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Creating a Community of Witnesses: Acts of Reading in Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*

Abstract

This article considers the reading effects of the mise en abyme *in Anne Michaels's* Fugitive Pieces *to create a community of witnesses among readers. The novel's multi-voicedness, created through a series of narratees and narrators, models complex identifications of the author, narrators, and reader. Through the figure of the reader presented by the narratees Bella, Michaela, and Naomi, as well as the narrators Athos, Jakob, and Ben, Michaels engages us in acts of reading and interpreting the ongoing effects of the Holocaust. She offers a prime example of not the eyewitness but the reader as witness in recent Canadian fiction.*

Résumé

Cet article examine les effets de lecture de la mise en abyme dans Fugitive Pieces *d'Anne Michaels pour créer une communauté de lecteurs en tant que témoins. Le caractère multivoix du roman, créé par une série de narrataires et de narrateurs, modélise les identifications complexes de l'auteur, des narrateurs et du lecteur. À travers la figure du lecteur représentée par les narrataires Bella, Michaela et Naomi, ainsi que par les narrateurs Athos, Jakob et Ben, Michaels nous engage dans des actes de lecture et d'interprétation des effets continus de l'Holocauste. Elle offre un excellent exemple non pas du témoin oculaire, mais du lecteur en tant que témoin dans la fiction canadienne récente.*

Addressing the first public conference on Canadian Holocaust literature, ninety-year-old survivor Nate Leipciger made a startling observation: "Fiction makes the story *live* more than history." Leipciger had always wanted to write a novel, but after a few attempts earlier in life he decided to produce a memoir, published with the support of the Azrieli Foundation. He went on to say that fiction, rather than memoir, has a greater impact on an audience. These statements were unexpected from the author of *The Weight of Freedom*, which recounts Leipciger's experiences of internment at Auschwitz-Birkenau from 1943 to 1945.[1]

With similar insight regarding fiction, recent critics observe that Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* powerfully engages readers in past events and diverse views of the Holocaust. Michaels's novel draws unexpected connections between history and fiction—and among the narrator, listener, reader, and witness. Although Michaels's work has been variously described as a trauma narrative, a redemptive narrative, and a witness narrative,[2] most critics, such as Neal Bruss, focus not on the real reader but on the narrator, Jakob Beer, and his development of a "language for bearing witness to horror."[3] Yet how exactly does Michaels's fiction make past events and experiences of the Holocaust come alive for the *reader*? To understand fully this novel's enduring

and transformative effect on readers, we must re-examine its genre and its multiple voices, perspectives, and embedded narratives. These characteristics would suggest that it takes the hybrid form of a postmodern and testimonial novel, with three narrators and three narratees or listeners. This article will show that *Fugitive Pieces* is a *mise en abyme*[5] that interconnects characters and events, by using three embedded stories to position readers as a community of witnesses, both inside and outside the text. As another survivor (and Nobel laureate) Elie Wiesel affirms, the witnessing process must include readers and listeners: the past "belongs to our collective memory" and interlocutors share a "responsibility" not to forget the Holocaust.[4]

In an essay for the *Guardian* in 2009, Michaels admitted she wept as she wrote *Fugitive Pieces*, hoping to "bring both myself and the reader" close to past events in which Jakob's sister, Bella, is lost forever.[6] The novel begins, in fact, with this figure of an engaged reader: "I remembered my sister weeping at the end of novels she loved."[7] Jakob also recalls himself leaning with a "cheek against hers, as if . . . to see in the tiny black letters the world Bella saw."[8] More than a decade after the novel's publication, Michaels found herself moved by the mail she still received from readers who were as engaged as Bella.[9] Bella's story is part of Jakob's, and his story bears witness to the continuing effect of her absence: it is what trauma theorist Cathy Caruth would call a wound of the mind that never heals.[10] The text's double-voicedness—to borrow a term from narrative theorist Mikhail Bakhtin[11]—expands outward from Jakob and Bella, through a series of three narrators with their corresponding narratees. Mirror-like, the novel becomes, in effect, a postmodern and self-reflexive commentary on the interconnected acts of reading, writing, and interpretation.

As a prime example of Canadian fiction that bears witness to historical trauma, Michaels's work is essential to our understanding of contemporary works that present not an eyewitness account, but a multiple-voiced text and "project of address."[12] The reading effects and storytelling strategies of this novel become apparent when we apply to it a communication model of narrative. Michaels creates embedded stories and complex identifications among the author, narrators, and readers. As narrative theorist Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan notes elsewhere, the real author generates a story for the real reader, just as the narrator tells a story for a narratee.[13] In the narrative communication situation, she adds, narrators and narratees can be dramatized as characters and may be plural rather than singular. The use of embedded narratives is common to postmodern fiction and contemporary autobiography, both fictional and nonfictional. As feminist critic Leigh Gilmore observes, embedded narratives are used to resist power, even in autobiographical writing, with "increasingly sophisticated critical discourses on the shifting displacements of 'identity' within language itself."[14] While the narrative communication situation is important to any story, it is critical to testimonial novels such as *Fugitive Pieces*. Holocaust scholar Shoshana Felman argues that the aim of the trauma narrative is a "testimonial *project of address*," in

order to position the reader as an "attentive" listener and a "responsive *you*."[15] In this way, writers such as Michaels create, among readers, ethical communities of diverse audiences.

Besides the memoirist Jakob, the novel's narrators include his mentor Athos and his biographer, Ben. Each of these three narrators addresses a trauma narrative to various narratees. The first narrator, Athos Roussos, is a Greek archeologist who, in a series of essays, commemorates his lost colleagues. Their excavation of a three-thousand-year-old Polish village contradicted the Nazi policy of Aryan superiority over other races and civilizations. Some of his colleagues were shot, and others were sent to a concentration camp at Dachau.

Resisting Nazi authority, Athos flees Poland, carrying with him to Greece a Jewish orphan, who hides in a riverbank near the dig. After Athos rescues the boy from the mud, Jakob emerges, rising from the clay, like Adam, or a "golem" figure from Jewish lore.[16] Athos hides the seven-year-old boy under his coat until he reaches home. There Athos extends his hands toward Jakob, a gesture signifying what Emmanuel Lévinas would call an ethical response to the other. Through this poignant gesture readers experience, in part, the characters' fear and longing. As Joshua Getz explains, Athos's caring act is an example of witnessing, demonstrating an empathy that is central to the novel's purpose and the theme that "we are all implicated in the traumas of others."[17] Athos may have suffered his colleagues' fate had he not fled with the boy, adopting and raising him. To reciprocate this love, the adult Jakob later edits and publishes Athos's essays in a book entitled *Bearing False Witness*, an embedded text that is part of the novel's *mise en abyme*.

As a child in his care, Jakob learns from Athos's writings, his stories, and his library. The boy cannot leave their home or attend school during the Nazi occupation of Greece. As a young man, he confronts the burden of memory embodied by Athos's stories of stone carriers. In Greek and in English, these and other tales recount explorers bearing fossils, prisoners hauling stones, and Athos bringing Jakob to safety. Each story reinforces the theme that we must all bear the past—and one another.[18] To honour the memory of the boy's Jewish heritage, Athos teaches Jakob the Hebrew alphabet and Torah, retelling stories such as Moses's call and encounter with the burning bush, Hagar's escape to the wilderness, and Israel's flight from Egypt. Athos guides Jakob through storytelling and by personal example. During the Second World War, he shelters a Greek neighbour's son from German soldiers; he stands at Jakob's side in a memorial service for the lost Jews of Corfu; he records a survivor's tale of the disappearance of Crete's ghetto and the escape of the Jews of Zakynthos.

While Jakob is his primary listener to such stories, Athos's writing is addressed to ever-widening audiences, including international academic and scientific commu-

nities. He elicits readers' resistance to authoritarianism, violence, and genocide. The series of essays by Athos records his colleagues' internment and execution, yet it remains unfinished until it is posthumously published by Jakob. For both men, the series represents a call for justice. "Whoever has power for a minute," writes Athos, "commits a crime."[19] Upon reading the manuscript, the adult Jakob confesses that, while Athos calls for solidarity, he sometimes finds the latter's faith in humanity "unbearable."[20] In his own memoir Jakob reflects: "No act of violence is ever resolved. When the one who can forgive can no longer speak, there is only silence."[21] He resists Athos's universalism, a modernist and generalizing tendency that assumes the equality of individuals, without recognizing differences of ethnicity, class, and gender. But he embraces Athos's particular hope that, for them, to "share a hiding place" did embody a mutual and active "love."[22] Although a complete recovery from trauma is impossible, Jakob gathers inspiration and strength from Athos's words and actions.

Jakob later discovers from letters that Athos had conducted an extensive search for his sister Bella. He clings to the letters, receiving them now as if in answer to his past question: what is stronger than fear or death? By reading between the lines in this way, and by recalling the Song of Solomon (Song 8:6), we too can infer that the implied response is love.[23] Jakob feels anew the active love and engagement of Athos. Repeatedly emerging from other descriptions of Athos is the figure of the writer–and reader–who places a hand on another's head, shoulder, or back.[24] The active hand of an empathic listener is an ethical response to another's suffering; likewise, the writing hand gestures toward acknowledgement, an ethical response. This figure of an active interlocutor recalls the attentive listener, and it recalls again Jakob's memories of his sister's active hand on a piano or book. Through an implicit association with Bella, it also becomes the figure of the reader—that is, one who is actively engaged.

Athos's story is embedded in the story of Jakob, the second narrator. When he edits Athos's book, Jakob weeps as he writes the dedication, echoing perhaps Michaels's own weeping. Having migrated with Athos to Canada in his youth, Jakob began a journal to record past events in English, a "language foreign to their happening," and the journal was a "revelation."[25] It fulfilled the role of a belated witness: "I did not witness the most important events of my life."[26] He was not an eyewitness at his parents' death or sister's disappearance. Because he hid in a pantry and ran to the river, he heard but did not see the Nazis attack his family. The adult Jakob now finds that the English language spans distances and carries memories like a "sonar . . . through which I listened . . . waiting to capture elusive meanings."[27] His memoir is a witness narrative performing the function of echolocation. His stories and those embedded in his narrative have an echo effect, for both him and the reader. Readers discover with him that meaning is transmitted not only through words, but through echoes, silences, and gaps in which memories resonate. The stories of Athos and Jakob are profoundly interconnected.

Jakob's story also echoes the author's life story around her family's origins. Her father came to Canada in 1931 at the age of thirteen with his family who were Polish Jews.[28] However, Michaels's father left Europe before the war and, unlike Jakob, did not experience it firsthand. Michaels herself is not a second-generation survivor but a second-generation immigrant. Coral Ann Howells recognizes that it is Michaels's "personal investment in Jewish history, which is also her family's history, that provides the genesis of the novel."[29] For this reason, the novel's dedication, "for J," gestures toward Jakob inside the text, and toward all Jews outside the text, whether lost or exiled. As Michael Richardson asserts, the dedication evokes the "J" that appeared on their passports and, at the same time, the uncertainty of the extra-textual reference.[30] The dedication's ambiguity expands the novel's meaning and amplifies its effect on readers. The author's purpose is personal and political, echoing that of Athos and Jakob. While commemorating both survivors and immigrants, her stated "ethical purpose" is to create connections among diverse readers who inherit, however unevenly, the Holocaust's historical legacy.[31]

Jakob remains traumatized by the disappearance of Bella and his parents' fate under the Nazis who broke down their door and burnt their home in Poland. At the river where Jakob fled, he fills his pockets with stones in a gesture evoking the burden of memory. Trapped in silence, the boy Jakob cannot speak. After Athos's death, the adult Jakob learns from friends that Athos himself lost a parent and siblings in childhood and a wife in adulthood. He recognizes in another's words the silence of grief: "Some stones are so heavy only silence helps you carry them."[32] He seeks to transmit the silences of the past in his poems and elliptical writing.

In his work and life, Jakob searches for a narratee. When he meets his first wife, Alexandra (Alex) Maclean, in a music library, they share a love of music. At first, Jakob's memory of Bella's love of music helps him bridge temporal and cultural gaps. Several years her senior, he is drawn to Alex's wit and humour, despite her restless Canadian innocence and early interest in Marxist meetings. Alex is a young clerical worker who attends coffee houses, concerts, and immigrant performances, but her understanding is shallow. She desires a "life of the mind—without all the reading."[33] Although they marry, Alex loses interest in Jakob and his story, complaining that she gets "more than enough history at home."[34] Unlike Bella, who was eager to share many stories, Alex cannot sustain an interest in Jakob's stories. Whether Jakob is speaking or writing, she interrupts him and "each time a memory or a story slinks away, it takes more" of him with it.[35] Lacking an attentive listener, Jakob lapses into silence. He becomes distant and Alex abandons him.

In contrast to Alex, Michaela, Jakob's second wife, is an attentive listener and engaged reader. She has "piles of books" and, as Jakob later reflects, "[l]istening to Michaela read, I remember how Bella read."[36] When he speaks of his past, Michaela weeps "for

Bella."[37] A museum administrator, whose Master's thesis explores ethics in cultural practices related to the Inuit, she shows a profound and empathic engagement. She values respectful and knowledgeable connections with others and the past. Soon after they are introduced by Maurice Salman, a mutual friend, Jakob desires to tell her stories. When he pauses for a response during their conversation, Michaela replies with a thoughtful insight: "I don't know what the soul is. But I imagine that somehow our bodies surround what has always been."[38] They exchange stories and read together. Reading bridges a generation gap of twenty-five years and Jakob no longer feels alone: "You're many years late . . . [and yet] how happy I am to see you."[39] His journal records the personal name of Michaela but no surname. She is thus inscribed in Michaels's text as an allegorical figure and responsive *you*. She becomes the model reader.[40]

Demonstrating an imaginative capacity for empathy, Michaela forms an emotional bond with Jakob. He feels both the "joy of being recognized and the stabbing loss" of a survivor.[41] By connecting with her, Jakob feels reconnected to the world and "suffused with peace."[42] In contrast to his earlier fear and isolation, he feels a new empowerment. He and Michaela are models of interconnection not only in a Canadian context, but also a global one. While a healing relationship cannot change the past, it can change the present and future. After their marriage, Jakob's recovery is a daily process that "heals gaps between us."[43] He soon anticipates the birth of their child: "My son, my daughter: May you never be deaf to love. / Bela, Bella: Once I was lost in a forest. I was so afraid . . . I saved myself without thinking. I grasped the two syllables closest to me and replaced my heartbeat with your name."[44] In addressing the child that is to be named after her, he alludes again to his sister. Michaels's text presents, then, a convergence of the past and present in the last words of Jakob's memoir.

Sadly, Jakob will never know the child Michaela carries, because all three are killed in an untimely traffic accident. The reader can feel the hope of recovery and pain of tragedy, simultaneously, by recalling Michaels's epigraph: "Poet Jakob Beer, who was also a translator of posthumous writing from the war, was struck and killed by a car in Athens in the spring of 1993, at age sixty. His wife had been standing with him . . . They had no children." The erasure of the child's name is, like the epigraph, addressed to the reader by the author, who is outside the text. Inside the text, it is probably penned by Jakob's biographer. Its purpose is to unsettle and make us think. The reader's engagement, emotionally and intellectually, is an integral part of the narrative process, particularly in the process of witnessing. When the real reader inhabits, imaginatively, the position of a narratee such as Michaela, the reader becomes engaged, and the engaged reader becomes a witness.

It is only after encountering a disengaged reader in Alex and an engaged reader in Michaela that we encounter Ben, the third narrator. Ben resumes the search for a

narratee. Like Athos and Jakob, Ben engages in commemorative acts of writing. The last section of the novel is the biographer's memoir. He addresses Jakob elegiacally and directly. "Jakob Beer," he writes, "I read your poems."[45] He identifies with Jakob, whose story echoes Ben's in the loss of a parent or sibling to the Holocaust. After his father's suicide, Ben finds a photograph of his sister and brother who died in a Nazi concentration camp in Poland: "On the back floats a spidery date, June 1941, and two names. Hannah. Paul."[46] The photograph reveals the source of his father's despair and satisfies Ben's need for a narrative to explain his father's silent pain. He projects onto Jakob the desire for a father figure. But he feels slighted at their brief meeting before Jakob's sudden death: "The truth is you didn't acknowledge me at all."[47] Instead, Jakob spoke to Naomi, Ben's wife, who dresses like an "eccentric sister" and resembles Bella and Michaela, the attentive listeners.[48] Ben's envy of Naomi grows upon learning that she knew, before he did, about the photograph of his lost siblings: "My parents, experts in secrets, kept the most important one from me to their last breath. Yet, in a masterful stroke, my mother decided to tell Naomi."[49] Hurt by his wife's silence and supposed betrayal, Ben leaves for Greece to find Jakob's journals for his biography.

The crisis in Ben's relationship with Naomi focuses on her role, not as his parents' confidante, but as Ben's. At one time, Naomi had attended Ben's university class on biography; she was an auditor, who "could listen closely and then with painful exactitude come out with a statement that sliced to the heart of things."[50] She demonstrated then "her openness, her Canadian goodwill" and Ben wonders now, "What would I do without her?"[51] In Greece, however, Ben meets Petra, a student from the United States, and projects onto her the desire for a muse. Ben's memoir mirrors Jakob's by engaging two female narratees, Naomi and Petra. Ben and Petra retrace the path of Jakob and Michaela, swimming and reading together. But during sex, when Ben inflicts pain, tears stream "down her face."[52] She leaves him, after scattering books and disturbing pillows. Unwittingly, she exposes Jakob's journals in the "gaps on the shelves,"[53] as well as a note from Michaela in the bed.

The note Petra exposes gives Ben an interpretive key to Jakob's recovery from trauma. Ben had long suspected a gap between Jakob's work and life, thinking a poem on Jakob and Michaela's sexual union was the key to Jakob's surfacing from grief. He now knows it is a healing relationship with Michaela, in a wider sense, that enabled Jakob to write like a man with a future. Ben finds evidence of Jakob's healing relationship and future hope in the note: "If she's a girl: Bella / If he's a boy: Bela."[54] Michaela's tribute to Bella in the name points again to her role as an attentive listener in Jakob's story. Ben resumes his biography, and the note becomes the climax of his memoir. Hoping to satisfy a curiosity about the poet by filling in the gap between Jakob's life and work, Ben has intuited correctly from their initial meeting that it was not language alone that had released Jakob from the past. Even more so than the

beauty of his poems, Jakob's life story shows the overarching value of Athos's example to make "love necessary."[55] Just as Michaela was the attentive listener in Jakob's story, Naomi takes on the same role in Ben's.

Recalling Michaela, Naomi is not merely a muse but acts as an important narratee throughout Ben's memoir. Susan Gubar rightly argues that she is, in addition to a wife and caregiver, an empathic witness.[56] From Naomi, Ben learns of his late parents' hope that, by not giving their son an obviously Jewish name, he might escape the anti-Semitism they had faced in Europe and in Canada. Instead of Benjamin, meaning "son" in Hebrew, they named him simply Ben. Without erasing his Jewish identity, it passed for a common name in his youth. Ben becomes an everyman and a reader of Jakob's life, however belatedly. In this way, he resembles Michaela. For this reason, Michaels gives him a personal name but not a surname. Allegorically, Ben stands for the reader as an interpreter of Jakob's life, as Marita Grimwood remarks.[57] Scholars such as Jerry Palmer insist a relationship always exists between a narrative and the social structure; and, in fiction, the "typicality" of characters makes them representative of "something larger and more meaningful than themselves."[58] As such, Naomi is the prime model of the reader and Ben's preferred narratee.

When they began dating, Naomi's rooms were filled with books. To satisfy her love of stories, Ben now confesses, "I made things up."[59] The admission undermines his reliability, not hers. She is an engaged reader and professional editor, as well as an amateur collector of musical lyrics. When he asks for songs to suit his parents' taste, she responds with their favourite, demonstrating insight and an intimate knowledge of them that he, in contrast, ignores. "The only thing you can do for the dead is to sing to them," she tells Ben. "The hymn, the miroloy, the kaddish."[60] Similar to Michaels, Naomi is a Jewish Canadian and, though she is not a second-generation survivor like Ben, she is knowledgeable and respectful of Jewish customs and history: "In the ghettos, when a child died, the mother sang a lullaby. Because there was nothing else she could offer of her self, of her body."[61] Since Ben's envy grows, due to her close relationship with his parents, the reader is re-positioned by Michaels's text to identify with Naomi instead of Ben.

When she accompanies Ben to a party where he meets Jakob, Naomi has read Jakob's poems, too. Like Michaela, Naomi bridges a generation gap by forming an emotional connection with the poet. Ben admires their interaction: "Of course Naomi was moved, and soon was telling you about her parents, her family. Naomi, usually so shy, spoke about the last summer with her dying father at the lake, then about my parents—for which I found myself not annoyed but curiously grateful. Tell him, I thought, tell him everything."[62] Naomi is an exceptional listener, a present and embodied narratee, as Ben goes on to note: "Your conversation had wrought a change in her body."[63] Ben sees her pleasure as her hand touches Jakob's face, and Jakob extends

a warm handshake to her. These gestures signify more than words; they signify an engaged and mutual response. Naomi models an active empathy. She takes pleasure again in Michaela's praise of a scarf and coat, as if Michaela had passed onto her the mantle of the attentive listener. However, Ben is angry to see that it is not he but Naomi who has attracted the couple's attention. His irritation at a supposed slight compounds his envy of her. He rejects her for the very quality he once admired: the ability to listen.

Following his failed relationship with Petra, Ben returns to Naomi. As if to reposition her as a preferred narratee, he picks up "Naomi's scarf"[64] in a symbolic gesture. The scarf recalls both Naomi and Michaela to whom it once belonged. Almost immediately, he admits it is not Naomi's scarf, but "she has one just like it."[65] Although his memory is faulty, Ben clings to the scarf as though it were a "tiny square of silence,"[66] signalling his changed perspective and willingness to accept the limits of his personal perspective. He acknowledges his need for a healing relationship like that of Jakob and Michaela. The acknowledgement restores his reliability for the reader, and he recognizes Naomi as the one with whom he shares the most memories. In this role, and in her empathy, she acts as the figure of the reader *par excellence*.

After his marital crisis, Ben remembers his wife and parents lovingly for having provided him a circuit of energy and mutual love. In a narrative circuit, the novel itself comes full circle, just as Ben's "plane descends in a wide arc" toward Canada.[67] Symbolically, the plane signals the genesis of his re-interpretation of the text's embedded stories. In fact, the first line of Jakob's journal becomes the novel's opening statement: "Time is a blind guide."[68] Like the previous two narrators, Athos and Jakob, Ben makes peace with his own past.

In Michaels's hands, the stories of Athos, Jakob, and Ben are shaped to be representative of a writer's search for the model reader. The memoirist Jakob looks backward and forward to his mentor Athos and his biographer Ben. Rippling outward, like sound waves from his memoir, the embedded stories emphasize a common need for actively engaged readers and listeners. Like Bella, Michaela, and Naomi, the reader is positioned as a witness who is receptive to the novel's trauma narrative. Michaels's text itself performs this type of engagement and gestures toward change. The last page re-emphasizes the structural metaphor of the *mise en abyme*. During a return to Canada, Ben reimagines Naomi's role as an engaged reader and attentive listener: "My wife shifts in her chair, her hair slashing her face in half. And when her face disappears like that, the sound will be in my mouth: Naomi."[69] The call for a response underlines the novel's purpose as a project of address. While the description may initially appear to erase her identity or show a divided attention, it actually stresses Naomi's role as an engaged narratee in two important ways. First, she is an active listener, not a static one. Second, she represents not a singular self but multiple

selves. Like a portrait by Cubist painter Pablo Picasso, the divided planes of the visage suggest a multiple-point perspective rather than a single-point perspective. The disappearance of her face shows not her lack of identity, but her representativeness as an allegorical figure of the witness, similar to Bella's characterization at the novel's outset.

It is the figure of the witness that coincides finally with the figure of the reader and writer. Examining diverse autobiographical texts, and the hybridity of the genre in Canada, Susanna Egan and Gabriele Helms note that identifying oneself as Canadian "involves a desire for origins and for ethnic belonging that contrasts with the unspecified and malleable nature of an imaginary Canada."[70] From the multiple perspectives in Michaels's text, an imaginary Canada emerges as a nation of immigrants and migrants, as a multicultural mosaic of people of different origins. Canadians are implicated in historical traumas worldwide, and, as Pedro Carmona Rodriguez attests, "Michaels's novel develops a politics of commonality in and out of Canada."[71] Michaels self-consciously uses embedded, multiple perspectives to create a textual space not only for Canadians, but for diverse readers to participate in a community of witnesses, inside and outside the text. Her novel engages us in a reading encounter with the past's historical legacy. It thereby performs and enacts an interconnection among readers who are witnesses.

In three narratees, Bella, Michaela, and Naomi, we can see that the figure of the reader as a witness is Michaels's primary achievement. With the mirroring and expanding structure of a *mise en abyme*, her testimonial novel remains open-ended, in order to suggest that the real reader must, in turn, rethink the historical and ongoing effects of the Holocaust. Narrators and narratees are connected as readers in embedded stories. They call us repeatedly to be reader participants in the ongoing process of witnessing. An exemplary model of bearing witness in fiction, Michaels's text embodies a project of address. She demonstrates how Canadian writers can perform complex "cultural work"[72] by engaging audiences in historical crises through witness narratives. The performance of the witness in Michaels's work expands our idea of testimony as constituting not only personal memory, but also shared memory. As Wiesel insists, "Human suffering anywhere concerns men and women everywhere."[73] Michaels's novel spans distances of time and space to connect readers and create a new audience and ethical community of witnesses.

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Nate Leipciger, author of *The Weight of Freedom* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2015), was the conference's opening speaker. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the inaugural conference on Canadian Holocaust Literature: Charting the Field, held at Library and Archives Canada on October 28, 2018, and the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences (ACCUTE), held at the University of Regina on May 29, 2018.

2
For more on terms, see, for example, D.M.R. Bentley, "Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*," *Canadian Poetry* 41 (1997): 5-20; Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 48-78; Merle Williams and Stefan Polatinsky, "Writing at its Limits: Trauma Theory in Relation to Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*," *English Studies in Africa* 52, no. 1 (2009): 1-14; and Connie T. Braun, "Anne Michaels and the Affirmation of Being in the Poetics of Suffering and Trauma," *Renascence* 62, no. 2 (2010): 156-73. For recent critics, see, among others, Michael Richardson, "'Every moment is two moments': Witnessing and the Poetics of Trauma in *Fugitive Pieces*, by Anne Michaels," *Journal of Literature and Trauma Studies* 3, no. 1 (2014): 81-99; Kim Verwaayen, "Folding Back the Skin of Text: Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* of Trauma, Testimony, and Auto/Biographical Form(s)," *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 28, no. 1 (2013): 126-49; and Sara R. Horowitz, "The Geography of Memory: Haunting and Haunted Landscapes in Contemporary Canadian Jewish Writing," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 35, no. 2 (2016): 216-23.

3
Neal Bruss, "Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*, Object Relations, Internalization, and the Development of Discourse," *Reader: Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy* 48 (2003): 21. Regarding literary terms such as "real reader," see note 13.

4
Elie Wiesel, "Preface," in *Night*, trans. Marion Wiesel (New York: Hill and Wang, [1958] 2006), xv.

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Jeremy Hawthorn defines *mise en abyme* as "the recurring internal duplication of an artistic whole . . . similar to what one witnesses if one looks at one's reflection between two facing mirrors." Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 210. The *mise en abyme* is a structural metaphor and, in Lucien Dällenbach's view, the aim of the "metafictional" *mise en abyme* is to "change the world." Lucien Dällenbach, *The Mirror in the Text,* trans. Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1977] 1989), 99-100.

6
Anne Michaels, "Guardian Book Club: The Morality of Memory," *Guardian*, Saturday Review, June 6, 2009, 6.

7
Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), 9.

8
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 9.

9
Sarah Crown, "Anne Michaels, Fugitive Author. Interview with Anne Michaels," *Guardian*, Saturday Review, May 2, 2009, 13.

10
Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

11
Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, eds., *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 315.

12
Shoshana Felman, "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 43-44. This essay is part of a larger research project that also includes Karen Connelly's *The Lizard Cage* (Toronto: Vintage, [2005] 2007), Lawrence Hill's *The Book of Negroes* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007), and Steven Galloway's *The Cellist of Sarajevo* (Toronto: Vintage, 2008).

13
Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 89-90. Rimmon-Kenan uses terms borrowed from Seymour Chatman but, unlike him, she views the narrator and narratee as "constitutive" factors and necessary, not

optional, to narrative communication. I, too, use the terms "narrator" and "narratee," "real author" and "real reader" to distinguish among personages and persons, inside and outside the text, but I would not identify the historical author with a fictional narrator, as a so-called second self.

14
Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 41.

15
Felman, 43-44. Unlike critics who insist it is impossible to transmit trauma through art, Felman refers to Theodor Adorno's idea that in an age of trauma, suffering may find a voice only in art; she recalls an essay by Adorno published later than the one in which he famously said it is not possible to write poems after Auschwitz. Felman, "Education and Crisis," 40-41.

16
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 12.

17
Joshua Getz, "Infinite Responsibility for the Other in Emmanuel Lévinas and Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*," in *Negotiating Identities: Constructed Selves and Others*, ed. Helen Vella Bonavita (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 140; Lévinas qtd. in Getz, 136-37.

18
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 22, 36, 53.

19
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 71.

20
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 59.

21
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 161.

22
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 20.

23
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 19, 109. The biblical allusion is that "love is strong as death" (Song 8:6).

24
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 21, 60, 119, 170.

25
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 101.

26
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 17.

27
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 112.

28
Diane Turbide, "Anne Michaels," *Maclean's*, December 22, 1997, 41. One interviewer found Michaels coy about her family's Jewish origins and immigrant past. Gerald Hannon, "Anne Michaels: Hiding in Plain Sight," *Quill and Quire*, April 2009, 14. But Michaels told another interviewer that the Holocaust is a "formative event" in which "we should all be interested." Crown, "Fugitive Author," 12.

29
Coral Ann Howells, *Where Are the Voices Coming From? Canadian Culture and the Legacies of History* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 109.

30
Richardson, 93.

31
Michaels, "Guardian Book Club," 6.

32
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 77.

33
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 131.

34
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 136.

35
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 144.

36
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 178, 191.

37
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 182.

38
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 176-77.

39
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 177.

40
According to narrative theorist Wallace Martin, the implied or model reader is "an abstraction used to discuss the kinds of competence real readers possess" and is "inferred from the text." Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 154. Similarly, Bakhtin says every utterance is shaped by the "responsive understanding" of a "second person" or listener. Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 135. Marita Grimwood goes as far as to call Michaela the "perfect reader." Marita Grimwood, "Postmemorial Positions: Reading and Writing after the Holocaust in Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 11 (2003): 126.

41
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 182.

42
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 182.

43
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 183.

44
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 195.

45
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 206.

46
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 252.

47
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 230.

48
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 236.

49
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 252.

50
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 234.

51
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 248-49, 242.

52
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 279.

53
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 281.

54
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 279.

55
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 121. On the theme of love, see also Michaels, "Guardian Book Club," 6.

56
Susan Gubar, "Empathic Identification in Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*: Masculinity and Poetry after Auschwitz," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 1 (2002): 262, 267.

57
Grimwood, 123-24.

58
Jerry Palmer, *Potboilers* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 91.

59
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 239.

60
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 241.

61
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 241.

62
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 207-08.

63
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 208.

64
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 285.

65
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 285.

66
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 285.

67
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 294.

68
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 5.

69
Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, 293.

70
Susanna Egan and Gabriele Helms, "Auto/biography? Yes. But Canadian?" *Canadian Literature* 172 (2002): 11.

71
Pedro M. Carmona Rodriguez, "Until You Crashed into My Geography: Nationness, Symptoms and the Peculiar Performativity of Two Canadian Fictions," *The Grove: Working Papers on English Studies* 10 (2003): 16.

72
Gilmore, 22. From Gilmore I borrow the words "complex . . . cultural work."

73
Elie Wiesel, "The Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech Delivered by Elie Wiesel in Oslo on December 10, 1986," in *Night*, trans. Marion Wiesel (New York: Hill and Wang, [1958] 2006), 119.