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Tree Rings:

Post-Holocaust Memory and Representation

“Trees carry the memory of rainfall. In their rings we read ancient weather – storms, sunlight, and temperatures, the growing seasons of centuries. A forest shares a history, which each tree remembers even after it has been felled” (Michaels 211). Bearers of time, trees preserve history intrinsically, locking the changing of seasons in their rings. Growing under the same conditions, trees share a common ancestry, their rings identical. In Anne Michaels’ novel, *Fugitive Pieces*, the metaphor of tree rings speaks to the wider themes of time and remembrance after the Holocaust. Emphasizing the redemptive quality of remembrance, Michaels reconstructs the life of Jakob Beer, a child orphaned in Poland during the Holocaust, from the ruins of memory. Literally, the child, in hiding from the Nazis, will emerge out of the boglands and into the embrace of the Greek geologist, Athos Roussos, a man who will come to function as a surrogate father to Jakob, educating, raising, and providing refuge for him on the Greek island of Zakynthos. Tracing figurative tree rings, Michaels superimposes the lives of characters Athos, Jakob, and Ben, the child of Holocaust survivors, breathing Jakob into life through an intricate overlapping of time and experience. Structurally, the novel follows this unique layering of lives and experiences. Steeped in geological metaphors, the novel’s chronology, like geologic strata, crumples, warps, and folds. Michaels highlights the interconnectedness of the past and the present, demonstrating memory’s ability to collapse time, ultimately leading to Jakob’s assertion that “every moment is two moments” (Michaels 161). Michaels demonstrates that at the intersection of memory and history, individuals face a moral choice of whether not only to

acknowledge history, but to carry history with them, in their memory. In essence, Michaels' manipulation of time implicitly broadens the history of the Holocaust to all readers, raising unnerving questions of intergenerational suffering, the potential for history to repeat itself, and how to navigate a post-Holocaust world. In distorting time and illustrating the redemptive power of memory, Michaels draws the reader in, and presents Jew or non-Jew with the choice of remembering and thus bearing witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust.

Fugitive Pieces begins with a short preface, which offers broad, overarching brushstrokes of Jakob's life and immediately foreshadows the importance of memory throughout the novel. In this preface, the unnamed narrator suggests that many stories from the Second World War "are concealed in memory, neither written nor spoken" (Michaels, "Preface"). Immediately following, the narrator offers a brief, matter-of-fact account of Jakob's story, detailing the circumstances and dates of Jakob's and his wife's premature deaths. The narrator plainly states that Jakob, a poet, "was struck and killed by a car in Athens in the spring of 1993, at age sixty" (Michaels, "Preface"). Reading with the abruptness of a tombstone, this unemotional account could describe countless other deaths, its impersonality highlighted by a narrator who remains unnamed. As literary critic Karen McPherson points out, the brevity of the details surrounding Jakob's life "alerts us to the great absences around which Jakob's story is constructed" (100). This brief testimony reduces the vibrancy of Jakob's life to its bare bones, condensing his entire life's work into a single, apathetic aside. The paragraph ends with a brief summary of Jakob's family, stating that his wife "survived her husband by two days," and he and his wife "had no children" (Michaels, "Preface"). This statement accentuates the finality of Jakob's death and marks the end of future generations continuing his bloodline. The subsequent pages stand in stark opposition to the indifference of the preface, as the mechanism of memory begins to piece together the complexities of Jakob's history. Tracing the lives of those he touched, this impersonal account

becomes rich, vivid, and complex. The ability to reconstruct Jakob's life despite an end to his bloodline is emblematic of the redemptive power of remembrance to combat the finality of death throughout the novel. McPherson, in *Archaeologies of an Uncertain Future*, asserts, "The preface suggests that even testimonial narratives that are recovered and preserved carry the imprint and the memory of the myriad other stories that remain unspoken or irretrievable" (100). The stark contrast between this minimalistic description, devoid of feeling, and the intricacy of the following pages, highlights the ability of memory to reach into time and drag the past into life.

Despite maintaining a progression forward, time is not exclusively linear throughout the novel. The fluidity of time results in speakers, events, and sentences that repeat, shift, and flow together. For example, the chapter titles, "Vertical Time," "The Way Station," and "Phosphorus," in Part I, repeat themselves in Part II, despite the shift in narrator from Jakob to Ben. Changes in time and speaker, often denoted only by italics or extra spacing between paragraphs, accentuate the unpredictability of time. Following the same plasticity of the novel's structure, conflicting times and places often supersede and truncate one another, leading to an elasticity of time. For example, past and present intertwine during a discussion between Daphne, Kostas, and Athos, characters that provide shelter and guidance for Jakob during his exile in Athens. Explaining the deteriorating state of Athens under German occupation, Kostas' bloody description of violence in Athens flows in and out of a description of the traumatic murder of Jakob's father (Michaels 63). In interweaving different times, places, and traumas, the conception of past, present, and future dissolves into one. In this sense, the novel's structure mimics the properties of human memory, which possesses the ability to navigate the past and the present freely. Such a confluence of spatial and temporal moments is characteristic of Holocaust narratives. Personal and public experiences of suffering become indivisible. "My father bleeds

history,” Art Spiegelman will write in *MAUS: A Survivor’s Tale* (7). Jakob highlights the fluidity of time and place more explicitly, linking his own life to the dead and the horrors of the Holocaust, stating, “While I hid in the luxury of a room, thousands were stuffed into baking stoves, sewers, and garbage bins” (Michaels 45). Jakob constructs a jarring juxtaposition, overlaying his comfortable life with the horrors of the gas chambers. In this instance, two disconnected moments in history occupy the same point in time.

In order to reinforce the collapse of linear time, Michaels creates geological metaphors that serve to emphasize the timelessness of memory. The lithification of memory, gypsum blossoms, experience crystallized, massive mountain tombs, and fossilized knowledge, Michaels roots human experience in geological features (Michaels 32, 36). Mapping human history through vertical layers of geological strata, Michaels highlights memory’s ability to endure. For example, while discussing Athos’ passion for geology, Jakob states that through Athos he “learned the power we give to stones to hold human time” (Michaels 32). Highlighting the Commandments, the Rosetta, and the Parthenon, Jakob articulates a oneness between human experience and the earth and underscores the resilience of memory. Etching human experience into stone, memory becomes physically engraved in history, untouched by the passage of time. In another instance, Jakob suggests, “Human memory is encoded in air currents and river sediment” (Michaels 53). Joining memory and the natural world, Jakob interlocks human existence with geology, making the past more tangible. Geology, a science, which studies details of the past in order to understand the present, becomes an effective mechanism for emphasizing the interconnectedness of history. Jakob encapsulates the fluidity of time stating, “I was transfixed by the way time buckled, met itself in pleats and folds...” (Michaels 30). In relying on geological diction to make the past palpable and suspend linear time, Michaels proposes a structure much like human memory, in which all time seems to coexist.

Creating a structure devoid of linear time, Michaels implicitly raises significant ethical questions regarding suffering within the context of the Holocaust. If the progression of time ceases to exist, does suffering ever end? Can history repeat itself? With respect to Jakob, suffering weaves its way in and out of his life, illustrated by various traumatic flashbacks and his proximity to his sister's ghost throughout his life. Night terrors punctuate Jakob's life as he often finds himself waking in the middle of a nightmare "rubbing the blood back into [his] feet after standing in the snow" having dreamed of his murdered sister, Bella (Michaels 141). Jakob's repeated experience of suffering implies that his present is inextricably tied to the horrors of the past. For Jakob, history can repeat itself, over and over again. In comparison, Ben, the speaker in Part II, suffers the effects of second-generation survivors. The child of Holocaust survivors, his parents' past clouds his present, his every moment plagued by his parents suffering. Ben's childhood and adolescence are fraught with exercises in panic, anxiety, and fear, born out of his parents' everlasting trauma. As an adult Ben struggles to "see past his father's silence, his despair," and disentangle himself from the nightmare his parents endured. Encapsulating this internal struggle, Ben states, "My parents' past is mine molecularly" (Michaels 280). Ben ties himself to the Holocaust genetically, demonstrating trauma's horrifying ability to transcend time. This genetic metaphor recurs throughout the writing of second-generation Holocaust writing. As the protagonist of Thane Rosenbaum's story "An Act of Defiance," Adam Posner, will say, "My DNA may be forever coded with the filmy stuff of damaged offspring, the handicap of an unwanted inheritance" (63). Like Adam, Ben's relationship with his parents' suffering extends beyond empathy; his parents' past the building blocks of his entire being. Such a continuity of trauma has disturbing generational implications as Ben also fears the inheritance he will leave for his daughter, the grandchild of survivors. In essence, suffering operates independent of time and space. Memory blurs the lines between where one person's suffering starts and another person's

begins. While history may not literally repeat itself, suffering spills down generations through memory. As Lisa Appignanesi, in her memoir *Losing the Dead* suggests, memory “cascades through the generations” (8). In arresting time, Michaels explores the endlessness of suffering in the wake of the Holocaust. The issue of navigating and processing this endlessness centers on how history and memory interact.

In the context of the Holocaust, the interaction of human perception and history results in varying models of memory: memory, defined here as the subjective perception and transmission of experience, and history, defined as an objective record of events. Following the Holocaust, Israeli historian, Saul Friedländer, suggests that memory’s intersection with history has hardened around two models. The first method of memory centers on “closure,” while the second method of memory revolves around an “open-ended process of remembrance” (Friedländer, “History” 5). In the first case, memory is a means to an end, an attempt to “domesticate incoherence, eliminate pain, and introduce a message of redemption” (Friedländer, “History” 5). This model seeks to find meaning out of suffering, stifle the progression of trauma, and repurpose the horrors of memory towards reconciliation between past and present. In comparison, the second method of memory “knows no rules... disrupt[ing] any set rendition among those who imagine the past and those who still remember it” (Friedländer, “History” 5). A model more engaged in confronting trauma, “expressions of the past resurface: the organized, oft-rehearsed narration on the one hand, the uncontrolled chaotic emotion, on the other” (Friedländer, “History” 5). A less-confining approach, the second method avoids gravitating towards closure and engenders an exploration of suffering. This method rids itself of convention and permits a more organic engagement with history. Friedländer’s flexible model is, in large part, psychoanalytic. In *Constructions in Analysis*, Sigmund Freud proposes a model closely associated with the “open-ended” approach to memory. Freud argues that the witness’ task is to reconstruct the past “from

the traces which it has left behind” (259). Comparing the psychoanalytic process of exhuming memory to excavation, a technique Michaels frequently employs in *Fugitive Pieces*, Freud suggests, “reconstruction resembles to a great extent an archaeologist’s excavation of some dwelling-place that has been destroyed and buried or of some ancient edifice” (259). Threading together remnants of the past, Freud encourages an active involvement and continual reconstruction of traumatic memory. As McPherson points out, this method implies that memory will stay open for future reconstruction and emphasizes “the complementary relationship between remembering and imagining” (107-108). While the first model of memory attempts to heal the rawness of the horrors of the past, the second offers a visceral, unearthing of history. The two methods are integral aspects of processing the endlessness of suffering after the Holocaust; however, the instant in which history and memory collide produces an immediate, pressing moral dilemma.

Considering how the passage of time corresponds with memory, Jakob asserts, “History is amoral: events occurred. But memory is moral; what we consciously remember is what our conscience remembers” (Michaels 138). Jakob suggests that at the intersection of perception and history a moral choice to remember or forget emerges. A choice, or opportunity, exists to approach the indifference of the past ethically. While history is indifferent to the passage of time, human perception is not. Where the subjectivity of memory and the objectivity of history overlap, individuals can choose to remember lives, atrocities, violence, and prevent the rewriting of history. This duplicity of time, prompts Jakob to suggest, “Every moment is two moments” (Michaels 138). Within the context of the Holocaust, this intersection has profound implications. Jakob’s assertion suggests that memory provides a means to turn absence into presence (Michaels 161). Remembrance and its transmittance are keys to resurrecting the past, giving existence to the fallen. Articulating the ethical consequences of confronting the history of the

Holocaust, Jakob states, “Complicity [to violence] is not sudden, though it occurs in an instant. To be proved true, violence need only occur once. But good is proved true by repetition” (Michaels 162). Jakob argues that the savagery of the concentration camps is irreversible, seared into history at the moment of violence. “Good,” or morality, is proven only in its succession. The transmittance of memory, affirmed by “repetition,” forbids the indifference of history. As a result, memory offers the ability to give the unnamed millions who were murdered in the Holocaust a place in history.

Significantly, Jakob states that memory is a choice, “what we consciously remember” (Michaels 138). Jakob’s emphasis on the word “consciously” implies that remembrance takes a concerted effort. Electing a model of memory linked to reconstruction, Jakob insists that the act of remembrance is not passive, but an active engagement with history. Ben, a child of Holocaust survivors, proposes that at the intersection of memory and history resides the obligation to bear witness to the past, stating, “The faces that stared at me across the centuries... were the faces of people without names. They stared and waited, mute. It was my responsibility to imagine who they might be” (Michaels 221). The assertion that bearing witness is a “responsibility” suggests that morality is defined by remembrance. Anthropologist, Erika Bourguignon, calls the choice not to stand witness to the horrors of the Holocaust, a deafening “silence.” Bourguignon reaffirms Ben’s position, arguing, “Silence is looking away, [an] unwillingness to confront reality” (84). Bourguignon articulates the morality inherent to this choice, suggesting that choosing “silence” is “ignoring, denying the past” (84). In essence, Bourguignon contends that not bearing witness is a form of “complicity” to the horrors of the past. To cast a blind eye to suffering would be to repeat the moral failings that accompanied the violence of the Holocaust. The opposite of “silence,” the path that Ben ultimately chooses, reinforces an idea put forth by McPherson that, “The trauma is not over as long as one is compelled to witness it” (102).

McPherson alerts bearers of memory to the implications of choosing to acknowledge the past, a statement at once chilling and redemptive. Bearers of memory not only acknowledge history, but must also accept the responsibility of carrying profound loss and pain. As Holocaust historian and philosopher Berel Lang puts it, “no Holocaust writing gives preference to silence,” for “the price of silence about the Holocaust in lieu of its representation as a general principle – that cost inviting the vacuum of forgetfulness – is too high” (18-19).

Raising issues of history and bearing witness, Michaels implicitly broadens the theme of memory to all readers’ relationship with the Holocaust and asks the question of where the obligation to bear witness falls and who should be “compelled” to witness it (McPherson 102). While survivors’ connection with the Holocaust is direct, society’s connection with memory is less well defined. Authors of *Truth and Lamentation: Stories and Poems on the Holocaust*, Milton Teichman and Sharon Leder, capture this dilemma in the introduction to their anthology stating, “Survivors have little choice but to remember loved ones slain; they are haunted by memory. But what about the rest of us?” (25). Teichman and Leder develop the conjunction of history and memory further, drawing a distinction regarding choice for those who survived the concentration camps and those who were not present to its horrors. Like Jakob, Teichman and Leder stress that memory is a “choice.” However, Teichman and Leder articulate the duality of this choice, proposing that survivors, as Ben’s assertion suggests, are left with no choice but to remember the Holocaust. Furthermore, for those directly connected with the Holocaust, memory assumes a sinister quality, which promotes perpetual suffering. Rather, the ability to choose lies at the feet of those who were not directly affected by the Holocaust. McPherson captures the essence of this choice stressing, “In the context of trauma, memory is double-edged: it can be something you *do* or something that *happens* to you” (102). In essence, as distance increases between the atrocities and the individual, the relationship with choice also changes.

Significantly, Teichman and Leder assert that memory of the Holocaust is not exclusive to survivors, nor the Jewish community. Instead, memory is indifferent to its courier. The idea of choice is deeply problematic in itself. The proposition that the ability to make history moral is not only open to, but also depends on individuals unaffected by the Holocaust is hazardous.

A bearer of memory too, the reader finds himself or herself mired in Jakob's discussion of history. Interacting with Jakob's history of suffering for the first time, the reader literally experiences the intersection of history and memory, adding weight to the idea that "every moment is two moments" (Michaels 138). In essence, Michaels indirectly presents the reader with the same choice highlighted by Jakob in his discussion of history. Under Jakob's proposition that memory is a choice, the reader can no longer remain indifferent to suffering. Asking the reader to make sense of the intersection between history and memory implores the reader to reconsider his or her own connection with the Holocaust. This confrontation is representative of the many challenges of navigating a post-Holocaust world. Readers of history must consciously choose to remember. This dynamic also brings into question a consciousness of reading. These issues prompt Teichman and Leder to ask the question, "In the face of what has been lost, and in the face of what we have come to know about humankind and God, how are we – Jews as well as non-Jews – to lead our lives?" (24). Teichman and Leder articulate the ethical problems for persons of all convictions in navigating a world after the Holocaust. Maneuvering the future is unclear if navigating the past is irreconcilable.

In addition, this question of how to live in a post-Holocaust world leads to the issue of how to carry a history that is not one's own. How does the obligation to bear witness change with the passage of time? Considering his profound guilt regarding his sister's death, Jakob argues, "To remain with the dead is to abandon them" (Michaels 170). Surrounded by his sister's ghost throughout his life, Jakob suggests that her death should not be met with silence. Rather,

stepping into life offers the ability to redeem death. As Athos points out, memory allows the dead to “outlast their killers” (Michaels 49). As a result, “In the face of what we have come to know about humankind,” Jakob argues that the moral approach to navigating a post-Holocaust world is to begin by living with a revised consciousness (Teichman and Leder 24). This suggestion implies that a moral obligation surrounds readers of history. In standing witness to the history of the Holocaust, a duty exists to prevent memory from being static and for the voices of the dead to succeed their murderers. Describing the effort to move towards a revised consciousness as continuing the “human legacy,” McPherson argues that bearing witness “establishes a continuum of communication and caring and vision” (114). Embracing this revised consciousness is meaningful because, “If receiving a legacy means giving *back*, it also necessarily means giving *forward*” (McPherson 109). This relationship fosters a dialogue between past and present.

In moving further away in time and relation to the Holocaust, American writer Thomas Laqueur, proposes an approach for readers, more in keeping with the model of memory as closure. Laqueur argues, “We might want to concentrate on the history of the political and moral failures, for example, that produced the Holocaust rather than the memory of its horrors” (8). Focusing on the moral shortcomings that contributed to the Holocaust serves to prevent repetition and complicity to violence. In this sense, a model of closure also helps the dead “outlast their killers” (Michaels 49). Bourguignon reinforces Laqueur’s quest for closure, adding, memories “help us gain a distance from the events and afford the possibility of constructing new lives” (84). Laqueur and Bourguignon propose a transformative approach to navigating a post-Holocaust world that dampens a focus on trauma and emphasizes moving away from pain towards reconciliation. Like the novel’s abbreviated preface, this method runs the risk of oversimplifying and compressing the intricacy of life for the purpose of closure. In doing so,

memories of the Holocaust become symbolic, rather than truths. In *How the Holocaust Looks Now*, historian Karolin Machtans argues that the compressional nature of closure removes specificity from the Holocaust and does not engender a conversation between the dead and the living (202). In its place, closure generates a “master narrative” that informs a present and future understanding of the Holocaust (Machtans 202). Creating a master narrative is hazardous because it depersonalizes suffering, ultimately leading to a misrepresentation of the scale of trauma. In addition, a succinct historical narrative overlooks the reality that many aspects of the Holocaust are indecipherable and unfathomable. As Friedländer points out, “Closure in this case would represent an obvious avoidance of what remains indeterminate, elusive, and opaque” (Friedlander, “Memory” 131). Here Friedländer asserts that closure sidesteps many of the abstract moral dilemmas in the wake of the Holocaust. As a result, closure takes on a redemptive theme, feeding into the overriding historical narrative that often attempts to find meaning out of indeterminable suffering and avoids the incomprehensible. Friedländer warns that any type of closure centered on comfort and healing, however desirable it may be, is unachievable and impossible (Friedländer, “Memory” 133). While closure and moving forward are relevant concepts for succeeding generations, detracting attention away from trauma engenders a forgetfulness of the scale and magnitude of suffering.

Fugitive Piece's fragmented structure, manipulation of time, and geological metaphors suggests that Michaels subscribes to the model of memory of excavation, indirectly proposing her own solution for readers in navigating a post-Holocaust world. Michaels grounds her approach in “open-ended remembrance,” with the hope of achieving some of the forward-looking characteristics of the model rooted in closure, ultimately indicating that open-ended memory is also transformative. This point is most powerfully illustrated by Michaels' construction of a novel born from the excavation of the remnants of Jakob's life in the preface. A

key aspect of excavation, Michaels “draws inferences from the fragments of memory” (Freud 259). Taken in its entirety, Michaels’ exploration implores readers to recognize the redemptive power of the imagination and reconstruction of a fragmented past. This process is transformative because reconstruction implies creation. As Machtans points out, this technique “aim[s] at interrupting the chronological representations of the historical events, thereby giving room to the competing memories and questioning the existence of a master narrative” (202). Digging into the past and excavating sites of memory punctures the overriding narrative and creates space for doubt, questioning, and discussion. This process leaves the reader “with an ‘opaqueness,’ an ‘uneasiness’ of interpretation of history” (Machtans 202). In capturing the opaque intricacy of history, excavation develops our understanding of trauma and perhaps better communicates the incomprehensibility of loss. Such an approach more closely reflects the traumatic nature of suffering and prevents readers from surrendering to over-generalizations and an all-inclusive narrative. In essence, Michaels’ approach suggests that a continual unearthing of history can be an appropriate response to unfathomable suffering. Tracing Jakob’s complex story through Poland, Greece, and Canada, is a prime illustration of a history buried under the weight of the master historical narrative. Constantly delving into the past and putting fragments together unearths Jakob. This method clearly develops what Friedländer calls the “ever-questioning commentary” (Friedländer, “Memory”131).

A model of excavation does not preclude moving forward and “the possibility of constructing new lives” (Bourguignon 84). The resolutions Jakob and Ben achieve toward the end of the novel demonstrate that reconstruction is a workable approach for carriers of memory. Jakob finds a way to confront his past through love for his wife Michaela and daughter, Bella (named in memory of Jakob’s murdered sister), while Ben is able to confront his parent’s suffering through his love for his wife, Naomi. The confrontations and resolutions Ben and Jakob

find represent a type of closure or at least capture some of its ability to look to the past in order to move into the future. Significantly, such closure does not seek to comfort or heal and look away from trauma, but achieves a confrontation with the past through the mining and unearthing of memory. This type of resolution is possible because excavation and reconstruction retain the possibility of generating togetherness. Piecing together scraps of memory, “Michaels tends to imagine a wholeness based upon the essential *incompletion* of lives” (McPherson 108). With this understanding, readers of history can still piece together wholeness out of absence. Based on a process of constant renewal, an approach of excavation continually looks back in order to make sense of the present. Such renewal also reveals itself in the preface, the narrator asserting, “A man’s work, like his life, is never completed...” (Michaels, “Preface”). Michaels underscores the cyclical nature of memory, suggesting that the task of bearing witness “is never completed,” and as a result, the lives lost in time are never completed either (Michaels, “Preface”). This approach to carrying memory implies a progression forward. As European Historian Dominick LaCapra points out, “Memory in this sense exists not only in the past, but in the present and future tenses” (LaCapra, “History” 16). Conscientious and ethical reading means avoiding what LaCapra describes as a “helpless possession by the past” (LaCapra, “Lanzmann’s” 267). “To remain with the dead” and not develop a model of memory that relies on the continual reconstruction and active revision of the past is to make memories one-dimensional (Michaels 170). In essence, the process of conscientious reading is obligatory and transformative.

In spite of its ability to redeem and resurrect, memory remains an inadequate proxy for life. Jakob articulates the deficiency of memory, asking, “How can one man take on the memories of even one other man, let alone five or ten or a thousand?” (Michaels 52). Jakob’s anxiety embodies the shortcomings of memory. His question points to the enormity of the scale of loss and asks if any mechanism is capable of capturing a horror so immense or whether the

transmission of memory can adequately honor the dead. An insufficient stand-in for life, memory ultimately falls short. Memory cannot bring justice to the murdered, nor can it do the lives of the dead justice. However, remembrance still possesses value. As it did with the novel's preface, memory has the capacity to personalize death and thus, as Eli Wiesel puts it, "to wrench those victims from oblivion" (21). In addition, for Jakob and Ben, remembrance signifies a moral choice. Memory is an affirmation of history and morality. Jakob argues, "Murder steals from a man his future. It steals from him his own death. But it must not steal from him his life" (Michaels 120). On its most basic level, memory absolves history of its indifference. Jakob's statement implies that not transmitting memory robs the dead of their existence and for that reason is imperative. Collapsing time, creating geologic metaphors, and discussing the importance of memory, Michaels urges the reader to reconsider his or her own relation to the Holocaust and consider how remembrance changes as we move further away in time from the destruction. In doing so, Michaels also implores the reader to elect an approach of excavation, leading to a continual process of imagination and discussion that interrupts broad, overarching historical discourses and interpretations of the Holocaust. This approach forces readers of history and of *Fugitive Pieces* to consider the uniqueness of the individual experience of suffering, and, as a result, better understand the profound scale of loss. Readers, in turn, can better transfer memory through time. The choice to transmit memory centers on its intersection with history. A collective consciousness is born out of that choice and forms a memory, "which each tree remembers even after it has been felled" (Michaels 211). Michaels suggests that the reader, Jew or non-Jew, can choose to be a tree that bears witness to the forest's history.

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