the Critic,” Said argues that “worldliness” emphasizes a text’s relations to a particular social and cultural context. Here he determines the transition in modernist to postmodernist scholarship in terms of
filiation (associations limited to biological descent) and affiliation (broader associations of cultural and social contexts). Relaying these definitions in a postmodern framework, Robert Eaglestone explains that filiation reflects how works influence and descend from each other, i.e., how the tradition of writing works (107). Affiliation, however, reflects the text’s relation not to the diachronic part of influence, but to the “text’s location in its own time, context and culture” outside of traditional, canonical ties (107). Referring specifically to Holocaust literature, Eaglestone notes that the filiations become significantly more complex as they extend outside of fiction: “they become personal recollection, the memories of parents and survivors, testimonies, museums, sites, religious traditions, works of history, as well as previous works of art” (108). Thus, tracing the literary filiations at work in The History of Love, the reader begins with Alma Singer and travels back through literary and human history: Alma Singer is named for the “first girl,” Alma, of “The History of Love”; Alma of “The History of Love” is Leo and Zvi’s childhood love, Alma Mereminski; Rosa becomes Zvi’s “Alma” as he translates “The History of Love”; Zvi’s Rosa is a shadow of Ozick’s Rosa Lublin; Rosa Lublin is the mother of Magda; Magda, read in relation to Celan’s epigraph, becomes an extension of Paul Celan’s Margarete in “Todesfuge.”12 Tracing the generations of textual links, intertextuality becomes a way for Krauss’s 2005 postmodern text to bear witness to past Holocaust fiction.13 In so doing, Krauss’s text inverts the common dictum waged against contemporary fiction writers of the Holocaust also invoked in Sue Vice’s work. Krauss’s work undoes the idea that there exists a mistrust of invention in relation to the Holocaust: “the more personal distance between author and
subject, the more ‘invented’ the work must be” (Vice 4). In Krauss’s work, invention is purposefully invoked to strengthen the intertext of connections between present and past.

In another method of textual witness to the “unrecoverable,” The History of Love commingles histories through its links to the work of Polish writer Bruno Schulz who was shot by a Nazi officer in a Polish ghetto in 1942 (Ficowski 13). For Eaglestone, the idea of “negative filiation” is just as important, if not more so, in Holocaust fiction. While affiliation reflects the “present and future understandings of the world, by ‘negative filiation,’ Eaglestone means “a ‘filiation’ to what is absent and unrecoverable” (108). The absent and unrecoverable often takes a prominent role in both Histories of love, especially as Krauss relies on the intertext to highlight the presence of absence. In so doing, intertextual ties to Schulz contribute to a presence of absence in the text. Writing to Charlotte, who is actually Alma in disguise, Jacob Marcus, actually Isaac Moritz in disguise, notes that he has just finished reading the The Street of Crocodiles, which Alma subsequently reads. Not only does the text itself appear as literally incarnate in Krauss’s work, but the characters Bird and Bruno, as well as the content of Leo’s “History” bear relation to either Schulzian themes or the writer’s historical persona. Leo’s fictional doppelganger Bruno, “always the better writer,” Leo describes, bears relation to the historical writer in both profession and name. Neither Bruno, historical nor fictional, survived the war. While Leo’s Bruno “died on a July day in 1941,” Bruno Schulz was gunned down by a Nazi in a Polish ghetto on November 19, 1942 (Krauss 249; Ficowski 13).
Before he died, Bruno Schulz had finished a set of short storied published as *The Street of Crocodiles*. As Colleen Taylor in “Childhood Revisited: The Writings of Bruno Schulz” testifies, the creative power of Schulz’s work centered on methods that are a “combination of science, magic and psychology,” methodology echoed in Krauss’s stories like “The Age of Glass” and “The Age of Silence” (Taylor 464). Both conceptually and lexically, Krauss’s *History* is written as if in extension of Schulz’s magical-philosophical stories “The Age of Genius” and “Birds.” In Jerzy Ficowski’s introduction to *The Street of Crocodiles*, he details that before Schulz died, he was also said to be working on a novel called *The Messiah*, “in which the myth of the coming of the Messiah would symbolize a return to the happy perfection that existed at the beginning—and this for Schulz meant the return to childhood” (Ficowski 18). Schulz also believed that the insights of childhood mark the boundaries of an artist’s creativity (Ficowski 20). In the figure of Bird, who both bears the namesake to Schulz’s story “Birds” as well as the conceptual parallel of a childlike “lamed vovnik,” or Messiah figure, Krauss thus collapses both the historical persona and literary oeuvre of Bruno Schulz; intertextually, Bird bears witness to the loss of this historical figure’s place in history of Jewish literature.

Krauss’s text is not only intertextually indebted to Jewish writers like Ozick and Schultz, but inventively takes off from the work of canonical postmodern writers like Jorge Luis Borges, Samuel Beckett and Vladimir Nabokov. Alongside the stories of other writers and histories at work within the narrative, these combined narrative threads come to embody what Julia Kristeva refers to in “The Bounded Text” as a “cultural textuality”: where “several utterances, taken from...
other texts, intersect and neutralize one another” (qtd. in Allen 35). Here, “neutral” is synonymous with a failure to privilege one utterance over the other, rather than the notion of cancellation. As Graham Allen explicates in _Intertextuality_, the text is thus not an individual, isolated object but a “compilation of cultural textuality” (36). Through this compilation, Krauss continues to defy any constricting notion of “Holocaust fiction” as she creates a compilation of Holocaust and non-Holocaust literary histories.

Like the narrators in Beckett’s trilogy, _Molloy, Malone Dies_ and the _Unnamable_, Krauss’s novel opens with the concept of Leo writing towards his death in “The Last Words on Earth” as Leo notes, “When they write my obituary. Tomorrow. Or the next day. It will say _LEO GURSKY IS SURVIVED BY AN APARTMENT FULL OF SHIT_” (3). Pondering the title of his novel, "Words for Everything," Leo notes:

> At times I believed that the last page of my book and the last page of my life were one and the same, that when my book ended I’d end, a great wind would sweep through my rooms carrying the pages away, and when the air cleared of all those fluttering white sheets the room would be silent, the chair where I sat would be empty. (9)

The attachment to writing as life also guides the character Malone in _Malone Dies_. Repeated throughout the chapters narrated by Leo, the refrain “And yet” functions much like the impetus in Beckett’s Trilogy to continue writing toward death; within the “And yet” of Krauss’s work echoes the refrains of “What tedium” and “No matter” that repeat throughout Beckett’s three novels.

Curiously, the abject also becomes a shared space inhabited by Leo and Beckett’s protagonists. Outlined by Kristeva in _The Powers of Horror_, the abject
refers to the human response, in the form of horror, shock, vomit, etc., to a threatened breakdown in meaning and identification caused by the loss of the barrier between subject and object, self and other (1-3). It is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection “but what disturbs identity, system, order” (Kristeva, Powers 4). In one instance, the breakdown in subjectivity of Leo’s character and the disturbance to the narrative’s overall coherence occurs through the indeterminate threads of Leo and Bruno’s relationship. As we learn on the final pages of the novel, Leo’s Bruno is only a literal piece of the imaginary: Bruno is “the greatest character I ever wrote” (249). And through Leo’s oft-humorous preoccupation with death and his aging, sagging body, the “tranquility of decomposition” that guides texts like Molloy is similarly at work in Leo’s physical decline (Beckett 25). The following scene in which Leo has allegedly cared for Bruno after he is hospitalized for an intentional overdose illustrates the breakdown in Leo’s physical subjectivity – his body – as well as his mind:

It was contagious. There was no reason for our laughter, but we began to giggle and the next thing we were rocking in our seats and howling, howling with laughter, tears streaming down our cheeks. A wet spot bloomed in my crotch and that made us laugh harder, I was banging the table and fighting for air, I thought: Maybe this is how I’ll go, in a fit of laughter, what could be better, laughing and crying, laughing and singing, laughing so as not to forget that I am alone, that it is the end of my life, that death is waiting outside the door for me. (Krauss 7)

Rather than happiness, only the sound of the abject, the disintegration of physical and mental control that propels one towards a death that waits just “outside the door” resides in Bruno and Leo’s howling (7). “There was no reason for our laughter,” Leo writes, as “a wet spot bloomed” on his crotch (7). Reminding the self
of its own fragility, the abject refers not to a thing but to a “potentially, a gravitational field that summons the subject from its proper place to a no-man’s land where the subject...almost ceases to be” (Becker-Leckrone 33). As Becker-Leckrone explicates in *Julia Kristeva and Literary Theory*, within the abject the crisis of place and the question Where am I? “precipitates a crisis of meaning and identification (What is that? Is that me? What am I?)” (32). On the level of Leo’s individual character, a character that frequently reminds us of his own invisibility, an ontological crisis is at work that requires the reader to question, Who is Leo? What is Leo? Is Leo Bruno? In turn, the narrative frame doubly tests the boundaries between fiction and history, and the limitations of its own fiction.

Similar to the work done by Miller Budnick in her analysis of the periodicity of Holocaust fiction, Eaglestone discusses the genealogy of texts that are explicitly and implicitly centered on the Holocaust. Grouping Beckett’s work within the latter designation, Eaglestone contends that these texts fall outside of the canon of “Holocaust texts,” but the implicit events make up a type of “absent content” (105). Thus, how do we conceptualize the relationship between Beckett and Krauss’s texts? As Hutcheon reminds the reader, intertextuality readings demand “not only the recognition of textualized traces of the literary and historical past but also the awareness of what has been done – through irony – to those traces” (Poetics 127).

The dialogic relationship between characters like Molloy and Leo serve not only to reveal Beckett’s influence at work in Krauss’s text, but also to perhaps make explicit what Eaglestone identifies as the implicit, “absent content” of Beckett’s *Trilogy*. Quoting Adorno’s famous argument regarding Beckett’s work, Eaglestone notes that
Beckett “has given us the only fitting reaction to the situation of the concentration camps—a situation he never calls by name, as if it were subject to an image ban” (105). Thus, by layering personas like those of Leo and Molloy, Krauss contributes to a twenty-first century literary genealogy of postmodern writing and underscores the “absent content” that pervades work like Beckett’s traditionally considered wholly apart from the Holocaust canon.

In addition to Beckett’s postmodern inflections, Borgesian-like themes perpetuate throughout the History, themes that move beyond the striking coincidence that both Zvi Litvinoff and Jorge Luis Borges happen to be Latin American writers from Chile and Argentina, respectively. The labyrinthine structure of texts within texts, whether real or imagined, is a common one among Borges’s Collected Ficciones. Intertextual layers in Borges’s work often calls attention to the postmodern intention that emphasizes a lack of a singular notion of truth. For Borges, as for Krauss, no direct parallels between literary text and historical referent are clearly drawn; texts often engage in self-reference and blur the boundaries between self and other.

Borgesian narrative strains surface prominently within Zvi and Leo’s relationship as well. Before Zvi leaves Poland he worked as a journalist – an obituary writer. Finishing an obituary of the famous writer Isaac Babel, Zvi feels pleased that he has completed his best work until he discovers that Leo has also attempted, and far surpassed Zvi in his own draft of an obituary of Isaac Babel. Amidst the obituaries Leo writes we find a mix of classic and Jewish writers like Kafka and Tolstoy, Osip Mandelstam and the fictional Leo Gursky himself; the
collection speaks to a Borgesian mix of writers both real and imagined that inevitably blur fictional and historical frames and referents. This narrative thread, one that we could argue is guided by the final epilogue of Leo’s obituary in the *History*, also intersects with Borges’s stories built upon catalogues of texts from bygone authors, stories like “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*” and “A Survey of the Works of Herbert Quain.”

If in Borges’s work, the language and process of fiction subsumes the place of subject itself, then in Krauss’s text, the fictional interplay challenges the reader to wade through both historical and fictional events in a text comprised of real and imagined authorship. The layers of uncertainty refuse to privilege a particular narrative. Thus, within Krauss’s text, the intertextual Borgesian threads that refuse a particular fictional referent, or singular, fixed notion of textual truth, call attention to the function of Krauss as a third-generation Holocaust writer. Without the experience of a living connection to the historical referent of the Holocaust, Krauss mediates through layers of fiction, history, testimony, obituaries of the known, imagined histories of the dead, in order to cohere a narrative frame. Relying on Borgesian themes, Krauss’s calls attention to the layers of textual representation and existential distance between story and the past it wishes to uncover.

The ontological problem of truth driving postmodern works like Beckett and Borges also enters Krauss’s text as the reader discovers the truth about a character Leo and Krauss share: Bruno. Earlier, when speaking to his son Isaac (as himself), Leo recalls: “I want to tell you—and then I broke off. What do I want to tell you? The truth? What is the truth? That I mistook your mother for my life? No. *Isaac,* I
said. *The truth is the thing I invented so I could live*” (167). However, when Alma and Leo meet on the final pages of the novel, Leo reveals the fictional-within-the-fictional in Bruno’s characterization: “He’s the greatest character I ever wrote” (249). Immediately the reader is struck by the dilemma of not knowing where Leo’s writing stops and Krauss’s narrative begins; Bruno is at once real (existing on the page) and imagined (existing only in Leo’s mind) for the reader. Here, Krauss invokes the suspension of disbelief central to fiction writing as a paradox: Leo intentionally disbelieves and misunderstands in order to more closely approximate the truth. Literally, the truth becomes an intertextual narrative structure that questions its own fictionalization; within this problemitization Krauss reveals a self-consciousness that historical accounts presume to embody, but as scholars like Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra point out, often lack. Additionally, reading Bruno’s character through an intertextual consciousness linked to Bruno Schulz, the presence of the historical literary persona and the loss of Leo’s friend to Nazi genocide collide. Layers upon layers of intertextual uncertainty become a dialogic imperative for the reader to make sense of these narrative collisions; rather than calling on the narrator or author, the Bakhtinian structure requires that the reader contribute to the creative process by piecing together the text.

Only on the final pages of the novel and in meeting Alma does Leo reveal the truth of Bruno as imaginary. For Leo the truth is “invented” but not yet fully realized. Only in the presence of Alma, as she asks, “Who is Bruno?” is Leo able to confront a truth that functions outside of his narrative invention: “He’s the friend I didn’t have” (249). And finally: “He’s the greatest character I ever wrote” (249).
able to let go of the memory of Bruno, Leo is only able to confront his truth-telling capacity in the presence of a third-generation listener: Alma. The groundbreaking work of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in *Testimony* details exactly this principle: the notion that only when a survivor testifies to a listener, or when the trauma is reported for another, can one come to terms with the past (57). And intertextually, as Zvi copies Leo’s text, he has already determined the function of the real Alma of Krauss’s protagonist as witness: “Because without Alma, there would have been no book” (184).

In *The History of Love*, Krauss relays testimony through layers of fictional representation that call attention to their own production. While Krauss undercuts the formality of knowledge and marks the privileging of certain histories as uncertain, the capacity of one character to relay another’s story becomes clear-cut. Stressing the intimacy of retelling, Krauss turns writers to readers and characters to those as the read-to. Alma’s name is embedded in Leo’s “History” and also tied to the intimacy of the act of reading itself. The entry from “My Mother’s Sadness” reads:

29. MY MOTHER USED TO READ TO ME FROM *THE HISTORY OF LOVE*. “The first woman may have been Eve, but the first girl will always be Alma,” she’d say, the Spanish book open on her lap while I lay in bed. (57)

Jorge Luis Borges too becomes a reader. After Borges becomes blind, he requests that the visitors who came to his door read to him: “he would lay his fingers on the spines of books until he located the one he wished to hear, and would hand it to the visitor, who had no choice but to sit and read it aloud to him” (71). As the writer ages, turning blind, strangers become those capable of reading the vast portions of
“Cervantes, Goethe, and Shakespeare” that Borges had long memorized (71). In the abstraction of writers as characters, whether “real” in the case of Borges, or already-fictionalized as in the case of Charlotte, Zvi and Leo, the function of the writer is accompanied by the function of the listener. The active production of history in the event of writing is no longer a one-sided process as writers become readers and readers, in turn, become listeners.

The genre of contemporary Holocaust-inflected texts also inserts a new dilemma into the conversation regarding Holocaust representation. Ultimately, the question is one of genre – Is this a Holocaust text? If yes, what makes it so? Scholars like Miller Budnick and J. Lang have skirted the issue by adhering to the new characterization of Holocaust-inflection. This dilemma also surfaces in Berel Lang’s discussion of the tensions behind the designation “Holocaust fiction” (107). According to Lang, the designation is a source of misrepresentation itself as it implies “that any work subsumed under that rubric had undertaken to represent a consciousness of that event as a whole rather than (for example) only the narrative of a single person’s life or death” (107). Thus, a text such as Krauss’s that intertextually represents postmodern aesthetics and canonical Holocaust narratives at once complicates the model of representation based on “consciousness of that event as a whole” (107).

Rather than narrow the scope of Krauss’s text through an analysis that delimits her work as one falling short of the work of a Holocaust artist, this project calls attention to the shifting consciousnesses and integration of uncertainty into stories of Holocaust fiction in the contemporary generation. As Krauss tests the
limits of her own fiction through texts-within-texts and blurs distinctions between
fiction and history, her text embodies what Hutcheon explains as the characteristic
boundaries between the “world” and art that many would unquestioningly use to
separate the two (Poetics 127). However, rather than reduce the scope of the novel,
intertextuality, as Hutcheon explores, opens a text up, rather than “closes it down”
(Poetics 127). She continues: “among the many things that postmodern
intertextuality challenges are both closure and single, centralized meaning” (Poetics
127).

In a narrative that places the onus of representation on the reader-as-
listener, how does the reader prioritize the various narrative tensions at work? The
answer lies in a precarious movement and balance among tensions, rather than
privileging a particular narrative thread. Ironically, as intertextual layers unfold,
such as the unveiling of Bruno’s fictionality, or Zvi’s act of plagiarism, uncertainty,
rather than resolve abounds. The uncertainty is confounded by the extra-textual
traces to other works, whether Holocaust or non-Holocaust in nature. Kristeva’s
distinction of intertextuality from Bakhtinian dialogism is a helpful model in
perceiving meaning amidst conflicting voices and histories. In an interview with
Margaret Waller, Kristeva explains that in intertextuality, content is not to be
understood as being about a single content, as in the question of analysis, “What
does this mean in this sentence?” (282). Rather, Kristeva explains, content:

may be dispersed, traceable to different points of origin; the final
meaning of this content will be neither the original source nor any one
of the possible meanings taken on the text, but will be, rather, a
continuous movement back and forth in the space between the origin
and all of the possible connotative meanings. (qtd. in Waller 282)
In one instance, Kristeva’s understanding of the “continuous movement” that bestows content with meaning is a useful frame in considering the tension at stake in the relationship between Beckett and Krauss’s abject characters, making explicit the implicit Holocaust content in Beckett. As Hutcheon notes, “postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context” (Poetics 118). In the turn to a text-within-a-text, or *The History of Love*’s overt use of Borgesian themes and imagery, she also relies on Borges’s explicit work deconstructing singular, privileged voices of truth to inform her narrative. In turn, through migration, of languages, texts, and dialogic discourse, Krauss asserts a new paradigm for Holocaust narratives that fails to privilege any one paradigm at all. Rather, moving from postmodern-to-Holocaust fiction, real-to-imagined stories, childhood-to-old-age and friendship-to-love, Krauss’s self-referential text destabilizes internal meaning and calls on the reader-as-listener, to, like Leo, create her own version of the truth.
Chapter 2: “Every Moment is Two Moments”:
Double-Voiced Discourse in Anne Michaels’s *Fugitive Pieces*

In the introduction to *Holocaust Fiction*, Sue Vice approaches intertextuality in contemporary Holocaust literature through a theoretical framework provided by Mikhail Bakhtin. However, in contrast to my argument, Vice places Anne Michaels’s *Fugitive Pieces* outside the dialogic network that constitutes her literary archive. Instead, Vice cites Anne Michaels’s *Fugitive Pieces* as one of two examples (Cynthia Ozick’s *The Shawl* functions as the second) that to her “do not push to any extreme their novelistic constituents; in other words, their content has not affected their form” (9). The first novel of Canadian poet Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* is a novel in two Parts, told respectively through the first-person narrators of Jakob Beer, a Holocaust survivor, and Ben, the son of Holocaust survivors. Before engaging with Vice’s claims, I will provide a brief summary of the multifarious plot.

When Part I of *Fugitive Pieces* begins, seven-year-old Jakob Beer has literally emerged out of the mud in the ruins of Biskupin, Poland, where he meets the Greek Geologist Athos Roussos. Jakob has survived the murder of his parents and sister Bella by hiding behind the walls of their pantry, and then, within the mud of Biskupin. Athos takes Jakob to live with him on the Greek island of Zakynthos during the war. After, Athos and Jakob immigrate to Canada, where Athos writes and teaches at the Geology Department at the University and Jakob, in turn, becomes a poet and translator. When Athos dies, Jakob returns to the Roussos family home on the Greek island of Idhra to finish Athos’s study of “how the Nazis abused archaeology to fabricate the past,” *Bearing False Witness* (104). On the island of
Idhra, Jakob also composes his own volumes of poetry, *Groundwork* and *What Have You Done to Time* (104). Jakob’s memoirs, later discovered by Ben, comprise part I; the narrative alternates between Jakob’s childhood and the Jakob’s adult reflections. When Part II opens, the narrative voice is that of Ben, the son of Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Toronto after the war. Ben is an academic who focuses on the interrelationship of weather and biography and has fallen in love with Jakob’s poetry. As his wife, Naomi, grows to love Ben’s parents, Ben’s isolation and anxiety mounts; at the urges of his wife and as a favor to Jakob’s lifelong friend, Salman, Ben travels to Idhra in search of Jakob’s lost journals. The novel closes with Ben traveling back to Toronto, having found Jakob’s manuscripts and resolved to reconcile with Naomi.

Contrary to Vice’s claim that *Fugitive Pieces* does “not push to any extreme [its] novelistic constituents,” I argue that among the postmodern retelling of loss and exile, memory obsessively persists both directly and indirectly to disrupt chronology and narrative coherence (9). Ultimately, Vice argues that the text elects not to appropriate any detailed horror as it infuses loss into descriptions of landscape, weather, and ancient history (9). Vice makes this argument at the risk of isolating the majority of American and Canadian Holocaust fiction written over the last decade. As I discussed in the introduction, scholars like Jessica Lang and Emily Miller Budnick have suggested that these recent fictions interpolate histories of the Holocaust alongside those of the non-Holocaust. Regarding this type of framework, Vice observes: “this seems to be a way of trying to wring aesthetic and meaningful comfort from an event which offers no redemption of any kind” (9).
Comfort, however, is lost when one considers the analogous geological histories described through the grit of Michaels’s poetic voice: the dark dirt and muck of her histories deny the reader solace. In so doing, Michaels’s language precariously suspends natural and human history in an unresolved tension; as in The History of Love, a major dialogic function of the text occurs as the reader is called upon to make sense of its constituent tensions and languages.

Drawing on the aesthetic quality of Michaels’s prose, Vice cites critic Natasha Walter’s critique of the text in order to support her argument. Walter cautions: “she is putting literature on a pedestal; it would be wonderful to see her making it a little less polished” (qtd. in Vice, 10). For “pedestal” Vice reads single-voiced; for “less polished” she reads “double-voiced” (10). On the most basic level, Vice argues, Holocaust fiction is dialogic in so much as it draws on both the literary and historical to comprise its frame (9). This claim would obviously seem to contradict Vice’s own reading of aesthetic language in Fugitive Pieces as “single-voiced.” However, reading Fugitive Pieces through the vein of Julia Kristeva’s semiotic approach to language, it becomes possible to locate the “double-voiced” in a text even as “polished” Fugitive Pieces.

Approaching the aesthetic language of the text through Kristeva’s reworking of Bakhtin provides one methodology to counter Vice’s claim that polished languages functions as single-voiced. Essentially, Kristeva establishes the necessary theoretical context to approaching the “poetic” within the frame of the novel. Although Bakhtin discusses dialogism as the defining element of novelistic discourse, Kristeva resituates this work in terms of both the novel and the poetic. In
an interview with Margaret Waller, Kristeva argues that intertextuality still persists in the poetic. Kristeva explains: “Obviously, if you are dealing with writing that is very fragmentary, very elliptical, as certain modern poetry is, then it is difficult to talk about novelistic elements” (283). While Bakhtin tended to characterize poetry in terms of the monologic, Kristeva remarks:

> the concept of intertextuality encompasses both novel and poetry, even if the novelistic element can be taken today in a very broad sense. Intertextuality is perhaps the most global concept possible for signifying the modern experience of writing. (qtd. in Waller 283)

Thus, Kristeva argues for dialogism to encompass the classic genres, both poetic and novelistic.

Extending her analysis, I suggest that Kristeva establishes the requisite theoretical context for approaching the aesthetic language in *Fugitive Pieces* through the intertextual. The double-voicings of the text frequently surface amidst disparate historical narratives, such as the interwoven tropes of geology and poetry. I will focus on this interrelationship as I ask, how does the reader account for the strata of histories within the text? Michaels interweaves histories of plate tectonics and earthly materials – limestone, wood, and salt - with Nazi destruction. Jakob writes: “Because Athos’s love was paleobotany, because his heroes were rock and wood as well as human, I learned not only the history of men but the history of the earth” (32).

In addition to the “lyric geology” of Jakob and Athos’s earthly fascinations, dialogism in the text through surfaces through the following tensions: the convergence between ancient poetry and its contemporary retelling; the dual
focalization of Jakob’s character narration; and the conversations between first-person narrators Jakob and Ben.17 Both the “real” poetry of ancient Greece as well as the fictional lines of Jakob’s work commingles in *Fugitive Pieces*. Through this structure, Michaels’s inserts new voices into the discourse of Holocaust history. In the introduction, I discussed Ozick’s use of “those documents” to substantiate her narrative frame. Here, Michaels foregrounds the poetic, rather than historical documentation, as the texts undergirding her historical fiction. The interplay of fiction supporting Krauss’s and Michaels’s narratives is symptomatic of the larger cultural context. As third-generation Holocaust novelists, Krauss and Michaels bear no direct relation to the Holocaust through lived experience, or even through their antecedent generation. In turn, their texts reflect the sociohistorical moment as they layer fictional texts to enable their method of indirect witness to the past.

Like *The History of Love*, *Fugitive Pieces* is a text-within-a-text. Although unnamed, the notebooks Ben discovers at Jakob’s family home in Idhra are the texts the reader has been witnessing through Part I. Functioning at the level of character, dialogism thus persists through Jakob’s double-consciousness as character and narrator; Michaels relies on a dual focalization to reveal the child and adult consciousnesses of a single-character’s frame. At the level of narration, the dialogic operates between Jakob and Ben’s first-person accounts, and on the level of history, between the first and second-generation accounts of Holocaust trauma. Similar to the narrative parallels at work in *The History of Love*, double-voicings in *Fugitive Pieces* contribute to a transfer of Holocaust memory through a character outside the discourse of first-generation survivorship: Ben. Sharing in the function of
“transmitter” with Bird and Alma, Ben, inevitably aids in the conveyance of Jakob’s story. These dialogic functions also continue at the level of meaning. Jakob’s “second history” becomes both Jakob’s re-birth out of the peat bog of Biskupin and into Athos’s world and the simultaneous documentation of this history in the notebooks that become *Fugitive Pieces*. The parallel chapters in Parts I and II underscore a disruptive chronology as they highlight the text’s circularity; the parallels embody a past that is also a future, the notion echoed in Athos’s daily reminder to Jakob, “it is your future you are remembering” (21). How these double consciousnesses affect the production of history is precisely the subject of this analysis. First, this chapter explores the various dialogic relationships within the text. Subsequently, I ask how these tensions reframe the concept of witness for the contemporary reader.

Memory in *Fugitive Pieces* frequently disrupts a monologic narrative frame. Michaels often employs Athos’s fascination with the earth as a metaphor for memory, evinced in Athos’s interest in limestone. Jakob recalls: “Athos had a special affection for limestone—that crushed reef of memory, that living stone, organic history squeezed into massive mountain tombs” (32). Encoded in the strata of limestone is the impetus to secure human memory within a natural history that, if not interred, inevitably risks being overwritten and distorted. For Athos, “human memory is encoded in air currents and river sediment. Eskers of ash wait to be scooped up, lives reconstituted” (53). In “that living stone, organic history squeezed into massive mountain tombs” and the human memory “encoded in air currents and river sediment” Michaels collapses human and earthly history into each other.
While recent scholarship on historiography by those such as Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra argue that historical narratives are no less subjective than fiction, the way that Michaels encodes memory in geological formations reflects its own natural formation.

Through her use of geological narratives, Michaels offers the reader an approach to history as an “organic” natural process true to its own formation.

Enmeshing the earthly within the poetic and vice versa, Michaels underscores the presumption Kristeva outlines in “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” between a text’s “internal” and “external” function. Here, Kristeva erases these boundaries as she argues that the inner-workings of utterances will always possess a double meaning: a meaning in the text itself and a meaning in “the historical and social text” (Desire 37). Only within the layers of the earthly does Athos come to understand the lived experience in “the historical and social text.” Jakob continues, Athos “was rhapsodic about the French Causses and the Pennines in Britain; about “Strata” Smith and Abraham Werner, who, he said, like surgeons “folded back the skin of time” while surveying canals and mines” (33). For Athos, earth science is a methodical process.

As critic Fabienne Quennet argues in her analysis of the overlaps between geographic and literary imagery in the text, “Athos reads human and social and geological processes according to their common characteristics” (4). Athos “applied the geological to the human, analyzing social change as we would a landscape; slow persuasion and catastrophe. Explosions, seizures, floods, glaciation. He constructed his own historical topography” (119). Moving to the text’s external relevance, the natural process of geology lends a distinct contrast to the unnatural process of Nazi
genocide. Only amidst the natural can Athos find a reliable approach to understanding the inorganic destruction of Nazi history. Lyric geology provides a way for Athos to encode memory in a pure, un tarnished form. Moving between the organic and inorganic processes of history allows Athos and Jakob to make sense of the past; in turn, Michaels requests that the reader move among narrative threads in order to cohere meaning from the text.

Natural and “unnatural,” human history, and literary approaches to the scientific, are just two example of the constituent tensions and languages at play in *Fugitive Pieces*. Amidst these tensions, I return to the question, what types of history unfold? In *The Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon sites scholar Georg Lukács, who argues that historical fiction organizes historical data to lend “verifiability” to the fictional. But Hutcheon counters: historical metafiction may well incorporate but does not *assimilate* this information (114). For Hutcheon, the process of attempting to assimilate is foregrounded as narrators try to make sense of historical facts they have collected (114). She continues:

> As readers, we see both the collecting and the attempts to make narrative order. Historiographic metafiction acknowledges the paradox of the *reality* of the past but its *textualized accessibility* to us today. (114)

What does it mean, then, for *Fugitive Pieces* to incorporate, but not assimilate, historical data, as Hutcheon suggests? This question is best addressed by looking at how Michaels relies on dialogic voices to unfold history throughout the text.

In addition to the human and earthly histories of the text, the landscapes of Greece, the island of Idhra, ancient ruins of Poland, and Toronto migrate to the
center of a metanarrative of Eurocentric historical discourse to which they are traditionally absent. Michaels relays the marginal in tandem with the dominant. In so doing, the history of the ancient Jews of Greece and their fate under the Gestapo becomes a prominent narrative thread. In September 1944, the Germans left Zakynthos and finally, Jakob and Athos are able to leave the island and travel to Athens. Here, Kostas, Daphne and Athos collectively piece together the three-hundred-year-old community of the Jews of Greece, and their fate under the Gestapo after the Italians surrendered.

Through the dialogic layering of the scene of retelling, the reader becomes literally subject to a “textualized accessibility” as history unfolds. Jakob recounts that Daphne, Kostas and Athos begin to speak, hungry for knowledge and truth: “Starved, they fell into conversation, cleaning their plate as if they’d find a truth painted on the bottom” (62). Their desire for knowledge is likened to the basic need to eat. The words Daphne, Kostas and Athos piece together of the various events becomes a substitute for nourishment as they create their own history. While the speakers metaphorically ingest their own knowledge, Jakob leaves the three voices unmarked; Daphne, Kostas and Athos’s sentences alternate across the page, interrupting one another, as they become a single narrative thread:

‘Daphne and I cheered, ‘Englezakia!’ as the English bombs fell in our streets, even as the English bombs fell in our streets, even as the smoke turned the sky black above Piraeus and sirens screamed and the house shook.’
‘Even I learned to recognize which planes were theirs and which were English. Stukas shriek. They’re silver and dive like swallows—’
‘And drop their bombs like shit.’
‘Kostas,’ chided Daphne, ‘not in front of Jakob.’ (67)
Incorporation thus becomes marked through the voices’ interdependence and collectivity as they interrupt one another, reconstructing the past and overcome their individual, isolated versions of history in Zakynthos, or Athens. As the adults collectively reconstruct the past, Jakob never assimilates their voices into his own first person narration. Jakob does not write, “I recall that Kostas said, ’Daphne and I cheered,’” but rather, Michaels focalizes Jakob as a thirteen-year-old boy and pulls the reader into this first-person consciousness. Through the dual focalization of Jakob, we see both the “collecting and the attempts to make narrative order”; the narrative situates the locus of meaning between layered voices and narrations (Hutcheon, Poetics 114).

Amidst the dialogue among Kostas, Daphne and Athos, Jakob inserts traces of his own history; within this scene we find the details of his first history enmeshed in his second. The textual process of these layered histories and voices creates a dual focalization of Jakob as both character and narrator within the same scene. Eventually, when Jakob returns to Idhra with Michaela in “The Gradual Instant” to write his memoirs, the reader is reminded of Jakob’s adult presence as narrator: “Each morning I write these words for you all. For Bella and Athos, for Alex, for Maurice and Irena, for Michaela. Here on Idhra, in this summer of 1992, I try to set down the past in the cramped space of a prayer” (191). But when listening to the details of the war, Jakob is still a child, too young to hear Kostas swear. Describing the beginning of the German occupation of Athens, Daphne recalls:

‘We closed the drapes to the sun and Kostas and I sat at the table in the dark. We heard sirens, anti-aircraft guns, yet the church bells kept ringing for early mass.’
... When they pushed my father, he was still sitting in his chair, I could tell afterwards, by the way he fell (63).

Daphne continues, but Jakob’s memories interject: “... I could tell by the way he fell” (63). In the process of writing, the adult narrator Jakob recalls the memories of Jakob the child; intertextual layers allow the reader access to Jakob’s pre-war past. Jakob’s adult voice does not relay the details of the German occupation, but rather, his alternating lines recall adventures with his childhood friend Mones skipping stones on the river or Mones’s mother, who made wigs. “She gave us mild while we were studying and the glass always smelled of lotion, it made the milk taste pretty,” Jakob writes (63). As Graham Allen remarks in Intertextuality of Bakhtin’s work, “dialogism does not concern simply the clash between different character-centered discourses; dialogism is also a central feature of each character’s own individual discourse” (Allen 25). Thus, in the dialogic tension between Jakob the adult/writer/narrator and Jakob the child/subject/character Jakob accesses his “first history.”

The distance between the narrator Jakob and character Jakob recalls Kristeva’s understanding of dialogic discourse, which for Kristeva includes the polyphonic novel. She writes, “in its structures, writing reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis” (Desire 77). Not surrounded by quotation marks, Jakob’s voice is one that is silent in speech, at the moment of conversation in Kostas and Daphne’s living room. Rather, Jakob’s voice is present only in writing. Later, Ben will remark that he could understand how, on the island of Idhra, Jakob would feel safe enough to begin Groundwork. In the
comfort of writing Kostas, Athos and Daphne’s voices, Jakob’s childhood silence transforms into textual presence and Michaels relies on dialogic framing to convey the otherwise absent history of Jakob’s childhood before the war.

Often, in *Fugitive Pieces*, Michaels relies on traces of other texts to address key historical moments. In the scene discussed above, Michaels unveils a history that not only has the power to transform men into poets, but a history with poetics as its protagonist. Kostas says:

> Since Daphne won’t let me swear in front of you, Jakob, though you’ve seen so much it’s only right you should know how to swear, I’ll tell you instead that war can turn even an ordinary man into a poet. I’ll tell you what I thought the day they abused the city with their swastikas: At sunrise the Parthenon is flesh. In moonlight it is bones. (68)

Athos recognizes the last line from Kostas Palamas, informally known as Greece’s national poet: "Jakob and I have read Palamas together” (68). Palamas, as Kostas says, “is our most beloved poet” (68). As Michaels’s text relays accurately in terms of lived history, Palamas’s death marked a major event of the Greek resistance. At Palamas’s funeral, Angelos Sikelianos, one of Palamas’s contemporaries, recited a poem that incited a demonstration of over 100,000 mourners against the Nazi occupation. The reality of this historic event is mirrored in the text. Daphne notes: “When Palamas died during the war, they followed another poet, Sikelianos, through Athens…and at his grave, they sang the national anthem, surrounded by soldiers!” (68). Kostas adds, “Afterwards, Daphne said to me—’‘No one but Palamas could so rouse and unite us. Even from his grave’” (68).
The history of Greek poetry continues to intersect with the Holocaust narrative in this scene of retelling. These intersections come to reflect Hutcheon’s argument for the power of historiographic metafiction in terms of its ability to reshape the past. Hutcheon posits that “historiographic metafiction tests the truth and lies of the historical record in order to reveal the fallacy of history” (Poetics 114). In the text, one may have two histories: a pre-war and a post-war history. In the dialogic interplay of the poetic and the historical, however, Michaels refuses to allow the latter to erase the former. Through the poetic, Michaels reframes Nazi genocide in a larger, deeper historical and poetic frame that refuses its own erasure.

Within his own writing in *Bearing False Witness*, Athos recorded “how the Nazis abused archaeology to fabricate the past” (104). Biskupin was already a famous site by 1939, but because “Biskupin was proof of an advanced culture that wasn’t German,” Himmler ordered its obliteration (104). Reclaiming the history of Greek language and poetry as central to Jakob’s individual story and the relationship of Greece to a larger European history during the War, Michaels thus re-contextualizes the historical discourse surrounding the German occupation of Athens.

This history not only dates to the work of twentieth-century poets Kostis Palamas and Angelos Sikelianos, but also to the time of Horace Gregory Ovid’s prevalence in Greek mythology. In the layers of textual representation, the poetic alternates with Kostas, Daphne and Athos’s first-person testimonies to become part of the historical narrative. Of the Greek reaction after the Germans left Athens on October 11, Kostas says, “We heard children singing the German soldiers’ song: ‘When the cicadas shrill, grab the yellow pill...’” (70). In contrast to the voice of
Jakob’s pre-war history that remains vocally silent throughout the scene, here, Jakob speaks. However, he does not express his own words, but extends the poetry he recognizes as that of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*: “Too many funerals crowded temple gates” (70). Kostas praises Jakob for his excellent identification and rushes to look up the rest. Kostas read aloud:

> Meanwhile the dead were fallen all about me,  
> Nor were they interred by usual rites:  
> Too many funerals crowded temple gates...  
> ...and none were left  
> To weep their loss: unwept the souls of matrons,  
> Of brides, young men and ancients – all vanished  
> To the blind wilderness of wind.... (70-1)

Specifically, the ellipsis enunciating the phrase, “…and none were left” emphasizes Jakob’s personal history amidst the intertext (70). The line equally applies internally to the context of *Metamorphosis* and externally as it depicts the loss of Jakob’s family. Greek mythology encases Jakob’s individual trauma; through the poetic Jakob is interred in a collective Greek history, and Michaels reclaims the “advanced civilization” that Himmler desired, but failed, to obliterate (104). For Michaels, poetics become part of the same ontological plain of historical data, similarly capable of explaining the past.

In *Fugitive Pieces*, we find the purely fictional life of Michaels’s characters Jakob and Athos crossed with the real-life uprising at Palamas’s funeral, or the “real” fiction of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*. Paul Crosthwaite in *Trauma, Postmodernism and World War II*, calls attention to not only Hutcheon’s work on historiographic metafiction, but also Fredric Jameson’s attention to the subject in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Jameson defines the novels of “historiographic
metafiction” as those that “shuffle historical figures and names like so many cards from a finite deck” (qtd. in Crosthwaite 148). In so doing, Jameson adds, “the purely fictional intent is underscored and reaffirmed in the production of imaginary people and events among whom from time to time real-life ones unexpectedly appear and disappear” (qtd. in Crosthwaite 148). Crosthwaite relies on Hutcheon and Jameson to conclude that the conventions of historiographic metafiction allow one to “imagine permutations of history” (148). While the historical events located in Jakob’s family story or the history of Greek Jewry cannot be altered, Michaels reshuffles the data to re-position Greek mythology as a central frame that aids in the retelling of the history of Greece’s Jews during the war. Because Michaels relies on Greek poetry, of her real and imagined characters, both contemporary and ancient, in order to reshuffle the monologic discourse of Nazi history, she lends support to Hutcheon’s keen argument that past events are virtually unknowable outside the texts and documents that surround them.

Paradoxically, the utterly fictional texts, exemplified in the layer of Ovid’s work within the already aesthetic prose of Michaels’s language, lend verifiability to Jakob’s identification with Greece as his home. Like Athos, Jakob personifies the Greek countryside during their journey to Athens as he expresses “intense empathy with a landscape”: “The landscape of the Peloponnesus had been injured and healed so many times, sorrow darkened the sunlit ground… I stood in the valleys and imagined the grief of the hills. I felt my own grief expressed there” (60). Thus, Michaels subverts the rhetorical move central to Lukács’s claim where the historical is often invoked to lend verifiability to the poetic (qtd. in Poetics 114). Michaels
relies on intertextual layers of poetry to connect Jakob’s identity to a specifically Greek history and landscape.

Poetry, within Fugitive Pieces, through its intertextuality, offers the absolute redemption from the past. As Ben notes of Jakob: “in your case, there seemed to be no gap between the poems and the man. How could it be otherwise, for a man who claimed to believe so completely in language?” (206). The novel’s metatext of layered voices and poetics echoes Ben’s characterization of Athos; Fugitive Pieces, too believes “so completely in language” (206). And in a very specific kind of language: poetics. The intertextual layers of Ovid’s poetics and Jakob’s own story wrests both a context and history away from the German occupation. Growing up under the guidance of Athos, Kostas and Daphne, Jakob understands, as they do, the power of poetry to restore. Jakob reflects:

On Zakynthos, there was the statue of Solomos. In Athens, there was Palamas and the graffitos, whose heroism was language. I already knew the power of language to destroy, to omit, to obliterate. But poetry, the power of language to restore: this was what both Athos and Kostas were trying to teach me. (79)

Michaels’s belief in the power of language is certainly one that extends performatively, beyond the page. In so doing, Michaels undercuts Adorno’s famous maxim “no poetry after Auschwitz” mentioned earlier. For Michaels, it is only poetry after Auschwitz. Here the text offers a retort to Adorno: “While the German language annihilated metaphor, turning humans into objects, physicists turned matter into energy” (143). Thus, amidst the language of natural evolution interlaced with Greek mythology, the poetics of Michaels’s text accumulate in energy. Adorno did go on to qualify his maxim in 1962. In “The Problem of
Suffering” he writes, “I have no wish to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric; it expresses in negative form the impulse which inspires committed literature” (312). However, he further explains: “Yet this suffering...also demands the continued existence of art while it prohibits it; it is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it” (312). Thus, it is literally in the poetry of Ovid that Jakob finds his own speaking voice, one rooted in Greek tradition and true to his historical experience. The poetic counters the silence that results from wide-scale destruction; Michaels makes this the explicit aim of her text. Ben observes of Jakob’s home, “the house did possess the silence that is the wake of the monumental event” in the wild garden, or in a “forgotten cup on the terrace, now filled with rain” (267). Images overrun this silence as the “polished” language of the text threatens the monologic discourse of Holocaust destruction.

For Michaels’s characters, language often figures in the text as a matter of life and death. Walking with Kostas before Jakob and Athos depart for Canada, Jakob notices graffiti scrawled across the walls: “a huge V-Vinceremo, we shall overcome—in black paint. Or M-Mussolini Merda” (78). Kostas explained that no one wanted to erase the symbols because during the occupation, “graffiti required swiftness and courage” and Graffitos who were caught were executed on sight (78). Kostas continues: “A single letter was exhilarating, it was spit in the eye of the oppressors. A single letter was a matter of life and death” (78). The single letters of street art thus parallels the significance of another single letter, the “J” also marking a crisis of life and death. In both of these examples language becomes performative
in the sense that Derrida explained in his remarkable work "Signature Event Context." Derrida argues that language not only says, but does as an iterable, written sign “carries with it a force that breaks with its context, or that is, with the collectivity of presences organizing the moment of its inscription” (9). First encountering Jakob’s book of poems, *Groundwork*, in a class with Salman, Ben reflects, “Who knew that even one letter – like the “J” stamped on a passport – could have the power of life or death?” (207). In the Derridian sense, the stamped “J” is unable to break with its context, the vision of white supremacy at the foundation of Nazism. As monologic discourse, the performative notion of the “J” functions at the opposite pole of what Derrida describes the extreme form of intertextuality. This would only occur if the boundaries between art and life were to “break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable” (Derrida 185). Thus, by layering Greek poetry with Nazi destruction, the lyrical and the geological, Michaels unsettles the monologic function of history. In so doing, Michaels’s text inches towards the Derridian pole where new contexts become “absolutely illimitable.”

Michaels further extends the poetic contexts of *Fugitive Pieces* as she embeds Jakob’s fictional volumes of poetry within her story; the move that echoes the Borgesian-like intertexts of *The History of Love* discusses in chapter one. In the process of reading Jakob’s *Groundwork, What Have you Done to Time*, and *Dilemma Poems*, Ben comes to terms with his own past. In this sense, the two-part structure of *Fugitive Pieces* mirrors the reflection between “Rosa” and “The Shawl” in Cynthia Ozick’s novella. However, the structure of reflection here extends across
generations. Ben, the son of Holocaust survivors, relies on the poetry of a first-generation witness to quell his own anxiety of the past that was not his own, but his parents. As Froma Zeitlin argues in “New Soundings in Holocaust Literature,” Ben does more than uncover one of the narratives deliberately hidden, as the novel’s first page depicts, “by those who did not live to retrieve them” (1). In Zeitlin’s analysis, “Ben does more than unearth the sought-after-object, does more than serve as the custodian and transmitter of Jakob’s memories in keeping faith with the dead” (189). Ben becomes the “spiritual or adoptive heir” to Jakob’s experience, which aids in Ben’s own transformation (189).

Zeitlin’s analysis does not take up how these narratives are structurally transmitted; however, picking up on Zeitlin’s thread, I suggest that Michaels relies on dialogic construction to transmit these experiences. Part II, like Part I, is written in a reflective voice, but here it is Ben who reflects on the already-lived experience of uncovering Jakob’s journals. In his ongoing conversation with Jakob, Ben remarks, “you died not long after my father and I can’t say which death made me reach again for your words” (255). In the same way that the italics of Part I set off the interjections of Jakob’s story amidst the details Athos, Kostas and Daphne relay, as Ben explores the house on Idhra where Jakob comprised his notebooks, lines of Jakob’s poetry, set off by italics, enter the text. Across the final four pages of “Vertical Time,” Jakob and Ben’s words commingle. As Ben remarks, at this point in Jakob’s life:

Your poems from those few years with Michaela, poems of a man who feels, for the first time, a future. Your words and your life no longer separate, after decades of hiding in your skin. (267)
Simultaneously, Jakob’s words speak to the complexity of Ben’s own situation: his retreat into his own anxieties regarding his parents troubled past and his separation from Naomi. Amidst this circular frame, Jakob’s *Groundwork* and Ben’s reflection collapse into one another. As Ben’s voice and the Jakob of *Groundwork* alternate, the voice first repeats, and then extends Jakob’s line, “Is there a woman who will slowly undress” (268): *Is there a woman who will slowly undress / my spirit / bring my body / to belief* (268). The relationship between the two speakers is one of “circular narration” a phrase Ben borrows from *Groundwork* to describe what he imagines to be the comfort Jakob seeks in Michaela: “the circular language of Michaela’s arms” (267). Zeitlin suggests of Ben’s unearthing and understanding of Jakob’s text that “it is the transfer of affection to others not related by blood that can bring some closure to the act of mourning and authorize the sense of an individual identity” (189).

Through the lyrical and the geological, Jakob the narrator accesses and recounts his history of trauma; through Jakob’s narratives, Ben assimilates his own difficulties understanding a past that belongs to his parents and their generation. In so doing, Michaels allows poetic representation to function as the referent to the past. Like the lines of Ovid’s poetry that allow Jakob a speaking voice within the history Kostas, Daphne and Athos recount, layers of poetics become the protagonist that aids in the transmission of memory. The *circularity*, however, also refers to the transfer of affection through a dialogic presence. Jakob, previously the adult narrator and child subject of Part I, becomes the subject of Ben’s narration in Part II. Textually, the transfer of affection to others not related by blood comes full circle as Ben is positioned as subject to the reader. Thus, the reader confronts the poetics of
Ben’s own work through the connections between literature and biography. In turn, the position of reader-as-listener, as Felman and Laub’s work asserts, also aids in Ben’s ability to come to terms with his past (57).

The dialogic transferences at work between Jakob and Ben, Ben and the reader, offer an alternative reading to Jakob’s notion that “every moment is two moments” (140). The moment of writing for Jakob becomes the moment of reading, and eventually contributes to Ben’s solace. Jakob’s past follows him everywhere; when he remarks that “every moment is two moments” he means that present and past circle back upon each other: Alex’s hairbrush becomes Bella’s brush; Alex’s hairclips become Bella’s bobby pins; Alex’s touch during the night becomes Bella’s writing on Jakob’s back (140). Structurally, Fugitive Pieces also performs doubly: the moment of writing is the moment of reading the past for Jakob; Jakob’s recall is also his future; Jakob’s narration is also his characterization.

While poetry may offer a form of redemption to the past as it overwrites the monologic markers of history, like the “J” used to destroy, to omit and to obliterate, Michaels distinguishes between the power of a specifically dialogic writing to enable transference within individual narratives from that of closure more generally. As Hutcheon argues, “among the many things that postmodern intertextuality challenges are both closure and single, centralized meaning” (Poetics 127). Relying on dialogism and layers of narrative voice, Michaels employs an integrated multi-voiced structure to work against both the metanarrative, and monologic idea of History. Hutcheon argues that the contradictions inherent in postmodernism involve its offering of “multiple, provisional alternatives to traditional, fixed unitary
concepts in full knowledge of (and even exploiting) the continuing appeal of those very concepts” (Poetics 60). The inherent tension Michaels presents between geology and poetry, or weather and biography, ostensibly reflect on the arbitrary boundaries of history while they underscore what Hutcheon refers to as “the continuing appeal of those very concepts” (Poetics 60). Throughout *Fugitive Pieces*, Michaels also plays with both the concept of “full knowledge” and how the idea of knowledge unfolds. After Jakob’s death, Salman reminisced of their friendship to Ben: “Jakob taught me so many things. For instance: What is the true value of knowledge? That it makes our ignorance more precise’” (210). Ben’s understanding of various histories – his parents’ pre-war past, Jakob’s life, the connections between meteorology and biography – may accumulate through the course of the novel, but they never become whole.

Thus, as the reader accumulates knowledge external to the narrative frame – knowledge of the situation of Greek Jews under Nazi occupation, or that of the history of salt, limestone, tectonic plates, the redemptive power of poetry – Jakob’s cautionary note that knowledge inevitably makes one’s ignorance more precise is refracted onto the reader through the metatext. The desire for historical knowledge may momentarily cease, as evinced in the clean plates left on the table of Kostas and Daphne’s kitchen, but the hunger for knowledge will resurface, just as Jakob and Michaela come to the table perfectly hungry with a “ravenousness that will be sated and will return” (267). And regardless of the vast literary and scientific knowledge unveiled throughout *Fugitive Pieces*, or the idea of transference at work, the reader
senses only the vastness of the unknowable and the inevitable pull towards more untold pieces of history.
Conclusion: A “Node Within a Network”:
The Intertexts of *The History of Love* and *Fugitive Pieces*

As I have shown in the previous chapters, both Nicole Krauss’s *The History of Love* and Anne Michaels’s *Fugitive Pieces* interpolate stories of first-generation survivors of the Holocaust into larger, competing narrative frames and disparate histories. In chapter one, I peeled back the traces of non-Holocaust and Holocaust narratives that influence the telling of Leo, Alma and Bird’s stories. Here, Leo’s first-generation story of witness unfolds alongside Alma and Bird’s third-generation stories of survival as they lose their father to cancer. While Alma sets out to find a new companion for her mother, Bird embarks on a detective quest to locate Alma’s “true father.” But no one voice is privileged; no narrative thread becomes more prominent than the other. Collectively, these stories reinforce the telling of one other and thus, across generations and disparate threads, unveil Leo’s Holocaust narrative. In so doing, Krauss juggles postmodern form and literary history to underscore an intertextual frame that refuses a singular origin of truth. Outside the text, this relationship becomes analogous to Krauss’s position as a third-generation Jewish American writer: for Krauss, no single, historical referent of the event exists in her position as a writer sixty years after the event. In Michaels’s novel, intertextual threads overlap through the tensions between geology and literature, weather and biography, or contemporary and ancient poetry. However, Michaels’s more experimental fiction also explores tensions at work when older versions of characters reflect on their younger selves, as I explored through the dual focalization of Jakob the narrator and character. Here, too, Michaels undermines the
notion of singular, originary truth behind Holocaust retelling; or, to conceive of this idea via Jean-François Lyotard’s understanding, Michaels disrupts the metanarrative of history. While in the previous two chapters I have discussed the various functions of intertextuality within Krauss’s and Michaels’s texts individually, in this conclusion, I will look at the intertextual connections between the two novels. Subsequently, I will explore how these paradigms of representation reflect the notion of witness for the contemporary reader as well as how future scholarship could best serve this project.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault aptly summarizes what allows for this type of textual crosscutting:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full-stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. (qtd. in Hutcheon, Poetics 127)

In the already intertextual network explored in these texts individually, the work that they perform in tandem only reinforces the idea that contemporary Holocaust novels often foreground their positions as “a node within a network” (qtd. in Poetics 127). As I have explored, this textual self-consciousness is a way for these authors to situate their own ethical dilemma of how to represent a historical event that is no longer accessible through first-generation accounts. Undergirding contemporary historiographic metafiction that specifically explores the Holocaust, intertextuality forces the reader to acknowledge “not only the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, but also both the value and the limitation of the inescapably discursive form of that knowledge” (Hutcheon, Poetics 127). In my analysis of
Krauss’s and Michaels’s work, I have shown that the discursivity of that knowledge, as we move farther and farther away from the historical referent, becomes more complex.

Through their individual reliance on texts-within-texts and dialogism, *The History of Love* and *Fugitive Pieces* question their own fictional capacity to retell historical trauma sixty years after the event itself. In response to their contemporary sociohistorical context, Krauss and Michaels reshape the tensions of previous first- and second-generation Holocaust fiction as they contest the boundaries of any single, centralized idea of the genre “Holocaust fiction.” Krauss and Michaels re-contextualize what have come to be canonical tropes of this genre, notions of silence, or survivorship, renewing the oft-recycled images within their dialogic frames. Notions of fragility and silence are commonly undertaken in Holocaust scholarship, especially by those concerned with psychic trauma.21 Looking at the works in tandem reveals Krauss and Michaels’ perceptions of canonical tropes depart from their earlier usages in first- and second-generation accounts. As Eric Sundquist notes in “Witness Without End?”, the rhetoric of “the unspeakable” and “the unknowable” has a long history in Holocaust scholarship (70). While the prevalence of fragility and silence may denote a Holocaust-inflection, within the two works, they refuse a singular, unified interpretation.

The intertexts, as I have suggested, recall the history of these trope from within an entirely new context. For example, through Krauss’s attention to fragility and silence in “The Age of Glass,” or “The Age of Silence,” Krauss reinterprets notions of fragility and silence commonly undertaken in Holocaust scholarship by
addressing such notions in relation to the work of Bruno Schulz. In Michaels’s text, concepts like “The Age of Glass” and “The Age of Silence” are explored in terms of both their literal and human history. For example, Athos reads to Jakob from books on the history of glass, among other texts of geological significance. Jakob also suffers from a history of silence, in hiding, in unknown languages, and in the deafness of his family’s death. Ben, too, suffers from silence, in the hidden stories of his parents’ past and in his dreams. In Emily Miller Budnick’s discussion of the repetition of certain Holocaust tropes, she relies on the work of Dominick LaCapra to reveal the challenges that accompany the specific rhetoric of Holocaust narratives. LaCapra writes that the Holocaust “has often tended to be repressed or encrypted as a specific series of events and to be displaced onto such general questions as language, nomadism, unrepresentability, silence and so forth” (qtd. in Budnick 220). For Budnick and LaCapra, this type of encryption inhibits the process of working through. Krauss’s and Michaels’s work, however, avoid this form of encryption, as their intertextual frames allow for multiple voices and interpretations. Through their intertext, Krauss and Michaels thus assert the importance of understanding their contemporary place along a genealogy of Holocaust fiction as they simultaneously allow room for contemporary narrative techniques and disparate histories to explore tropes of the past.

Through the novels’ intertext, tropes of the past become reinvested with a contemporary meaning. In both The History of Love and Fugitive Pieces, the trope of "survivorship" is extended post-usage in the frame of Holocaust history. In Cynthia Ozick’s The Shawl, Rosa Lublin laments the idea that she is a “survivor” versus a
“human being.” When Dr. Tree repeatedly contacts Rosa for her participation in his study of “Repressed Animation,” she contests:

Consider also the special word they used: survivor. Something new. As long as they didn't have to say human being... They don’t call you a woman anyhow. Survivor. Even when your bones get melted into the grains of the earth, still they'll forget human being. Survivor and survivor and survivor; always and always. Who made up these words, parasites on the throat of suffering! (Ozick 37)

Ironically and with contempt, Rosa notes that as Dr. Tree refers to himself “both as a scholar of social pathology and as a human being...”, he didn’t forget “this word human being!” (37). As Emily Miller Budnick discusses in this scene, the “paradox of a humanitarian, humanistic impulse that dehumanizes, or at least de-individualizes the specific human being” captures the problem of what Elizabeth Bellamy calls “After Auschwitz.” In Bellamy’s read, writers and artists have tended to transform “Real Jews” into “tropes or signifiers for the decentered, destabilized post-modern subject in a theoretical system that persists in defining (or ‘fetishizing’) them from without” (qtd. in Budnick 220). Ozick ironizes this attitude through Dr. Tree, who contacts Rosa literally to be a “subject” in his study. The notion of “survivor,” however, in the current texts departs from the dichotomy of “survivor” versus “human being” in Dr. Tree’s frame of reference.

Rather than recycling Holocaust tropes at the risk of “hypermemory” or “preempting the Holocaust” as I discussed in the introduction and chapter one, The History of Love and Fugitive resituate these tropes from their contemporary positions. This becomes especially apparent as Krauss and Michaels resituate the use of “survivor” that Rosa mocks. While Leo and Jakob maintain the positions of
first-generation survivors, members of the second and third-generations actively share the discourse of survival. After the death of her father, Alma writes, “I decided I would learn to survive in the wild like my father. It would be good to know in case anything happened to Mom, leaving Bird and me to fend for ourselves” (42). Here, the notion of “survivor” is reconfigured in terms of one’s ability to protect her family, as well as oneself, from harm. With her allowance, Alma purchased a book called *Edible Plants and Flowers in North America*, memorized the Universal Edibility Test in case she had to survive somewhere other than the U.S. and readied an emergency survival kit under her bed (44). Ironically, Athos and Jakob survived on the “overlooked sea peas and vetches, on hyacinth beans and nasturtium pods” during the foot shortages under the German occupation of Greece (38). As Jakob writes, Athos “looked up recipes in Theophrastus and Dioscorides; he used Pliny’s *Natural History*” as a cookbook. Ben, too is concerned with survival: “from conversations with my mother, when I was eleven or twelve, I learned that those with a trade had a better chance of survival” (225). Discovering Armac’s *The Boy Electrician* in the library, Ben notes that he “set about acquiring a new vocabulary. Capacitors, diodes, voltmeters, induction coils, long-nosed pliers. I raided the Pageant of Knowledge series, *Electronics for Beginners, The Living World of Science*” (225). If not a survivor in the sense that Leo, Jakob and Ben’s parents are survivors, nearly all main characters are marked with this terminology: Alma, Bird and Charlotte survive the death of their father, Charlotte’s husband, to cancer; Athos survives the death of his wife, Helen, to cancer; Jakob survives both the war and Athos’s death; Ben survives a repressive childhood and a Holocaust history that he
has come to internalize as his own. Survival is a lived, conscious experience, never taken for granted by other protagonists either too young, or fortunate enough to have escaped Nazi occupation. Survival for these characters is thus a privilege, but one that does not come without the heavy task of conscious, lived enactment. Viewing the widening discourse of “survivor” consciousness among the characters of these two novels, one starts to detect a tendency in contemporary Holocaust literature to recast the notion of “survivor” not as a means of delegitimizing the “authentic survivor” from the inauthentic, but more so to allow characters like Rosa Lublin, Leo and Jakob to share in the discourse of human being.

Through their reliance on intertexts that reveal traces of the past amidst new narrative frames, both stories reveal the notion of indirect transmission of Holocaust stories at their center. In so doing, intertextual, indirect transmission becomes a central marker of third-generation Holocaust writing reflective of the external and contemporary reality. In The History of Love, for example, transmission is directed towards the reader. Alma and Bird may read pieces of their mother’s translation of Leo’s “History,” but externally, the details of Leo’s experience in hiding are revealed only to the outside reader. In Fugitive Pieces, the reader confronts Holocaust narratives of the first and second-generations, bringing the circular language to bear also on the third-generation reader’s access to Ben’s traumatic past. Within the text, as Ben discovers and reads Jakob’s narratives, transference also occurs internally. In both novels, a divine presence also aids in this transmission, marked through the act of naming. Bird, a self-proclaimed lamed vovnik who shares the name of the Polish Historian Emanuel Chandelbaum, marks
his detective journey through divine intervention. Alma, too, embodies the transcendent spirit as she is called after Alma Mereminski and the Spanish word for soul. Discovering one of his parents’ secrets from Naomi, Ben describes that his parents prayed that the birth of their third child would go unnoticed: “They hoped that if they did not name me, that the angel of death might pass by. Ben, not from Benjamin, but merely “ben” – the Hebrew word for son” (253). In Hebrew, Ben literally translates to “son of god,” thus Michaels marks Ben too with a hidden, divine spirit. No character that transmits the story of the preceding generation is a blood relative; rather Krauss and Michaels mark the impetus of transference by a divine, unconscious need.

In addition to blurring the borders of a canonically Holocaust story with a contemporary Jewish American bildungsroman, or a Holocaust story and a history of geology, Krauss and Michaels also reveal an impetus to transmit these stories cross-generationally and through acquaintances or even strangers. As I discussed in the second chapter, Froma Zeitlin, writing on Fugitive Pieces in “New Soundings in Holocaust Literature,” suggests, “it is the transfer of affection to others not related by blood that can bring some closure to the act of mourning and authorize the sense of an individual identity” (189). Zeitlin would presumably be modeling her analysis on Cathy Caruth’s groundbreaking work in trauma theory. The crux of Caruth’s argument reflects the notion that it is not until generations after the first-generation of witness that one is able to come to terms with the trauma itself. Caruth argues:

    described in terms of a possession by the past that is not entirely one’s own, trauma already describes the individual experience as something that exceeds itself, that brings within it individual experience as its most intense sense of isolation the very breaking of
individual knowledge and mastery of events. This notion of trauma also acknowledges that perhaps it is not possible for the witnessing of the trauma to occur within the individual at all, that it may only be in future generations that ‘cure’ or at least witnessing can take place. (136)

Amidst these tensions, there is at once a danger in equating or replacing the trauma of one protagonist for that of one from a subsequent generation. It is exactly this type of danger invoked in the critical debate between trauma theorists Ruth Leys and Cathy Caruth. In Leys’s critique of Caruth in *Trauma: A Genealogy*, Leys argues that the particular risk of Caruth’s notion of traumatic experience that “stands outside or beyond representation” adheres “when her claim takes the dramatic form of proposing that the trauma experienced by one generation can be contagiously or mimitically transmitted to ensuing generations” (304). The real harm, for Leys, is the result: “that each of us can be imagined as receiving a trauma that we never directly experienced (304).

Thus, key to the discussion of transference in Krauss’s and Michael’s texts is the distinction between incorporating history and mimitically receiving a trauma that one never directly experienced. In looking at internal transference within the novels at hand, Leo and Alma, separated by two generations and a narrative that only converges on the final pages of the novel, or even Ben and Jakob, do not share in the same traumatic events. But if it is in “future generations” that “cure’ or at least witnessing can take place,” and not through “mimetic transmission” that is occurs, what is it that the contemporary generation is able to witness in these texts? Sundquist reflects, sixty years after the Holocaust, “it still remains an open question what we have been enabled to witness” (67). Especially, as Michael André Bernstein
cautions, “no one becomes a survivor either by virtue of being a Jew or by the intensity of their absorption in the history and literature of the Shoah” (qtd. in Sundquist 68). By relying on traces of other texts in reshaping Holocaust tropes, or dialogic frames that call attention to their fiction’s capacity to transmit history, Krauss’s and Michaels’s texts bear witness to their own capacity to shape history from the contemporary moment.

These types of intertextual narratives enable new thinking regarding the contemporary ethical paradigm of witness for the writer and reader. In Marianne Hirsch’s notable article “The Generation of Postmemory,” Hirsch writes of the tendency in fiction of the postmemory to serve the needs of the present, rather than the past. Hirsch turns to the post-generation, the children, like Ben, of Holocaust survivors and its reliance on photography as a primary medium of transgenerational transmission of trauma. Arguing that representation serves the postgeneration more so than the memories of the previous generation, Hirsch analyzes the work of W.G. Sebold’s Austerlitz and Art Spiegelman’s Maus to show that these texts’ reliance on photography serves as a “performative index,” shaped by the viewer’s needs and desires (124). The “performative index” or “index of identification” is shaped less by the subject’s having-been-present and “more by affect, need, and desire as time and distance attenuate the links to authenticity and ‘truth’” (124).

Thinking through the “performative index” in terms of its role for the postgeneration lends a significant model of analysis to the intertextual frameworks of Krauss and Michaels. The intertexts of these novels, whether in connecting to
Holocaust and non-Holocaust narratives, or in their methods of representation that call attention to their own textual self-consciousness, seems to distill, in part, the ethical dilemma for these writers of an experience they only have access to through layers, upon, layers, of textual history, whether in the form of fiction or testimony. The intertext, thus reflects a certain need not to represent directly what is only accessed indirectly, through the literary imagination, for these writers. In this sense, one can approach the intertext as a type of “performative index” indebted to the consciousness of the writers’ existential distance from the event of the Holocaust.

While this is a successful model given the texts under consideration, the analysis is limited to two highly postmodern Holocaust novels written from a North American perspective. In order to fully understand the intertextual frameworks underpinning today’s fiction writers’ access to the past, one would need to broaden the literary archive to include texts by Krauss’s and Michaels’s contemporaries that are both more, and less “Holocaust-inflected” than the texts under consideration. Leaning towards the former pole, I would consider texts such as Jonathon Safron-Foer’s Everything is Illuminated. To broaden this type of analysis towards the pole where embedded Holocaust narratives become increasingly abstract, I would consider the work of authors such as Dara Horn and Michael Chabon. It would also be useful to look at other contemporary Anglophone literatures, or works in translation, such as Sebald’s Austerlitz, that fictionalize the past. Looking at intertextuality in a variety of Jewish texts both tending towards and away from telling explicitly Holocaust stories would enable a closer analysis of the work
performed in tandem by Krauss’s and Michaels’s work. This would especially serve the overarching trends that surface, such as extending the discourse of “survivor.”

Still, there are conclusions that can be drawn from looking at this particular narrative pair. As the intertexts mark the historical and social paradigms outside the novels’ frame, they point to an increasingly unstable narrative within. Instability within the particular frame of historiographic metafiction of the Holocaust requires a more active participation from the reader as he or she must piece together the different narrative frames. In this frame, nothing is “read” for granted. But the work of the contemporary reader of these intertextual narratives is not to cohere a single representation, but to engage in constant movement among representations. Hutcheon specifically remarks on the role of historiographic metafiction as a refusal to close down a text:

While postmodernism, as I am defining it here, is perhaps somewhat less promiscuously extensive, the notion of parody as opening the text up, rather than closing it down, is an important one: among the many things that postmodern intertextuality challenges are both closure and single, centralized meaning. Its willed and willful provisionality rests largely upon its acceptance of the inevitable textual infiltration of prior discursive practices. The typically contradictory intertextuality of postmodern art both provides and undermines context. (Poetics 127)

In the realm of Holocaust fiction, Hutcheon’s work on historiographic metafiction bears increasing significance, especially, as resistance to closure often indicates movement towards working through. This would seem to follow the paradigm outlined by Cathy Caruth previously mentioned, as well as the work of historian Saul Friedlander. In “Trauma, Memory and Transference,” Friedlander argues that a main aspect of working through entails, and here he is referring to the historian,
“the imperative of rendering as truthful an account as documents and testimonials will allow, without giving in the temptation of closure” (261). Thus, I return to the idea proposed in chapter two, where Michaels’s work may lend itself to inter-generational transfer of memory, but simultaneously refuse a coherent, unified version of history.

In Hutcheon’s formulation, and one that is echoed within each of the texts observed, textual infiltration widens Holocaust discourse as it challenges “both closure and single, centralized meaning” (127). Here, Hutcheon echoes Berel Lang’s complaint in Philosophy of Witness, where the notion of “Holocaust literature” to some appears as a function imposed externally “where the artist’s scope is narrowed as they then become Holocaust-novelists/poets/painters in a way that they themselves have objected to” (107). I would suggest that Berel and Hutcheon’s analysis motion for a new set of criteria in approaching these texts that stems from the idea of “Holocaust-inflection.” As Emily Miller Budnick’s work identified emerging Holocaust fictions by this rubric, defining how a particular text would come to be called “Holocaust-inflected,” the next step is for literary scholars to develop new frames of analysis and tools of representation with which to approach these texts. I argue that intertextual movement as a resistance to closure is one such criterion. There are certain to be others, reflected in contemporary Holocaust narratives that both explicitly and implicitly embed Holocaust narratives in their frames.

What does it mean, for a reader, engaged in the dialogic double-voicings and intertexts of Krauss’s and Michaels’s work, to resist closure? For the contemporary
reader, resisting closure entails a self-conscious reading experience where one does not project, from the postmodern present, a more complete knowledge of the past.\textsuperscript{22} The tendency to do so reflects Berel Lang’s argument as he notes that today, virtually all writers of Holocaust narratives depend to some extent on assumed knowledge (109-10). For Lang, however, what becomes much more common over time is “the projection into the victims’ minds of a consciousness of the Holocaust as a ‘whole’” (110). Here Lang faults Ozick’s \textit{The Shawl} and Elie Wiesel’s \textit{Night}, which “include an overlay that not only assumes knowledge in the audience of the intent and outcome of the Holocaust” (110). Most significantly, however:

\begin{quote}
this assumption projects into the consciousness of the individual characters depicted and so into the plot as a whole that same awareness: the recognition of a cataclysm that goes beyond their own immediate condition, dire as that was. (110)
\end{quote}

Bearing Lang’s analysis in mind, the reader, then, starts to understand why piecemeal frameworks and disparities in reader-character and character-narrator knowledge become key to contemporary fiction in this realm: to avoid the fundamental misrepresentation that accompanies projecting present knowledge onto the past. Because, as Lang argues, it was never “\textit{the Holocaust}” that its victims experienced (108).\textsuperscript{23} Thus, inherently built in to the structural complexities of the intertextual frameworks of Krauss’s and Michaels’s work is the desire on the level of utterance, or name, or narrative voice, to resist closure. In so doing, the clash of dialogic voices and meanings refuses the reader solace. Beyond the last “full-stop” of the text, the reader departs embodying knowledge of the historical past, of
Holocaust and non-Holocaust histories, and of a knowledge that only made her “ignorance more precise” (Michaels 210).
1 Lang asks, what constitutes misrepresentation? The notion of misrepresentation relies on two fundamental premises. In the first, “representation is differentiated, various, and sufficiently so as to require analysis of how it works (thus also of how it may fail) both for specific cases and more generally” (95). And thus, the second entails the idea that “representation and misrepresentation are interlaced conceptually: there is no running into the one without running into at least the possibility of the other” (95). For more on this relationship, please see Chapter 6 of the B. Lang.

2 See Wiesel, From the Kingdom of Memory (15).

3 Here Ezrahi mentions the work of Paul Rosenfeld and Denise Levertov (213).


5 J. Lang loosely defines third-generation Holocaust writers roughly as those that were born in the 1960s or later (46). While Michaels was born in 1958 and tells the story of a survivor and child of the first-generation eyewitness, the blurring of Holocaust narratives with non-Holocaust represents the type of postmodern inflection with which my analysis is concerned.

6 Holocaust-inflected texts are not to be confused with texts where the events are the Holocaust implicit, and make up an ‘absent content.’ The latter includes the work of Samuel Beckett and George Orwell’s 1984. For more on ‘absent content’, see my discussion Robert Eaglestone’s The Holocaust and the Postmodern in chapter two (105).

7 While Bakhtin formed the theoretical groundwork for this concept in “Discourse and the Novel,” Julia Kristeva coined the term “intertextuality” itself in 1980 in her work Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. For more on the genealogy of these terms and concepts, please see Mary Orr, Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts.

8 In order to distinguish the text-within-a-text that share in the name The History of Love, I refer to Leo Gursky’s novella in quotation marks and Nicole Krauss’s text in italics.

9 Tracy Rich locates this usage in biblical history (Ex. 3:13-22). When Moses asks God what His “name” is, Moses, Rich explains, is not asking “what should I call you;” rather, he is asking, “who are you; what are you like; what have you done.” Rich’s work on the importance of naming in Jewish Philosophy can be found on the web at the Jewish Virtual Library: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/name.html

10 Please see chapter one of the Vice.


13 For more on Paul Celan’s “Todesfuge,” please see Shoshana Felman’s reading of Paul Celan in Testimony.


Vice argues that in contrast to the materiality of the other novels she discusses, *Fugitive Pieces* diverts attention to the spiritual realm and the world of the transcendent. For more, please see *Holocaust Fiction* (9).

Please see Dalia Kandiyote, “Our Foothold in Buried Worlds: Place in Holocaust Consciousness and Anne Michaels’s *Fugitive Pieces*.”

The existence of the text and its “otherness” produces what Kristeva refers to as an ideologeme: “The concept of text as ideologeme determines the very procedure of a semiotics that, by studying the text as intertextuality, considers it as such within (the text of) society and history. The ideologeme of a text is the focus where knowing rationality grasps the transformation of *utterances* (to which the text is irreducible) into a totality (the text) as well as the insertions of this totality into the historical and social text” (37). For more, please see Kristeva’s “The Bounded Text” in *Desire in Language*.


Alternating with Ben’s narration at each ellipsis, the text of *Groundwork* reads:

...Is there a woman who will slowly undress
my spirit...
...Is there a woman who will slowly undress
my spirit, bring my body...
...Is there a woman who will slowly undress
my spirit, bring my body to belief... (268)

See, for example, Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience*, Ruth Leys’s *Trauma: A Genealogy*, or Dominick LaCapra’s *Writing History, Writing Trauma*


Furman, Andrew. “Inheriting the Holocaust: Jewish American Fiction and the Double Bind of the Second-Generation Survivor.” *The Americanization of the*


