# SEEING WHAT REMAINS:
# ON THE ENIGMA OF THE LOOK,
# BETWEEN MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA

by

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for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
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**SEEING WHAT REMAINS:**
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## Abstract

Walter Benjamin, in Thesis IX of his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," wrote of the angel of history looking back at the past from the now-time of the present moment, at the historical wreckage, a single catastrophe as it were, piling in front of its feet, as it gets pulled forward facing back into the temporality of the future and the space of modernity's violent excesses, heralded by the promise of apparent progress. As the title to my dissertation suggests, my study begins, following the angel's look, with these three words, seeing what remains, and as such it is structured around the very nature of this arresting "look back" and that which is being regarded, the ruins, or the remains and remainders that exist after, and in the aftermath of, traumatic loss. Working with and across a variety of mediums, I conduct a series of exegetical studies of recent "texts" – literary, photographic, and cinematic – within which, I argue, this look back figures as central to the concern of how we might understand the simultaneous existence of the forces of remembrance and forgetting, and of mourning and melancholia in memory-work. The various "texts" within which I explore this look back are Anne Michaels's novel *Fugitive Pieces*, the photographic series titled *Library of Dust* by David Maisel, the movies *Hiroshima, mon amour* by Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais and *Amour* by Michael Haneke. I situate my exploration of the enigmatic nature of the look back in these different textual scenes alongside Sigmund Freud's critical work on

transference and transference love and Kaja Silverman's rigorous expansion of the psychoanalytic objective of the "cure by love." Here, it is my intention, as such, to work toward and expand on my thesis that this look, of the angel (or the materialist historian or the artist as witness), is a look of redemptive love, both against erasure and against the possibility of invisibility, "to awaken the dead" as it were, so as to address the loss inscribed in historical experiences with catastrophic temporality and to thereby redeem the ethical from within the scene of trauma.

**Acknowledgements**

The cure by love, Kaja Silverman suggests, following Freud, "represents the triumph of relationality, it is a cure through and for displacement…[it] suggests that creatures and things are in need of this care because without it they cannot help but suffer from the most serious of maladies: invisibility" (Silverman, 2005, p. 42). Acknowledgments are, in their most distilled and simplest sense, inscriptions against such invisibility. Over the many years that it took me to see this project to its completion, I have been cared for in the most significant and, dare I say, transformative manner; I have been cared for through the many ways in which the people who have supported this project both directly and indirectly have offered me instances of not just insight, but lessons I can take with me elsewhere and everywhere. As such, I have been so utterly displaced.

When I started my doctoral work, I arrived at it with a strange, though perhaps expected, set of drives and fantasies – about who I wanted to work with, about what I wanted to study, research and write about, about what this project would offer me, both in the midst of it, as I lived both with it and through it, and in its possible aftermath. I arrived at the University of Toronto with the sole purpose of wanting to study under Roger Simon and Rebecca Comay, both of whose theoretical work I had been following with great rigor for so long till then, since the very early days of my post-secondary training. Unfortunately neither relationship was seen to their intellectual fruition, at least not in the way that I had initially wanted or hoped for. Roger, my erstwhile dissertation advisor, passed away, just over a year prior to my completing this project. His death, thus, marks this work. Rebecca, who I had idolized and idealized for so long, taught me the significant lesson that the text and author might be disparate entities, and as such, despite our best efforts and my unwavering

commitment to her longstanding intellectual project made it difficult for me to work with her. Perhaps, the difficulty was mine and not hers. Intellectual inheritances are difficult, at best. Sometimes, they place the block that prevents you from the very task at hand, the task of thinking thought, the task of thought and its inscription. However, despite it being marked by loss, this project, as well, is so deeply influenced by what I have had the opportunity to learn from them in the years they were present for my intellectual growth. As such, what is to come to the reader in the pages to follow reverberates with their respective eternal yet absent presences that inform every bit of the core of this text. I cannot thank them enough, not in the least bit for the difficult lessons in epistemological humility they both imparted to me. As such, in the end, it was not the project that I had initially fantasized about writing in all my prior intellectual bravado, but it became, perhaps unconsciously, over the course of its time the very one I was always meant to write.

Another significant death, and a loss inscribed in that dying, marks this project as well. In a sense, this project is flanked in the midst of two deaths. Roger's toward the end, and the death of my maternal grandfather, T.S. Simon at the very start of my graduate work. I often catch myself wondering what he would have said regarding my completion of this program of study. He, like Roger, taught me the importance of being kind as such, and kind, more specifically, to memory itself, the importance of remembering, of trying hard not to forget, but knowing that I would inevitably not remember everything as it had happened, and the importance the demand of ethics held in the caring and careful act of looking back, to watch over the otherness of the past as it watches over me. It is to the memories of both Roger and my grandfather, memories that keep fading into ruin, that I dedicate this work.

This work, then, remains as a singular testimony of what continues to remain of them in my life.

Rinaldo Walcott was so deeply generous in his offer to take over the reins of the advisory duties in the aftermath of Roger's passing. For this, I am incredibly grateful to him; in his ability to see that this project was worthy of being completed and in his assistance as he offered it to me to do so. Robert Gibbs and John Zilcosky, as members of my dissertation committee, were equally supportive throughout the efforts I made toward completing this project amidst the loss it was surrounded and informed by. Bob gave the earlier drafts of this work such close and intimate attention while reading them – attention only one so skilled in the task of exegetical reading is capable of offering. His suggestions have given this work more strength and stamina than I had initially hoped for it. I met John while taking a course with him in the early stages of my doctoral work on Freud's concept of the uncanny. Little did I know then what I know now regarding what it means not only to theorize the experience of the uncanny, but as well to live with it, to embody it in the work I endeavored to do here. Again, a mere thanks seems so limiting and limited for how I feel in regards to how all of them helped rescue this project from its own possible demise. I, as well, want to offer my acknowledgement and thanks to Tanya Titchkosky who agreed to act as an internal-external reader in the final stage of this dissertation, at my defense. Allan Pero, who graciously accepted the invitation to act as my external reader was, in my opinion, one of the most ideal readers I could have hoped for, outside of my own immediate committee. Both of their comments regarding the political and aesthetic categories I consider here offered me the much-needed provocative challenges I require to think about and continue to address as I move beyond and forward after this dissertation.

This project could not have also been possible if it were not for the years of work, the simultaneous work of psychoanalysis, I was undergoing with the ongoing support of my analyst Dr. Oren Gozlan. This work is an extension of the work I was doing with him in gaining a much deeper understanding of my unconscious processes and my conscious processing. Neither can I privilege intellectual work over the work of psychoanalysis nor can I privilege the work of analysis over its intellectual description in the form of the work here. Both speak to such profound internal ways in which I distill the social world around me, internal ways that have affected me and continue to affect me in how I experience the ruins of life in the form of the experiences it has offered me.

My family never fully grasped what it was I was doing in the act of wanting to further my education at the graduate level by doing a doctoral degree. I come from a family of professionals – engineers, teachers, social workers, nurses, accountants – for whom the upper-middle class aspiration of securing employment and economic stability was a source of constant conflict between my desire to continue with my studies and further my intellectual pursuits and their desire for my personal and financial stability. Being the first person on both sides of my parents' respective families to have gained a doctoral degree, I was constantly aware of the immense privilege attached to the work of thought and theorizing, and to the task of knowledge production in the very act of reading what I wanted, experiencing all the art and cinema I was given exposure to. Though, there were several instances during this long process in which they did not truly understand my work or my desire to continue with it, I want to thank my parents Raju and Sara for the space they offered me to pursue my work. I also want to thank my brother Ronnie and his wife Vijaya for their presence throughout this

struggle. The spaces and silences between my family and myself allowed for this work to be slowly but surely built.

OISE was the ideal place for me to complete this work. It offered me the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary platform upon which I could slowly construe of and construct the project in the manner that best fit my own desires. I never felt limited by the institution in which I found myself. Additionally, I also want to acknowledge the opportunities I have had to form ties with the Centre for Comparative Literature, the Department of Philosophy, the German Department, and the Jackman Humanities Institute. All of these venues offered me the multidimensionality I had wanted and hoped for in regards to strengthening my work and my thought process.

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2007 has become a very close friend and ally, ever organizing my psychoanalytic thoughts as they arrived to me. It was she who strongly encouraged me to apply to the Cornell School of Criticism and Theory, which I had the wonderful opportunity to attend during the summer of 2008. While at the Cornell SCT, I had the chance to attend and participate in a six-week philosophical seminar on the subjects of torture and dignity offered by Jay M. Bernstein. This experience left its radical and serious mark upon my project and altered the ways in which I thought of the philosophy of embodiment as it relates to psychoanalytic and memory-work. Jay has continued to be greatly supportive of my intellectual commitments and it has been a pleasure to keep in touch with him over the years with regards to our mutual academic interests. While at Cornell, I also had the opportunity to develop what I now hope will be lifelong personal and intellectual friendships that keep inspiring my thoughts – I want to particularly acknowledge Cathy Hsiao, Damon Young, Philip Longo, Neica Michelle Shepherd, Julie Orlemanski, Amrita Ghosh, Amit Baishya, Brad Flis, and Marie Buck.

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limitations of my own project. Francisco-Fernando Granados with whom I have shared many a lengthy conversations regarding all matters Spivakian and of the nature of the subaltern and the relationship between ethics and aesthetic practice has proved to be one of my most important commentators during the very last stretch of my dissertation work.

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Significant friendships outside of the academy have also presented themselves to me as both providing respite from and offering other ways by which to think about my work and

the nature of work in and of itself. These same friends were also incredibly patient with me and present, by persistently keeping in touch with me, especially during my long periods of absences from the various social spaces and relations to which I belonged. There were many weeks and months in which I would recluse myself into the hovel of my study to focus on my research and my writing during which period these very friends would wait on the sidelines and margins of this work with a patience I can only hope I myself would have had had the roles been reversed. I want to thank "the boys" – Kevin Leung, Mic Carter, Yaseen Ali, Brien Wong, Zamin Kanji, and Ricardo Baptista – for offering the occasional weekend respites into club land for night-long dancing excursions. I also want to thank Gemma Charlebois with whom I shared many a good meal, wonderful bottle of wine, and stimulating discussion regarding the latest in the literary scene. Finally, of my friendships, I want to thank – though no words can be used to describe how grateful I am for this friendship – Libby Zeleke, my closest and dearest friend, for the unwavering presence she has had in my life, for continuing to stimulate my interest in all things philosophical, cinematic, and psychoanalytic. With the exception of my committee members, she has been a close instigator in the development of my work since its earliest stages, even before I entered graduate school, when we were both those strange literary-type activist-y students working toward our respective undergraduate degrees in social work at York University.

Finally, in the name of a friendship that eludes all forms of language, I arrive at Umair Abdul, my best friend in life. I know it is customary for many to credit their work and the very nature of their working to their closest, most intimate friends, but I can attest to the fact that I would not know where to begin articulating how immeasurable his support and presence has been in regards to my life and this project. Much of what follows in the pages to

come was written at what were incredibly busy times in both our lives – his completion of his law degree at Osgoode and the subsequent completion of his articling and my completion of my own doctoral work. Umair has been so incredibly important to me in ways that I could not even begin to express; suffice it to say, I do not think this project would have been completed if it weren't for his presence as my most important interlocutor. Amidst the ruins, and precisely because of them, and in what remains in the promise of the time to come, I am glad I found him to share my closest friendship and life's work with.

**Dedication**

***To the memories of Roger Simon and T.S. Simon***

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## A Preamble

In a manner of speaking, I conceived of this text with a backward glance that almost, perhaps not so coincidentally, befits the very subject of my study – the enigmatic nature of the look back that one might give over to the past, that one might give oneself over to in how we come to address a temporality that is anything but linear. I negotiated this project, on mourning and melancholia, within the scope of this backward glance, working my way through to the beginning from the end. It is as though, with this backward glance to see what remains, one already exists in the time of the future anterior, within a time that has already come to pass but becomes only realizable within the confines of what might be perceived as hindsight marked by the search, Proustian in nature, of lost time. Let me allow myself to explain the temporality of this project a bit more.

I had never initially intended to write about Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's exquisite – my biases, I feel, must be at the forefront here – 1959 film *Hiroshima, mon amour*. Rigorously theoretical in its evocative scope, elliptically poetic in its delicate narrative structure, and operating as both a literal and figural montage of images, I had always already felt that *Hiroshima, mon amour* was the sort of text one could not simply write about or reduce to and within the space of theoretical demarcations and deconstruction. In a way, I felt its most significant strength, at least in my own estimation of it, lay in its capacity to elude and evade anything we could say about its textual overflow. In another sense, one might argue, as Eric Rohmer succinctly did, that *Hiroshima, mon amour* "is a film about which you can say everything" (Rohmer, 1959, p. 13). It was a fear of this "everything," a fear of not being able to cover this "everything" in the explication of my thought processes regarding the film that concerned me and prevented me from initially

entering it as a site for possible textual exegesis. It was, however, a significant loss in my own personal and intellectual life that allowed me to return to it and think closely about how it would speak to my own ability to reflect upon and contend with this specific loss and with the nature of loss, as such.

Toward the end of 2011, my former dissertation advisor, Roger Simon, was diagnosed with cancer and as such, he had had to withdraw from his supervisory relationships with the few remaining students he had continued to work with after he had entered retirement in 2010. In a sense, in hindsight, by relinquishing himself of his supervisory duties, it would appear that he was possibly preparing us, his remaining students, in advance for loss. I had worked with Roger for close to eight years by then, for my MA and for most of my doctoral work, so the loss of him as my advisor and mentor felt quite profound, to say the least. In the late summer of 2012, after having undergone much treatment – a surgery, chemotherapy – to address the cancer, his condition started to deteriorate rather rapidly. Unable to withstand further treatment, he passed away on September 17, 2012 on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah will now forever bear the indelible mark of his death for me. In what follows in chapter 1 of my dissertation, I will go into great detail regarding my psychical response to his death and the profound associations that were enlivened, so to speak, as a result of this loss. That being said, the psychical matter that was triggered by his passing concerns the very subject of *Hiroshima, mon amour* – the matter of how the past bears its unforgettable mark on the present, and how the present cannot exist or even be conceived of as a presence without the past bearing down on it. Hence, I returned to *Hiroshima, mon amour* as a way to mourn; as, as well, a way to think carefully about the simultaneous occurrence of melancholia in the very scene of mourning,

and the simultaneous occurrences of both remembrance and forgetting. It was a desire to further understand the simultaneous occurrences of what appeared as presumably oppositional forces that inspired this work, which in the final analysis, I hope, the reader will possibly experience as a work of both letting go of and holding on to memory.

Memory and invisibility form the central concerns of this dissertation. Without remembrance, objects of our affection, love objects as such, become irretrievable, given over to the auspices of untimely and surreptitious forgetting. Invisibility, or rather the fear of these objects disappearing from memory or becoming invisible, shrouds this kind of memory-work, as well. As the present quickly turns into the past, and as the past absorbs the presence of memories into itself, what we find is an optical illusion rendered to us through the tasks of remembrance and forgetting – the past bears itself on the present, while the past cannot exist, as well, without the present insisting itself upon how we remember it. What we remember is not always how events occurred or happened and what we forget speaks much to our psychical life's dependence on its own capacity for or repertoire of repression to avert the tendentious impact of the aftermath that trauma produces. In a manner of speaking, this project, then, will explore how the past becomes other to us, ourselves as we move forward in time from the present conjecture – it explores the past as other, or as embodying a sort of otherness itself that is given over to the forces of both mourning and melancholia, and operating under the difficult struggle between remembrance and forgetting. In the end, it is hoped that what comes from exploring, in detail, this simultaneity is a desire to address how the subject might become visible to her/himself and to the world at large; how the subject might be able to "awaken the dead," as Walter Benjamin suggested, of her/his own seemingly irretrievable past.

What follows then begins with an intensely personal narrative about how I contended with what was a deeply affecting loss. It turned quickly into a work that attempted to tie together the complex relationship between a subject and her/his own struggle with both remembrance and forgetting. This subject, here, is understood under the heading of two distinct forces – one that craves a profound relationship with her/his own ability to historicize her/himself through her/his own personal memories, while also unconsciously being given over to repression. What then starts off as a personal project regarding how I both preserved and destroyed memory in the wake of the personal loss I experienced became quickly, as well, a project about a struggle – and an attempt to build a correlation – between two apparently disparate theoretical strains, historical materialism and psychoanalysis. Taking my cues from a Benjaminian-styled obsessional attempt at describing, collating, and archiving the material history that accounts for much of what is remembered and forgotten within and about a subject's life and by subsequently applying this task of historiography – a task that exists at the very margins of dominant historical time that is always already presumed to be progressively linear – to the practice of psychoanalysis, I attempt to make a case for a psychoanalysis that is both intensely political and deeply revolutionary at the level of the personal and the subjective. While historical materialism, as both conceptual framework and theoretical practice, announces within itself a logic that is always already directed toward the possibility for revolution at a grand and collective scale that simultaneously both includes and exceeds the individual subject, my desire is to locate the subjective – remembrances of times past and the traumas that affect the subject – at the very sight of the individual.

For me, psychoanalysis, as I attempt to describe it here and explore it alongside the materialist attempt at recuperating memory in the wake of its own possible forgetting

becomes precisely the political act par excellence because it could possibly offer up a manner by which to answer that age-old Spivakian intrigue: can the subaltern speak? Subaltern speech, or the speech of the other, exists outside of and exceeds linear historical time; it exists beyond and outside a history of visibility, beyond and outside a history that only privileges its victors. Fundamentally, this project attempts to address this invisibility at the level of the subject and the very subjective in the sense of how remembrance and forgetting, and how mourning and melancholia operate to enable a relationship, difficult as it may be, between a subject's present and past.

Seeing what remains, therefore, in this scene becomes as much a work of excavating ruins, remains, and remainders at the level of the personal and the subjective, as it is about a work that makes the invisible – that which exists outside of and beyond linear time – visible. Seeing what remains, as I describe it here, for the materialist historian becomes a task of making note and taking stock of precisely those moments in the linear order of time when temporality itself becomes both ruptured and consequentially annulled. Concurrently, seeing what remains in the psychoanalytic encounter becomes a taking account of this very rupture in the linear order of time in a person's memory of her/himself as the very instance when trauma and its subsequent byproducts may be envisioned as being the bridge that ties the past with the present and the future to come. In both scenes, be it in the work of historical recuperation or psychoanalytic care, seeing what remains, it is hoped, will be a looking that unearths the unseen, invisible fragments that may always already be given over to loss, repression, or retention, and as such, in both scenes, it is hoped that this seeing is predicated on a look of love, a love that redeems the past as having an insuperable link to the present and the future to come. This seeing is borne from a looking that believes love – in the case of

both historical work and psychoanalytic care – might be able to redeem the subject by redeeming the lost time of the past that is the very temporality on which trauma depends upon to enact its punitive intentionality on the subject's psychical life. As such, such a seeing of what remains looks toward this look of love to "awaken the dead," much as in the case of the angel of history popularized by Benjamin's provocative invocation of it in Thesis IX of his "Theses on the Philosophy of History."

While the attempt I have made here, in the form of a preamble to this text, is to outline some of the central themes that the reader might come across over the course of reading it, an introductory preamble seems incredibly reductive to the general complexities I have endeavored to contend with over the course of writing this work. On the one hand, the work appears to be about something quite radically, at first glance, simple – the look of love, modeled on the look given, in Benjamin's reading of Paul Klee's rendition of the angel of history, and its subsequent imposition upon the scenes of both historiography and psychoanalysis. However, I would encourage the reader to read with care, take seriously, and look closely at how such a look is mired by the difficulties it is confronted with that I attempt to further outline here. This look is, at its heart, while ultimately presumed to be redemptive, a look that attempts to pry the invisible excesses of historical trauma into the status of becoming visible. Awakening the dead – even in the context of memory-work – is, in the final analysis, a task, even as a metaphor utilized to adjoin the past with the present, imbued with profound difficulty.

What, then, starts of with a personal narrative about loss, and how that loss was then subsequently grieved, turns into, in the first chapter, a discussion about historical work wherein I outline the Benjaminian distinction between historical materialism and historicism.

This task of distinguishing between the ways in which trauma – both historical and personal – and loss of memory can be accounted for, then sets the stage for a more nuanced and detailed conversation regarding mourning and melancholia, and remembrance and forgetting in the second chapter. Here, my desire is to not privilege one experience over the other, but to understand both as occurring simultaneously within the same instance. I propose that the staging of this simultaneity is best, though still enigmatically, exemplified in the fixed look at the wreckage of the past offered by the angel of history – fixed upon the past's catastrophic ruins, from the now-time of its stagnation in mid-air, as it is simultaneously being shaken out of this sense of stagnation while being pulled backward into a future to come. This look is then described further to hold within its glance a simultaneous occurrence of both mourning and melancholia for the presumably irretrievable past and the simultaneous pull between the desire to remember while in the throes of inevitable forgetting.

The final three chapters, then, attempts to explore this look as it became discovered and further explicated upon in a variety of different "textual" instances. In the style of a "true" intellectual melancholic, perhaps even an academic fetishist, once I began to think of and understand the angel's look as a look of love, a love against erasure, a redemptive love that desires to "awaken the dead" and avert the subject's invisibility, I began to see it everywhere. Irrespective of the medium – be it a novel as in the case of Anne Michaels's lyrical *Fugitive Pieces*, photographic as in the case of David Maisel's series *Library of Dust*, or filmic as in the case of *Hiroshima, mon amour* – it became an obsession and a personal fixation to seek out this look back of love to see how various artists addressed, quite unconsciously as the case may be, this look as being significant and even central to how memory is both recuperated and repressed, how trauma becomes plausibly open to

explanation, and how the subject is made to become visible within the context of the pull between her/his past, present, and the future as yet to arrive. Having had the uncanny intellectual and professional trajectory I have had, having been professionally-trained as a social worker and a psychotherapist, who now finds himself completing his doctorate in Sociology at a Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education at a Faculty of Education with his research interests spread across the length and breadth of the broad areas of ruin studies, trauma theory, German-Jewish thought, psychoanalysis, and 20th century French philosophy, studying across a variety of media, mainly ranging between Holocaust literature, ruin photography, and post-war German and French film. I cannot claim singular expertise in any of the texts I have chosen for the purposes of my study. However, for me, the various kinds of texts I chose to explore only attested to the importance that this look back seemed to signify for and offer to the theoretical propositions I endeavor to make over the course of this work. As such, this look back of love, its possible applicability across a wide range of mediums, and its simultaneous applicability within the scene of politics, ethically responsive practices of remembrance and commemoration, and the psychoanalytic encounter, thus, becomes the explicit promise of both the possibility of remembrance and forgetting on which this entire work rests.

# Chapter One:
# Fragments of a Mourning:
# On Destructive Looking, Between Remembrance and Forgetting

**I give you up to oblivion.**
- The French woman, in the film *Hiroshima, mon amour*
(Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959)

**Behold the invisible.**
Lecture notes, Varghese journal
- (Silverman, 2008)

## Memory of a Melancholic Mourner

Psychical life is, often if not always, imbued with a particular kind of intentionality. More specifically, one's unconscious psychical life is governed by an intentionality that is, even in the best of times, difficult to ascertain at a first glance. The task of unraveling that intentionality within the unconscious life of the subject as it then manifests in her/his choices, her/his desires, her/his remembrances, even her/his instances of unconscious (and even conscious) repression become the purview of the work that psychoanalysis claims to undertake in the clinical setting. In an important sense (and this will be central to the thesis I will be attempting to make a case for over the course of this project), we might consider this work the work of looking back, the work of remembering, the work of culling from memory the remains of what was once lost and what might continue to be lost, left to erasure, and/or repressed. My present interest in the work of remembrance specifically as it relates to the scene of psychoanalysis – this act of looking back at one's life, at one's own past – is governed principally by two considerations that might be uttered side by side for the way in

which they quite uncannily seem to echo one another – uncanny[1], perhaps in the Freudian sense of being both frightening and familiar in each other; perhaps frightening all the more for the intimate and notable identification we may make of each of them, with the other.

Firstly, we have that significant statement made by Sigmund Freud himself in his 1914 paper, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through":

> [The] patient's state of being ill cannot cease with the beginning of his analysis, and that we must treat his illness, not as an event of the past, but as a present-day force. (Freud, 2006b, p. 396)

Then, there is the near-prophetic and famous line from Thesis V of Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," again, echoing a similar sentiment that asks us to consider the relationship – that which we cannot ignore, in the least bit, when thinking about memory-work – between the now long-gone past with the ever-dying present:

> For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably. (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255)[2]

Holding both these uncannily similar and familiar comments together, I decide to consider the work of remembrance, as a work of looking back, and, at that, an enigmatic look. Several questions abound when thinking about the enigmatic nature of this look, this look back at a past that has long left us as its remains, as its veritable human ruins: What does

[1] Sigmund Freud described the uncanny as that which belongs to "the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread" (Freud, 1953, p. 123). Within this space, my use of the term is to regard the logic of the two statements I am about to cite as being strangely familiar to one another, as though they echo one another – the first having been made by Freud himself, the other by Walter Benjamin. Within this logic of familiarity, the term "uncanny" seems to be the best manner in which to describe this "echo," for as Freud described it, it, also, references "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud, 1953, p. 124).

[2] Over the course of this project, the name "Benjamin" will come to reference two different thinkers, namely the German-Jewish thinker Walter Benjamin, who will be cited as W. Benjamin, and the present-day philosopher Andrew Benjamin, who will be cited as A. Benjamin. I hope this will help to mitigate any and all confusion that might occur given their identical surnames, and given that the latter, Andrew Benjamin, himself is a foremost scholar of Walter Benjamin and oftentimes cites him in his own work.

it mean to look back at the past of one's own life? What might it hold for us in regards to the psychical conditions of a subject's present-day living? How do we understand the past and the force it both enervates and negotiates in the present conjuncture? Is this look, this look back at one's subjective past, a look fundamentally governed by a necessity to understand what could be left both to and after the processes of loss that always threaten memory and remembrance? And, if so, what does it mean to remember, as such? Optically charged, or rather enlivened within the context of its own optical potentiality, the look, as I try to understand it here and engage with it, negotiates the tightly woven interstitial space between remembrance and forgetting. Fundamentally, this act of looking, looking back, engages the work of redemption through remembrance, redemption from forgetting. Through this redemptive work of memory, regarding the images of the past as having something to offer to and for the concerns and conditions of the present, to possibly perhaps approach or at the very least gesture toward the tentative possibility for a cure against loss, where we take seriously the Freudian consideration of the illness as a force from the past always and already at work in the present, as a present-day force, we hope to negotiate that fine line between the desire to remember what could otherwise be given over to loss and to the, at times, even more compelling and unconscious processes that lead to forgetting, forgetfulness, and repression, and thus, inevitably, to loss itself.

In the final analysis, to look is also, first and foremost, above all else, an answer to a seemingly difficult demand, the, at once, incommensurable yet unavoidable ethical demand, to see, to see what remains, to see the very remains that are left behind in the longing to turn back and look – which, in and of itself is a scripted look – and to see in these very remains, hence, a possibility to remember yourself otherwise, outside of the presumed straight line of

historical logic, to see what remains and to see the very remains that bridge the dead past with the dying present – to see yourself as you once were, in the now. The look, the enigmatic nature of this look, thus is, at first, an act that goes against the grain of how we understand linear temporality and classificatory and normative historicism. It acts to rupture temporality, intervene by way of making an interruption in time itself by looking back at the past, from the moment of the present, thus acknowledging that the very present owes itself to the past and its ever-prescient sense of itself as being always already in the throes of its own loss, under the threat of being erased. In this sense, what appears as a rupture, an intervention, or rather an interruption in the structure of temporality itself as enacted through the gesture of looking back enacts as well an illusory optical ambiguity in how we come to regard time itself, both the past-ness of it and the moment embedded in it that dwells in the present. The look, as I will suggest later, is observation, self-immersion, reflection, and recollection. It follows an ethical script that is the response embedded within it, to a demand not to forget, as such; it also follows a script that sanctions and enlivens our always already ambivalent relationship to memory, historical time, and to ourselves as subjects.

Before I go any further, it will be important to understand the look as mired by the aforementioned optical ambiguity as opposed to simply a visual experience. This delineation and distinction that I attempt at making between optics and the nature of the visual is key to understanding how the look figures within and structures the tenuous relationship between remembrance and forgetting. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines optics as “the science that deals with the genesis and propagation of light, the changes that it undergoes and produces, and other phenomena closely associated with it” (Merriam-Webster Online, 2013). In what might be further understood as, to an extent, distinct from the optical, it describes the

visual as “of, relating to, or used in vision” (Def. 1, Merriam-Webster Online, 2013) or “attained or maintained by sight” (Def. 2, Merriam-Webster Online, 2013). Optics or the optical do not have to pertain to the structure of what can or cannot be seen; it, as in the case of the look I am attempting to theorize here, address both sight and seeing, and the space beyond sight, see-ability, and beyond the limits of vision as it pertains to the unconscious life of the subject. As such, the optical and optics, in general, address a psychical experience of looking for something that may not be seen at first glance or not at all, and may not even be a scene in the unconscious, in the visual sense; it might resemble the task of an archeologist excavating a dig, searching for that which s/he does not already know, or a translator for whom language becomes the site of linguistic ruination and re-inscription, the task and space that accommodates the destruction of the old and the construction of the new. Such an optical ambiguity might become the very governing factor in how one looks – looks at the past, at one’s own past, the past of an other, or the otherness of the past, at history, at memory, at the very acts of remembering and forgetting themselves – because it seems to go beyond the gesture of the gaze, wherein as how Kaja Silveman has suggested the look is “distinguished…from the gaze on the basis of the look’s emplacement within spectacle, the body, temporality, and desire” (Silverman, 1996). In a sense, it does not merely gaze at the ruins of time, memory, and/or historical consciousness, it tries to look directly at the spectacle for meaning in the loss embedded in the structure of the ruin itself; it sees in the uncanny familiarity between the life of the past and life in the present – inheritances that cannot and refuse to be ignored – and it seeks to understand the meaning and what lies beyond/beneath the trauma[3] or the horror that the ellipsis, the unconscious of one’s psychical life, announces – both loss of memory and the negation of remembering.

[3] This term “trauma” central to psychoanalysis, initiated in its use by Jean-Martin Charcot, and then built upon,

Because I started off with an address regarding the intentionality embedded in the psychical processes of one's unconscious life, and because I relate this intentionality as being a central concern both of and to the work that psychoanalysis attempts to carry out, it seems only proper, if not imperative, that I start this project with an attempt to narrativize an instance culled from my own experiences being under analysis – an instance that unravels the very unconscious tendencies that allow us to look back, remember, remember against forgetting, while also remembering in the very throes of forgetting itself, and that fundamentally allows us to dramatically remember otherwise. The dramatic nature of this act of looking back and thus of remembering otherwise will be played out in the story I unfold here, which is, at its heart, a story of both mourning and melancholia, where the two surreptitiously occur simultaneously. Like the dots that structure the absence and presence living in the ellipsis, those that announce the very thing of loss – a truth, some knowledge, a false remembrance – that we must both hold on to in its absence and let go off due to its incomplete and unstructured nature of presence and, perhaps even, plenitude, mourning and melancholia, in how they occur at the site of the unconscious processes (remembering, repeating, working-through, as Freud declared), are both enlivened and deadened by the processes of forgetting and remembering, respectively, as they happen in the simultaneity of the same temporal instance. Fundamentally, the question begs to be asked: how do you remember that which you forget? The answer, as will be played out over the course of this dissertation, might lie in the notion that it is only and precisely that which you forget, that

expanded, and radically changed over the course of Freud's architecting of the field, here becomes re-organized not merely as a constitution of and confrontation with the Lacanian Real or as Jean Laplanche described as "an event in the subject's life, defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 465). Rather I take heed of and expand on, as will be shown later in this chapter, Rebecca Comay's significant re-working of the term to describe "a caesura in which the linear order of time is thrown out of sequence" (Comay, 2011, p. 25). As such, it becomes the metaphor for the rupture, the break, within notions of historical linearity.

which forecloses itself to you by leaving your memory, by becoming available to loss, that you can remember and, more intentionally (again, let us not forget the intentionality of unconscious life), remember otherwise, outside the purview of any and all desire for authenticity, accuracy and/or a commitment to a linear historicity.

For days after his passing, I would try to remember Roger, my former dissertation advisor. It was as though I was trying to test my own ability to remember, test against the inevitable stresses imposed upon the conscious to forget. I would try to recall the very first time I met with him, at his office, back in November 2004. I would also try to recall other meetings I had with him – to think through and remember his gestures, his comments, his precise words. News of his death had, admittedly, come as a shock – an expected shock, because I had known that he had taken to becoming quite ill for a few months before his death, but a shock nonetheless precisely because it seemed as though I – in the traumatizing sense – had expected it. Shocked by this loss, my response was to feel it through a sense of numbness. I felt so utterly and completely numb with the reception of the news. People would, for days after his passing, approach me or attempt to get in touch with me to express their condolences; especially those who knew the nature of what I considered my close relationship with him and the fact that I was one of his last remaining students, as yet to complete my dissertation after he had retired in 2010. All I could do, in the presence of all that sympathy, was respond with a silent numbness. Hence, the reason for my obsession with trying to remember my encounters with him – to remember what we talked about during our meetings, to remember the different meetings I had with him to discuss my work or to converse about our mutual intellectual interests. I took to the task of trying to read some of his work – excerpts from book chapters, articles he had had published, an earlier draft of a

chapter from his last book that he had just completed prior to his death – to see if that would inspire some sort of affective response, to see if that would break the code of silence of this benumbed emotional response I seemed to have been offering up in the shadow of his death. I even went to OISE (the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto) and walked past his old office in my department and the office to his "Testimony and Historical Memory" project to see if they would act as triggers for some sort of a response. The more I tried to force a remembrance, the greater I felt the memories seeming to fade. A line from Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* kept haunting me in the wake of this unnerving feeling wherein the more I tried to remember him, the more I felt I was forgetting: "I give you up to oblivion." The nature of this oblivion – its recesses and its affective content, the horror of the elliptical uncertainty of what lies within what might be remembered or might be forgotten – will be the subject of much discussion during the course of this work.

It was then in the scene of my analytic work with my psychoanalyst, Dr. Oren Gozlan, that something else more unconscious started to become apparent – some aspect of this loss I was experiencing in the wake of Roger's passing was constitutive of another earlier loss, a past loss, that was acting upon, forcing itself on to, my present life, leaving behind its imprints in the form of this benumbed response. This numbness articulated itself in the very first session I had with Dr. Gozlan immediately a day after receiving news of Roger's passing, in a statement that I made during the session, wherein while attempting to explain my desire to try and remember Roger, in the attempt to explain to Dr. Gozlan the aforementioned tasks I had taken to in the vein (and in vain) of trying to remember Roger, I exclaimed a profound feeling of loneliness – a loneliness I had not expressed feeling in what

I had felt was a very long time. Dr. Gozlan encouraged me to talk more on the subject of this feeling of loneliness – what about Roger's death left me feeling quite alone, all of a sudden? What did the loss itself signify for me, and my work with him? What did Roger signify to me in the realm of my personal and psychical life? Answers to these seemed, at least at first glance, obvious to me.

Roger, for years, had been the subject of conversation in many of my analytic sessions. It was obvious, through the course of analysis, that he signified not merely one of the most important intellectual and academic relationships I had had, but that through the effects of the logic of transference he had come to signify, stand in, and psychically be held in place, in the surrogate sense, as something, or rather as someone of so much more importance. The need for some context in regards to this logic of transference should be responded to, presently.

In May of 2004, my maternal grandfather, T. S. Simon, the person I had had the closest of relationships with in my family, of anyone on either my paternal or maternal sides, passed away at the age of 86. At the time, I was 25. My grandfather, with whom I had felt a unique bond for much of my life, had been ill and bedridden for quite a few years by then, and so, much like the expectation I had of Roger's death, his death had also been expected when it happened. My response to his death, from what I can remember now, was also one of a benumbed sense of emotional paralysis. It was also accompanied by a feeling of relief attached to the sense that someone so close to me who had suffered in pain for so long had finally been released from that pain. That being said, the grief attached to it was an ongoing reverberation in my life and still seems to have continued to be so, as the case may be and as will be explained shortly. It was, then, in the November of that same year that I met Roger –

someone whose intellectual work on questions regarding history, memory, and the practices of remembrance I had been following for quite a few years by then – to discuss the possibility of pursuing further graduate work at OISE (at the time, I had already been working on my Master's degree at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto). Right from the very beginning, I felt and was quite conscious of the pull of transference. Despite the more obvious connections that might lead to a transferential encounter – both their last names being the same, Simon; both of them being influenced by differing kinds of Jewishness, him Ashkenazi, my grandfather of Syrian Orthodox Christian/Cochin Jewish descent, hailing from the southern Indian state of Kerala – what incidentally tied me to Roger was a much deeper psychical identification and association I had made between him and my grandfather. What I saw as a similitude in regards to their temperament, their generosity, their commitment to a sense of ethics as it relates to pedagogy allowed for the identification to take place without much difficulty. The fact that I had just lost my grandfather a few months prior to meeting Roger, and that this loss was still freshly and nominally laden in my unconscious life as an as-yet-unresolved wound and source of grief enabled for the transference to take place. Considering this, is this not, to take a moment's pause from the narrative, precisely the definition of transference as offered to us by Freud?

> If someone's need for love is not entirely satisfied by reality, he is bound to approach every new person with whom he meets with libidinal anticipatory ideas; and it is highly probable that both portions of his libido, the portion that is capable of becoming conscious as well as the unconscious one, have a share in forming that attitude. (Freud, 1958, p. 100)

What does it mean to transfer unresolved feelings of grief and loss – and by extension, love – onto a surrogate figure through the means of an identificatory and/or associative alliance? And, how does this identificatory alliance thus allow us to expound

upon the relationship between the past and the present, and answer to the call of both remembrance and forgetting? I could, right from the very start of my intellectual work with Roger, assess the need to think about and work through this transferential gesture wherein I felt I was remembering another relationship – the one I had with my grandfather – and repeating its associative tendencies through that encounter, and working-through through the scene of this repetition, thus, the feelings of loss and grief that had permeated my psychical life after that prior relationship had been lost. Coincidentally – or, perhaps, not so coincidentally, lest we forget the previously mentioned intentionality with which our unconscious life works and forges on, tying the past and the present to one another – it was in that November, in 2004, that I started undergoing analysis with Dr. Gozlan.

At first, my desire to undergo analysis was purely rooted in a theoretical curiosity – because I knew I was interested in reading in the field, studying it further both for my interests in applying it to my academic work and also in the context of my own work in the therapeutic scene, as a social worker. Over the course of the last 8 years in analysis, it has come to signify much more. It has allowed me to not merely think through and work out my relationship to my writing, my therapeutic practice, and my intellectual commitments in the various scenes of reading and exploring art, literature, and film, but, as well, it has allowed me the opportunity to explore, understand, seek out probable explanations for the ties that bind the space of my unconscious processes that govern my psychical life and the material existence of my daily life and lived experience. As such, the analytic space has allowed me to delve deeper in trying to understand my relationship to my own subjectivity – my conscious and unconscious experiences as a visibly racialized man, with a visible physical disability – and its perception within and relationship to the world external to my internal life. Sessions

have abounded with much discussion about and exploration of my psychical experiences with respect to my relationship with my parents, with my brother, my various friendships, and so on. Much has also been discussed between my analyst and myself about my experiences with my own embodiment. It was during the context of my work in that space that I became more keen in thinking through my own relationship to the processes of mourning and my relationship to how loss has structured my life, particularly in regards to that seminal loss, the death of my grandfather.

Early on, the transferential possibilities within the context of my working relationship with Roger were part of the discussion between my analyst and myself. While pedagogically speaking, I am of the opinion that transference is key to the pedagogical relationship between teacher and student, as it "is the notion of bringing past encounters – histories of conflict – to bear on new social situations: we transfer the emotions generated in the previous encounter to the new" (Britzman & Pitt, 1996, p. 117), I was weary about this specific transference and how it would work as a resistance to or interfere with my intellectual and academic work with Roger. It would only be 8 years later, on the eve of Roger's passing, that this transference would make its logical sense to me, beyond the mere obfuscatory yet obvious identificatory markers that tied the two figures together within the confines of my psychical life and its processes of working-through the experience of loss I felt in both regards.

Flash forward to 8 years after – after my grandfather's passing, after I had met Roger, after I had started undergoing analysis, and now after Roger's passing itself – I found myself lying on my analyst's couch, on the very next day after hearing the news about Roger's death, expressing a profound feeling of numbness against feeling the grief-laden impact of this news. The numbness coincided with the aforementioned feeling of profound loneliness

that I announced to my analyst as well. I also told Dr. Gozlan that as a response to this feeling of numbness – which I equated to a lifelong and historic desire to not "appear hysterical by crying" – I found myself engaging in the various tasks I alluded to earlier as a way to remember my encounters with Roger. I explained that if by remembering him, I would also be able to feel something, perhaps cry, perhaps feel affected, in some small way, by his death, then I might also be able to start the work of mourning as such. I expressed feeling quite tired by this feeling of being benumbed. Dr. Gozlan suggested that perhaps the assumed absence of feeling, or rather the resistance to feel as it was being played out through this experience of a numbness, was an affective response in and of itself, that my claims toward and for a particular kind of stoicism was, against my earlier desire to appear as such, a hysterical response. It was in the wake of this suggestion that I alluded to this feeling of numbness being coupled by a feeling of profound loneliness.

The session after that was spent further expressing my fears of "appearing hysterical by crying" at Roger's funeral. It seemed as though I was expressing this internal conflict between feeling numb which I equated to feeling nothing, while also wanting to feel something, while simultaneously resisting the act accordant to what might appear as a more expressive affective response. The third session after Roger's passing, happened the day after his funeral wherein I spoke of the fact that the overwhelming experience of sharing the space of his funeral with many of his erstwhile students, his friends, and his family did eventually bear itself down upon my psyche and I did end up crying quite intensely and profusely at the funeral itself. I, proudly, perhaps in how I remember it now, declared during my session that I felt that I had finally arrived at some place in my psychical processes regarding this specific loss and that the work of mourning itself was now already, or rather seemingly, underway –

as though it was some sort of clockwork arrangement or stopgap procedure that I could initiate, alter, or interrupt on my own accord. While my analyst acknowledged that the loss and its impact were finally coming to a state of awareness in my consciousness and that I was coming to experience the loss as loss, beyond the feeling of being numb in its face, he did want to continue to address the feeling of profound loneliness that I declared feeling in the very first session I had with him immediately after hearing of Roger's death. The third session ended at this moment where he broached the subject of this feeling of loneliness.

The fourth session is when and where a particular sort of unraveling of my unconscious life took place; an unveiling, so to speak. Looking back at it now – knowing that this "look back" is tentative, at best, and could always already be held up to the scrutiny of doubt regarding its accuracy – I remember having a difficult time starting to speak in this session. At first, I declared that perhaps I was having a difficult time speaking because I had felt that everything that needed to be addressed regarding Roger's death had already been spoken about and discussed, and that since now the process of mourning had been initiated in the prior session (the third session after Roger's passing, the session immediately following his funeral), nothing was left to be said on the matter.

My analyst, then, announced as a reminder that he was going to be away for two weeks. He was reminding me that he had told me the news of this rupture in our sessions at the end of September, some time ago. This had been the case always – any and all possible ruptures in the analytic sessions, as a result of my analyst's planned/scheduled absences (due to the fact that he was attending a conference or going on vacation), would be discussed well in advance; it was a way to prepare me for the break in my analytic work. This preparation regarding any and all upcoming breaks in the analytic process had become part and parcel of

how I experienced analysis until then. Yet, for some reason immediately unbeknownst to me, at least at the first glance, I seemed to have forgotten – or rather repressed – Dr. Gozlan informing me of this break. I expressed to him that it is not that I doubt that he told me of the rupture weeks in advance, but that I was fascinated, rather, in my own forgetting of him telling me of the break. To which, he responded something to the effect of how the subject of forgetting had been coming up quite a bit in the past few sessions, especially after Roger's death. I attested to this and realized that forgetting was definitely on my mind – in my attempt to remember Roger, I engaged in rote tasks that I thought would help me remember him, but the more I tried at remembering him, the more I realized the memories were fading or re-organizing themselves in my mind; also, in the midst of the numbness that I seemed to have exhibited as a way to confront Roger's passing, I had forgotten the very significant detail of my sessions with my analyst breaking for a period of two weeks, as though I had repressed the knowledge of this rupture, or rather the knowledge of Dr. Gozlan's departure, and, even more specifically, repressed the very knowledge of my analyst having told me well in advance about this break in our sessions together. This forgetting seemed to be quite curious and coincidental in light of my struggle not to forget, or against forgetting as it was being played out in my attempts at trying to remember Roger.

As a way to move along the session – probably because I was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with this attention being drawn on to my sense of forgetfulness – I made a statement that returned the conversation to Roger. I said, "without wanting to sound crass about it," that I had been thinking about who, now, would write me a reference letter – in the chance that I decided to return to academia, or wanted to pursue postdoctoral work at the academic level. I admitted that while this thought had been hovering through my mind for a

little while now, ever since Roger passed away, it felt like a question that required deeper probing. When Dr. Gozlan asked me who else I could consider asking to be a reference for me, should the need arise, I responded that it was not that I was worried I had no one else to approach regarding the issue of a reference letter, and that there were others I could potentially ask and approach if I wanted one; rather, what I felt was important about this concern regarding the reference letter was what such a letter signified to me personally. I continued to discuss how I felt that a reference letter, at least in my own estimation of such a text, should be written with a profound and intimate awareness of the subject of the letter, and that it should be conscious not merely of the academic work or the professional acumen and commitment of the subject, but should be a letter that addressed and attested to the character of its subject. As I continued to speak about this, I said that what I felt was that in all my academic career, it was only Roger who knew me, not just with regards to my thoughts, my work, my intellectual capabilities, or my academic work, but as someone who "really knew me, as a person," and that this was a matter of grave significance to me. I wanted, for some reason, to be not merely known for the work I was capable of producing but also for my character.

The transferential logic began to address itself in this scene wherein I quickly then reverted the conversation to the subject of my grandfather, indicating that much like Roger, I felt the only other person who knew me, who "really knew me, as a person" was my maternal grandfather – someone who, again much like Roger, was the subject of many a session. I expressed that it was as though with Roger's death, much like with my grandfather's death, I felt this loss as not merely a loss of the subject of death itself, but as though I had lost someone who "really knew me, as a person," and thus the loss felt, as well and perhaps more

significantly, as a loss of myself; it was as though something of me, or about me, had died along with their respective deaths. Loss, in this sense, always already seems to announce a moment of living death for those left behind, or those that remain, wherein such loss is not so much the loss of the figure/s or the object/s that has/have been lost but the loss of its/their significance and signification in the lives of those that remain, the remains and the ruins, the very excess of that loss, and, again in this sense, it is precisely through the remembrance, the invocation into memory, of that signification that the living, the very remains and ruins, continue to live as such. The memory of loss, here, is the excess, the surplus matter, exceeding the very limits of life itself but still constitutive of and constituted by it.

Dr. Gozlan, at this instance, interrupted with a question, which went something to the effect of addressing the well-known fact (in the scene of my analytic sessions) that my grandfather and Roger shared the same last name and that both of them were influenced by differing kinds of Jewishness. I suppose, in hindsight as I outline this session here, it seems to me now that he was pointing to what in appearance seemed like an obvious point of transference, or rather the exact moment in which transference seems to have been occurring.

The subject of names continued to be explored and explicated upon – of the fact that my grandfather and Roger shared the same last name, and how while my surname was itself Varghese, the name of my paternal grandfather, I had always harbored a not-so-secret desire that my surname be Simon as well, because of my closeness to my grandfather on my mother's side (and as a way to dis-identify with my father and his side of the family with whom I did not grow up so close to, or rather grew up feeling quite alienated from). Dr. Gozlan, then, continued to ask me how I got my name, to which I responded,

> Well, I was the firstborn, and my mother wanted to name me…the name Ricky is from Ricky Ricardo, from *I Love Lucy*, my mother's favorite TV

> show from when she was pregnant with me....after me, there was my brother Ronnie, who they named after Ronald Reagan…my parents often like to make the distinction between Reagan the actor and Reagan the politician…they insist they named my brother after the actor…my parents have a ridiculously vulgar sense of humor…naming me after a Cuban character on a TV show, who regularly beat his wife on the show…and my brother after a deeply conservative Republican president…I'm not sure if I buy the story of this distinction…both Reagans were horrible, in my opinion…and my sisters were supposed to be called Sabrina and Samantha…Sabrina, after my mother's favorite movie…I think it came out in 1954…starring Audrey Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart…I'm not sure what the origins of Samantha is.

At this point, my analyst interrupted my speech. He asked, which sisters I was referring to and what I meant by "were supposed to be called." I was confounded – I was certain that I had talked about these children that my parents were supposed to have had after they had my brother, and that neither of them survived. My analyst confirmed that not once in my 8 years in analysis did I ever mention anything about these sisters, the supposed names that they were meant to be given, and their births that never took place – that ultimately all of this was new to the scene of my analytic work with him. As mentioned, I was completely confounded by this, what I felt was an oversight on my part, or rather, yet another scene of forgetting, and repression, regarding the sharing of what seemed like a very significant set of details concerning my childhood. Again, I admitted that I was fascinated by the fact that I had forgotten to mention this; that I was surprised that I did not mention these children at all during the eight years I had been in analysis.

Dr. Gozlan encouraged me to talk more about these children, what I might remember about my mother being pregnant with them, and what I might remember of what happened to the pregnancies themselves. I continued by indicating that I did not remember much about

the first time my mother became pregnant after my brother. I know that I was 5, my brother 2 1/2, and that this specific pregnancy happened while we were living in the Middle East, in Saudi Arabia, where my parents lived and worked since the early 1970s, and where I spent the first 16 years of my life. I remember that years later when asked about this pregnancy it would be indicated to us – my brother and I – that the child was lost as a result of my mother having had a miscarriage. I indicated to my analyst that I seemed to have a more vivid memory of the pregnancy that occurred after this initial one, the one that happened when I was 8 and my brother was almost 6. I remember this pregnancy quite distinctly – or rather at least I remember it the way I seem to remember it now. I remember my parents, my brother, and I traveled to India – to Kerala, where both my parents hail from – to attend the wedding of my uncle, my mother's youngest brother. I remember being quite excited about this vacation to India, because it was also going to be the very first time in my life I would be attending a wedding. I also remember my mother being pregnant and that the pregnancy seemed to have been difficult for her, especially after we arrived in India. What I remember next was my mother had to be hospitalized a week before my uncle's wedding, and that as a result of complications with the pregnancy, she had to undergo an abortion. All my brother and I were informed of, at the time, was that we had lost the sister we were supposed to have and that our mother was not doing well physically. When she eventually returned home, the home of her father, my grandfather, she was in much pain and was rather emotionally distraught. As a result, she was rendered unable to attend my uncle's wedding. What I remember happened as a result was that she remained home, as did I, and so did my grandfather, while everyone else attended and participated in the wedding, including my father and my brother.

For years after this event, I would remember my uncle's wedding with some amount of disdain for I would look at it as the very first wedding that I was supposed to attend, but was never taken to – I would feel as thought I was betrayed out of the experience itself. I would also remember seeing my mother in a physical and emotional state that I rarely associated her with – emotionally bereft and depressed, physically unwell, still experiencing some amount of bleeding from having lost her child; I distinctly remember the blood. Having grown up in a home with a maternal figure I often identified as rather emotionally grounded, hyper-rational, highly reserved in demeanor and composure (while my father, I, for the most part, experienced as what I felt was quite the opposite – coded as hysterical, frenetic, frantic, aggressive, irrational), I remember feeling quite unsettled and unnerved at seeing my mother in this state of psychical and emotional disarray. I grew up being closer to my mother – being the disabled, more feminine/feminized child, I identified with my mother's emotional demeanor and, for much of my life, the feminine became coded for me as hyper-rational, intellectually sound, and emotionally astute. As a result, this seeming primordial scene of trauma wherein I was witnessing my mother to be other than what I always thought I knew her to be had its impact on me. I felt, for the first time in my life, not only a sense of abandonment in relation to my mother, but also a profound sense of wanting to dis-identify with her and her state. I remember feeling confused as to why she was expressing such profound sadness when I had come to know and experience her to be a grounded figure in my life, exuding emotional strength and certitude. The structure of idealization, which I had invested my mother with, erupted at the seams and was left in a state of ruins in this traumatic scene.

As I mentioned earlier, while my mother was bedridden during this period, immediately after the abortion she had just had, my father and my brother (who, as I alluded to earlier, was almost 6 at the time) took part in my uncle's wedding, I was left home with my mother – why I was left home to witness my mother's grief, while my brother was taken to the wedding, is still a detail whose reason I am not entirely certain of, but could perhaps be deduced from and ascribed to the sense of detachment I have felt with respect to my father for much of my life even prior to this specific scene. More immediately, it would seem that it was, as though, in and through this act of my father (and my brother) leaving behind my mother and me at home while attending my uncle's wedding, perhaps quite unconsciously, the lines of grieving and mourning this child that was lost became drawn. The work of mourning, let alone acknowledging the existence – through such literal inscriptions like my mother's bleeding, or through the literalization of such inscriptions as blood – of this child that was then lost, became the responsibility of my mother and, by extension, mine. This work of mourning, in this scene at least, also became radically coded on lines that were quite impressionistically gendered. My mother and I, her odd child (an oddness ascribed not merely to my nature or temperament but to my disability as well), had not only to acknowledge that a child had once existed and was now lost, but also had to take on the necessary burden inherent and implicit in the work of mourning that now had to be endeavored and endured. It was into this scene of mourning that my grandfather was initiated.

While my father and my brother (who from a very young age shared a close bond with our father, like the one I shared with our mother) participated in my uncle's wedding along with the rest of the family, and while my mother was bedridden tending to her physical

state of weakness and her grief, it was my grandfather who volunteered, I remember, to stay behind at home and look after me. For years after this, as I continued to explain to my analyst, I would look upon this act as quite important and powerful in regards to the imprint it left upon me, of what I understood and regarded as a generous gesture in the name of care. In such a childhood scene as this, wherein I felt abandoned by my parents – by my mother as she occupied and lived within the confines of her evident grief and by my father in his, perhaps unconscious yet visible, refusal to participate in the grief let alone acknowledge the need for it, the death of a child – my grandfather took on the role of my caretaker for that brief yet significant moment, forsaking the opportunity to attend his youngest son's wedding. I expressed to my analyst that it was most likely at this precise moment in the course of my tenuous life history that I felt a particular bond and alliance forming with, and an allegiance in regards to, my grandfather.

It felt as though the source of this alliance with my grandfather was finally unearthed after being in analysis for 8 years precisely on the eve of Roger's death. As I lay there on my analyst's couch and reflected on Roger's passing and its impact on me – around the question of knowability, the desire to be "really known," and the aforementioned feeling of profound loneliness I expressed to my analyst – it dawned on me that perhaps the reason why I never spoke of this specific scene from my childhood within the context of my analysis was because my grandfather died precisely proximate to the time when I met Roger, just a mere few months after. It was as though I did not have to grieve my grandfather when he died because through the logic of transference whereby, "if someone's need for love is not entirely satisfied by reality, he is bound to approach every new person with whom he meets with libidinal anticipatory ideas" (Freud, 1958, p. 100), I found in Roger a surrogate figure to

invest in, to feel protected by against such feelings as abandonment, loneliness, and unknowability, perhaps against even a kind of erasure or invisibility. Now with Roger's passing, the surrogate was no more and I was forced to confront these earliest of watershed feelings that laid its impact and impression upon my psychical life.

With the end of surrogacy and the confrontation with such persistent feelings as they have stemmed from the kernel of one's childhood experiences, we are able to understand the important link between love, transference, and memory – the need to satiate the need for love through the logic of transference as a form of memory-work in and of itself – and thus also what remains, the very remains as such, as they exist as excess material, the protruding surplus of psychical mulch, overflowing from the muddy recesses of one's unconscious psychical life. We also come to understand the way in which "[one's illness]" cannot be treated "as an event of the past, but as a present-day force" (Freud, 2006b, p. 396), and that "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255). This threat of an always already plausible loss is however, as I have shown through this narrative exercise culled from an experience within analysis, held in abeyance or held at bay via the resolve of returning the objects of loss – repressed, yet perhaps still insurgent, memories – into the recesses of the unconscious. They are awakened from their dormancy, from their suspended and frozen state, each time a powerful transferential encounter is made available or visible, such that a remembrance is made viable through the logical blueprint of psychical experience laid out by the transferential encounter, and a repetition enables the working-through necessary for a possible cure and curing against loss itself.

In writing all of what I have written here, till now, the question of accuracy as it relates to what I have remembered and rendered, and the concern for an authentic memory persists. However, as I have endeavored to write down these memories – from what I consider a significant scene from my childhood, from my retelling of this scene or in how I retold it within the scene of an analytic session years later, in my very attempt at wanting preciseness in the telling itself, and in how I tried to remember it, much like in how I attempted to remember Roger immediately on the eve of his passing – what becomes apparent is the very impossibility embedded in the task of remembrance. I remember that, when I initially started thinking about how I wanted to write this exercise in memory-work and how it might relate to the work of my mourning regarding the loss of both my grandfather and now my dissertation advisor, I felt this compulsion to remain faithful to the details – the facts, events, dates, chronological certitude – as they had apparently happened. However, memory-work and fidelity to the details of what and how one remembers seem to always already elude one another. The fantasy of historical accuracy in how a story might or could be retold, the desire to remain authentic in regards to how we remember, and the impulse to remain faithful to the nitty-gritty details regarding subjective memory all seem to be laden with an impossibility that causes us to remember otherwise – optically as opposed to the visual.

To remember is to look at the ruins of what remains in memory and to realize that the moment language enters the discourse of memory-work, loss is inevitable. Representation becomes a failed endeavor. The symbolic eludes and evades any possibility to materialize the real of traumatic loss signified in memory, as such. This will be a central tenet regarding memory-work that I will keep returning to and emphasizing as I propose it here. Speaking

memory, submitting it to the symbolic and representational mediation of language as such, whether we speak it in the scene of an analyst's office or write it in the form of linguistic inscription in a historical or archival tome has to grapple with the difficult challenge of loss. To take memory hostage in this scene seems futile, at best. We grasp at straws to remember accurately, when all we can do is forget more, leave more to loss. Instead, we remember, and speak or write from memory, not the details of the memory at work in our unconscious psychical life but the meanings we may cull from the way in which they bridge the past with our present life. Here, for instance, when thinking about and attempting to grapple with the question of how to write transference – not how to write *about* transference – my only recourse seemed to have been to address it from the space of how it was being embodied precisely in and through the sites of forgetting that the instances of transference instantiated, be it in the case of my grandfather, Roger, or even my analyst. Forgetting about my analyst having had announced a 2-week rupture in our sessions together was perhaps – and this is only a postulate, at best – a moment in which I used that instance of forgetting as a way to guard against feeling abandoned or lonely, especially immediately prior to Roger's passing. Having already lost the significant surrogate figure upon whom I had invested much transferential potential, my forgetting that my sessions were going to be ending for a period of 2 weeks was a way to protect against the loss of my analytic relationship as well, especially in the scene of my mourning.

Again, I want to revisit the notion I proposed here earlier that the act of looking back, remembering one's past, is an optical act as opposed to merely a visual gesture, and as such, optical acts are subject to the illusory play of what might or might not be there laid upon the

landscape of one's unconscious life – "beholding the invisible,"[4] as Kaja Silverman is wont to address it as. Let us then start with the premise of an untenable visuality in the gesture of looking, looking back more specifically, wherein the desire for scopic fidelity – in how you look at the ruins in memory and recount them – seems to be the optical challenge *par excellence* in how we remember or forget. It is not only about seeing what might, even for a brief moment be, cognitively visible to the naked eye upon the fragmentary landscape of one's unconscious, but looking at the loss itself, what it stands for or stands in for, its meaning held within the structure of the psychical ruin as it pertains to forgetting and what it allows us to remember of the forgetting itself.

In what will now follow in the next section of this chapter, I want to think through remembrance in the context of the struggle between a historicism that privileges linearity, apparent authenticity, and seeming accuracy and a materialist history that acknowledges the fissures in such a progressivist temporality, the ruins of and in memory-work, and regards forgetting itself as fundamental to remembrance within the work of memory. Here, the task is to locate the look back as founded on a destructive impulse that actively constructs memory as it quietly and surreptitiously destroys it via moments of interruption that strike against any notion of linear temporality – the simultaneous forces of remembering and forgetting exerting their respective pressures upon each other across this presumed temporal line. This will provide a necessary foundation for what I hope to explore in the next chapter, wherein I will return to look closely at the bond between love, surrogacy, and memory, where by

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[4] I was first exposed to this premise of "beholding the invisible" within the context of a lecture given by Kaja Silverman, under the title "Behold the Invisible," on Thursday, October 30, 2008 at the University of Toronto, where she presented her work regarding Jeff Wall's photograph *After "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue*.

mobilizing the well-worn Freudian concepts of mourning and melancholia, I try to locate how remembrance, in the enigmatic look back, is essentially an act of irreducible love.

There, in the final analysis, as will be the case for the remainder of this project, I postulate that if indeed remembrance is an act of love, an untenable yet compulsory/compulsive love story nonetheless of and for the recuperation of memory of/from what remains, a commitment to heed the repetitive imperative in the verb "to remember," within the work of remembrance then, you are not so much in love with the object of lost memory per se, or even in the enactment of the act of looking back. Rather, remembrance acknowledges the love one might hold and have for the very structure of the act of looking back itself, in the precise – and this desire for a preciseness is an untenable imperative in and of itself – structure of the look, itself; what it has signified concerning the past that it regards speculatively, what it signifies of the now-ness of the present moment overflowing with hope for future recuperation, what it will come to have signified of the future, in the anterior interiority of a future always already never here or rather predictably here too late.

**Staging the Destructive Look**

Programmatically speaking, this project started with fragments and remnants that are already being collected under the heading of that age-old way in which one could possibly begin to tell a story, "Once upon a time." What, however, is signified by such a point of narrative origin? How do we account for the fragments and remnants, of narrative and detail, collected under such a heading? What happens to the story when it is repeated, by oneself to another? What remains of these fragments and remnants when this story is given breath each time it is repeated? Do they remain the same? Have they changed over the course

of each repetition? Is each moment at which we repeat a narrative, a moment in which we can melancholically hold on to the fragments and remnants that hold a narrative together, or mournfully let go of them, thus, perhaps inevitably, making room for other fragments or remnants that are culled into memory? What happens to repetition within the melancholia that is inflected by and informs this most common and colloquial of all ways to start a story, or a history, "Once upon a time"? What becomes of the tenuous status of the assumedly dead and long-gone past within the ambivalent context of the present, Walter Benjamin's now-time[5], always and already in the throes of its own dying, both momentarily and momentously? What becomes of the pull between sanctioned and seemingly sacred history and fragmentary, fragmented memory, ever in a state of decay, a decay that presumably continues with, alongside, and against the progression of time? Several questions crowd my concerns here – concerns that attempt to bridge the assumedly polarized lacuna between mourning and melancholia, between the dead past and the dying present, between history and memory, between the caesura that infiltrates a moment of historical stand-still and the seemingly ever-charged and propelled sense of progression, between the memorial and remembrance practices of the historical materialist and the production and reproduction of history by the historicist, between presumptions of uninterrupted linearity and a course of history that is otherwise punctured, wounded, and continually sutured and imbued with the scars of its own rupture, between repetition and repetition with difference, between the recuperation of historical trauma and the healing of the wound, of loss, that remains, exposed by and through remembrance, on the surface of memory's fragile skin.

[5] Walter Benjamin's comments on now-time, the *Jetztzeit*, the time of the present, was explicated upon within the context of his famous "Theses on the Philosophy of History," where accordingly as in Thesis XIV, "history is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [Jetztzeit]" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 261).

As a devise utilized for the purposes of temporal containment, such a moment of narratological inception as the oft-times repeated and, at times, overused "Once upon a time" seems to presume and stamp an apparent origin and an authentic moment when a narrative, a story, or a memory might initiate itself or begin; it assumes a once and for all moment within the structure of temporality at which point we might begin to map out the temporal birthplace of a history we have come to understand as a taken-for-granted moment of expropriated knowledge, knowledge worthy enough to be registered within and consigned to sanctioned (biographical, state, or institutional) scenes of the archive. Despite the troubling gendered allusions to the work attributed to the labors of the historical materialist, it might be worthwhile to turn our attention briefly to Walter Benjamin's critique of this "whore called 'Once upon a time'" that the materialist historian seems to want to elude and evade, especially as she/he regards their task as one that is always already engaged in the work of rupture and break; rupture and break of that tenuous aspiration called the progression of historical linearity. Let us recall W. Benjamin's comments on this matter:

> The historical materialist leaves it to others to be drained by the whore called "Once upon a time" in historicism's bordello. He remains in control of his powers, man enough to blast open the continuum of history. (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 262)

Rather than merely archiving a story that appears to have a linear underpinning, for the historical materialist the concern is one of how to address the question of time and temporality as it relates to how we think about the past and the present, and, more specifically, as it relates to how we think about the past *within* the present, wherein, let us remind ourselves of this, for W. Benjamin, "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present…threatens to disappear irretrievably" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255). This past,

here, appears to owe its very survival to the temporality of the present now far-flung and removed from it. The work of the materialist historian, then, becomes one in which each moment of the present that she/he encounters in the work of "blasting" historical continuum, must in turn account for the past that it invokes and brings to life within the very moment of and in the present in which the rupture and break of the continuum occur. He seems to emphatically distinguish this materialist task from the task of the historicist, for whom history is a progressivist project, a project inaugurated by the seemingly authenticating yet numbing affect imbued by the adage "Once upon a time" – numbing for it leaves no apparent room open for doubt or scrutiny in the look back at the past that it engenders within the context of historical work. We may see this adequately outlined, for instance, in philosopher Andrew Benjamin's expansion and explication of W. Benjamin's distinctions:

> In opposition to…historicism for which the present is either a moment in the unfolding of progress, like any other, or a part of a backward and forward succession of facts, or is subsumed in some other way under a conception of history as a completing or completed whole, for Benjamin the present is both the moment and site of the actuality of the past. The past is contingent upon the action of the present. (A. Benjamin & Osborne, 1994, p. xii)

The seeming promise of the "Once upon a time" is an apparent progression, then, to an inevitable and inexorable ending, and this is a promise that is, as A. Benjamin reminds us an inheritance that has been garnered from "the project of [the] Enlightenment philosophy of time" (A. Benjamin, 2005, p. 1). Progression becomes a moment of both prescriptive narrative telling and a diagnosis toward a presumed understanding of how a story must or should end – oftentimes in favor of the victors, and without any, to little or no, regard for those existing as historical marginalia or detritus. W. Benjamin, as such, was always concerned with the history of those on the margins, and this concern was informed by a

sadness. For him, "the nature of this sadness stands out more clearly if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 256). Imbued with this aforementioned sadness, as such for him "this answer was inevitable: with the victor" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 256). It is against this notional character of a victor, and in favor of those and that which is forgotten from within the annals of historical knowledge, that W. Benjamin would go on to architect his grand critique of historicism, his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" – a critique designed to think through carefully the project of the historian for whom time and temporality could never be perfect measures of and for historical experience or knowledge; that they are always already being punctured by moments of interruption (the blast in remembrance, the surplus matter of loss). Blasted out of historical continuum, interrupted in order to salvage the memory that exists on the fringes of memory-work and historiography, in its dustbins, waste sites, rubble heaps and the physical materiality of ruins, we are left with time, neither perfectible, nor with a discernible goal in mind. A. Benjamin, again, becomes instructive in turning our attention to the kernel within the Benjaminian critique of the historicist's agenda:

> A critique that can be understood as having been undertaken in the name of modernity. The implicit understanding of historical time in [this] conception of the Enlightenment…presupposes a gradual though inexorable move towards the realization of a specific goal. The goal in question is of course Enlightenment and thus the move towards it interconnects time and perfectability. As such, this development becomes the formulation of progress….[Fundamental] to Benjamin's critique of progress as defining the ambit in which politics and time are interconnected is the centrality that is attributed to forms of interruption. (A. Benjamin, 2005, p. 1)

Progression and progressivity become annulled for the modern subject, in a manner of speaking, in this process that seeks to address historical production as a collectivity of interruptions – remembrances and instances of forgetting, remembrances against forgetting,

remembrances of forgetting itself – in an otherwise linear set of historical assumptions. A historical production vis-à-vis the memory-work embedded within the structure of the look back at the past without a set goal, as in the case of the goal of Enlightenment for instance, means the production of a narrative that amounts to the materialist historian strategically, at times, and nefariously (necessarily nonetheless), at others, taking account of those moments of interruption, wherein it might be argued that those very interruptions both become and form the very substance of historical production itself. In this sense, "historical materialism sees the work of the past as still incomplete" (W. Benjamin, 2002, p. 267). Temporal demarcations, caesuras, and delineations that attune the materialist to these very moments of interruption in the narrative structure – the moments that cause the remembered narrative of history and historical experience to rupture within itself, to lay the narrative in a state of ruin, so to speak – account for this sense of incompletion. The work of remembrance, as such, or rather, let us remember, the work of looking back, then becomes experienced as work that ceases to be complete or ceases to expect its own completion, and finds itself ever in a state of anticipation of this always evasive completion. It is as though such an interruption leaves the narrative in a state of waiting. Always seemingly, thus, in a state of deferral (its goal deferred to another date as yet to be known or left to be announced, eluding and evading any sort of temporal predication or prediction – remember the lateness of Kafka's Messiah[6]) and belatedness, the work of the materialist looking back becomes the work of bringing together the divergent strands of interruptions as an ever-growing system of narrative patchwork; the material surplus of history on the margins as offering up alternatives – both in the sense of

[6] In his evocative and now-famous parable, "The Coming of the Messiah," Kafka theorized on the quixotic and ironic possibility of a Messiah who "will come only when he is no longer necessary; he will come only on the day after his arrival; he will come, not on the last day, but on the very last day" (Kafka, 1984, p. 182). This becomes paradigmatic, in a way, of a particular sort of hope-infused cynicism that Kafka seems to acknowledge as located within our understanding of a temporality and a history that is presumed always already linear.

beginnings and endings – to what is held in the archive. This task, then, goes against the grain of what A. Benjamin considers "the insistent presence of historicism's reactualization in the form of continuity and arguments for gradual development through time" (A. Benjamin, 2005, p. 1). Temporality, in such a scene infiltrated by interruptions, becomes other to itself, other than how we might have come to conceive of it within the logic of enlightenment thinking.

Rather, and quite significantly I would add, it would appear that the work of the materialist looking back, with her/his look back, seems to hover around the uncertainty that informs the interruptions themselves. What, then, would become of the narrative when time, the very temporal ground of the narrative, has, itself, been ruptured or shifted, hence interrupted? What remains – would be another question to consider – of the narrative in the archive itself? It would seem that this temporal shift exists in direct contra-distinction to the progressivist affectation inspired by the "Once upon a time." This inaugurating moment never remains the same and never holds or contains the story in the same manner, when remembered outside of the space of the sanctioned archive. There is not and never will be such a thing as a single totalizing story that encompasses subjective or communal historical experience or knowledge. Every story may be open to interruption, as it plays out in the scene of remembering and forgetting, and every story might be remembered differently or in a manner that is both qualitatively and empirically otherwise than what is held in any presumed historical tome. Historical materialism opens up the tome in such a manner that every time the story is told, every time one looks back, so to speak – for instance, upon the analyst's couch – another way in which it might be told or retold may become unfolded and yet another relation to the experiential nature of the story becomes opened up and made

possible. Deferral and belatedness in temporality cause the narrative to shift allowing for the Benjaminian blast to take place in how a story, as mentioned earlier, unravels, in how it shifts, slides, and fluctuates between historiography, the practice of archiving, and memorialization or commemoration, the praxis of remembrance. However, it is also important to note that we cannot polarize these practices – historical archiving and the practice of remembrance – for they structure each other and structure themselves around one another.

As A. Benjamin declared while "with historicism, time becomes naturalized…[to] denature time is a further part of a project marked by interruption" (A. Benjamin, 2005, p. 1) – to unsettle, thus, the numbing and saturnine affect inscribed in the "Once upon a time." It is this, which becomes the work of the materialist to unearth time outside and beyond the impulse within historical practice to naturalize it as a linear tendency, a progressivist movement forward, or a hegemonic goal-oriented structure of experience. In this sense, one might recognize a critical strand of thought wherein this very structure attends to the centrality of the experience of alienation as endured by the modern subject – a break from the rational and progressivist promises of the Enlightenment to a way of experience that regards the modern subject's self-estrangement as marking her/his own experience of history and memory within the enactment of the look back at temporality and upon the temporal past. Be it marked by the rise of industrialization and the concomitant experience of the commodity fetish (Adorno, 1973, p. 52) within the landscape of political and economic sociality, or through historical traumas, such as the Shoah (Bauman, 1989, p. 201), that have accrued over time and caused our very experience of temporality itself to feel severely blasted off course, it would seem the self-estranged modern subject is confronted by the materialist historian

reminding her/him of the accumulated interruptions that mark our disorienting and dizzying sense of time. As such, as A. Benjamin suggests, we might be bequeathed to acknowledge that "the modern [is] premised on an inaugurating interruption" (A. Benjamin, 2005, p. 1). We cannot forget that time itself is in ruin here, especially in regards to our interrupted experience of looking back at it, and our interrupted gesture of remembering it and seeking redemption from our memory of it, against its possible eviction to the recesses of forgetting.

It would be important not to ignore what seems to be essentially a destructive element embedded within the gesture of looking back and thus interrupting historical time in its presumed linear sense. How might we begin to understand the look back as essentially destructive, as such, within how we conceive of temporal interruption here? On the one hand, we could consider it as a destruction *of* experience within and of historical time. As such, as A. Benjamin reminds us, "for [Walter Benjamin], 'destruction' always meant the destruction of some false or deceptive form of experience as the productive condition of the construction of a new relation to the object" (A. Benjamin & Osborne, 1994, p. xi). The historical materialist, through the optical potentiality embedded in the act of looking back, tends toward such a constructive form of destructivity – we will return to this "constructive" orientation momentarily – to create anew from the old, from the space of ruination, for she/he has "the destructive character…the consciousness of historical [man], whose deepest emotion is an insuperable mistrust of the course of things and a readiness at all times to recognize that everything can go wrong" (W. Benjamin, 1999d, p. 542). Historical experience requires this denaturalizing process that acknowledges the possibility that it can be interrupted, annulled as it were, at any moment when we look back at the past from the present conjuncture. For this reason, "therefore the destructive character is reliability itself" (W. Benjamin, 1999d, p.

542) and it can be relied on to draw from and upon the object new ways to underscore historical experience or knowledge. The object, here, being simply that which is remembered, culled into memory through practices of productive remembrance and/or generative commemoration, as, perhaps, in the scene of a psychoanalytic encounter. Seen in another light, we might consider this destruction *as* experience itself, as a way to experience historical time. In this latter scene, we might note that the gestural moment of looking back as an interruptive act, with its destructive tattering of time and our sense of a presumed linearity to historical temporality, becomes the very substance of the materialist's sense of history, wherein, "destruction [becomes] the condition of the possibility of experience" (A. Benjamin & Osborne, 1994, p. xi). Here, destruction, the destructive look staged and restaged, becomes and is experience of history itself – be it in the scene of the work of a materialist historian or in the space of excavation and memory-work as conducted within a psychoanalytic encounter between analyst and analysand.

As such, destruction *as* experience itself attends to a slightly different logic of interruption. Here, we are concerned not merely with the destruction of historical experience as such, but to think of destruction, the look back as already informed by its potential to destroy, as forming the very experiential foundation for us to think through and consider the possibility of interruption in historical time. We are reminded again of the Benjaminian call to consider the danger embedded in not thinking that "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of it own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255). Calling upon the past in the present moment – remembering, recalling, resuscitating the past in the instance of the present – allows us to destroy the very experience of the present as such, by forcing us to reorder and reorganize the meaning of the

present and how we relate to it. The present is always that moment upon which the past can rely – the very reliability of the destructive character of the materialist. As such, we come to realize that we are both here *for* and *because of* those who came before us. Every moment in the present can be a moment in which the past might be called upon and attended to, and, therefore, we begin to see "the temporality of the present as the moment of destruction" (A. Benjamin & Osborne, 1994, p. xi), where destruction becomes the very experience of history as it is produced through its own interruption.

An example might serve to elucidate the point I am attempting to make here. A clearly Benjaminian moment of destruction as experience might be noted, thus, in the concept of the montage. In remarking about his incomplete magnum opus, *Passagenwerk*, W. Benjamin noted that it, as a work of historical retelling and retooling, "must develop to the highest point the art of citing without quotation marks. [Its] theory connects most closely with that of montage" (W. Benjamin, 1999a, p. 458). The montage, here, remains distinct from that which might be referred to as a collage. It could signify the destruction of the old, its exculpatory renunciation, to construct a new conception of how we might experience historical time – a citing out of sync, as would be the case, with representation or outside of the reconstruction of events – while the collage attends to the space of something akin to a pure form of re-presentation. The montage, citation over and beyond quotation, ruptures and reorganizes the meaning of historical time through its interruptive capacity to denature this time as we look back upon it, while the collage is limited to history taken out of context, though not necessarily out of sync with time per se. As such, in the collage, we are generating quotable quotes that only add to linearity rather than interrupt it, while the montage traumatizes, wherein if by traumatizing we mean to refer to its ability to cite out of

sync with time – this citation out of sync with time is the very traumatizing of time; its rupture and interruption at every instance in which we look back at the past from the present to re-inscribe this past with new meaning. The montage quite efficaciously rehearses – in the enigmatic destructivity of the look back from the present to the past – what philosopher Rebecca Comay has come to describe, following Freud, as the structure of trauma, its constitution, negotiation, and subsequent overcoming now, as I mobilize it, within the scene of remembrance and forgetting:

> [The] dissolution of the event into a missed event and the hypertrophic investment in the trivial, the nonevent, the negligible remainder…a perpetual syncopation between originary inscription and subsequent transcription, translation, or re-edition…[trauma] marks a caesura in which the linear order of time is thrown out of sequence. We compound this temporal disorientation every time we try to quarantine trauma by displacing it to a buried past or a distant future. (Comay, 2011, p. 25)

If we are to follow Comay's logic, the missed event, the nonevent, and the negligible remainder, the very remains of loss as such, and the surplus extrusions that exceed loss and exist beyond it become collected and collated within the penumbra – remember, the look is both, seeing and destroying seeing itself, both remembering and forgetting, of what lies beneath, elsewhere, and beyond what is or can be seen – of the montage, to produce meaning beyond merely acting as a provision for functional or functionary fodder for some presumed sense of a historicity that appears linear. Trauma becomes annulled, while simultaneously annulling time, if only momentarily, through its own banishment and eviction in how it becomes mediated or bifurcated to another date repressed in our memory of the past or in its deferral to a future as yet to occur, and subsequently, even ultimately, inescapable within the space of the montage. The at-times monological space of the analytic encounter performatively stages the experience of the dialectical montage in how the narratological

experience of looking back at one's own past is a constant optical structuring and restructuring of a materialist history that accounts for a negotiation of and with the memory of trauma – a break with and in time – and the continual inscription and description of its repudiated excesses in the psychical life of the subject.

Michael Shanks, in his work on archaeology – an important metaphorical instance, as it will be explained later, within the context of this project – further expands on the distinction between collage and montage within the space of articulating a methodology for historical work, when he describes them as follows:

> Collage...is direct quotation, literal repetition or citation of something taken out of its context and placed in another. Montage is the cutting and reassembling of these fragments of meanings, images, things, quotations, borrowing, to create new juxtapositions. Collage is a simple questioning of the notion of representation as finding some correspondence with an exterior reality…[In montage] the aim is to construct something new out of the old, to connect what may appear dissimilar in order to achieve new insights and understanding…not reducing the things found to the general. (Shanks, 1992, p. 188)

As such, we see in the montage a destructive element to the enactment of looking back through the space of historical work that allows for interruption to cut across any presumption of a linear temporality that might be associated to history within its progressivist mode. Here, destruction as experience offers us an understanding very similar to what A. Benjamin spoke of regarding the montage, wherein it "destroys the continuity of narrative as the condition for a new construction of history, while now-time destroys the experience of history as progress, replacing it with the apocalyptic doublet of catastrophe and redemption" (A. Benjamin & Osborne, 1994, p. xi). This now-time, *Jetztzeit*, becomes the instructive moment of the present in which we might experience both the catastrophic rupturing – for as W. Benjamin announced in his *Passagenwerk*, catastrophe is signified by and acts as a

signature to the “missing of an opportunity” (W. Benjamin, 1999a, p. 474) to act out of an ongoing obligation (read: responsibility) and ever-present commitment to the revolutionary impulse located at the margins, perhaps always already registered in the look back of the historical materialist – of an assumed historical linearity and the redeeming of a lost yet persistent past within its association to and insistence upon the present instance. Destruction as experience becomes historical time collapsed within itself and released from the crypt of linearity within the present’s capacity for both recuperation and incorporation of the past into our experience of it – this fragile past – in the now-time, within the context of its immediacy and the extreme presentism of this moment in which we live.

In either scene, whether we think of interruption as destruction *of* experience or destruction *as* experience itself, of historical time, we find a critique of the progressivist agenda of historicism. We find that historical time for the materialist is time out of sync with itself, marked by the interruptive gestures that could allow us to re-imagine history – how we remember or forget it, in the look back we hone upon the past – as something other than how it might be conceived of in, and received through, the space of the sanctioned archive. It might be incumbent upon us to consider briefly the question of empathy – a matter of chief concern for W. Benjamin with regards to historical work – as it might be inscribed in the destructive look back. Empathy, as such, becomes examined in Convolute N of W. Benjamin’s *Passagenwerk*:

> It is important for the materialist historian, in the most rigorous way possible, to differentiate the construction of a historical state of affairs from what one customarily calls its “reconstruction.” The “reconstruction” in empathy is one-dimensional. “Construction” presupposes “destruction.” (W. Benjamin, 1999a, p. 470)

All along, it would seem as though we were setting the stage for a dialogue on and about empathy within the scene of historical work. It would seem that, if we were to take W. Benjamin's observations seriously, the work of the historicist is opposed and juxtaposed to the work of the materialist on precisely this account, an account informed by what it means to empathize, to work from and within this space of empathy in the context of how history might be told and retold. Historicism assumes to seemingly do the work of the collage. It brings together a set of names, dates, and facts about events, as they appear to have taken place that, then, allow for a linear telling to occur within the space of the archive. It quotes and cites through quotation the events that may be spun together in order to organize what appears to be a cohesive whole; a way to experience the story of man as being both coherent, and directed to and by the goal of her/his apparent seamless progress. As such, for W. Benjamin, this was always reconstruction, and not just a mere reconstruction of events, but one that served the purpose of the victors. Within this linear telling, other names, dates, and facts about events inevitably become lost, misplaced, forgotten, or repressed – the material of excess, the very structure of the edge of the ruin. This historical collage quotes the gains (and losses) of the victors, not the losses (and gains) of those on the margins of historical experience. It does nothing to critique or challenge our sense of time, and its empathy, the empathy of the historicist, is reserved only, it would seem, for the victors and the reconstruction of their progressive narrative. The one-dimensionality of this move does not account for the accumulated losses and grievances of those others whose stories might slice through linear time itself causing our sense of history to be severely yet necessarily altered.

To approach memory-work from a variety of spaces of remembrances, from a compendium of approaches at and to memorialization, from a variety of different experiences

with and within forgetting as it becomes outlined across and along multiple temporalities, from the space of wanting to destroy notions of linear time itself when looking back at it, through interruption, by calling upon the past in every moment of the present is the further project of the materialist historian for whom experience is always and already mired by the complication of having to take account of the multitudes who remain outside or on the edge of the tome, forgotten to the gestures of remembrance. Construction of historical experience then here does presuppose and is, again, always already predetermined by the destructive element that the work of interruption, the work of the materialist, takes into account. This reminds us of the project of the montage – to order, reorder, organize, and reorganize history and the temporality of the remembered past as an ongoing (and perhaps interminable) process of recuperating and augmenting this past for the purposes of present life and living, in a manner that regards the margins, and takes these very margins as its most central and more immediate of its concerns.

The montage becomes the space – perhaps the space par excellence in its capacity to unmake and undo linear history – where experience becomes reorganized to attend to what might be a multifarious approach to thinking with, through, and against historical temporality, marked by ruptures, elisions, and other ways of addressing what lies outside of the mere reconstruction or reconstitution of events. The attempt is to tie together the present with the past, a multitude of possible presents with a multitude of possible remembrances of the past marked by forgetting and/or repression, such that they become dependent on each other, such that they cannot and refuse to exist outside of each other. Experience of historical time, in this materialist context, "is lived similarities" (W. Benjamin, 1999c, p. 553), and accordingly for W. Benjamin, knowing fully well how people are continuously influenced by

the dominant historicist logic of time and progression, “most people have no wish to learn by experience” (W. Benjamin, 1999c, p. 553). This resistance to learn from experience, as such, seems to resonate with a resistance to learn from observation, for as W. Benjamin was wont to state, “experience and observation are identical…observation is based on self-immersion” (W. Benjamin, 1999c, p. 553). Observation renders the historical subject the possibility to accrue and accumulate in the gesture of the look back and, thus, shore up, in a sense, the various possibilities by which to both regard and consider historical time and its accompanying traumatic pressures. Observation, self-immersion as such, revels in the possibility to endure these pressures, for in these pressures is the opportunity for remembering and remembering otherwise alongside possible forgetfulness – this otherwise, here, signifying the taking account of the losses made by, through, and within historical time. In his “The Concept of Criticism,” W. Benjamin explains the enervating and incisive possibilities encrypted in the rigorous bond between that which he refers to as experiment, here standing in for the logic of experience or historical experience as such, and the work of observation – looking back, in the optical sense that I spoke of earlier – as one beyond the limits of empirical culpability, both being essential to and for the work of criticism:

> The doctrine of the medium of knowledge and perception is linked to the doctrine of observation, which is of immediate importance in understanding the concept of criticism. “Observation” [Beobachtung] and its frequently applied synonym “experiment” [Experiment] are also examples of mystical terminology; in them, what the early Romantics had to explain and conceal concerning the principle of knowledge of nature rises to a peak. The question to which the concept of observation is the answer runs as follows: What approach does the investigator have to adopt in order to achieve knowledge of nature, assuming that the real is a medium of reflection? He will understand that no knowledge is possible without self-knowledge of what is to be known, and that this can be called into wakefulness by one center of reflection (the observer) in another (the thing) only insofar as the first, through repeated reflections, intensifies itself to the point of encompassing the second. (W. Benjamin, 1996, p. 147)

"What approach does the investigator have to adopt in order to achieve knowledge, assuming the real is a medium of reflection?" he asks. Here, assuming the "investigator" is the historian, the materialist historian to be precise, could we expand on this conceptualization of such a "nature" under observation and that which is being experienced as one that might possibly encapsulate beyond what the physical world offers for examination? In other words, could it as well mean or endeavor to mean the nature of history, or rather the nature of historical time? Furthering our thoughts on this matter, is it possible for us to imagine this nature to also hold within its scrutiny the nature of remembrance, of how the subject remembers denatured historical time and her/his position within the memory she/he calls into and forth from her/his psychical life? "Repeated reflections," as W. Benjamin referred to it, afford the subject, or the materialist historian with the possibility for directing one's observant look upon historical time and recall, for the sake of remembering otherwise, a temporality that allows for its own infiltration by the subject her/himself. Here, against the concealment enacted by dominant historical narrativization, the historical materialist is called into a compelling and attentive wakefulness – again, a term deployed by W. Benjamin's ever enlivened desire to always and already attend to that which is left out, against the repressive impulses that govern us to merely, or simply, cut our historical losses – for "waking is the paradigm of remembrance" **(**W. Benjamin, 1999a, p. 13**)**. A wakeful and observant, yet enigmatic look back – enigmatic all the more for the uncertainty of what might be found upon and within the gesture of reflection – seems to be the arena through which the historical materialist regards her/his practice of memorial recuperation against loss via forgetting and forgetfulness. We are reminded here, as it parallels our efforts, of the highly

significant look, yet another enigmatic look back, of the angel of history, we find W. Benjamin describing in his now-famous Thesis IX:

> My wing is ready for flight,
> I would like to turn back.
> If I stayed timeless time,
> I would have little luck.
>
> - Gerhard Scholem, "Greetings from Angelus"

> A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 257)

Mesmerized and traumatized, it would seem, both in the same moment; mesmerized precisely by the trauma induced by the look back it affords upon that which has accumulated as the detritus and wreckage of historical violence, and traumatized to the extent that it cannot avert its look – it has been handed over with, as in the form a gift, the real of reflection – by the out-of-sync character (a destructive character) of the logic of a ruptured temporality, we find the angel is in a state of perpetual wakefulness, an observant insomniac, unable to relinquish itself from the very gripping experience of this ruptured temporality and the incumbent trauma that arrives alongside it. Imprisoned in the cryptic stuck-ness that this look back represents for the angel, for the materialist at large, we would, now, have to account for what, the excess, the material substance, is being looked upon – to account for what it represents, what it stands in for, perhaps as a metaphor, what it might elide, what it

holds as traumatically catastrophic yet simultaneously, perhaps even, redemptive for the linear time this ruin in and of itself annuls as a result of the look back with which the angel regards loss.

***Figure 1.* Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*.**

Much will be said regarding W. Benjamin's angel and its near penitent yet ethical look in the pages to come. It will become both the template and, dare I say, starting point for my reflections regarding the enigmatic nature of the look back that it simultaneously is

commanded upon to garner, endures against what might be conceived of as better judgment, and cannot help but offer. The traumatic pressures insist upon it to observe history, remember and re-member memory, and remember against forgetting, a forgetting only too easily applied and applicable to the psychic life of the subject. Within the purview of this, it also engages in a remembering within the confines of what is an ever-forgetful look, continually reminding us of the traumatic pressures that persist alongside and against the repressive forces that exist, as might be seen to be exercised (and exorcised, as the case may be, from) within the scene of a psychoanalytic encounter.

What, then, does it mean to look back within the auspices of the threat of forgetting? Is this look back a silent looking, enraptured by and within its own gestural limits? What happens when archiving both promises to enact remembrance and threatens to instigate forgetting, wherein we might only call to and cull from memory what we want to consign to the archive? Here, archiving might be structured around the gesture of maintaining a record of what is looked upon in this enigmatic look back, and what meanings might be culled from this look. It might stand in for the work of the materialist historian taking account of the ruptures that conceive of and re-constitute history time and again, or for the work that occurs within the context of the linguistic discourse that is passed between analysand and analyst. The structure of narration regarding memory, its place within the scopic nature of the look back, and its subsequent collection under the heading and within the limits of language already gives memory-work over to the perpetual (and perceptual) struggle between remembering and forgetting. It becomes both a site of and for mournful letting go and a site of melancholic gripping, grasping, and taking hostage of. As such, keeping in mind the observational strategy that both announces and engages us in the ongoing processes of

repetitive and repeated reflection that W. Benjamin holds quite clearly near and dear to the work of materialist historian, we find that the look back infiltrates and is simultaneously, in the same instance, infiltrated by language and linguistic discourse that both seeks to restore remembrance and annul it, lay it in ruins, through language's ability to innervate forgetting. The more I tried to look back as a gesture to remember Roger, the more I found myself forgetting. The more I attempted to write down the narrative in the chronological order of the turn of events as I remember it happened that described my psychical life, the more I found the memories slipping; the very slippages being owed to the desire to be accurate and authentic in the moment of observation, self-immersion, reflection, and recollection. The more I look, the more difficult it becomes to engage in the optics of looking and the more looking becomes a visual gesture that painfully plays at and out the always already anxiety-ridden and failed game of fact-finding and fact-checking – always already failed precisely because every time the narrative gets reconstituted, it becomes different and its own other; it gains a new perspective or aspect while it loses another. This observational work in the scene of remembrance, as it then becomes relegated to the limits of linguistic discourse, is performatively one that rehearses the archeological metaphor of excavation, wherein as W. Benjamin reminds us:

> Language has unmistakably made plain that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. Above all, he must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the "matter itself" is no more than the strata which yield their long-sought secrets only to the most meticulous investigator. (W. Benjamin, 1999b, p. 576)

There can be no hubris attached to a perpetual remembering when perpetual forgetting exists alongside it, as agent and provocateur to memory's own self-negation, its own impulse for destruction and disavowal at each instance, of a rupture, of the look back. Hence, the look is always and continually returned back – "[one] must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter" – looking, searching, to see and read beneath and beyond what can be seen, to garner and gauge from the observation a series of reflections on how we think about ourselves within the constraints of the notional exchanges made between remembering and forgetting within the context of a traumatized temporality and a traumatic historicity. As in the case of the analytic encounter, remembering is always already presciently operating with the knowledge that forgetting, as its antagonistic other and alter, insists its repressive exertion upon the psychical life of the subject. However, W. Benjamin also insisted that "the main feature of forgetting is that it forgets itself."[7] We attempt to cull to memory the very thing we cannot help but forget, but the moment we remember it, the process of loss has already been engendered. In this sense, memory-work resembles the site of the ruin, and the ruin becomes metaphor and metonymy for both the eternal struggle and commitment to remember and the unavoidable inevitability of the surreptitious loss garnered within the experience of forgetting. W. Benjamin reminds us that, "in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay" (W. Benjamin, 1998, p. 178), and as such we are to regard memory-work as one imbued with both surreptitious gain and surreptitious loss. If the angel of history is looking back, and transfixed within the prison of its own look, the ruins of the wreckage it witnesses being laid at its feet signal a demand to be seen, a call to not avert its look elsewhere.

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[7] See Rebecca Comay's essay "Benjamin's Endgame" in *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (A. Benjamin and P. Osborne, eds.), where she reiterates Benjamin's comments regarding the subject of forgetting when he quotes Willy Haas on Kafka's *Trial*.

In this circuitous universe that straddles the tenuousness of both remembering and forgetting – what might be in line with the aforementioned apocalyptic doublet of catastrophe and redemption – the ruin, as historical metaphor, becomes prefigured as both cause for and symptom of commemoration, and as such this commemoration also regards itself as being localized at the very nexus of the experience of both mourning and melancholia that persist and insist in the same instance. In the look back at the ruin of memory, at ruined memory, what is it that we are looking for, and what is it that we hope to see – especially if it is both an instance of mourning and melancholia, of both capricious loss and salvaged gain, of both tendentious decay and insurmountable build up, accrued accumulation of psychical mulch – missed events, nonevents crowding around and over easily negligible landscapes of repressed memories? And, what about redemption? Or, rather what is it that we hope for in this relationship between both gain and loss within the parameters of memory-work as implicitly redemptive? Is redemption an ethical imperative, founded upon an interminable love for the object of loss, to never forget, a hope that we may remember otherwise, outside of the sanctions of a recognized archive, remember the significance of the loved object itself? Redemption, as such, will continually be evoked as a key conceptual object of analysis, regarded through out this project, as the very thing that both commands the look back at the past and resists any and all impulses to forget the metaphor of the ruin. As such, redemption will also traverse this fine line between prescriptive mourning and diagnosed melancholia in the rapturous rupture promised by the enigmatic look back – why one is described "prescriptive," as such, and the other "diagnosed" will be explained in the chapter to follow.

What will now be addressed in the next chapter will be a more closely attuned exploration of the relationship between memory and the imperative to remember as

determined by how the figurative experience of love plays out within the transferential logic of the look back upon ruined memory, this memory as it becomes the very agent and object of its own living death. It is in the midst of such a constellation of love, possible surrogacy, and difficult memory, in the name of remembering amidst and precisely because of forgetting, that we might be able to address both the missing of opportunities to redeem the traumatic past as an ongoing concern for the present and, as well, think futurity. This futurity rests on the bridging together, difficult as it may appear or be, of the past with the present moment, in the hope that we find in the ruins – that allegorical stand-in for memory-work amidst and flanked by perpetual remembering and perpetual forgetting – the object of loss that demands from us an incommensurable form of love as we look back at the past, a past that asks and implores us to remember and remember otherwise each time, every time, time and again; remembering against the accumulation of trauma, wreckage, and incalculable loss.

## Chapter Two:
## The Ethics of Looking and the Intentionality of Love in Mourning and Melancholia

**Every moment is two moments.**
- (Michaels, 1996, p. 143)

**[Then] our coming was expected on earth.**
- (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 254)

### A Secret Simultaneity

In her evocative work, at once both rigorously rich in the sense that it might advance our interests in arriving at some better comprehension of the philosophy of history while also being a remarkable work of literature that walks the fine line between lyric poetry and psychological prose, *Fugitive Pieces*, the novelist Anne Michaels declares almost quite resolutely that "every moment is two moments" (Michaels, 1996, p. 143). While the philosophical import of this insight will be detailed further in the chapter to come, following this present one, wherein I will endeavor to do a close study of how Michaels mediates the boundary between traumatic remembering and ever-plausible forgetting, this simple statement does allow us, presently, to turn our attention to how we might come to understand the intentionality of the look back – what it intends to achieve, or at the very least attempts to do, and what it might promise with regards to how we regard the struggle between memory and its repression. What, then, is the look back? What is its intentionality, so to speak? How do we perceive it or begin to conceive within its structure a possible ethics of looking or ethicality in the look per se, especially as the act straddles the gentle line between a now departed past and an ever departing now? Fundamentally, for our purposes here, as alluded to

in the previous chapter, a question could be asked which requires us to consider the look as being either melancholic in its disposition or mournful in its capacity to contend with the losses we are dealt with in the face of – in the figurative sense of the "piling wreckage…the pile of debris" – rising historical trauma, as might be the case depicted in the seemingly, as mentioned earlier, penitent look of the angel.

Paul Klee's dramatic painting *Angelus Novus* – which through W. Benjamin's utility of it in architecting his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" became a significant "icon of the left" (Werckmeister, 1999, p. 11) exemplifying its revolutionary spirit – invokes and engages us in this debate on how it regards what its look specifically seems to regard. The debate surrounds the peculiar simultaneity that the image of the angel seems to announce. It seems to rehearse this view that Michaels holds, that every moment is, in fact, two moments. Both the figural and literal stagnancy of the angel, its look suspended and directed at the ruin that continues to pile up at its feet, skyward as it gets pulled backward, toward the unknown, unknowable future that exists under the presumed banner of "progress;" this seems to relay a specular struggle between the simultaneity of two seemingly radically opposed experiences, namely remembrance and forgetting. It is as though, as Amresh Sinha stated, "[remembering] and forgetting are forever a place of intertwining, a crossroad, a junction" (Sinha, 1998, p. 99). The angel, in its station of mid-flight, trapped within the spectatorial realm of its imprisoned glance, seems to expose its residence in this very moment of intertwining, at this precise crossroad juncture in temporality, and this very instance in which cumbersome historicity pulls and tugs at its wings. This simultaneity is instructive all the more for the fact that, as might be interpreted from the angel's look back, "when [it] remembers, it remembers only what was forgotten…each time [it] remembers it remembers forgetting" (Sinha, 1998, p.

99). As such, we could deduce, that "the only thing remembrance remembers is obviously not itself, but it's other, namely forgetting" (Sinha, 1998, p. 99). There seems to be present, here, a modicum of temporal ambivalence precisely because the look seems transfixed in time – it exists neither in the past, nor in the future; rather, it is negotiated in the rupture it breaths into the time of the now, the temporality of the present. It looks back, its frontward look directed back upon the temporal past, as it is forcibly moved toward the future, forced by the storm called progress, its back pinned up against futurity itself. They, both the look and the angel, exist as this ruptured interruption, this ambivalence in temporality. In this sense, such a rupture is a bifurcated experience – a redoubled experience as the case may be, where the experience of looking at the past, remembering, and being pulled forth to the future, in a backward gesture that forces a letting go, perhaps a mourning, enacts the tension between the past and the very present moment from which the look back is instantiated at the object of loss. As such, within this tension, as Sinha states memory:

> is the instant of an experience, lived synchronically, which is devoid completely of any temporality whatsoever, though it depends on the lapse of time. Therefore memory does not revert toward itself in order to catch up with the past which is left behind. In this sense, memory is not ahead of itself in that it must wait for time to come up beside it surreptitiously. Memory, instead of regressing toward a past, stands still, frozen in its track…[What] one experiences in memory is hardly time but the timelessness, or the lack of it – the death of time. Neither past nor future is remembered in memory, but the self in its absence is now re-presented as a forgetting through images. Memory sees itself fleetingly as eternally present in the instant of forgetting. (Sinha, 1998, p. 100)

This frozen look, of the angel, of the subject who looks back at her/his own life, at historical trauma as such, exists in the instance of that very gesture of the look back, where memory resides between the past and the present, wherein this memory tries to recuperate the past for the purposes of present living, in a scene in which the self regards itself and its

relation to temporality – linear presumptions of temporality – with some measure of profound ambivalence. If memory is a moment – a Benjaminian instance of an irresolute interruption that slices through time – as can be suggested following Michaels's earlier insight, that exists flanked between two moments, wherein on the one hand we find in the insomnia-infused look back a moment of perpetual awakening, a "waking [that is] the paradigm of remembering" (W. Benjamin, 1999a, p. 13), and on the other hand, a moment of forgetting, "a forgetting that forgets itself,"[1] then what we see in Klee's angel is an image likened to W. Benjamin's own conceptualization of the obsessive image of the "ragpicker" poet Charles Baudelaire, the image of a figure in the state of a "petrified unrest" (W. Benjamin, 1985, p. 40). In Baudelaire, this petrified unrest is evoked when W. Benjamin construes in him the task of a poet that cannot help but become a materialist historian of sorts in the scene of a modernity always already marred by the mark of a catastrophic excessiveness in its accumulation of the refuse it seems to accrue over time:

> 'Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day's refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot, he catalogues and collects. He collated the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously: he collects like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry.' This description is one extended metaphor for the poetic method, as Baudelaire practiced it. Ragpicker and poet: both are concerned with refuse. (W. Benjamin, 2006, p. 48)

Wreckage, refuse, waste, and ruin – these become the central concerns envisaged in the look back enacted by the poet, the angel, the materialist historian painstakingly involved in the work of archiving the loss that exists somewhere between remembrance and forgetting. This task – of collecting, collating, regulating, regarding, and historicizing, thus ultimately to

[1] See footnote 7 in the previous chapter for the precise citation for this.

commemorate the fringes and margins of excluded historicity via a montage of materials – is mired by a constructive sort of destructivity that was described in detail in the preceding chapter. If the wreckage demands this look back, this attentive and wakeful look of the angel and, thereby, as well, the materialist historian, and if this demand is to be met through the articulation of an empathy which already preordains that any construction of historicity must include within its logic a destructive element, then, here, remembrances, memories, and forgetting are understood as a continuous reimagining of a temporality that is always being ruptured, sutured, woven and rewoven to imagine a remembrance that is otherwise, outside of narratives that merely and only ever privilege the victors. As such, it might be significant for our purposes here to garner a closer attention to the look itself and attempt at trying to theorize the mood by which the look back sheds itself on the object that is looked upon.

In the theatre of grief, where loss is paramount to how we might understand our relationship to the object remembered or forgotten, in simultaneity, it would be of undeniable significance to think about how to imagine the structure of the look's ambivalence. Here, in the look back of the angel, we see a fundamental ambivalence as such that seemingly straddles how the loss – the wreckage, the ruin, the lost object – is configured within this instance of both its simultaneous affirmation and negation. To take the thread of this thought back to the narrative culled from the experience outlined in the previous chapter as it played out within my own analytic encounter in how a specific transferential relationship between my maternal grandfather and my dissertation advisor Roger Simon was revealed, when we remember a lost object we once found ourselves deeply invested in and enthralled by, in another object, a surrogate object, how are we both participating in the experience of remembering and forgetting vis-à-vis this scene of an extraordinarily unconscious

transference? If as earlier suggested, where we took Freud seriously when he stated, that "if someone's need for love is not entirely satisfied…[he] is bound to approach every new person with…libidinal anticipatory ideas" (Freud, 1958, p. 100), what does this look back do for us, who are left behind, or remain to remember and forget, and subsequently remember again through (and against) this forgetting? How do we, as the angel desires to do so itself, "awaken the dead" via the look back? Is this ambivalence the very nature of the love we have for the lost object as it is experienced in the look back, an ethical ambivalence that speculates – this speculation being an ongoing imperative – on the nature of our complicated relationship to that which we have lost; the material object, its memory, as represented by the catastrophe(s) that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage? Fundamentally, the inquiry might be one that asks, is the look back, of remembrance and forgetting, a look of love? And furthermore, does this love, its ambivalence more specifically, tip ever so turgidly on the fulcrum point between a mourning that repudiates the loss, allowing us to seemingly distance ourselves from the bond with the object of loss and a melancholia that regards the affectivity of the loss itself and not the object of loss?

Let us, for a brief moment, return to the look back upon the wreckage by the angel. In this glance and glancing that occurs (and seems to recur because of the angel's own stagnancy) in the instance of the present moment, the now-time of a ruptured temporality, so to speak, as it is pulled into the future by that veritable storm called progress, we find a time that is held in a sort of corpse-like fixedness and where this fixedness could be characterized as, perhaps, a wounding of time itself, the aforementioned interruption, the precise moment in which a destruction of apparent linear temporality becomes necessary for a construction of a different historicity, a historicity remembered otherwise, at the margins, always already

aware of its own inscrutable susceptibility to the specificity of a logic of repressive loss. If the look back of the angel, at the wreckage of the past can be characterized as such a wound, of and in time, our concern becomes whether to determine this wound (or wounding via the look) as being perpetually open, the opening being a necessity for commemoration itself – Freud's melancholia – or if it might be possible to seek a closing of the wound, a mourning of the object of loss through the object itself being metabolized through and renounced from the subject's psychical registry. This fixedness in the look, a wounding of temporality through a looking as such, exemplified in the look of the angel, as it is structured, or rather becomes structured, between these two psychical states concerning loss theorized by Freud, mourning and melancholia, seems to announce the very nature of the dialectical standstill that W. Benjamin attempted to comprehensively explore as central to the task of the materialist historian:

> A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines the present in which he himself is writing history…Materialist historiography…is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary change in the fight for the oppressed past. (W. Benjamin, 1968, pp. 262-3)

"Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well" – at its core, this seems to be the very foundation upon which a theorizing of the simultaneity of both mourning and melancholia, occurring in the same instance of this look back signified by the temporal standstill, could be made possible.

From here, we turn to Freud's complex study of mourning and melancholia. His oppositional stance, which he takes with regards to the experiences of mourning and melancholia, is famously well known. In the last chapter, I alluded to this supposed opposition vis-à-vis the characteristics I accorded to them in line with Freud's own thinking wherein I described mourning as "prescribed" while melancholia as a diagnosis or a diagnosed pathology. For Freud, "despite the fact that it produces severe deviations from normal behaviour…we rely on [mourning] being overcome after a certain period of time, and consider interfering with it to be pointless, or even damaging" (Freud, 1957, p. 244). For him, mourning becomes psychically necessary as the penultimate stage in realizing fully that the object has been lost – it, for Freud, is the ethical stance that radically construes a fissure between the subject and loss itself.

Here, the object is allowed to die, the corpse is permitted to irresolutely decay, and the loss is given over to itself. It is founded on an ethic of relinquishment from grief itself, where the subject's bond with loss is loosened and the very structure of history as it might be regarded – as in the case of the angel's regard – perhaps as W. Benjamin stated "does not assume the form of the process of eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay" (W. Benjamin, 1998, p. 178). This relinquishing from the grip of grief does not, however, signify that the loss has been somehow disavowed. In fact, for Freud, mourning leaves no room for such structural ambiguity, it is loss attained and signified only within the enactment of a letting go, being pulled into the futurity of progress. It only admits to a loss unless the letting go has occurred; the only "true" loss – if one were to attempt at calling it as such, true – is the relinquishing of loss itself, for the object of loss is apparently or seemingly valorized and given an a priori privileging precisely in the very recognition that it has been lost and will

irretrievably continue to remain as such. Hence, for Freud, "mourning impels the ego to renounce the object by declaring its death, and offers the ego the reward of staying alive" (Freud, 1957, p. 257) – this declaration of a demise, dying, or end as such, for Freud, would then be the beginning of a sort of revived survival of the subject who has experienced the loss. While as might be the case, in mourning "the world has [indeed] become poor and empty" (Freud, 1957, p. 246), the subject of loss has been preserved, and the object of loss has been left behind, allowed to be lost, and given over to a forgetting that psychically privileges the object's death and the subject's life and potential for livability. The wound or the wounding has been closed, and the look back devolves precisely because the object cannot be possessed any longer for the purposes of the self's ego preservation. Rhetorically, the calcified memory of the lost object is left behind, and the subject progresses to an elsewhere place, beyond these remains and remainders, in the name of progression itself, for its ego's survival depends on this moving on, or forward. Remembrance, in this scene, is founded resolutely on the object of loss, in the distilled sense of being no longer utilized for the purposes of the subject's ego's survival, and as such remembrance can only be founded through a forgetting of the loss's signification in the psychic life of the subject.

The utilitarian or functional impetus holding together or maintaining the ephemera of the object of loss in the subject's psychic life, or rather the very experience of loss itself, for Freud, was pathological and was the purview of the melancholic's disposition, one that seemingly "[took] satisfaction from self-exposure" (Freud, 1957, p. 247). It is this effusive pleasure from self-exposure that sets apart the melancholic from the mourning subject. Self-exposed, for the whole world to see, for the melancholic, the loss was always not merely contained in the figure of the lost object per se. Loss, for the committed melancholic, is

experiential, or in Freud's words, the "loss is more notional in nature" (Freud, 1957, p. 245), wherein loss is the experiential attribute that gives the melancholic her/his subjectivity. The subject is infiltrated not so much with the memory of the lost object, but rather given her/his identity via the loss itself. The subject appears stuck, and poised in this stuck-ness, not in her/his ability, or lack there of, to forgo the lost object, but in her/his ability to forgo the aftershock of the loss as such. Relinquishing the object would mean, relinquishing the experiential aspect of loss as affect itself. It is this logic – of loss as affect – that allowed Freud to list melancholia among other narcissistic illnesses, wherein:

> [The] love relationship, despite the conflict with the loved one, must not be abandoned. This substitution of identification for object-love is a significant mechanism for the narcissistic illnesses…Even in the case of transference neuroses, identification is the manifestation of something held in common that may signify love. (Freud, 1957, pp. 249-50)

The love, or rather the specificity of the love relationship here, much like the earlier mentioned self-exposure, is directed back at the subject her/himself. This self desires an identificatory alliance with the lost object, but can only identify with it to the extent of finding in that particular aspect of the latter's own specific absence its own self image, where the loss is seemingly a mediation and distillation of the potential loss of the self as embedded in and embodied through the loss of the other, the lost object. Hence, in what appears to be a painfully starved love relationship with one's own self in the throes of the object of loss being essentially lost, we find what would cause Freud to remark that in melancholia, "it is the ego that has become empty" (Freud, 1957, p. 246). The lost object seemingly loses all significance, its core sheen, in this dynamism, except for the utilitarian functionality of its loss and subsequent absence from the equation, where one "cannot consciously grasp what [she/he] has lost" (Freud, 1957, p. 245), and in fact if a grasping were to occur of the object

of loss itself, then melancholia's affectivity – what Rebecca Comay would come to name "the unappeasable attachment to an ungrievable loss" (Comay, 2005, p. 88) – comes to a radical and critical end.

Unlike mourning, melancholia lives on only in the sense of the mood (*Stimmung*) of loss, not in the object that has been lost. Freud believed that "this might also be the case when the loss that is the cause of…melancholia is known to the subject, when [the melancholic] knows *who* it is, but not *what* it is about the person that he has lost" (Freud, 1957, p. 245) – the memory of my maternal grandfather and the psychical imprint of that childhood encounter with a traumatic cathexis (as it became staged in a scene of familial trauma – my mother having had lost a child, my father's refusal to acknowledge this loss or participate in the work of grieving, and both of their subsequent psychical abandonment of me within the space of this originary loss; an abandonment that left me, perhaps unintentionally, under the care of my grandfather) from which he guarded me, which then became transcribed vis-à-vis the processes of transference upon, and suffused within, a new figure of surrogacy, Roger. Herein, the significance was not so much in the various (and albeit diverse) figures of loss – my grandfather or Roger – but rather held in the significance of what these dynamic relations spoke of in regards to the trauma that they guarded me from or against. As such melancholia becomes prescriptive of the love relationship as regulated through the experience of loss itself as opposed to the object of loss – here, identification becomes identification not with the object but with the experience of loss, and this "identification is the manifestation of something held in common that may signify love" (Freud, 1957, p. 250). What, for Freud, was troubling about the melancholic's rapture or fixation was that it provides no adequate rupture between the subject and the loss itself. It, for

him, was pathological precisely due to its indulgence in the identification of the love relationship being founded not in the bond between the subject and the lost object, but, rather, between the subject and its identification as having lost something of value, of whose value s/he has no real or "authentic" measure, except the fantasy of a material investment in the psychically imprinted loss itself – "a relation to non-relation" (Comay, 2005, p. 90), as Rebecca Comay would describe it. Herein, the structural need for melancholia to reign seems to be in the notion that the lost object be present in its loss and subsequent absence or its dis-memberment through the affectivity of a loss that is experienced as having always already surpassed or exceeded the physicality or materiality of the very object it seeks to articulate through this disarticulation. As such, following Freud, Comay would imagine melancholia in a vein that considers it to be prescriptively meditative, symbolically mediated, and preoccupied with what can be salvaged from its own staging:

> The preoccupation with an originary loss ('as such') logically preceding the loss of any determinate object could function equally as a pre-emptive denial of loss which would mask the real inaccessibility of its object by determining it in advance as lost - thus negatively appropriable in its very absence. The melancholic attachment to 'unknown loss' would in this way function apotropaically as a defense against the fact that the object 'lost' was in fact never mine for the having. Melancholia would thus be a way of staging a dispossession of that which was never one's own to lose in the first place – and thus, precisely by occluding structural lack as determinate loss, would exemplify the strictly perverse effort to assert a relation with the non-relational. (Comay, 2005, p. 89)

Fundamentally, a relation to non-relation, as such, the "complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound" (Freud, 1957, p. 252), because the work of renunciation as might be envisaged or possible in the processes that involve mourning refuses to occur or refuses to be evoked, thus causing the melancholic to occlude the exalted experience of an ungrievable yet performatively grief-stricken loss that she/he thereby seems to claim for

her/himself. This occlusion occurs because a resolution has not been arrived at in regards to the nature of the relationship between the subject and the lost object. For Freud, mourning meant repudiation of the narcissistic logic of holding on to the object for the self or subject's own identificatory ends. In melancholia, this repudiation cannot be possible for the melancholic identifies precisely along the lines of this loss; the melancholic is the very loss that she/he apparently – rather than living through and leaves behind – becomes.

This state of becoming-loss, as such, more precisely speaks to the structural ambiguity or what Freud referred to as "ambivalence" (*Ambivalenz*) that is the very epitomizing characteristic of the melancholic's self-eviscerating identity, wherein this "ambivalence is either constitutional, that is, it is attached to every love relationship of [its] particular ego, or else it emerges straight out of experiences that imply the threat of the loss of the object" (Freud, 1957, p. 256). Where "like mourning [it is] a reaction to the real loss of the love-object…it also has a condition which either is absent from normal mourning or, where it is present, transforms it into pathological mourning…the loss of the love-object is an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence of love relationships to come to the fore" (Freud, 1957, pp. 250-1). The ambivalence, which according to Freud, is lacking in mourning because it leaves no room for such apparent psychical ambiguity – the object is and will remain lost and both remembered and forgotten as such – in melancholia, because the ego preservation of the melancholic demands the preservation of the experience of loss as is, the relationship between the subject and the object of loss or the lost object does not seem to reach any sort of comfortable resolution. Rather, it hovers in the ether of an ambivalence, and a love left seemingly unfulfilled or unresolved precisely because the lost object is continually resuscitated for what appears to be a regressive enactment of its ongoing loss; here, "each

individual battle of ambivalence loosens the fixation of the libido upon the object by devaluing, disparaging and so to speak, even killing it" (Freud, 1957, p. 257) such that what is given a position of privilege is the phenomenal loss itself. Mourning becomes subsequently and apparently impossible in this scene, because ambivalence reigns over the relationship that could otherwise only be fulfilled through an acceptance of the subject disengaging from the lost object once and for all, withdrawing from the ties that bind it, first and foremost, to this lost object but more immediately to the loss itself. Hence, Freud would have believed that renunciation gives way to the structuring of the experience of mourning work, but in melancholia the ambivalence is a negation of the object, and the persistence of the love relationship as being and existing beyond the lost object, living in the very inscription of loss itself.

Self-exposure in the melancholic is her/his way of thereby surreptitiously acknowledging a love beyond and after the object, a love for her/himself as mediated through the eviction of the object so that the loss of this beloved of all objects could then be the very substance of the self's own fantastical identity; "the perverse simultaneity of acknowledgement and disavowal [as] the condition of historicity" (Comay, 2005, p. 90). This love is pertinent for the melancholic, for without it, she/he cannot be, the very figure of a becoming-loss that supersedes the object of loss itself. While in mourning, the love is only love when renunciation has been both irrevocably possible and acknowledged, and the object is remembered as having been lost and remains dis-membered as such and disentangled from the subject, in melancholia, the intentionality of the love is to preserve the ego of the subject; herein rather than forming a relation with the lost object by acknowledging that it has been fundamentally lost, the self "[takes] flight into the ego [so] that love [of the self] escapes

abolition" (Freud, 1957, p. 257). Without this love for its own self, for its own identity being founded, pun intended, on the lose of some thing – an ideal, a nation, an object, a person, or the sensuality of belonging – of seemingly tantamount value, of whose value itself becomes irrelevant, the self ceases to exist in its melancholic stupefaction.

As can be seen in the detailed exploration of the two psychical states, Freud was, it would appear, quite transparent in his privileging of the work of mourning, the work of object repudiation and renunciation as being a stance of a necessary ethical release (a secondary violence following the anterior violence of loss itself) of the lost object from the grip of the self's relation to its romanticized, idealized, and, as mentioned before, exalted loss, into the space of a remembrance that can only take place in the face of a perpetual promise of the possibility of it being irrevocably forgotten. Here, the object dies, its death is declared, and this dying becomes commensurate in it being commemorated by a somber gesture of letting go, a release and a relieving, that leaves the corpse of the lost object untouched by a self that has negotiated, as difficult as it may have been, an acknowledgment of this loss. His diagnosis of melancholia as a narcissistic pathology, however, alternatively articulated a desire to think of loss in that space – of being pathological – as being utilized against the lost object as such. Melancholia valorized not the object (or the literal other of loss, the lost other), but the loss itself, and thus only ever worked, for him, to serve the recuperation of a self in the structure of the experience of the loss itself. He deemed this as a narcissistic articulation of the self, and thus a negation and violation of the object of loss. Its death declared only to proclaim in this declaration the heightened suffering of the self. In what might appear as a direct contradiction to this logic proposed by Freud, however, there appears another possible trajectory for thinking through the seeming opposition of mourning

and melancholia to one another, as proposed by Slavoj Zizek, wherein he asks us to consider the melancholic's fixation as having a generative potency beyond being a site of narcissistic self-reliance; for him, melancholia instantiates philosophical thinking as such:

> How are we to unravel this paradox of mourning an object that is not yet lost, that is still here? The key to this enigma resides in Freud's precise formulation, according to which the melancholic is not aware of what he had lost in the lost object. One has to introduce here the…distinction between the object and the (object-) cause of desire: while the object of desire is simply the desired object, the cause of desire is the feature on account of which we desire the desired object (some detail or tic, which we are usually unaware of and sometimes even misperceive as the obstacle, as that in spite of which we desire the object). From this perspective, the melancholic is not primarily the subject fixated on the lost object, unable to perform the work of mourning, but rather the subject who possesses the object but has lost his desire for it because the cause that made him desire this object has withdrawn, lost its efficiency. Far from accentuating to the extreme the situation of the frustrated desire, of the desire deprived of its object, melancholy rather stands for the presence of the object itself deprived of the desire for itself. Melancholy occurs when we finally get the desired object, but are disappointed in it. In this precise sense, melancholy (disappointment at all positive, observable objects, none of which can satisfy our desire) effectively is the beginning of philosophy. (Zizek, 2000, p. 662)

Here, philosophy itself, or more specifically the philosophy of history – materialist historiography, even more specifically speaking – as W. Benjamin imagined it being summoned up in the look back of the angel seems to owe its birth and survival to the melancholic disposition. The wound of the look, as it slices through a time presumed to be linear, if it were held in a rapture that claimed to be melancholic would indeed, or it would seem, bleed a sort of philosophical intuition that required profound suffering – here, for Zizek, it becomes the affect of an originary disappointment – to be the chief characteristic in contemplating the relationship between the past and the present as it gets reconstituted and regarded in the form of the ever-changing and radicalized montage. The look here, seems, to garner a sort of elliptical sheen; it appears to be elliptical in its very structure of incompletion

for in it is the essence of a contemplative moment that re-members time forgotten outside of a progressive historicity, a time outside of goals and knowability, a remembering of a time that can only ever be remembered as forgotten. The melancholic's love for the object of loss it looks upon, precisely the past of temporality as it lays in ruins, as in the case of the wreckage left at the feet of the angel, is a love that struggles against its own irretrievable exile. Fixation, as Comay suggests, it would seem "yields a form of rupture" (Comay, 2005, p. 95). The obsessive look upon a rubble heap which then seems to insistently negotiate the catastrophic accumulation of a potently cogent collections of varied and myriad histories of traumas becomes heretofore the instance of an apparent transgressive rupture, an open wound, that resists closing in on its own identity through the formulation of mourning rituals that might be claimed to be empty or might continue to remain as such, for the intentionality of an ongoing and persistent gaze allows for the angel, and the materialist historian, to recuperate the memory of the past for the living that is to occur in the present in a manner such that catastrophe might be set up against the economy of its structural other, redemption. We will return to the concern regarding this economy of redemption or the redemptive in the look back, shortly.

Let us briefly pause though, here, over this suggestive polarity that has been described in the specular experience of the angel. Freud deems the ethical as residing in the articulation of a mourning that enables the object of loss to be relieved of the weight of the subject's dependence on it for her/his own intrinsic identity or identification. He alternatively situated melancholia as severely pathological, narcissistic, precisely self-aggrandizing in the very act of the subject being cast in the sadomasochistic performance of her/his own seemingly irrefutable self-flagellations – beating oneself up, perhaps literally, perhaps

figuratively, punitively punishing oneself, for enacting and consequently enduring the loss she/he has commandeered but nonetheless comes to condemn as having to claim for itself in and through its very absenting. Zizek seems to have necessitated an inversion, perhaps from a Freudian glance even a perversion, of this logic by giving melancholia the position of being the very foundation, inspiration, and affective intuition behind the structuring of philosophical thought and thinking. The seduction of melancholia, here, is to approach it as one might approach or regard philosophy itself, as the angel might regard the rising rubble heap of history, as the ragpicker might go about the business of collecting the refuse of modernity's excesses, or as a poet might go about scribing linguistic ruins structured in the form of verse, and thereby invest in this regard a thought that privileges traumatic loss, or the trauma of loss itself, as being imminently essential in the production of commemoration or remembrance, as such. Comay would have us understand this as a "[temptation] to see in the very stubbornness of the attachment – the 'loyalty to things' – a certain ethical dimension: the refusal to perform the mourning work of renunciation through symbolic mediation might seem to [here] involve an encrypting of alterity within the interiority of the subject, which would as such divest itself of its illusory sufficiency or self-containment" (Comay, 2005, p. 88). The rupture in temporality, the open wound, burns and borrows through the very fabric of a comfort and reliance in stagnancy as played out in the gesture of encrypting such alterity; there is no end, it would seem here, in sight to the suffering that will then be generative – or so, it is believed – for the melancholic.

What if, though, there is no ethical transgression residing, per se, in either position – be it in the release of the lost object by what Freud might have regarded as the benevolent mourner or the retrieval of the figuration of loss, in the form of an encrypted alterity, in the

melancholic, where a holding on as opposed to a letting go appears to be "righteously" commemorative? What if, in another sense contrarily speaking, either position was, perhaps, equivalently transgressive in the ethical sense of remaining true to the object of loss, wherein it would bequeath us not to privilege one position over the other as being the more ethically sanctioned stance? What if the philosophy of the instance culled from the look back of the angel, or the subject, or the materialist historian accumulating endless histories of catastrophic loss, the philosophizing of history as such, relied on the simultaneity of both psychical states being occupied, within the confines of one and the same time – the instance, as such? What if the look back relied on the surreptitiously simultaneous affectivity of both mourning and melancholia co-existing in the same instance? If as Michaels claims every moment is two moments, could it not be possible that in the literal or figural stagnancy of the angel, we could begin to see the very structure of both remembering and forgetting as always already existing in the same instance, "the instant of an experience, lived synchronically, which is devoid completely of any temporality" (Sinha, 1998, p. 100), wherein this very experience could then be subsequently, if only cautiously, described as a lingering abolishment, wherein the look back, the enigmatic look, of the angel, is precisely a lingering abolishment of love itself?

Here, such a stagnancy or stuck-ness as portrayed by the angel, as a lingering sort of abolishment regards the past that it hovers ever so poignantly over, to look back at, while being, in the same instance, both inextricably and perpetually abolished and even exiled into an unknown and unknowable future time or futurity by the auspices, and in the name, of progress. As such, in the realm of such a secret simultaneity as mediated through the anxious fixation of the rapturous glance found in the angel's look back, we see the tentative

negotiation of a poetry, the ordering and re-ordering of the world in the form of verse and memory, that appears as though its meditates on this task as if it were an act of rag picking through modernity's excesses; as well, we envision a history "[that] does not assume the form of the process of eternal life" (W. Benjamin, 1998, p. 178), wherein we only take account of, collate, and archive a remembering that only ever remembers the forgotten or the repressed. Here, a history that valorizes the possibility of an irreducible eternal decay, as opposed to the privileging of the presumption or the fantasy of an eternal life, regards the structure of the look back as being found straddling the ambivalence that the apparent oppositions occupy, on both the lingering, a waiting for something – redemption – to occur, that seems to be the purview of melancholia and an abolishment, of the object of loss and the ego's hold on this object, as handed out in mourner's demand to be relinquished, once and for all (if it were that easy) from the lost object's, at times, unwavering grip.

As such, let us return again to that declaration made by Freud wherein he posits the following: "If someone's need for love is not entirely satisfied…he is bound to approach every new person with…libidinal anticipatory ideas" (Freud, 1958, p. 100). How would we position this anticipation, as such, alongside our present consideration of a mourning and a melancholia that might not be imagined as being so opposed to one another, but, perhaps, be informed by one another, might in fact structure one another and be formed around each other's simultaneous existence, of occurring in a simultaneity that resists the privileging of one over the other? How would we regard then, this look back, of the angel, as a look of, perhaps above all else, love, for was it not posited by W. Benjamin himself that this angel "would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 257)?

Both instances – of mourning and melancholia – being governed by a generative promise, to awaken the dead, with full knowledge that remembering might itself be a betrayal of their death, that which stems from a love to retrieve and remember; both being a love that might be tentatively looked upon as simultaneously the act that initiates the look of the angel of history as an ethical response to the dead and what we might inherit from them – the difficult traumas – and the subsequent aftermath of what becomes the seemingly violent yet necessarily ethical prison of the look itself, a love invested in an elsewhere in the form of a transferential encounter onto the ruins of a remembrance that refuse to be forgotten, but also only ever remembers forgetting in and of itself. In the simultaneity of two moments, one of mourning ungrievable loss through a release of the lost object into the ether of the loss itself, and one of melancholically seeming to appear to retrieve the lost object through a holding on to the structure of the loss as affect itself, perhaps what is negotiated, as well, is the simultaneous existence of two instances of love in the same instance lived synchronically. In one instance, we find a love *of* the ruins, the memories themselves, acting as possible coded fetishistic stand-ins for the evocation of commemorative gestures that claim to do the mourning work of remembrance and memorialization, and, on the other, a love *from* the ruins, where these ruins, of the remembered past, act as metonymic supplements or substitutes, surrogates as such, in which we invest anticipatory ideas and fantasies that might allow us to address the ambivalent relationship we have with a specific traumatic past. Furthermore, it might be important to consider that we find a theory of a love that invokes and revokes the past in and from memory, a love that invokes memory only ever to revoke the past-ness, the very temporality, of the past, a love that is the very ruins of subjectivity, the memories themselves. As such, we find that the ruins of the remembered past, as they might

also be prone to an irresistible decay (both the ghosts of Freud and W. Benjamin haunt us here), are the very condition of and for a love of memory, that they condition a love necessary for an ethical historicity that always tries to look back, and look again and again for redemption of and against loss in the dust, at some thing that is not immediately visible or could easily be recuperated. Such a love, precisely as a mediation of redemption or a mediation of what can be continually redeemed from the past for present living, makes for the optical possibility of beholding the invisible, beholding in the invisible, in the remains or in what remains of memory, a condition of and for a historicity that considers not what it regards but the precise nature of the regard or the look itself. What lies here is a promise to both never forget and always only remember forgetting in the very moment of a repetition that becomes the template for this love against an always already irresistible erasure, of both my self and the other.

**A Love Against Erasure**

How might we be able to productively garner an understanding of the aforementioned economy of redemption within the universe of such a love that seems to straddle the simultaneity of both remembrance and forgetting, of both a secret acknowledgement and, as well, a secret disavowal of loss, of both mourning and melancholia? Furthermore, how might we be able to regard this redemption in the look back, of the angel or of the materialist historian, for that matter, or the patient on the analytic couch, in what appears to be a constellation of contested memories that attempts a bridging, tentative as it is, between the past and the present? Redemption, as it negotiates the striations and the frayed edges of a memory, continually under the auspices of construction and destruction, always open to the possibility of its own erasure and/or repression, seems to be the final watchword on the table

in this sense, as it approaches a love of and for, but more specifically *in*, memory that recuperates the desire for seeing the unseen in the remains, "beholding the invisible," or rather, curing the ever-prescient possibility of a loss, as such, of the self that remembers and exists through this remembering, and the other that appears as having been lost (or appears as loss itself), and also, simultaneously exists through this very remembering.

Mobilized, as suggested earlier, by art historian and film theorist Kaja Silveman, this phraseology surrounding erasure, behold the invisible, seems to announce a spectatorship of supposed ruins – the site and sight of both ultimate visibility in what remains and invisibility in what appears to have been supposedly lost. Ruins, as such, might stand in as complex yet crucial metaphors for a memory that is laid out in plain sight, as such, for a memory that remains as yet to be recovered from a forgetting or a loss and sighted and cited as such. The angel looking at the dramatic wreckage being piled high, skyward, seeks to address the catastrophic historicity that is magnanimously being presented to it through a desire to, as W. Benjamin suggested, "awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed." This desire to awaken the dead vis-à-vis a compulsive inability to turn away the look from – or rather a return always already back to the look and the look back upon – what lies in front of it, as a way to redeem from the past, what can be or has been lost to it, in and for the present moment, there seems to be an echo of a sort of a "cure by love" which seems to be, again, the site and sight of taking stock of, keeping account of, and even possibly citing what might appear as a series of redeemable specular grievances against history's encumbrances. Such grievances – catastrophic caesuras in the form of historical events that annul any sense of a linear temporality through a continual rupturing of time within the very impulse to look back itself – require to be dealt with a love that reflects an ethical attentiveness and responsiveness

as it works against and negates erasure. Mobilizing Duras and Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* as the site of her textual exegesis, and speaking against the specter of such an erasure and the possibility of an invisibility that requires to be redeemed as in the case of what is being perceived in the look back, Silverman is radically insistent in making a case for this cure by love as fundamental, perhaps even indispensable, to the tie that binds the past with the present:

> What Freud calls "the cure by love," on the other hand, represents the triumph of relationality; it is a cure through and for displacement. The cure by love frees us from fixation through the formation of a new libidinal relation. Indeed, its whole point is to bring about the reconstitution of the past in the guise of the present. To the degree that what was asserts its priority over what is, the cure by love has failed. Although Freud himself tells us that we must love or fall ill, we are not accustomed to conceptualizing love as a cure. We are generally less aware of its medicinal properties than of its powers of intoxication. This is because we are accustomed to thinking in narcissistic ways about love. *Hiroshima, mon amour* encourages us to approach this topic from the other direction: from the direction of what is loved. It asks us to conceptualize love not in the form either of the aggrandizement or rapture of the one who loves, but rather in the form of care for the world. It suggests that creatures and things are in need of this care because without it they cannot help but suffer from the most serious of all maladies: invisibility. (Silverman, 2005, p. 42)

We will return to read into the significance of this passage, and more specifically, this invocation of Freud, in a manner much more nuanced in the chapters to follow, most specifically, in the chapter that returns us to take a closer look at *Hiroshima, mon amour*. For now however, under our present consideration of the effect of the look, as it experiences in itself the affect of loss, within the enactment it attempts at of a redemption of memory from the past for the present living, it is as though such a loving look, acts against invisibility by laying claim to the notion that invisibility might very well be a possible or inevitable outcome. It would seem that the cure by love starts from the premise that invisibility, “the

most serious of maladies," always pushes up against any possibility to resuscitate the image of the past for the present. It is as though this cure by love is always regarding with grave concern the idea that "the patient's state of being ill cannot cease with the beginning of his analysis, and that we must treat his illness, not as an event of the past, but as a present-day force" (Freud, 2006b, p. 396). Furthermore, if redemption were to be both a requirement for this cure by love, and its subsequent affirmatively appropriable aftermath, where the love is an act of bringing to the fore that which cannot immediately be seen, then redemption must also take serious note of that Benjaminian conviction that "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present…threatens to disappear irretrievably" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255). It is as though this cure by love, as suggested by Silverman, is the very structure of a conjuring of memory and remembrance, the very embodying of memory itself as the "triumph of relationality," that ties the present with the past, that allows for the generative tendencies of repetition to retroactively enact themselves in the process of addressing the subject's encounter with trauma, and that seems to traverse the incredibly fine line between the experience of mourning, the letting go necessary for the release of the object of love from the self's grip, and of melancholia as a possible commemorative byproduct of loss itself.

If catastrophe is the missing of opportunities – for the retrieval of the past for present living, life, and livability – within the scene of historical time left in a state of rupture, as suggested by W. Benjamin, then redemption, here, is always already a redemption of loss through a love that makes the invisible visible, a conjuring up of remembrance against erasure. Redemption always occurs in and occupies the fragility of the now-time, where this now is the time of a simultaneity that, at first, distends temporality as such, and then gives it over to its own eruption – a wounding – through the interruption that might be mediated

within the look and looking of the look back, the death of the past and the birth of the present and its foretelling in the form of a futurity always in the process of being made, happening in the same instance, of both a simultaneous acknowledgement of loss in mourning and its structural disavowal in the experience of the melancholic. The economy of redemption in the look back exists in the possibility of what can be inherited in and from the field of the optical – the summoning of the love that exists for the invisible, a love found in the ruins as such for what remains after loss and what was lost, in the same instance; a love of and for relationality. What appears as recuperative and, perhaps as well, reparative in the tendency toward a redemptive repetition across temporality or in the precise nature of the redeemable can be best described as has been envisioned in W. Benjamin's Thesis II, wherein he reminds us of the "secret agreement between past generations and the present." Herein, lies possibly an ethical dimension to relationality and responsiveness, in the very bond between the past and the present, an instance of relationality in the now that can only seek a necessary strength in the conjuring up of the past via a cure by love in the present:

> The past carries with it a hidden index by which it is referred to redemption. Doesn't the breath of the air that pervaded earlier days caress us as well? In the voices we hear, isn't there an echo of now silent ones? Don't the women we court have sisters they no longer recognize? If so, then there is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Then our coming was expected on earth. Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim. (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 254)

It is this perceptive conjuring of the world – its discerning evocation against an invisibility that plagues it and its continued revival and renewal vis-à-vis our relationship to and with the past, in the enactment of the look back at the wreckage, ruins seemingly imbued by historical catastrophes, the ruins of and within memory – that can be redeemed in the look

that becomes the necessary impetus behind this cure by love that seeks to formulate relationality as the ethical paradigm which holds the past together with the present. Does this not structure an essential core to the living that could take place in the present, this relationality? Can this desire to ethically relate to an other of and in the past be the very basis of accounting for the accumulated wreckage of our catastrophic and collective traumas? Is this not, perhaps, the ethical dimension inherent in relationality itself, to not flee from such scenes of relationality for fear of the unknown or the unknowable, for fear of the loss of oneself in the other of the past, for perhaps the only relation that matters is precisely the one in which one might lose one self in the past-ness of the past as a compulsorily unavoidable prerequisite for present living? Could this not be the triumph of a love against erasure, of a relationality against an ever momentous invisibility, of this cure by love, this demand for an ethics wherein we might relate to the other of the past, our pasts, in love, in sadness, in grief, in comedy, in anger, in madness, in tragedy, in all the uncanny brokenness of the world?

In the three chapters to follow, this cure by love as formulated in the triumphant relationality that it might inspire between the past and the present becomes the central and founding concern as we examine how the look back commands a way in which we remember and forget the past, and thereby have a relationship that is both recuperative while also being informed by "irresistible decay" – it is the simultaneity of these synchronous events that are opposed within the instance of both their doing and undoing that becomes paramount to this exploration. In chapter three, as mentioned earlier, I will conduct a close reading of Anne Michaels's novel *Fugitive Pieces*, wherein I will underscore the aforementioned simultaneity within the philosophical impetus behind her comment, "every moment is two moments." Here, the focus will be on how language, laid in ruins, offers us a way to come to terms with

irreparable loss – both material and fantastical – and the traumatic rupture in time therein. The work of the poet – both in how Anne Michaels herself identifies and then goes about structuring her narrative and in how her central character the poet Jakob Beers comes to terms with the losses of his past – in tending to the ruins of memory vis-à-vis the ruination of language itself becomes imperative in how we think through the conjuring of a past, as a way for living in the present, as a way to account for present life as one looks back at this distant past. In chapter four, I turn my attention to another, more structural, in the literal sense, concern, the very physicality of the ruin and of ruination as a site for both remembrance and forgetting, and how an ethical look back might be a look back at what we have gained and lost in the space of a cure by love, what we have gained in the losing and what was lost in the aftermath of recuperation. Photographer David Maisel's series *Library of Dust* becomes the subject of the conversation in this chapter, wherein the two moments existing in a secret bond or rather in the instance of a simultaneous co-existence are the moments of beauty and horror – beauty as visualized in the precise manner in which the images capture the objects that have been photographed and horror in the way in which these objects, corroding, rust-drenched copper canisters, become emblematic of a history and memory of abnegation, abjection, and insurmountable losses. How we hold these apparent oppositions – of beauty and of horror – at once, in the same tentative moment, in how we look at what we look upon, in how we regard these physical structures in ruin and what memories they thread and negotiate within the experience of the displayed photograph, as simultaneous art object and as an ambivalent gesture of and for commemoration become significant to the discussion I hope to engage in. Again, relationality vis-à-vis a cure by love becomes the foundational blueprint for my exploration of how the look at what remains becomes configured herein. In

the final chapter, a comparative exercise will allow me to return more closely to the prosaic nature of the look itself – the look back as a look that allows for an ethical relationality between the past and present. Herein, I situate the look in how it has been written into the transferential love relationship that structures the basis of Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's narrative in *Hiroshima, mon amour* against the act of looking as it is engaged with, as a work of both mourning and melancholia existing simultaneously in the more recent *Amour* by Michael Haneke, which I plan to consider as the latter's response to Duras and Resnais; an uncanny response at that, I will argue, rooted in the complex complicity between memory and relationality in how we come to or are forced to look upon trauma. As such, with regards to both films, the concern is to explore how the looking or the look back itself (or rather, how it is conceived of in both these instances) as an act of encountering or recuperating trauma functions in the way in which the notion of a cure by love via such a look allows us to regard how historicity is both a site of remembrance and loss; how representation and the look it invites, and sometimes implies, can only be encountered through such a simultaneous remembering and forgetting. When we look at historical events – catastrophes that rupture our sense of a linear temporality – how we relate to the look, or rather, more specifically, the act of looking or looking back (as either an artist or her/his audience) becomes central to how we understand it as an ethical measure regarding a response to the past from the moment of the present. What we inherit and how that inheritance becomes figured in the foreground of the enigmatic look, or rather how we define the terms of our encounter with what remains of the past thus becomes encrypted in the demand to look as such.

It is important, at this moment, to note that the rationale behind the "textual" scenes I

have chosen for my study – Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*, David Maisel's *Library of Dust*, Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* and Michael Haneke's *Amour* – is not immediately or easily intuitive. Figured and grounded in the obstinately difficult experience or, dare I say, task of trauma, I wanted to use the metaphorized trope of the ruin and the engendering of the act of the look back upon such ruins, as displayed within W. Benjamin's reading of the angel of history, as the ways by which to enter a sanctioned mediation of how we might be able to account for and understand how trauma becomes placed within a historical consciousness that contends with and always already has to contend with the indexicality of ruptured time and temporality and a redemption always already deferred and even delayed.

In Michaels's novel, language itself, as showcased in the work of the poet (consider Baudelaire) becomes the site of an irresistible and interminable decay that accounts for the trauma that bridges the past with present living. The physical and uncontrollable decay of the canisters in Maisel's evocative photographs come to be regarded as a site of the aforementioned simultaneity – of the co-existence of that which can be both grotesquely beautiful and horrifically sublime – and the object of the photograph itself, as both commemorative artifact and site of temporal ruination, comes to be understood as a meditation on how time itself becomes spliced or annulled, left in ruins, a ruin literalized in the look we afford the photographic object. In both the films – by Duras and Resnais and Haneke – the ruin is spatial and embodied, respectively. We will see that the return to a ruined geopolitical site as in the case with a return to Hiroshima in Duras and Resnais's film becomes infiltrated with a look back that regards trauma both at an eternal distance and with an infinite intimacy that is, at once, simultaneously almost unbearable in its grave severity

yet incredibly irreducible within the realm of the ethical relationality that is being made a case for. In *Amour*, on the other hand and in concurrence with the reading of *Hiroshima, mon amour* that I hope to make, the ruin is even further localized, as will be seen. It becomes or is shown as being embodied in the very nature of the body's disembodiment, wherein the body in ruins, in the state of uninhibited aging and irrecuperable decay, becomes the object of the look back that cannot be forcibly averted by the film's audience; that ruined object of an embodied and naturalized catastrophe, as will be described later, that Haneke forces us, as his audience, to continually look upon – a redemption in bodily decay.

In all these, the attempt is to think through the experiential and affective dimensions of the traumatic field in historical time closely and carefully with the task of articulating an ethical demand and response embedded in the compulsive nature to look back, to continually think the look upon the past and its accumulations as not merely being either mournful or melancholic in temperament or disposition, but as being informed by a love that privileges a paradigmatic relationality, above all else, between the past and the present in the moment of a ruptured historicity. Through such a commitment toward the ethical that which might be garnered from a difficult yet loving look back, it is hoped that a better understanding might be had of those haunting words that signify the core of this project: redemption and inheritance; as in what, if anything, can be redeemed from the past for present life and what can we inherit, if only tentatively, from this complicated promise of a redemption that is structured in the very rupture and rupturing of history which this look back seems to signify, demand, and instantiate.

# Chapter Three:
# "I see that I must give what I most need":
# Between Loss and Language in Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces*

**Giving forgetting too.**
- (Prenowitz in Derrida, 1995, p. 105)

**…within the hollow crypt of subjectivity, the object persists as living corpse.**
- (Comay, 2005, p. 95)

## An Opening, Then to Empty

At the very end of his now canonical text, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, in the "Epilogue" to that study, Paul Ricoeur offers us a suggestive starting point for my considerations – a poem that examines the "under" space of his subjects of investigation – themselves signs, stars, constellations of thought – namely history, memory, forgetting:

> Under history, memory, and forgetting.
> Under memory and forgetting, life.
> But writing a life is another story.
> Incompletion (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 506)

Why this poem becomes quite instructive for me as I embark on an exploration of Anne Michaels's compelling novel *Fugitive Pieces*, resides in the final word that Ricoeur himself inscribes: incompletion. This other story, incompletion, announces a task as yet to be rendered complete, as yet to be given over to its own fulfillment, as yet to be written fully, without apparent error, "under" perhaps the signs of history, memory, and the always already haunting presence of forgetting, repression, and loss. Writing a life, under the signs of these – history, memory, forgetting – thus becomes the task needing completion, the task that

announces itself, as incomplete, interrupted, broken, ruptured, left in ruins, fragments, fugitive and unruly pieces.

How do we learn to contain these fragments that life presents us with in the very sense of an always already present threat of their possible disappearance and plausible loss? How do we underscore the ways in which we might bound these fugitive pieces that one might attempt to remember and recall? How do we account for the rubble heap left within and at the fringes of the site of memory? How do we retrieve the detritus material – that essential material – that exists at the contours of the task of containment; containment being rendered possible within the act, the task, and the very process of writing – or speaking, as the case may be in the analytic setting – subjective life? Writing life, thus, then begins at this point – if we can call it a "point" as such, a point of departure rather than one of origin, perhaps – of not ever being fully possible; it begins with and is borne out of the sense of possible loss. Writing and/or speaking subjective life is, thus, a process given over to the loss inscribed in the recuperative experience of anamnesis. A definitional pause is required before I go any further in addressing what exactly might be rendered in and through the relationship between loss and this experience known as anamnesis, and, by extension, in and through the relationship between remembering and the writing or speaking of life, the ascribing of meaning to memory within the spaces of either writing or speaking life. For Andrew Benjamin:

> Anamnesis means remembrance or reminiscence, the collection and re-collection of what has been lost, forgotten, or effaced. It is therefore a matter of the very old, of what has made us who we are. But anamnesis is also a work that transforms its subject, always producing something new. To recollect the old, to produce the new: that is the task of anamnesis. (A. Benjamin, 2009, p. ii)

At first glance, it would appear anamnesis has something to say regarding the structure of the ruin – the mediation between something being held up as fetish object or commodity, while also being beholden to its capacity for irresistible decay. Between the old and the new, between that which is remembered by a subject, by us as subjects in all generality – the unsettling memory of repressed (and subsequently remembered) trauma, to be sure – and that which is produced within and then by a subject, or within and then by us, again, as subjects in the collective sense, in all generality, under the sign of newness, a biography of sorts of the repressed trauma limited by the language of written inscription or speech, is the "wounded landscape" (Michaels, 1996, p. 59), to borrow a phrase from Michaels's text, of memory. So between loss, as structured along the striations that exist amidst remembrance and forgetting and its place in the writing and/or speaking of life; between trauma, that accumulated sedimentation of unresolved experiences with pain and of grief within life, experienced all the more in the sense of time forced out of bounds and out of step with itself or in the manner of ruptured temporality, and the space of inscription in the form of text or speech, that container of newness rendered possible through the site of writing and/or speaking life, exists the wounded spaces of memory, the space opened up and, then, emptied out through the remembrance, the recuperation, the recollection, and the reminiscence that anamnesis promises or makes both tediously and tentatively possible against forgetting and against invisibility, made operative all the more precisely because forgetting continues to haunt memory.

In such a scene, what, then, is memory, but an "open wound,"[1] which must necessarily irritate and persist in its insistent irritation both in manners surreptitious and

[1] This is a nod to Freud's conceptualization of the experience of melancholia, wherein it is famously known that he utilizes the image of an open wound in his 1917 essay "Mourning and Melancholia." Accordingly for him,

public, such that we evade and elude its threatening possibility to fall into forgetting, its seemingly inevitable journey toward "irresistible decay," as suggested by W. Benjamin, and deterioration? What is contained within the overflowing contours of encrypted memory, but a haunting of the most ephemeral manner, which, in the Proustian sense, gives way to, or flows into, our "search of lost time"? It is this impregnable persistence, or we could, again, even say an insistence, of memory, both in its failure to be ever fully recuperated and its always already felt visibility in the form of anamnestic traces, which becomes the narrative arc upon which this chapter attempts to do a reading of how, in Michaels's novel, we understand the task of writing and/or speaking subjective life, as perhaps also the task of encountering – having a confrontation, perhaps in the dialectical sense, with – the trauma of loss, and the production of the new, the subject's remembrances. Anamnesis, thus, if we were to consider its relation to the act of writing or speaking subjective life, to memorializing living itself, through its own recuperative gesture, allows for the subject to be within the space of the new, of the very recuperation of subjectivity, of making it visible and prized to the subject her/himself.

Anamnesis, thus, makes possible a retrieval of that which is historic to us, trauma, and subsequently, perhaps even consequentially, allows for subjectivity to be born anew, opened and emptied – a necessary opening and an essential emptying, a laying bare for the possibility of subjective writing and/or speaking to take place. Subjectivity, laid bare, opened up and emptied out through this task of reminiscence, within this scene, as such, of an exposure, of the wound it holds and carries with it, exposed to its own remembered past – its

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and as mentioned and explored in detail earlier in this project, the "complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound drawing investment energies to itself from all sides…and draining the ego to the point of complete impoverishment" (Freud, 1957, pp. 252-3). It would seem by utilizing this image-metaphor of an open wound, what Freud alludes to is the persistence and insistence of melancholia upon the subject who experiences it, much like a wound that refuses to heal fully.

own memory of itself – excavated and evacuated of all its moral imperatives, ethical accoutrements, and eschatological impulses, idealizations, and desires, becomes but a mere empty shell, a vacant cocoon, a refurbished tabula rasa within the distilled confines of the confrontation it might possibly have with its own unspeakable and incommensurable trauma, as it remains captive, held encrypted as both prisoner and hostage, to its own backward-looking glance at a life, then to be written and continually re-written, inscribed and repetitively re-inscribed within the space of the narrative or the narration of this repressed trauma. Anamnesis can, perhaps, be located in the enigma of the look back, the backward-looking glance that holds the one enacting this act of looking back in its rapturous look onto that "wounded landscape," again to borrow Michaels's phrase, of memory, to see in one's past what is not immediately visible or what cannot easily be made visible.

It is imperative here to account for something, for why in this gesture toward understanding anamnesis as embedded within the gesture of the look back, in retrieving the old to produce the new, I privilege memory over history, error in details, temporal interruption and narrative incompletion over seeming correctives and apparent fulfillment. The task of opening a traumatic wound – trauma, here, being unspeakable, resisting both presentation and "authentic" re-presentation, or eliding any sort of symbolization, symbolic mediation, or temporalization – and emptying out subjectivity, so to speak, to give it a possibility to work through the unresolved experience(s) that garnered the wound in the first place, perhaps the experience of some loss or other, is always, as with anamnesis itself, borne of the possibility of it being riveted by and cathected to its own ruptures, of the possibility of ongoing and continued working and reworking through the act of glancing back. History – that quantified, or rather more precisely that seemingly quantifiable, tome of both arcane and

archaic knowledge – can itself be challenged of and for its apparent claim toward speculative accuracy and presumed authenticity, and can, as well, be worked and re-worked. The work of the historian, or rather more specifically the materialist historian, is, admittedly, never over. This work itself is one of ongoing and continued, perhaps everlasting anamnesis. However, history and the very methodological practices that inform historiography are always already given a privileged – perhaps, one might (and justifiably so) argue, unfairly so – place in the structural social systems and institutional public spheres that abound everyday cultural and socio-political life. Memory, on the other hand, often devalued, evacuated of its substance from the public sphere, and relegated to (and, sometimes, even regulated within) the scenes that pertain to private life, the space of the interpersonal, the catastrophic place of missed possibilities and opportunities, incommensurable meetings, accidental passings and painful glances overflowing with longing. History, to an extent and without appearing to be so grandiose in making such a statement, appears to depersonalize the subject. It becomes, in a manner of speaking, a possession of the state, the collective – a melancholy possession, at that – after it has been dispossessed off subjectivity and dispossesses the subject of her/his own story, particularly or more specifically the other or the otherness of the past itself. It does not take into account that history could, as well, be a space of that aforementioned simultaneity of both melancholic recuperation and simultaneous mourning. Memory (and remembrance, a remembrance against forgetting and against invisibility) remains and acts as remainder, a ruin as such, of that which remains most deeply intimate to that subject; offering the subject her/his own possibility for a biography, or as Michaels, herself, describes, for "a biography of longing" (Michaels, 1996, p. 17), either to be spoken or be given over to

inscription and ascribed, as such, with tentative meaning for the purposes of psychical life in the present.

In this sense, one might be able to understand, as such, that history's attempt at a depersonalization resists, at times, an immediate encounter with trauma, while memory, the sought-after desire for a biography of and for subjective and intense personal longing – longing to be recognized as and become visible as a subject – is already wrestling with both the possible recuperation and remembrance, as well as the irresolute forgetting or repression of those traumatic moments that inform an individual life. Accordingly, "history is amoral: events occurred. But memory is moral; what we consciously remember is what our conscience remembers" (Michaels, 1996, p. 138). For Michaels, we come to understand the contra-distinction, thus, between history and memory becomes all the more realizable upon a literal surface such as that presented by the object of the map or the practice of mapping – again landscapes, possibly given over to probable ruin and irresistible decay, become our imaginative terrain for psychic exploration – where "on the map of history, perhaps the water stain is memory" (Michaels, 1996, p. 137). The map is that historical document or document of apparent historical certitude, quantified and qualified by latitudes and longitudes, upon which a stain, the stain upon history, could be retrieved, like the impression or imprint etched upon Freud's mystic pad[2]. The map becomes the archive, the stain upon it the memory (the ruin and ruined memory), perhaps, of historical trauma. My desire is to investigate the pertinence and persistence of memory's psychoanalytic utility, in how we, or one might, encounter this trauma, its possible erasure, and the writing and/or speaking of an individual

[2] In his 1925 essay "Note on the 'Magic Notepad'," Freud employs the concept of a magic or mystic notepad as a metaphor to describe the psychic process by which we receive information from the external world, as in the manner of a trace-like impression. However, precisely because of its trace-like quality, this impression that enters our psychic life at the conscious level is not lasting in its effect; rather it becomes more deeply embedded and relocated to the level of the unconscious recesses of our psyche.

or subjective life, here as it is spoken, uttered, or written, left to silences that lay dormant within the place of the poetic devices and free-associative intrigue mobilized in how Michaels constructs her narrative.

This commitment to the psychoanalytic "working-through" of the subject's memory of trauma – the stain on the map of history – through the space of one's own narrative articulation might very well rehearse for us how the invisibility of her/his otherness or the otherness of one's own past itself, for instance, may allow for the continual arrangement and rearrangement of her/his own desires or longings through the anamnestic gestures that offer her/his own psychic life the opportunity for a voice outside of historical strictures, scriptures, bounds, bonds, or restrictions – a recording of one's own time as it takes a step out of bounds from, out of sync with, linear historicity. If history is the container, the very space of rational containment like a map or a mapping system, then memory is what exists on its contours, either evicted from history or given a second-order priority, at best, the misaligned and misplaced boundary that maps physical and geographical space. An opening enacted, then to empty the container to re-inscribe it with an encounter with trauma itself becomes the task of the psychoanalytic subject who desires speech or to speak her/his own narrative.

For Michaels, as we might recall from my earlier invocation of it, "every moment is two moments," where perhaps one moment is the moment recorded and anointed with the sacral blessings of apparent objective history presumed to progress into some notion of a future that lies ahead, while the other moment – other and perennially other-ed – is the moment removed from dominant and domineering historical recognition, situated at the frayed edges of the archival tome, always threatened by the imminent risk of loss or forgetting and repression, or the possibility of being rendered obsolete, incomplete, or given

over to silence. If “loss is an edge” (Michaels, 1996, p. 223) or exists at this edge, simultaneously, however, this other moment – remembrance – frustrates the edge, the contour, and threatens, as well, to seep into, to stain, so to speak, and to break the code of silence that is handed down by history. For Michaels, “silence…the response to both emptiness and fullness” (Michaels, 1996, p. 194) seems to always unnerve and threaten its own silencing. Incompletion is always reminded of the hunger for its own fulfillment. Silence is always already informed by its break, the break in the linear time of speech and inscription.

If trauma resides in this space of two simultaneous moments – to think back to how Michaels deems that every moment is composed of two moments, where as in this case silence is a response both to emptiness and fullness – then the gesture of looking back that is promised within the event of anamnesis also exists within the space of two simultaneous actions that are promised within this enigmatic look back, the acts of opening and emptying, to open the wound as such of melancholia and to simultaneously drain it of, and mourn in this act of emptying, its sense of loss as well. To open the subject would mean to allow her/him the possibility of engaging with her/his own traumatic wound – the wound that does the task of silencing – while to empty subjectivity of its baggage of catastrophic wreckage allows for it to reconstitute itself through memory and remembrance in the space of writing and/or speaking life through an engagement with trauma itself, allowing perhaps for mourning to become a possibility for the subject. These recuperative and re-collective events, of opening and emptying – the simultaneous occurrence of both melancholia’s recuperative impulse and mourning’s capacity to relinquish the subject from the grip of the open wound itself – that promise the ever fecund production of the new, this new being something that

has allowed the subject (or at the very least gesture toward allowing the subject) a possibility for a working-through toward forming a relationship to her/his own trauma, thereby rendering the subject a life, so to speak, outside of history.

Closure and fulfillment – for the victors, suggests W. Benjamin – might be the task of history, but the task of memory, remembering as such, as it takes place in the space of the literary event explored here, or in the event of the psychoanalytic working-through that occurs upon the analytic couch is always already one of opening and emptying, both to take place simultaneously such that the subject's avowal and renewal (the simultaneous acknowledgement and disavowal of the apocalyptic doublet, suggested earlier, of both catastrophe and redemption) occurs within the moment of her/him looking back at her/his own past and the otherness it represents within it becoming possibly visible. In what is to follow in the next two sections, I attempt to address a series of such moments of opening and emptying, within Michaels's novel. In the next section, *The Language of Ruins, the Ruin of Language*, I explore these moments, of opening and emptying, of both remembrance and simultaneous forgetting, within the scenes in the novel that explore the work of the translator and the task of the poet, as Michaels tries to enact them within the context of her poetic prose. As such, I attempt at trying to link these tasks with, and to, the work of the archaeologist – a recurring figure in Michaels's novel – and the very experience of psychoanalysis. In the final section, *A strange hope*, I attempt to consider the role of both melancholia and mourning in the backward-looking glance, to think through the possibility for hope to be borne out of their persistence as it is encrypted in this look back at what the subject has irrevocably lost to her/his own past. Here, such a hope finds its domicile precisely

in the attempt at binding the past to the present, such that the life of the past might have something to offer for the living that is to happen in the present instant.

**The Language of Ruins, the Ruin of Language**

Athos, the archaeologist – whose profession, as I will soon show, is neither a coincidence nor an unintentional literary Freudian slip on the part of the novel's author – who comes to save the young child Jakob Beer in the novel, says to his unexpected ward: "Write to save yourself…and someday you'll write because you've been saved" (Michaels, 1996, p. 165) – words, it would seem, resounding with the impulse to open up and empty out subjectivity in the spirit of anamnesis. It also announces the rupturing of any presumption of linear temporality. Temporally speaking, this remembering in the present of "writing to save [oneself]" anticipates a future in which such a remembering of the past will have meant the very saving of present life itself – it appears to rehearse the angel's look back at the wreckage of the past, as it becomes propelled backward into the future. As such, because of how they seem to distinguish ruptures in linear time, these words, perhaps, form one of the central tenets within Michaels's evocative novel. A descriptive break is purposive here to announce what the story in itself contains and carries.

Jewish Canadian poet Anne Michaels tries her hand at prose in her *Fugitive Pieces*, a novel, a biographical novel, it would seem, split in two – let us remember, again, her aforementioned literary gesture that every moment is two moments. To call the novel just a work of prose, in a way, would seem far too reductive. It presents itself as one long seemingly open-ended poem-like prose with its lyric turns of phrases, with its allegorical gestures, with its attempt at opening up and emptying out the subjective lives of the characters it tries to, at once, both narrate and respond to. In a literal sense, the novel itself

appears as a sort of literary ruin; Michaels appears to stage within it a literary negation of negation itself in how it appears to be prose that could only exist unless it did so within the confines of its poetic language, and as a kind of poetry that folds in on its own prose-like quality in its attempt at telling a story, to articulate, in a lyric and fragmented sense, a narrative prose. It is not merely in such a movement at attempting to narrate a life or a series of lives in the writing of them, but, as well, in the movement toward wanting perspicaciously to respond to her own characters that Michaels articulates not merely a novelistic endeavor but a poetic turn within the structure of the narration she undertakes in her novel. By offering her prose a poem-like lyric quality, she stages a wounding of the text itself that reveals that no story could just simply be told; the presumed linear language of narrative historiography and storytelling itself must be unraveled, ruined, and undone in the manner that infusing her prose with lyricism makes possible. We are not just in the universe of a narrative novel; we might very well have come upon a poem, an elliptical response, a dialogical encounter laden and infused with responsiveness for and between writer and character, and by extension, the reader, as well. She does so, from her position of being a poet herself writing a lyrically charged narrative prose about the life and work of her fiction's central figure, Jakob Beers, himself a poet (and, as well, a translator of poems).

The novel is centered on this fictional poet, Jakob Beer, who, as a child, was saved by the archaeologist Athos Roussos from the Nazis, after they invaded Poland. Jakob's family – his father, mother, and sister Bella – perishes under the hands of the perpetrators, while he alone survives, and is found by Athos in an archaeological dig near the town Biskupin, where Jakob and his family lived. Athos and Jakob subsequently escape the Nazis to the Greek island of Zakynthos where the former lives. They spend the years of the war in secrecy,

wherein Jakob has to be kept safely hidden lest the Nazis who end up invading Greece and its islands find him. During this period of hiding and seclusion, Athos inaugurates Jakob's entrance into the world of the latter's education in languages – they begin to share their languages with each other, Athos offers Jakob his knowledge in Greek and English, while Jakob shares with Athos "a little of [his] Yiddish, with smatterings of mutual Polish" (Michaels, 1996, p. 21). Athos "made [him] review [his] Hebrew alphabet," for he "didn't want [Jakob] to forget" (Michaels, 1996, p. 21). Simultaneously, it was not only in languages that Jakob was being offered lessons; he was, as well, being imparted with knowledge of geology, paleobotany, Greek mythology – "[he] learned not only the history of men but the history of the earth" (Michaels, 1996, p. 32) – the world of maps and the erosive and corrosive geographies they architected and articulated, and, also, a resounding and fruitful knowledge of poetry and the poetic form, which would inevitably inspire him to try his own hand at writing poetry and in the task of translation.

As Michaels writes, Athos was offering Jakob a "second history" (Michaels, 1996, p. 20), for he emphasized to Jakob, that "it is your future that you are remembering" (Michaels, 1996, p. 21). This future will, then, find them migrating, after the war, from Greece to Canada, from Zakynthos to Toronto, where Athos is offered a position to teach at the university. We find that as the novel proceeds Jakob is still pulled irrevocably and continually to look back at the past, to that moment in the past when his beloved sister Bella disappears from his life forever. Much of what remains in the novel is Jakob's ongoing recuperation and resuscitation of Bella's memory in this gesture of his look back – through his thoughts, his dreams, his own interest in music (Bella was a pianist), through the ways in which he comes to experience and understand his relationships with both his first and second

wives, Alex and Michaela. He also revives his memory of Bella, the nature of the filial intimacy he shared with her and subsequently lost, through his work on his own poems – which as one commentator in the novel, Jakob's friend Maurice Salman, announces "aren't poems, they're ghost stories" (Michaels, 1996, p. 163). Bella's ghostly presence may be felt in the very attempt he makes at writing poetry. Furthermore, the past continues to be evoked through his efficacious work, throughout the novel, to complete Athos's own magnum opus, *Bearing False Witness* after the latter has died, which as Michaels describes was Athos's "conscience; his record of how the Nazis abused archaeology to fabricate the past" (Michaels, 1996, p. 104). Jakob's obsession with the past, with the events of both his own past and the past in general, get re-inscribed at the site of poetry and in the work of archaeology and excavation that is represented in and by the task of translation – this becomes both his obsession to return to that moment when he lost Bella, and also, his obsession to find a way to let her go, let her memory leave him, in order to be able to mourn, move on, and remember her otherwise outside the space of a melancholic relationship to the trauma of his loss of her. What we, however, come to realize is that the structure of mourning is deeply embedded in the very experience of melancholia here, where he "must give what he most needs" (Michaels, 1996, p. 294).

Let us return, for the moment, to Athos's command: write to save yourself, and someday you'll write because you've been saved. As I mentioned earlier, this forms what appears to be a central tenet to Michaels's novel precisely because it addresses the question of writing life and the safety one finds, perhaps belatedly, in one's commitment to language. Language, however, also signifies unbearable loss here – it is a site of ruination, absences, presences, rubbles of nostalgia, fragments of memories pieced together from fragile, fugitive,

and, at times, untenable and unruly pieces from the past. Language becomes the site of an uncanny – in the Freudian sense – sort of alienation, the space of irrevocable loss and grief for Jakob, for "his life could not be stored in any language, but only in silence" (Michaels, 1996, p. 111). This silence represents the uncanny precisely because it appears to be both long familiar and gravely feared, that which is deeply intimate yet deeply revered out of the sense of horror it seems to decree from deep within it. Language, for him, becomes the site that is both a store that is overflowing with the fullness of memory and empty of the substance that he greatly desires to recall and remember – the emptiness language presents him with concerns his difficulty at fully being able to grasp within the space of such insufficient language itself his experience of losing his sister Bella. The traumatic silence, here, becomes actualized as the response to both this fullness that language promises and, simultaneously, negates through the scene of an empty space of non-representation of the trauma of loss itself. It becomes the site of containment for all that is both lost and overflowing from that loss. It becomes the site of containment of and for his subjectivity that he requires to open up, in order to empty out the trauma of his loss, and so he "thought of writing poems this way, in code, every letter askew, so that loss would wreck the language, become the language" (Michaels, 1996, p. 111). Loss wrecking the language, so that loss becomes the language, so that the wreckage comes to amount to what is implicitly lost within language's interior incapacity to represent the traumatic silence that is always already built into it for Jakob – this loss as embedded within his very experience of language in the scenes of writing and translating poetry become pivotal to his experience of the traumatic loss he seems to continually encounter within the memory of his beloved sister.

Language as loss, language as alienating the lost subject, lost language as alienated from the subaltern or other-ed subject: is this alienation not, in some manner of speaking, feverishly symptomatic of the experience of modernity, of modernity's trauma, of the silence built into this trauma that informs the modern subject and her/his relationship to the losses incurred over the course of her/his life, as s/he attempts to recall them anamnestically from memory's cavernous and tentative spaces? Absences and presences abound in this exercise of anamnesis, and even more so, that which is visible and that which remains invisible and requires to be brought into visibility govern this exercise. The ruin, language as the terrain of this ruin, becomes a signifier to understanding the rubble heap of fugitive words that cloud the site of unreliable yet unrelenting memory, that crowd the site of both simultaneous remembering and forgetting. Language as ruination fulfills this promise of alienation, for in the ruin we find insight for and toward the anamnestic practice of excavating the subject's psychic life from within the scene of "irresistible decay." I alluded, earlier, to Athos's profession as not merely an accident, unintentional, or even coincidental. Athos, as archaeologist, provides the command: write to save yourself and someday you'll write because you've been saved; is this not precisely the work of the psychoanalytic endeavor itself and the psychoanalyst as biographer of and for the analysand and her/his longings, this work of anamnesis, of excavating memory from the unconscious recesses of the latter's psychic life? Athos, in a way, through these, his imperative and his offering to Jakob of an education, of a "second history," a "remembrance of his future" as yet to happen, also offers his ward the possibility to mine and excavate the losses that abound his psychic life, specifically the loss of that which he loved most, his sister Bella. Athos's offering is obviously with the knowledge that what Jakob has lost is irreplaceable; it references the

traumatic silence within which Jakob is trapped, unable to articulate his loss or detach and relinquish himself from this loss's grasp. In this scene of traumatic loss and traumatic unbounded, overflowing silence, Athos "longs to steal [Jakob's] memories from [him] while [he's] sleeping, to siphon off [his] dreams" (Michaels, 1996, p. 92). Here, we find the analyst's own dream-like wish desires its own aporetic fulfillment.

That which is invisible abound in and overflow from the subject's psychic life – these become significant in our exploration of the terrain of language, the terrain left in ruins after we account for what language leaves outside of itself, within the space of those traumatic silences, the silences that act as both responses to fullness and emptiness, at one and the same moment. Though, let us remember again, each moment is, always already, almost resolutely, two moments; each moment is simultaneously both absence and presence, both the logic of the visible and the logic of that which remains invisible, and thereby unconscious. For Michaels, "most discover absence for themselves; trees are ripped out and sorrow floods the clearing. Then we know what we loved" (Michaels, 1996, p. 233). This invisibility reminds us of that which was once there, but now is irrevocably lost. The ruin and its rubble remind us not merely of loss and alienation, but also of the objects, lost, signified and enveloped by and within our experience of our loss of them. It is what remains, acts as remainder of that loss in the very "what remains" of temporal disruption unearthed as fundamental attribute to the experience of trauma. It returns itself in the form of an invisible presence, enigmatically wrapped in the envelop of a present absence, always haunting us, like Bella haunting Jakob's memories, his dreams, his moments of traumatic silence as connoted by his attempt at wrecking language through loss within his attempt at writing poetry. Thus, "there's no absence, if there remains even the memory of absence" (Michaels, 1996, p. 193). This

memory of absence or of invisibility is the opening and the emptying of subjectivity, the subject's look turned backward within the ongoing act of anamnesis, to recover, recall, and recuperate the objects of her/his own loss; to grasp at the possibility to encounter her/his own traumatic silence, to be able to respond to it, to be able to pry it into visibility vis-à-vis a look of love that will cure it of its invisible status.

When we open up the subject's psychic life, when s/he encounters her/his traumatic silence at the site of language's failure to represent the unspeakable, we encounter a "present, like a landscape, [which] is only a small part of a mysterious narrative. A narrative of catastrophe and slow accumulation" (Michaels, 1996, p. 48). What gets accumulated, built up – this detritus material at the contours of memory – is this traumatic unspeakability; the rendering of that which cannot easily be rendered or made visible. Ruins, the brokenness within language, the encrypted tomb-like logic of the unspeakable or the untenable, the supposedly easily repressed or disavowed, also leave room for dust, for "ambushed, memory cracking open. The bitter residue flying up into [one's] face like ash" (Michaels, 1996, p. 105). This memory cracking open becomes significantly exemplified in Jakob's turn toward the work of translation, particularly the task of translating poetry, especially from his own position as a poet himself. Translation and poetry become a way to address the traumatic ruin of language by the process of the aforementioned attempt at the wrecking of language, making it lose itself within itself, making it emblematic of – another grave, yet another monument to – loss itself. The work of translation, much like the work of the poet, becomes a further exercise in rigorously exorcising Jakob of his traumatic silence by enacting loss upon language, by ruining it through the very space of tasks such as the writing of poetry or the act of translation itself:

> Translation is a kind of transubstantiation; one poem becomes another. You can choose your philosophy of translation just as you choose how to live: the free adaptation that sacrifices detail to meaning, the strict crib that sacrifices meaning to exactitude. The poet moves from life to language, the translator moves from language to life; both, like the immigrant, try to identify the invisible, what's between the lines, the mysterious implications. (Michaels, 1996, p. 109)

Translation of a poem, as Michaels considers it above, converts it, against any and all resistances within language itself and precisely because of those very resistances, into another poem altogether, giving it a new language by reckoning with and wrecking the old one. It obfuscates through this wreckage, but rescues, as well, through this tenuous obfuscation. Translation here, as Rebecca Comay suggestively observes, as mentioned earlier, becomes trauma, where "a work [of translation] proves to be a by-product of its own aftermath, subsequent to its own supplement, generated retroactively by the textual overflow that will eventually efface it" (Comay, 2011, p. 24). It traumatizes language, while allowing the traumatic silence within it a possibility for release. It accounts for those "textual overflows" but knows itself to be such a textual overflow, always already produced in the wake of retroaction, in the moment of it being pulled back while it "gives what it most needs" (Michaels, 1996, p. 294), while it offers up one language in place of the silences embedded within the interstices, the dusty nooks and crannies, of the other. Mobilizing Comay's logic of translation as trauma, perhaps the trauma *to* language in the task of translation as well as the trauma *of* language in the writing of poetry, we find that the rupture that such a task as translation signifies only further enhances the sense of temporal disruption that trauma itself seems surreptitiously and gainfully to depend upon:

> Translation implies not only a spatial relay of psychic energy from one occupation zone to another but an economic inflation – an overinvestment or hypercathexis in the trifling aftermath of an intensity originally unmarked.

> Trauma marks a caesura in which the linear order of time is thrown out of sequence. (Comay, 2011, p. 25)

In a sense, this stages the Bejaminian conception regarding a “construction [that] presupposes destruction” (W. Benjamin, 1999a, p. 470), where a newness as is promised in the very task of translation as a form of inscription might only be possible if the old is incorporated within itself with a sense of decay and unstoppable destruction – one must destroy in order to construct anew, as one must re-inscribe historiography with what memories are left aside in order to offer it new meanings and new possibilities outside of and against a sense of the catastrophic forgetting and subsequent invisibility that always and continually haunts memory as a specious specter. A destruction of language to create something anew also traumatizes the time that language seems to both announce and exist within – the linear time of a linear language of history that progresses from some fantastical place of origin to a presumed moment of apparent enlightenment. Temporal linearity, or the assumption of it, erupts, blisters with cavernous lesions, and out of this would bleed trauma, both in fullness and emptiness, in silence; it becomes, belatedly, the blood that bleeds from the puncture holes that negotiate the skin of presumed linear historiography. This is what translation gives – a giving of what it most needs, a transgression as such – to the work of mourning and melancholia in how and what language simultaneously both holds on to and relinquishes itself from in the scene of the loss this very translation seems to both initiate and mediate.

Trauma becomes more at home within the presumed irrevocability of the memory of what language gains to lose; it – trauma – exists at the contours of its unrelenting desire for containment. It throws the subject off her/his course, renders her/him unspeakable within the

irrational system of its own violence, and causes the subject to recede into her/himself. It causes the subject to secrete, like Jakob, silence as a response to this violence. This invisible oozing secretion of that which has been accumulated, the catastrophic accumulation – catastrophe, itself accumulated, as history's angel widens her eyes to look back – within the psychic life of the subject, becomes released or at least obtains a possibility for a partial release in the space of the translator's or poet's task. The task of the translator or the work of the poet becomes akin to the excavation enacted by the archaeologist or the labor of the analyst. While the archaeologist collects and recollects the rubble heap of detritus material in the form of fugitive rocks, exhumed bones, and unruly sedimentation, accumulated, aged, and dead earth, the work of the poet, as well, becomes similarly anamnestic, collective, re-collective, organizational, and reorganizational. To think W. Benjamin on Baudelaire, again, becomes particularly instructive here in reminding us of the poet's recuperative task of "ragpicking."

Similarly, because each moment is two moments, while the psychoanalyst engages the analysand seeking out the possibility of a "working-through" of her/his own relationship to traumatic silence through the very task of anamnesis within the space of memory, the task of the translator is one of giving up, giving over, and giving in to the demands of both the apparent original and the new. The analyst, the biographer of the analysand's anamnestic narration of her/his own memories, works similarly in the sense that s/he gives, offers, and rends silence, so that the subject, the analysand, may speak. The translator's arduous task is no less a task of giving – perhaps giving what s/he needs most, to echo Michaels's closing line at the end of her novel. Eric Prenowitz, Derrida's translator for the latter's *Archive Fever*, in the "Translator's Note" for that text, superbly articulates this task of giving that the

translator makes necessarily, if only through a painstaking commitment to the very task of giving itself, possible. As such, here if the task of translation itself, the traumatizing of language in order to rescue it from its own traumatic silence, should take place then:

> A translator's task is giving up. Rendering, and very often rending, each time wrenching. Caught in an intractable double bind, immemorial and infinitely iterated, one must decide or rule…right where the idiomatic snarl won't be untied. It means giving up the dream of an effortless and silent living transfusion, immediate and unmitigated, unmediated. Giving up giving, in other words, because in the first place the thing does not belong to you and in the second it will not in any case have been handed over intact. But giving, nonetheless. Getting and begetting. Forgiving, perhaps forgiven. Giving forgetting too. (Prenowitz, as cited in Derrida, 1995, p. 105)

Is this not programmatic of the task of analytic praxis – the giving off, the figural discharge and secretion, of what one never owned and of what was never owed to the analyst in the first place? The narrative, anamnestically recovered, from the unknowable space of the unconscious belongs to, and only ever did belong to, the subject. Both the opening and the emptying belonged to her/him as well – not to the analyst, nor to the biographer. The text – the story of the past of language – never belonged to the translator. The words never belonged to the poet; s/he only ever responded to the traumatic silence embedded in language, as in the case of Jakob, through the writing of poetry or the labor of love that translation is, to pry the invisible into visibility. The biographer, in the figure of the analyst, has only ever been a collector of stories, first and foremost – what appears to be a mere yet incredibly necessary excavator of rocks and stones as in the case of the archaeologist; a ragpicker tirelessly picking at and collecting from accumulated wreckage; an uncanny poet wrecking and breaking fragile language, coded and recoded; a translator opening up the wounds in language itself, always already there, of a poem in a tongue other than her/his own.

**A Strange Hope**

What exists in the interior of Jakob's obsession with his past and the loss it interred? What is Jakob hoping from within this fixation (of which we know, yields a sort of rupture) upon the past? What is he hoping to retrieve, as such, from within it? An examination of the matter of hope and hopefulness seems significant at this juncture, for an entire archaeology of this elusive subject "hope" – stranger all the more for its elusiveness as will be explained soon – could be conducted through a carefully architected study of the mere yet enigmatic gesture of this look back. This look back, as it was the inscription par excellence made by the look of the angel that W. Benjamin so movingly wrote about, inspired by Paul Klee's stunningly haunting modernist rendition, *Angelus Novus*, seems to state within its gestural limits the overflowing of hope that might arrive at us with the past and the look we offer it. Whether we are addressing the repression of some experience we mark and/or understand as traumatic – the traumatic as it exists in the realm of silence and broken language – its return, its revival, or its recuperation, or if we are addressing the compulsion and the impulse to repeat, the act of repetition itself, we are, it would be seem, in some way attempting to write a memory that ties hope to the gesture of looking back; addressing some thing, some one, some event or occasion that has left its vicious and visceral imprint on the unconscious of the subject, to be referred back to as a trace, a remainder, from the now already long gone past. Even the at times narcissistic acting out of melancholia, the inscription of disavowal in mourning rituals, or the painful longing that is commemorated within and cemented into the experiential universe of nostalgia may be construed as being informed by the desire to look back, with a sense of hope for some sort of retrieval, a desire to "awaken the dead" as such. Setting aside, for a moment, the logic of calendars and the debate between presumptions of

history's linearity, the assumption of a straight line of progressivity and continuum etched within, across, and upon dominant historicism and the circularity of historical materialism, punctured by events that repeat over and over again; whether we are addressing this linearity or that circularity, the gesture of looking back marks for the subject a moment in which one is both stifled and offered up in that very sense of having been stifled the opportunity to not merely attend to history alone, but memory, that subjective crypt of our longing for a biography outside of the normative strands of this history.

While it would be of interest in the grander scheme of things to derive a complex blueprint, a schema of sorts that allow us to make, again, imperative distinctions between history and memory, precisely in their relation to this thing called hope and while such a blueprint of distinctions might give us much to contemplate upon in regards to the enigma of this gesture of the look back – we might call it an enigma purely because its purposes are not always clear to us, and not always founded on equal footing and/or similar terms for all concerned; for some, it means redemptive hope, for others, it may lacerate, upon the individual and collective conscience, a wound of injustice – our immediate concern, here, lies with respect to the position of hope within the realm of memory-work, the anamnestic glance backwards, within Michaels's novel. Before venturing into the text, let us consider this thing called hope, a little while longer. Hope, for W. Benjamin, would amount to the notion that "every second of time [is] the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 264). As such, it would seem that hope almost always promises an intrinsic disappointment, here, in regards to our fervent belief in the promise of its own futurity, but almost, as though in one fell swoop or in the same nascent life-giving, death-abiding, life-drawing breath – simultaneity, again, becomes the signifier of this hope wherein

“each moment is two moments” – it salvages the object of our loss from the rubble heap of what remains after the trial of anamnesis and the task of the tentative recovery it mobilizes. This hope is nourished and nurtured, by its own excess, by it own ability to exceed itself – overflowing the contours of containment – because it is hope in something always futural, only ever taking place in the present moment, and in the case of the look back, while regarding something that has already come to pass or become the past. Andrew Benjamin’s directives – here, on the nature of this hope – become quite necessary to cite. For him:

> Hope endures. Hope is not a projection into the future. Such a projection would abandon the present, refusing to grant it any quality except the demand that it be effaced. Thinking the present, allowing for the present to insist, is not to remain complacent. The present exists as a complex set up which whilst always allowing for forms of complacency, nonetheless provides the very setting in which complacency can be challenged. (A. Benjamin, 1997, p. 154)

Obdurately stubborn in its duration and durability, hope enacts resistance against this complacency, against its own undoing – is this not a mapping out of hope as inherently or implicitly a melancholic stance, informed by a mournful turn toward the past? Remember, here, Athos’s comment to Jakob: “It is your future that you are remembering” (Michaels, 1996, p. 21). In other words, is hope not structured around a simultaneous melancholia and mourning? Is not hope’s relationship to loss structured around the very “giving of what it most needs” that seems to exist on the fulcrum point that separates melancholia and mourning in how this loss might be held on to while also simultaneously relinquished in the moment we feel hope within the gesture of the look back at the past from the moment of the present, as we plummet into an unknown future?

Without assigning either melancholia or mourning with a positive or negative evaluation, knowing full and well that the desire to do so might be nurtured by a strong

impulse in and of itself, what I refer to as their simultaneity in regards to the hopefulness of the backward glance addresses the very way in which the anamnestic process of both excavation and recovery – either through the poetic endeavor as Jakob undertook it or at the site of psychoanalysis's couch – is both informed by a cynicism against and an optimism for the recuperation of the lost object. Both melancholia and mourning, thus, inform hope both of its cynical moment and its moment of possible recovery – each moment is, again, proven to be two moments. It heals, while it wounds, while it heals again. It opens, then to empty, but overflows with both the fullness and emptiness of traumatic silence – negating what needs affirmation the most, the subject's desire to be reunited with the lost object, while, as well, affirming what it negates. This reveals the status of that which is redeemed, received, and, then returned within the confines of the fluctuating, nausea-inducing hopefulness that informs the anamnestic gesture of looking back – the giving away, according to our earlier reference to Michaels, of what one, the subject, needs and desires the most.

Jakob's longing for a biography – the desire to break from, break with, and break the traumatic silence, rupture it from being and living within it, much like the rupturing experienced in time itself when the look back commits the past to a relationship to the present from where the look is directed – resides in both his desire not to let go of the memory of Bella, while also maintaining an awareness that this letting go must take place, that this mourning would release him. For he knew that he would have to give what he needed the most, have it wrenched from him while partaking in the wrenching as well, that "to remain with the dead is to abandon them" (Michaels, 1996, p. 284), and that it was "[his] responsibility to release her, a sin to keep her from ascending" (Michaels, 1996, p. 8). Here, the structure of loss is given clarity such that the key to loss itself lies in the losing, the

giving, again, of what one needs the most in the hope, the simultaneity of both melancholia and mourning, the remembrance borne out of forgetting, the forgetting that remembrance ordains – hope, both tenuously turgid, swollen at its contours with its own excessiveness, and tentatively tangible, as a living in the present for the future, and as a living in the present tied to the past – that the subject might be released from the grips of that which s/he has efficaciously loved and lost.

For years, after they had migrated to Canada, we find that Athos persisted in his almost unbearable – for Jakob – search for Bella. Jakob's difficult struggle with both melancholia and mourning, his struggle to let go of Bella's memory in his dreams and thoughts, became Athos's hope; while Athos's almost interminable search became Jakob's hope. Athos "must search so that [Jakob] could give up" (Michaels, 1996, p. 59). Athos's "backward glance gave [Jakob] a backward hope" (Michaels, 1996, p. 101). It gave him the piecemeal mechanism – the slow, gradual machination of his own "working-through" – needed to redeem his self from the past, while being able to redeem the past from this very self as well. Michaels makes a radical proposition here – the possibility of "redemption through cataclysm; what had once been transformed might be transformed again" (Michaels, 1996, p. 101) again echoing W. Benjamin on the very nature of materialist history, where, let us remember, "[in] the ruin, history has physically merged into the setting…in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay" (W. Benjamin, 1998, p. 178); the recovery of the old to produce the new subject, informed by both the old and its own transformation into the new. Here "redemption is possible, but it is only the redemption of tragedy" (Michaels, 1996, p. 120). The tragic lies in the backward glance, the look back, itself – its Orphic capacity to kill again the lost object,

without wanting or desiring to kill again and over again in its gesture toward recuperation; to let go of the lost object as it reaches out to grasp it, hold it for the very last time, always for that one last time more. Hope renders the object lost again for a second time and mourns this loss subsequently, as it attempts to resuscitate it to life, for hope is only balanced out by its own failure, which reminds the subject of the impossible and irrecoverable nature of the lost object. For Jakob, this second loss, as it were, is made possible for through the look back, through the anamnesis that allows him to sift through the moments of the past, in his memory, both saturated with and emptied out of traces of Bella – signifying both fullness and emptiness, both visibility and invisibility:

> I turn and Bella's gone; my glance has caused her to vanish. I wrench around. I call, but the noise of the leaves is suddenly overwhelming, like a rush of falls. Surely she's gone ahead to the river. I run there and dig for clues of her in the muddy bank. It's dark; dogwood becomes her white dress. A shadow, her black hair. The river, her black hair. Moonlight, her white dress…when I wake I know its not Bella who has vanished, but me. Bella, who is nowhere to be found, is looking for me. (Michaels, 1996, p. 125-6)

The painful realization that the object of loss, in this scene of dream-state anamnesis, is already a creature of Jakob's fantasy is almost unbearable. What is palpable, however – what is defined by its very palpability – is that the object is recuperated to be vanished again, recalled to be let go, retrieved to be released; the psychic life of the subject contracts, sphincter-like, in order to expand and be relaxed again; there is no absence, as Michaels suggests, if there remains even the memory of absence. Hope of and for letting go – Freud's mourning – structured around melancholia becomes the founding site of the redemption that the look back inaugurates in the moment of culling the past, the invisibility it seems to unveil, through the look of love we offer to it. Theoretically speaking, this killing through a

rebirthing of the lost object within the space of memory, the place of the remembered past, is exemplified by Comay when she describes melancholia:

> [as displaying] a similar logic. The incorporation of the object requires the latter's abbreviation as a frozen attribute and thereby inflicts upon it a kind of second death – miniaturization reproduces the death which it simultaneously reduces – a violence which will in turn reverberate within the sadomasochistic theatre of grief wherein, famously, it is the lost object itself which is being whipped by the subject's most intimate self-flagellations. The refusal to admit the object's lack involves the concession of that very lack and exacerbation of the latter's mortifying dismemberment. Reduced to a part-object within the hollow crypt of subjectivity, the object persists as living corpse, at once congealed remains and extruding surplus, whose death accretes like so much cellular efflorescence. (Comay, 2005, p. 94)

Accordingly, if the symptom of memory, the symptom within memory, is to repeat hope's intrinsic ability to both mourn loss and melancholically recover the lost object by recovering the very sense of loss attached to it in the very gesture of hoping, at the very eruptive moments within a subject's traumatic silence, be it in her/his thoughts, dreams, speech or act of writing life, through this anamnesis – much like in the analytic encounter, the role of the analysand within the context of her/his treatment is to give into this anamnesis, to offer her/himself up to the ever possible return to that very point where s/he repeats the gestures of recuperating loss – then this unbridled and, lest we forget, unconscious repetition has within it the constant playing out and unraveling of hope within that self-effacing theatre of grief and further, perhaps all too necessary, self-erasure, as suggested by Comay, to make the otherness of the past become visible to use for the purposes of present living. In the context of the analytic relationship, this repetitive impulse in hope seems to announce it as hope that is given being hope returned and hope returned as always already hope given, in the space of the working-through which trauma provocatively invites us to do. This might resound and echo with words such as "…next time around…" – so incredibly moving and

poignant for the promise they hold. For us, such words as "…next time around…" might just as well apply to the nucleus of memory's recuperative nerve. In remembering Bella, Jakob is remembering his future without her; in remembering my grandfather through the transferential encounter that was made possible through my encounter with Roger and my analyst, my desire was to remember a future outside of all of them, while remaining with them as well, or rather having them continue to remain with me in the hope I have for the present and future to come as a present and future always existing in the waning shadows of a past that has already come to pass.

Memory's recuperative impulse – this impulse acts as both supplicant for the subject and supplement to loss, as a reminder and remainder of what remains, what is, and what could be – a moment opened up to the pedagogical imprinting of loss itself onto the subject's psychic life, opened up and emptied out through anamnesis, acting as overflowing vessel of what remains, as remainder, left behind by and within the space of trauma's intricate silence. Hope, therein, acts as an inexorable experience rooted in a melancholia and a mourning that leaves much to be desired because it; the simultaneity of these two acts as an assumed productive prison of and for subjectivity itself, like the prison of the look of love that the angel of history appears to be transfixed within. We might conceptualize hope's enactment to precisely bolster its utilitarian benefits – give it use or use value, so to speak – for its generative tendency in what it can call to, invoke within, and cull from the memory of a past, that is already in excess, already come to pass as other than and to us, such that we take seriously the imperative that "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255). What would this ghost, that excess, of the past be saying to us, through the task of looking

back? If memory is inescapable yet open to the possibility of continued renewal vis-à-vis both remembrance and forgetting, eludes both its own avowal (read: acknowledgment) and disavowal and is, from a psychoanalytic perspective, inherently hopeful – a hope that is already operating in the interstices of the excessive belief that the archive of the unconscious, that frayed-edged book of life, the subject's own biography, cannot contain everything it could possibly "hope" to hold and all that the subject longs for – then what is held, to return us back to the very beginning, in the repetitive gesture of looking back is the movement always and already pointing us in the direction of both melancholia and mourning's simultaneous co-habitation in the subject's psychical life. Though lest we forget, as we see in Jakob's story, neither hope nor the simultaneity that nurtures it promise the satiation of its own voracious appetite; it only quells it for the time being, rendering us the time and timelessness of its own cocoon-like visibility, and the promise of letting go that arrives within that radiantly ruptured temporality forced out of step with itself in the movement to look back at the time that has already, now, come to pass.

# Chapter Four:
# Words of Light and Grave Sites:
# Ruin, the Beautiful Horror of David Maisel's *Library of Dust*

**You were my death...**
- (Celan, 1972, p. 283)

**We keep death 'other' by *representing* it:**
**death always happens to an other self as we look on.**
- (Bernstein, 2008, p. 39)

## On Ruin and Beauty

At first glance, it would appear the ruin, as physical structure and philosophical metaphor, signals death and dying; the turning in to refuse the decaying sense of abjection one might garner from the proverbial wreckage of historical trauma. In order to start the work, however, of theorizing ruin here, it might be best at first, if only momentarily, to locate my interest. Without appearing somewhat or overly morbid, it seems essential for me to admit that I have always held a profound interest in and fascination for the specific site of the grave, the tomb, the crypt, or the mausoleum, or with any site or space, for that matter, that becomes the keeper and placeholder of and for remains and cremaines. This interest has stemmed from a desire to understand how these sites come to stand in for – metaphorically, structurally, archaeologically, and psychically – the lost object; here, the lost object of the corporeal, once-alive, body. Furthermore, an interest in the very processes of decay and ruination of the site of the grave itself, its own ongoing process of wasting away, an unstoppable wounding, an irresistible decay, under the hands of weathering, meteorological effects, and both human and non-human interference over the course of time, has navigated

me through my ongoing commitment to studying rituals attached to the marking or commemoration of loss.[1]

The continued return to the site of the grave or the crypt to mourn the loss of a loved one – the melancholia imbued within the very process of mourning – has been of acute psychical and theoretical intrigue, especially in regards to understanding the socio-cultural meaning associated to the processes of mourning, letting go, and moving on, while, at the same time having, perhaps always and already having, the grave or crypt act as an ongoing reminder of the loss it stands to, in some small way, replace, mediate, or metonymically stand in for. The grave or the crypt, also, seems to become a moment in which ruin comes to be revealed to us. It is both visibility and invisibility; a structure or a holder, like an urn, that stands in for the absent body, which then becomes a new sort of presence or visibility that elides and eludes other forms of possible visibility that remain invisible. Over time, the structure itself falls into ruin, be subject to decay and overgrowth, wreckage and rotting. Visibility in the shadow of invisibility, invisibility only further enhanced by what is given over to be made visible while what remains invisible remains as such, absence and presence, appearance and disappearance, the once-was and the now-is, the clean crypt standing in for the lost body, the decayed grave standing in for the once pristine monument that holds the corpse in its embrace, laid down there for its ultimate rest – all of these logics seem to be inscribed upon this object that signals and signifies memory, the grave.

In the context of this chapter, then, my attention is drawn toward the analysis of another sort of grave or crypt. My interest, here, is not in the physical structure of a large-scale grave, but rather drawn toward a smaller, more localizable holder of memory. The

[1] An earlier version of this chapter, titled "Opening the Tomb: Supernature, Beautiful Decay, and Ruination," was published in 2012 in Drain Magazine, Issue 15, *Supernature*, edited by Celina Jeffrey.

particular instance of an artistic nod given to the beauty of natural decay that I wish to attend to here is a series of photographs taken by David Maisel; the series entitled affectingly as the *Library of Dust*. The series contains, as will be shown here, a collection of corroding copper canisters, blooming under the pressures of calcification, deterioration, and decay. Ruin revealed here, perhaps, in all its unbounded, violently ruinous, and detritus glory, as taking history outside of its dominant narrative restrictions. The reason why I refer to them as crypts will be revealed later.

The chapter is, as is to follow, divided into four further sections. The first section will confront the way in which beauty and decay, life and death, become inextricably tied together at the site of an enlivening that is constituted by and through, and further constitutes what we understand as the experiential logic of the sublime that the ruin might come to represent. The hope, here, is that it will give us a better grasp of how ruin as, perhaps, a process of ongoing spatial decay, as a metaphor that brings alive the experiences of remembrance and forgetting, mourning and melancholia, in the instance of a simultaneity, gives rise to how we think about and understand the apparent beauty of the object undergoing the decay. The section after that, entitled *Life, Loss, Inscription, Mediation, Mourning*, will deal with what these canisters contain, the specificity of what it is that is being let go, mourned, and the other sorts of “irresistible decay” again as suggested by W. Benjamin, beyond the natural destruction of decay, that these canisters encrypt, signify, and continue to mediate. Following this, I move on to a section addressing the issue of ruptured (and the rupturing of) temporality and how photography, the art and practice of it in the case of these images, deal with decay in and of itself. The seemingly linear flow of time, as marked by surreptitious decay and ruination, becomes locked within what I will address as the extreme

presentism of photographic time, the Benjaminian now-time, the ruptured and rapturous caesura that punctuates decay itself. The final section, *Can Beauty Remember?*, then moves the conversation from aesthetical considerations to more political ones. However, the attempt in this section is, though, not merely to move from aesthetics to politics, or from phenomenological readings of the art object in the form of the photograph and the processes of ruination to their more dialectical or ideological readings – such a move, while easy, might be far too reductive – but to situate aesthetics and politics alongside one another, as informing each other and as facets of the pieces that cannot be abstracted from one another. Aesthetics and politics are always at play within the confines of the ruin – literal, metaphoric, psychical – its decay, its transformation into ruin, and the crypt that encapsulates all that is to remain of what needs, of what bequeaths us, to be remembered of loss and remembered precisely because forgetting awaits it.

**Sublime Devastation, Enlivened Aesthetics**

A short three-line elegiac poem penned by Romanian-born Jewish poet Paul Celan, writing in German, from his evocative collection *Fadensonnen*, seems to be an appropriate place for me to begin my ruminations here – ruminations, here and now tentative at best, that concern themselves preeminently with addressing that uncanny yet pressing engagement between the beauty of the figure of the ruin, or rather, more specifically, the beauty of that which becomes ruin, and the gesture made toward mournful remembrance. This arresting work, arresting at least in my own encounter with it, reads as such:

> You were my death:
> you I could hold
> when all fell away from me. (Celan, 1972, p. 283)

It is this relationship to being arrested, in becoming a being-arrested, by an encounter, with perhaps *the* encounter – with an other or the otherness of the past as symbolically given meaning through the figure of the ruin, with a mysterious visage, with the face beneath a veil, with an unknown history, with an elusive memory, with a body in its fetishized brokenness, with the trace of unhinged ghosts haunting us from and beyond the margins of being, with what remains of them, in their state of ruin, perhaps, with the strangely public yet simultaneously surreptitious beauty of that which comes to ruin itself – that becomes of primary importance for me here. Again, poetry becomes a way out for me – parlayed with its own limitations strewn along the way – to return to conceive of this almost inconceivable encounter between the beauty of the figure of irresistible decay, the ruin, and the praxis of remembrance, as I recall John Keats, from his "Endymion," where he rehearses what we already know of the Romantics long drawn out love affair with beauty and the experience of the sublime, that experience which, evokes transcendence, transcends us beyond the culpabilities of our vulnerable and aging bodies, the psychic and physical materiality of everyday life and living, that perhaps assumes to bring us closer to an experience of divine revelation:

> A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness; but it will keep
> A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet
> breathing. (Keats, 1999, p. 61)

Never allowing itself to pass into nothingness, yet keeping, at times dormant, at times awake; this seems to allude to an understanding not merely of our experience with beauty, but with our tenuous relationship to memory – never passing into nothingness, dormant and

awake, sometimes simultaneously; an unnerving insomnia of sorts, an insomnia akin to a waking that as W. Benjamin suggested was “the paradigm of remembrance” (W. Benjamin, 1999a, p. 13). What then becomes of beauty when it inspires memory, preserves it, pickles it for future use? What is the relationship between a divined transcendence that this beauty promises, or seems to promise, and the immanent wound that ruptures and cracks the skin of our consciousness when we attempt to remember, especially a memory of invisibility or abjection, further marked by decay, an object laid to waste, turned to ruin? What becomes of beauty when it is a beauty, decaying over time and beautiful all the more for this decay, that holds in its very fragility the memory of rejection and exile? What becomes of memory when it is conceived of as having the aesthetic possibility to undo us, be the cause of our undoing; “us“ being the ones who remain to look outwardly, to look back as is the case at the past, in the wake of the sheerness of the beautiful object presented to us, offered to us within the tender caress of our eyes, beholding and beheld by this ugly beauty, decaying, ruining, ugly for the memory it holds and continues to hold in our look upon it? The logic that ties together beauty, ruin, and memory seems to be, at once, both labyrinthine and circuitous amidst this array of questions.

At this juncture, what philosopher Jay Bernstein tells us of the purpose of what we have come to understand as modern art becomes instructive, where as Barnett Newman, before him, articulated that “the impulse…was [the] desire to destroy beauty” (Newman, 1992, p. 573) itself. Accordingly Bernstein continues in the following vein:

> The beauty being destroyed is classical beauty, whose cold perfection is at one with its pretense to timelessness. In its place is to arise an experience connected…[to] the violence of natural sublimity: an intensity of pain and pleasure in the experience of the formless appearing of the overwhelmingly large and powerful. (Bernstein, 2008, p. 41)

It is this revelatory struggle between pain and pleasure, between melancholic withholding and mournful relinquishment – also, between beauty's attempt to evoke something akin to sublime transcendence and the anxious nervousness of the memory that it inspires and that which is always already immanent, especially when it brings forth to the now-time of the present, from lost time, the memories of the rejected, the exiled, and the invisible – that seems to allow us to attend here to the distinct artistic endeavor made by David Maisel, through his series the *Library of Dust*, that recall, recoup, and recollect a specific kind encounter with the past.

Prior to discussing the particularity of the *Library of Dust* series, it is important to set it within the context of some of Maisel's earlier, more sublime, projects. The term sublime is both crucial to consider and intentionally instructive, here. We are now, if only for a brief moment, entering the philosophically charged exploratory universe of the likes of Edmund Burke, whose study of the sublime becomes of canonical importance to address. For Burke, this experiential moment marked as the logic of the sublime is an attempt at tying together the tenuous relationship between pain and pleasure – like Bernstein – between the cohabitation and comingling of both pain and pleasure:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling….But as pain is stronger in its operation than pleasure, so death is in general a much more affecting idea than pain itself; because there are few pains, however exquisite, which are not preferred to death; nay what generally makes pain itself if I may say so, more painful, is, that it is considered as an emissary of this king of terrors. When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible, but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience. (Burke, 1990, p. 36)

A fine thread exists here under the heading of terror – terrific beauty, terrific decay, terrific ruination, the terrific processes of ruin – that holds simultaneously both pain and pleasure, both melancholia and mourning in how what is remembered and forgotten is conceived together, thus informing the "violence of sublimity" that Bernstein alluded to earlier. What reminds us of our own mortality becomes this simultaneous invocation of both pain and pleasure; a dizzying sort of invocation that has the potential to undo our sense of self and selfhood, displace us from this sense of self we hold on to in the throes of our experience of loss or its imminent possibility. Accordingly to Burke, we see that this pain, this undoing so to speak, might give way to the apparently pleasurable – it is, if anything, enlivening; life-giving, while also reminding us of life's potential to be laid to waste, come to ruin, decay, die, and rot.

Let me now return to what I referred to earlier as Maisel's earlier, more sublime, projects that preceded the *Library of Dust*. Here, one might specifically look toward the aerial landscape photographs that belong to *The Mining Project* series and *The Lake Project* series. His attempt to address the relationship between nature and its use, corruption, and abuse under human prodding, plying, and manipulation is recalled, here, as we look, later, upon the corroding canisters of the *Library of Dust* series.

***Figure 2.*** **David Maisel, *American Mine – Carlin, NV 6* (2007).**

His commitment to rethinking aerially the terrific and terrifying experience of such sublime expanses of various wounded landscapes – perhaps, in attempting to offer a kind of disguised critique of this very experience of the sublime itself through this rethinking of the self produced from on high, a looking back initiated from on high at the catastrophic undoing of geographies that are laid to waste below – allows us to conceive of a transcendental

quality to his earlier works that might be interpreted as all too unbearable for some of us. Humanity's sea-level relationship to the exposure of expanses that we find in front of ourselves has led to the projects of domination, conquest, colonization, and environmental decay and degradation. The violent impulse to have dominion over the land that we set foot upon rehearses this sublime experience as that which enables it to be both undone by the sheer impossibility of the very desire to apparently conquer it all, this painful expanse, and to be pushed forth into the act of violent conquest nonetheless. It would seem that the wide expanse both humbles us in its painfully charged decay and craves the violent pleasures of conquest. It limits and delimits subjectivity's relationship to the natural world, at one and the same time, by offering both pleasure and the prohibition and refusal of that pleasure through a painstaking witnessing which in turn rearticulates our relationship to what we understand as pleasurable, i.e. a pleasure that arises from the pain of loss itself; the secret simultaneity of a melancholic's commitment to withhold the lost object, here the ruined landscape, while desiring to be relinquished from the loss's grip in the very same instant, of wanting to mourn it. The beauty of these images seem to offer the viewer the promise of life, while at the same time reminding us that it can be violently taken away. This is what the apparent beauty of the sublime renders to us, the promise of a violent sort of extrication, while at the same time affording us the experience of enlivening us, where this "enlivening, coming to life, is indeed the moment in aesthetic experience that bears within itself an ethics and a politics" (Bernstein, 2008, p. 39). This ethics and politics are derived from within the experience of how we regard loss, look upon it from the temporality of a present always in a state of both movement and rupture through its very own and intimate annulment.

What Maisel, in his earlier works, attempts to do is to take our sea-level look elsewhere – call it a bird's-eye view (though I would propose it to be more akin to a transcendental God's-eye view, if we were to take the theological-political significance of this sort of transcendence seriously for a moment) – to a place above, on high, from an almost inconceivable height. Through this seemingly transcendent enactment, he offers us images of loss as such, of deforestation, of the violence done to land under the hands of uncontrolled mining, of the effects of lake flooding and a series of other forms of environmental violences. Again, we are confronted with beauty's double-edged sword, so to speak. We are offered images whose claim to beauty seems all too obvious at first glance – like the ruin it portrays what is visible buries beneath it what remains invisible. The images, textured and manipulated in regards to color, brightness, and lighting, heighten any and all experience we might have in regards to what we might otherwise happen upon as an encounter with the painfully pleasurable sublime, especially if we were merely looking at another seemingly beautiful landscape, from the perspective of a sea-level look. Here, however, the skeletal nature of the landscape is laid bare for us – almost, in a manner of speaking, as though it has been revealed to us through an x-ray device. The way in which the landscape has been affected, effaced, impacted upon, and dealt with, becomes clear. In a manner of speaking again, it would even seem as though we are looking upon images of a grandiose crime scene. Dead earth, devastated land, detritus wasteland – all allude to a sort of witnessing, a sort of bearing witness to, a death, a dying-in-the-process or, even still, a decaying corpse where ruin, as process, continues its work in haunting silence – history here, to invoke W. Benjamin again, "does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay" (W. Benjamin, 1998, p. 178). Enlivening – as aesthetic

experience and encounter – then, becomes read through the lens of a confrontation with death, this irresistible decay, itself where, then, as Bernstein reminds us:

> Beauty's life-saving power is always for us the return of the repressed, a return of the conditioning of life by death, death's proximity, and hence indissolubly bound to the violence of the sublime, to the fracturing and fragmenting and tearing of form and proportion for the sake of aesthetic encounter. Perhaps we might say that the turn toward the aesthetic is implicitly a turn toward enlivenment as art's governing orientation. (Bernstein, 2008, p. 41)

***Figure 3.*** **David Maisel, *The Lake Project 17*.**

After such projects as these, marked by their grandiose quality and their magnanimous affectivity, we arrive at his *Library of Dust*, where the magnified magnificence of the earthly landscape has been replaced by another landscape of the more microscopic world of entropic and corrosive decay and rusty ruinous blooms, as they seem to appear on these copper canisters. At first when looking upon their immediate appearance in these

photographs, we are drawn to these canisters and their beautiful ugliness, or ugly beauty – whichever way you would have it – by their sublimely ravenous decay and ruination, heightened only by the black galaxy-like darkness that encapsulates and acts to hold them as their tentative background.

***Figure 4.* David Maisel, *Library of Dust 769*.**

The image of each canister, set against the darkness of its black background, allows us to perhaps imagine the envisioning of another sort of more localized kind of a landscape.

We are not concerned here with decay and degradation at the large scale; we are not seeking absolution or to be held by or beholden to the terrifyingly painful wonder of the earthly ruin or devastation that we might have had a hand in causing; rather, we are asked to look at a smaller universe, and seek out an undoing whose object of specificity is but a mere decaying, yet seemingly beautiful, copper canister. The transition and translation from large to miniscule in Maisel's work – assuming we come to look at these smaller universes, having already some prior knowledge of his earlier work dealing with larger landscapes – is breathtaking and humbling precisely because of this change in scale.

***Figure 5.*** **David Maisel, *Library of Dust 1210*.**

In a sense, this move addresses us as a shock to the visual system. This shocking visual transgression within the size, scale, and scope of his work, while retaining something of that sublime violence I described earlier is worthy of closer consideration. Such a shock might be felt in regards to how we conceive of beauty within this move, and how we perceive

the work of the shock of beauty itself– as something that gives forth the possibility to enliven us through our awakening to the proximity of death, decay, and destruction in the figure of – and figuration given to us by – the ruin. In this moment when we find ourselves awakened to what both the landscape images and, as well, the canister images produce in us, as shock and as affect, or rather, as shock as a form of affect, we begin to understand what Bernstein, so eloquently, reminded us of:

> The shock of beauty, its enlivening, is a violent tearing of the self from out of benumbed half-living that beauty…makes vivid the proximity of death to the lived, hence to the fleetingness and transience of life; and thus the experience of beauty is bound up with or is a form of mourning. (Bernstein, 2008, p. 41)

What, however, is being mourned and melancholically withheld, in the context of Maisel's canister images? Or, perhaps, the better question to ask might be, what about these images might incite within us the possibility and potential for, the very condition that inspires within us, the desire to mourn while also simultaneously contend with the experience of melancholia? Still further, we might want to consider what sort of loss is signified here that demands a mourning to occur, especially in light of the image's perspicacious beauty that enacts the withholding that melancholia seems to adequately mechanize? These are some of the questions that will direct my exploration in the next section.

**Life, Loss, Inscription, Mediation, Mourning**

While large-scale devastation, when we are made privy to it, becomes, for some of us, an unbearable and obdurate sort of undoing of our own culpability in the acts that led to those moments of destruction, the humbling that comes with the sublime experience of the beauty found in these canister images has a different tenor of culpability that seem to resound with their presentation. What, then, is our culpability, here? What are these canisters reminders

and remainders of? What *does* our undoing for us in regards to these smaller ever-decaying, ruinous universes, these miniscule calcifying spaces of ruin?

To elaborate upon this feeling of a specific kind of culpability, it would be worthwhile to attend to how and where Maisel discovered these canisters. By doing so, we might be able to better tie in how subjective life and its loss might be inscribed, remembered, and mediated in the throes of simultaneous forgetting through that memory, in how we look upon the photographs of these canisters. A context and a biography seem to be particularly essential here, as we attempt to analyze these images. Maisel discovered the objects of his project's fascination at what is now known as the Oregon State Hospital, a psychiatric institution, which had been previously referred to as the Oregon State Insane Asylum. It had been active ever since it was first built in the 1880s. During the period between 1883 to the early 1970s, over 5000 wards lived and died there, and their bodies were disposed of through cremation. What remains each canister, then, signifies and what remainders they come to act as signatories for are the ash remains of these wards, most of whom were left to be institutionalized by the state, and their ashes left uncollected by friends, relatives, and families.

***Figure 6.*** **David Maisel, Asylum 16, Oregon State Hospital, Salem, OR.**

What seems to offer a tragic strain, then – tragedy becomes painfully inscribed into the apparent sublime experience of looking at these images – to these canisters and their contents is that they were left uncollected and discarded. They were labeled with the names of the patients, as well as numbered; however, most of the canister labels did not remain for long. Most probably, a result of being destroyed after having the canisters be stored in an underground vault that flooded. There were medical privacy laws that dictated that the names remain private and confidential. Representing, according to one commentator of these photographs, Geoff Manaugh, “literal gravesites…[each] canister holds the remains of a human being, of course; each canister holds a corpse – reduced to dust, certainly, burnt to handfuls of ash, sharing that cindered condition with much of the star-bleached universe, but still cadaverous, still human…[it] is not a library at all – but a room full of souls no one

wanted" (Manaugh, 2008). Souls that no one wanted signify the triple layer of invisibility that this decaying beauty of loss seems to allude to – the rejection of their mental illness by family and friends, the rejection of the state's concern or care for their wellbeing, and finally the rejection of their ashes by family and friends, due to them being left uncollected. The tragedy makes the story all the more moving, all the more compelling, all the more beautifully sublime in the pain they seem to apparently evoke – causes us to remember and take account of the memory we associate to the invisible of society; the nameless, the faceless, the subaltern, the foreign, the other.

The beautification of the other through their crypt, their miniaturized grave here, being re-inscribed with new meaning as a moment of divination is enacted through the sublimation afforded to them through the artistic practice, here being photography – where our culpability in regards to our forgetting or the potential to forget the invisible and the othered is stark precisely because of what remains these crypts contain and what forgetting and remembrance they subsequently and simultaneously account for. Entropy, or rather entropic break down or wasting away, gives way to ruin and decay as visualized in how these canisters have changed over time; it also offers us the discourse by which ruin as a process of perennial decay becomes a site for aesthetic sublimation and fetishistic reliance. The entropy, here, manifested through the rusting, the rotting, and the corroding of these canisters, thus causing the unsettling disarray of these miniscule universes as represented within Maisel's series become a metaphor for decay, a simulacra of the production of a ruin outside of what we understand the ruin to stand (and stand in) for more colloquially, which is a breaking away and down of sites and spaces of architecture.[2]

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[2] Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss's article "AUser's Guide to Entropy" in October, Vol. 78 (Autumn, 1996) was instructive in garnering a better understanding of how entropy has been explained and utilized

Thinking with entropic ruin, again, we might find Bernstein to be significant here, when he reminds us that our experience of death is always a distantiated one, precisely because "our own death is unimaginable…each envisagement of it involves our survival as spectator" (Bernstein, 2008, p. 39). We melancholically hold on to and withhold the image of our mortality by preparing to mourn the death of an other. It always seems to happen to something outside or beyond our own bodies and our selves. Death, as represented through what we might come to know in regards to what the canisters contain, sits alongside our awareness or our perception of these images as being "beautiful"; "beautiful" because they symbolically re-present and re-cast death through the space of entropic break down, through what we know as the ongoing process of atrophy, calcification, representing almost a continued vestigial decaying life-death, or dead-life – ruin, surreptitiously, at work. What we come to realize, however, is the difficult nature of this beauty, the beauty of Maisel's canisters, which as Bernstein might suggest operates on the notion that we, as viewers, continuously get tossed between the tenuous positions of being either spectator or held within the embrace of both melancholia and mourning:

> We keep death 'other' by *representing* it: death always happens to an other self as we look on. This naturally infects our relation to the death of actual others. In mourning and melancholy we mimetically adapt to the other's death, dying to life, while simultaneously and secretly being relieved by the fact that it is truly the other and not oneself who has died. This cycle of

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conceptually by artists such as Robert Smithson and Gordon Matta-Clark to think about how architecture finds itself within spatial settings. Accordingly, both Smithson and Matta-Clark looked upon architecture differently in regards to the processes of entropy, waste, wasting away, and ruination. For Smithson, architecture was a way to combat waste and structurally respond to waste and ruination, while for Matta-Clark, he considered "waste as architecture" (Bois & Krauss, 1996, p. 59), wherein the entropic quality of wasting away itself contributed to the very architecting of spatial parameters and how we might think about the structures working within those parameters. In either case, entropy as it related to the ruin was a productive venue to thinking through the ways by which natural decay might be aesthetically mobilized. Moving from a conversation about entropy as it relates to architectural structures to a discussion about Maisel's canisters is made possible precisely in how the aesthetic value of corrosion and decay is heightened within his photographic series; in how the entropic break down of these canisters comes to be re-articulated within the space of his photographs as having a value adherent to how one might think about what may be deemed aesthetically beautiful or pleasing.

> spectatorship and benumbed grief is thus presented in a manner whereby, for all intents and purposes, conventional relations toward death are, in truth, forms of defense against it; but in defending ourselves against death we insulate ourselves against life. (Bernstein, 2008, p. 39)

The beauty thus, here, inscribes a shock of death, a shock to life, an enlivening shock, precisely because death, its remainders and its continued reminder becomes so palpably shocking, wherein the shock only adds to the vital propensity of this indescribable and inconceivable beauty of irresistible decay and ruin. It renders itself shocking precisely because we are left to wonder how such beauty could sit up against what Judith Butler, invoking the politics of silent anonymity entrenching biopolitical formations, refers to as "ungrievable loss" (Butler, 2004, p. 36), ungrievable all the more because these mentally ill patients whose remains are left in these canisters were marked as either less human, or inhuman; invisible as such as Kaja Silverman might refer to them as and thus, forgettable. Maisel, it would seem, attempts to call forth their memory through the simultaneous contradiction and juxtaposition of this very memory of the forgotten with the potential appreciation that the beauty of these canister photographs might incur. At the precise moment, when we thought it was just another pretty picture, we are reminded of what they hold – a memory of invisibility that demands a look of love from us, its audience, to cure it, as such, of this invisibility. We are also reminded of their subsequent and continued decay, calcification, and ruin. Ruin, here without any knowledge of a presumed linear temporality or any concern for the ineffable nature of historical accountability, continues to be, almost pristinely, at work. Beauty then, to echo Bernstein, "is difficult, and enlivenment necessarily Janus-face" (Bernstein, 2008, p. 39).

Citing art critic Peter Schjedahl, in a brief essay Maisel himself wrote about the *Library of Dust*, the latter reminds us "much resistance to admitting the reality of beauty may be motivated by disappointment with beauty's failure to redeem the world. Experiences of beauty are sometimes attended by soaring hopes, such as that beauty must some day, or even immediately, heal humanity's wounds and rancors. It does no such thing, of course" (Maisel, 2008). While devastation could be held to be aesthetically captivating within the realm of its artistic rendition or inscription, the question, then, becomes this: can beauty remember and remember precisely in the wake of forgetting? It might be pertinent, then, to think of an ethics of and for the image as such when it conceives of memory, for if these images are, as Rebecca Comay effectively reminds us, like "memorials…[they] take the place of memory…what appears 'for us' is not only a function of our conceptual mediations but may reveal the impossibility of every standpoint [including that of the artist, their potential audience, or the one who takes up the challenge of theorizing upon what they represent] from which to mediate…[inscribing] the limits of the possibility of inscription" (Comay, 2005, p. 92). If, then, inscription is what the work of art does in the time of memory, in the time of a simultaneous remembrance and forgetting – the present time, perhaps, and the future time to come that it effervescently anticipates – then this inscription of beauty holds us in its rapture, and while it might insist upon us the possibility to remember the exiled, it may also prove to evacuate that memory of its own subject.

A similar treatment of the redemptive quality, however, of Maisel's photographs might be further explored by again briefly returning to a discussion about the sublime, now within Adrian Parr's work. In her *Deleuze and Memorial Culture*, she attempts to explain this transcendent experience within the abstract work of Mark Rothko. While speaking of

Rothko's paintings, specifically the sublime experience she describes they appear to offer, she explains that "[he] did not attempt to 'represent' the sublime experience of horror in all its alienation…rather introducing a humanist edge into abstraction the problem of presenting the unfamiliar becomes one of 'evoking' a sublime experience in the viewer" (Parr, 2008, p. 39). As such what Parr points to is that "[Rothko's] work is not abstract enough because they articulate redemptive experience as the condition of possibility for the unfamiliar" (Parr, 2008, p. 39). This makes immediate sense when thinking about Maisel's canister images precisely because while we might think of these photographs as standalone images outside of any sense of them being representations of loss and invisibility, whose subjects themselves hang on the tight balance between remembrance and forgetting, and while the aesthetic value of entropic ruination might give them an indexical value outside of their mournful historicity, what is redemptive precisely about them is the memory of the materialist history one might garner from these canisters and what they contain, and how it cannot easily be abstracted or wrenched away from their presentation to an audience.

The "unfamiliar" causes the viewer to remain grounded in the experience of viewership, whereby as Parr rightly points out "the libidinal charge of [the unfamiliar] and the horror of the sublime is connected to a unified subjective ground so that the creative potential of generating other associations (perhaps, art historical or aesthetic in tendency) is frozen within one interpretation of sublime horror" (Parr, 2008, p. 39). As such for the viewer (or the looker, as the case may be), "subjective affect is assigned a place in the consummated experience of the picture and [her/him]" (Parr, 2008, p. 39). In such a scene, there is no complete transcendence in the hold of beauty per se, and more specifically the beauty of that which arises from decayed matter and/or the memory of invisibility; it always

already tells us, the viewers immanently interpellated by the act of viewership, of other stories beyond the aesthetic structure of its own decay – one cannot merely hold beauty, to remember, when all else seems to fall away, as I noted earlier in what Celan postulated. The insistence and persistence of the ethical continues to echo beneath the translucency of the skin of the aesthetic in how we look upon the aesthetic and triumphantly relate to these images in a manner such that this, our look, might have the ability to make visible the invisible remains they both signal and signify.

**Ruin, Signature, and the Decay of Photographic Time**

I want to pause and explore briefly a ruin or a sort of ruination of an altogether different valence – beyond that of nature, or object decay, or ruination that impacts itself upon space, place, and/or surface. I want to consider, here, the decay or rupturing of time, of the temporal itself, and particularly the rupturing of time in relation to what is captured or captivated within the space, the prison, of the photograph. The photograph acts, then, as temporal holder of something we might assign the value of being the extreme present, a present in the manner of it being the absolutely finite sense of the now it appears to represent – this categorization of such a present, here, as an absolute must be done with great caution. Additionally, it might be worthwhile to explore the relationship between the ruining of time – halted within the extreme present of the photograph – alongside natural decay and ruin as process, especially within the context of Maisel's canister photographs. What happens to time within this logic of natural decay? What becomes of the object, decaying, captured within the space of the photographic present?

Herein, it would seem that Maisel's images stage almost efficaciously and without doubt Roland Barthes's provocative commentary on the photograph and its process of becoming "horrible":

> If the photograph becomes horrible, it is because it certifies, so to speak, that the corpse is alive, as *corpse*: it is the living image of a dead thing. For the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute reality with an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past ("this-has-been"), the photograph suggests that it is already dead. (Barthes, 1981, p. 92)

The "eternal value" – a temporal marker is assigned here – of the photograph converts the reality it seems to attribute to the canisters with an apparent aliveness. This aliveness is, simply put, layered. On the one hand, the canisters hold the remains of those who died in the asylum; they act as containers, of memory, of the once-alive patients. The photographs bring their memory to life, to a living in the present moment, to the surface of its audiences' consciousness. Within another regime of thought, the canisters themselves have a life, a deadening decaying life of sorts, as their surfaces calcify and rot under the pressures and processes of ruin. The rupture in the seeming reality, as exposed by the layered nature of this aliveness comes from within the temporal break that is issued upon the "eternal" attributed to the photograph. It becomes an object that bridges, albeit tentatively at best, the past recorded within its space and the present moment within which it is either captured or viewed. What then, more immediately, is this notion of the present, or rather the extreme present of photographic time here? Arthur Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Representation*, seems to gesture toward a definition, of sorts, to this seemingly most ungraspable of concepts when he writes:

> Above all, we must clearly recognize that the form of the phenomenon of the will, and hence the form of life or of reality, is really only the present, not the future or the past. Future and past are only in the concept, exist only in the connection and continuity of knowledge in so far as this follows the principle of sufficient reason. No man has lived in the past, and none will ever live in the future; the present alone is the form of life, but it is also life's sure possession which can never be torn from it. The present always exists together with its content; both stand firm without wavering, like the rainbow over the waterfall. (Schopenhauer, 1969, p. 278)

While the past and future render themselves as conceptual frameworks – as in, we address the past as either a memory and/or a forgetting, a temporal map upon which we can situate a narrative of an event happening or occurring, and the future as some hoped for, anticipated time to come that does not fully ever arrive, a time that will have come to pass, a future anterior as such – the present, or more precisely the extreme present, might be captured in that fragile word "now." A question, then, begs reflection here – have we ever thought about how fragile, delicate, and untenable a word (at least within the space of English dictum) this now of the present is? The meaning of this now, at least if we are meaning it temporally, ceases to exist the moment we utter the word itself. Since, it has passed, is always in the moment of passing, and will continue to pass us by, will have already passed us by in the moment of its utterance, the moment of the future anterior, now can neither be anticipated nor has it ever existed per se. Now is both a sight of simultaneous acknowledgement and disavowal – a time of both mourning and melancholia. Like W. Benjamin's conception of history, which is in and of itself a history of the now, this now "does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay" (W. Benjamin, 1998, p. 178). It becomes lost time, a time that sediments as it decays, a time dying already as it happens to be born. In a way, it eludes symbolization and in this sense, it seems impossible to feel melancholia for it (or even nostalgia, for that matter)

because it is the object, perhaps *the* object par excellence, that always already exceeds temporal restriction, having been lost to us, can neither be gained nor recuperated hence, it becomes pure phantasm or ghost time. This would make up the core of the powerful soul of W. Benjamin's now-time, *Jetztzeit*, where in, as we know already, "every second of time [is] the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 264).

While it eludes symbolization, much like that which decays under the elaborate entropic workings of ruin, perhaps the most immediate place where the now-time of the present is attempted to be given a value is within this tenuous space of, or rather scene within, the photograph. The photograph, in this case, becomes the impenetrable prison of the now, that lost time of apparent stillness that has become ghost-time, hovering, if only momentarily and liminally, between the presently exposed concepts of the past and the future. Although, it was alluded to earlier that we cannot feel a melancholia for this now-time, because it never existed, except in some articulation of the extreme present that is always already passing us by – thought of, in it already having come to pass in the future anterior – the photograph becomes the object that seems to permit a relationship, though melancholic in nature, to that lost moment of the now. How does this decaying time and its seeming imprisonment within the photograph, then, relate to the structure of decay occurring to the physical object of the canisters Maisel photographs? Peter Schwenger, in his groundbreaking essay "Corpsing the Image," addresses this precise issue when he contends that:

> [the] decomposition is that of an image, shuttling eternally and emptily between subject and object. The image decomposes, decays–or, more particularly, because of the crucial implications of the body's image, it can be said to *corpse*. And this is not morbidity, but the normal state of perception. The metaphor of the image as corpse is not likely to occur to one whose eyes drink in greedily the pleasures of seeing…They arrive at our eyes already

> mourned, decomposing even as they compose themselves around embodied subjects–who must continually reforget that the state of these images is also our own. (Schwenger, 2000, p. 413)

Thus, to look upon an image is to be aware of our own relationship to the once-alive, to death and also to dying, to be always already within the grip of the work of what it means to be corpsed, to melancholically become corpse and to be mourned in the process of becoming corpse, the process of ruin in and of itself – to find oneself in relation to decay as such. It would seem, therefore, that there are several relentless scenes of self-exposure, so to speak, here that underpin how we experience photography's ambivalent relationship to death and how we understand photography within the ambivalent temporality of death and dying itself and the uncanny teleology of the object that is being photographed. The photograph as corpse appears to be the first scene of this exposure here. The second scene might be when we come to understand the photograph of a corpse, or in this case the copper canisters of Maisel's series, as being further corpsed within the space of the photograph itself or in the act of them being photographed. Furthermore, time itself is dying, decaying, because that present time in which the photograph itself was first taken is now long gone. The photograph remains as the remnant of a near tragic love relationship we have with that now, now already long behind us. Jacques Derrida, in his posthumously published critical work on the photographs of Jean-Francois Bonhomme, *Athens, Still Remains*, offers us a contemplative instance of what such a photograph might signify; a reflective insight that quite adequately becomes relevant in how we address the images that make up Maisel's own *Library of Dust*:

> Whether we are looking at the whole picture or just a detail, never do any of these photographs fail to signify death. Each signifies death without saying it. Each one, in any case, recalls a death that has already occurred, or one that is promised or threatening, a sepulchral monumentality, memory in the figure of the ruin. (Derrida, 2010, p. 2)

What deaths or ruins do these photographs signify, then? For one, and perhaps most importantly, they signify the death of the wards of the asylum. In another manner of speaking, the photographs capture the living death or the dead living that calcification and atrophy signals, in how decay, the decay of ruin, has impacted the canisters themselves over the course of time. Still, in another sense, they signify the death, decay, and the irretrievable passing of time itself.

Earlier, I mentioned that the photograph captures what I referred to as an apparent stillness. This stillness is important to think a little further through, for while the photograph itself is stillness, in a sense, personified, statuesque or stone-like, in the way it holds time and freezes it, what is happening is quite the opposite, outside of the realm of the frozen crypt that is photographic time. In fact, what occurs, even while the photograph captures the extreme present of a now, is the death of that very now, of every now, its decay; a decay that is happening almost in uncanny simultaneity with the ruin of the physical object of the canisters themselves. Mourning the ruined now while melancholically desirous of holding on to it in the space of the photograph existing in the simultaneity of the very moment in which the canisters themselves are given over to their physical and structural decay.

The photograph, then, according to Derrida "[demonstrates] an affection for what has fallen into disuse, a mourning that keeps within itself what it loses in the keeping" (Derrida, 2010, p. 41). A mourning that comes to resemble the melancholia it attempts to defer or come to enact as belated posturing. It becomes a monument to what is lost and what remains, and then also acts as "a fetish [object which] fetishizes in its turn its own abyss" (Derrida, 2010, p. 41), which in this case is the loss that comes in the form of the ruin of both object

and time. Disuse, as metaphor or as stand in for both ruined time and ruined object, then allows us to realize that any conversation about ruin as such, as processes of decay and ruination, would not be complete without considering the decay of this now, seemingly simultaneously both grasped at and lost, in one and the same moment. Use (of the photograph as art object, as monument put forth toward the practice of remembrance, as testimonial artifact witnessing loss and invisibility) and disuse become radically intertwined at the site of this signature, the site of that which signifies traces, the sacral remains. If decay, in the form of rust, calcification, and atrophy, is and acts as signature to ruin as it plays its part in the wearing down of the canisters, then the photographic still of the decayed object, what remains of it, acts as signature for the ghost time of the now, the trace of that time and its immediate decay. Ruin exists within something akin to the future anterior, perhaps, wherein it will have already come to pass and become past in how it is then looked upon from the present moment of the now-time, the time of the angel's look back. Space and time meet at the site of the photographs of these canisters, always already themselves a monument, not only *to* decay, but as well *of* decay, in and of itself.

**Can Beauty Remember?**

What remains? The tomb, or what now remains to hold it, its photographic referent. Signature, inscription, text – the logic of ruin, its weight bearing down upon both spatial and temporal parameters, seems to orbit these three moments that underscore the trace of irresistible decay that is presented by the canisters themselves and re-presented within the context of Maisel's photographs, photographs we might come to qualify as either "sublime" or "beautiful." The photographs become remainders of what is left behind of a fragment of humanity, fractured by and within space and time, after decay, and while decay, has allowed

for the ruin to tempestuously take hold. If the image, then, becomes signature, the signifier of authority and visibility; or inscription, the imprint of, perhaps, sacral and vestigial remains; or, still yet, a text, a monument, architected, toward and for memory's ability to witness and testify for the past, then we are left standing in front of these images, as if dejectedly and unnervingly, in front of a tomb itself asking the question of, what is it that these texts, these visual photographic texts, are trying (but also failing) to tell us? What story is left behind for us, to carry, and to carry on with? Or, perhaps, more immediately, the image, the tomb, the remainder itself asks the question to us: what will you remember, from here on in, after the image has been viewed, or rather witnessed? Or, even more seriously, we might ask, what has been made visible through a possible look of love upon these images?

A memory of invisibility – the unmarked, ungrieved, abject subjectivities – left without even the signifier of immediate claimants that could be attached to them seems to be, at once, both called for and elusive. If the image, as Maisel offers it to us through his canister photographs, renders memory both possible and impossible in one and the same moment, then the question of whether the beauty of decay can remember becomes superfluous, at best. We are left to wonder how we might metonymically translate aesthetic considerations of the ruin's beauty to political clarion calls for memory, remembrance, and the possibility of and for conscripting this remembrance within the embedded space of a viable archive; an archive, here, of ruin as it is, that continues to decay. The text, which the photograph offers itself up as, is perhaps a testimonial to invisibility, at least in how one might "read" the invisible as connoting a sense of the abject or the othered, as that which exists outside of the unsettling logic of the normative and, hence, the apparently grievable, and, as well, seemingly outside the parameters of readability itself.

This readability, or the conceptual impossibility to read, is of central importance to Julia Kristeva, for instance, whose work on abjection is well known. This impossibility to read the abject or the invisible, or rather the abject as informing the very conditions of invisibility and, hence, unreadability, comes from what exists within the logic of a thing being produced as "abject," for as Kristeva so rightly describes, "there looms, within [abjection], one of those violent, dark revolts of being directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1). These "violent, dark threats" retell for us effectively the story of the violence of sublimity itself which was discussed earlier, wherein the sublime experiential moment arises from the pleasure of pain, the shock of the unfamiliar and the horrible being thrust upon us, to remind us of our relationship to the dead, to death itself, to our own dying, and above all else what we resist, in this dying, in order to live or feel alive or be enlivened. As such, Kristeva's abjection locates itself in:

> [the] corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death. In the presence of signified death…I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3)

To read invisibility vis-à-vis abjection within the site of Maisel's photographs – be it in the abject refusal of placing the mark or title of grievable subjectivity upon these patients, whose remains are now contained within the canisters; or abjection, itself as embodied by the ruinous decay of the canisters themselves; or furthermore, the abjection of beauty itself here, the abjection that such beauty becomes articulated as, or rather the beauty that is made possible through abjection in and of itself – would be to engage in the task of situating the

aesthetic alongside the ethico-political in our consideration of ruin as process of decay and ruination, to insist upon the ethical as always already a demand through which we make realizable the possibility to remember and recall the invisible that has been aesthetically represented here and culled into visibility through our look. For Kristeva, this task, the task of the ethical as practiced within the space of remembrance and memorialization here, might very well be the work to be undertaken by the deject, "by whom the abject exists." Accordingly, the deject:

> [*separates*] (her/himself), situates (her/himself), and therefore strays instead of getting her/his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing. Situationist in a sense…(necessarily) dichotomous…s/he divides, excludes, and without, properly speaking, wishing to know her/his abjections is not at all unaware of them. Often, moreover, s/he includes himself among them, thus casting her/himself the scalpel that carries out her/his separations. A deviser of territories, languages, works, the deject never stops demarcating her/his universe whose fluid confines–for they are constituted of a non-object, the abject–constantly question her/his solidity and impel her/him to start afresh. A tireless builder, the deject is in short a stray. S/he is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding. S/he has a sense of the danger, of the loss that pseudo-object attracting her/him represents for her/him, but s/he cannot help taking the risk at the very moment s/he sets her/himself apart. And the more s/he strays, the more s/he is saved. (Kristeva, 1982, p.8)

It would appear, for us, that the Kristevan deject resembles the earlier evoked Benjaminian ragpicker poet from the previous chapter. Here and in this sense, the ethico-political stance of (or rather, command upon) the deject – the one who is audience to the images of Maisel's series; the one who both, at one and the same time, is evasive of the memory of loss and death and hailed into that memory through these images – "straying" is one of always already negotiating and mitigating the tenuous task of realizing her/his ever compromising relationship to abject invisibility, its incumbent traumatic aftermath, as such and as represented by and within the natural world, living and dying under the pressures of

ruin. Abjection reminds the deject of her/his own destruction, her/his own relationship to the grotesque and the vulnerable (the corpse or the process of becoming corpse), as such, within her/himself. This ethical task within the context here commands upon the deject an imperative toward a recognition of (and recognizing) the logic of decay that might attempt to close up the gaps within history and memory, as we attempt, as well, to understand the abject figures left outside of historical logic within the photographed canisters. By extension, the task of the abject and invisible other outside of history much like the task of the ruin, and the task of the ruin's photographed evidence then, perhaps, becomes the task of longing itself, a longing already embedded within the deject's enactment of her/his own straying both to and away from invisibility. This interminable longing becomes one of an unending desire within abjection itself to be prized and brought into visibility, to be read, to be articulated, to be given, or rather, to have voice, to be heard, to be seen, and to be, above all else, recognized as, first and foremost, subjects, or worthy of the recognition that subjecthood proclaims.

The instructive word in the statement that I have just rendered above is "interminable;" an interminable longing for things that apparently disappeared to appear again, or reappear as the case may be, but can only be brought into such visibility, or outside of such invisibility, through our look of possible love. This seems to be the case in point for Maisel's canister images. This is both what is its promised possibility and its notional impossibility as photographed decay and ruin; it is that which both limits and delimits its potential to remember within the spatial and temporal logic of ruin, especially as it becomes characterized as an object's process of death and dying, a thing, of beauty; a text, made beautiful all the more, apparently, for its unreadable and abject invisibility. The rusted tombs that the canisters come to signify become the site for both the opportunity for visibility and

remembrance, and the monumental figure whose silence becomes all the more unbearable because what forces this silence, or forgetting, is, perhaps, the re-presentation of the ruin's beautiful decay within the ruined space and the dying time of the photograph itself.

## Chapter Five:
## From Hiroshima, With/out Love:
## Returning the Destructive Look, in Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* and Michael Haneke's *Amour*

**The subaltern cannot speak.**
- (Spivak, 1988, p. 313)

**I'll think of this adventure as the horror of oblivion.**
- The Japanese man, in the film *Hiroshima, mon amour*
(Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959)

### The Look of Love, or Can the Subaltern Be Seen?[1]

How might we understand the scopic fidelity of the angel's look back at what appears to be an eternally rising catastrophe and the incumbent ruins that such catastrophe produces, ruins psychical and material in nature signifying loss, as an ethical imperative – as a look of love against erasure and such loss, as such – toward the otherness of the past that has already left us, been laid to presumed waste, and/or given over to possible temporally charged, spatially signified, and/or materially marked psychical decay and deterioration? How might we think of the temporality of this look back and what it might give over to memory-work in the way of situating and citing a scene in which redemption might be the possible inheritance – the cure – that such a look gives us, us who remain to grieve the past in the simultaneous instance of both a mourning that mediates the loss of the past and its possible ongoing melancholic meditation? As Kaja Silverman elsewhere famously suggested regarding the

[1] While the title I use for this particular subsection of the present chapter appears to borrow from Greg Grandin's rigorous essay "Can the Subaltern Be Seen?: Photography and the Affects of Nationalism," published in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* Vol. 84, Issue 1 (February, 2004), my use of this suggestive title is to postulate a possible relationship I attempt to make between the very final part of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous essay, the part concerning the suicide of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, and Kaja Silverman's study on the cure by love.

paintings of Gerhard Richter, the answer to these queries might reside not in the space of the "either/or," the polemical opposition construed of two apparently or seemingly divergent or disparate standpoints, be it, for instance, either mourning or melancholia, either forgetting or remembrance, but in the "both/and" of their simultaneous activation, activity, enactment, and unearthing wherein the inquiry might take an altogether different route, otherwise as such than it might usually be presumed to take[2]. In this scene, rather than asking if the ruin stands in as an assignation or a scene of *either* mourning *or* melancholia, it might bequeath us to apodictically come to a conclusion that deems this spatial and temporal material metaphor as a scene of *both* grief-stricken mourning and the site, sight, and situated place wherein melancholic remnants of the past assumed to have already long departed us find their untimely and even uncanny home in the conflicted space of our respective psychical lives.

Hence the both/and signifies both an attention – a perpetual insomnia and a perceptive waking, so to speak, in order to "awaken the dead" – to ruins, to catastrophe, and, as well, to the look itself. Both the look and the ruin as historical metaphors for time passing from the past into the present and onto a future as yet to come becomes equivocated in the instance of this simultaneity, a simultaneity that can only be made possible in the rupture that the look back itself sanctions, enlivens, and makes viable as our experience of time and temporality becomes constantly inscribed upon with newer narratives and even newer

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[2] Kaja Silverman speaks at great length of this specific quality in Richter's diptych paintings that signal his interest in creating analogous relations between disparate and divergent political forces that lie seemingly against one another but in close proximity to each other. She uses the formulation of the "both/and" to explore how Richter's diptychs regard and consider the matter of political difference along lines of similarities, as coexisting despite their differences in proximity of one another. My first exposure to this "both/and" formulation was through the lecture Silverman gave, titled "Unfinished Business," as part of the *Panorama: New Perspectives on Richter* symposium at the Tate Modern in London, on October 21, 2011. I found this formulation most useful to think through in regards to my own concerns regarding the simultaneous occurrence and coexistence of the experiences of mourning and melancholia, and of remembrance and forgetting, as politically-charged forces that appear to be distinct but that one could make a case for their analogous similarities in how both these seeming polarities are situated under the heading of the experience of contending with loss and its incumbent traumatic pressures. A video recording of this lecture can be found here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLsQeSL39iM

memories. Such an equivocation in the name and instance of such a simultaneity becomes determined within the way in which the look back requires the object of its scopophilic glance as much as the object, the lost or repressed image of the past, requires the look back to grace it with its irreducible sheen; a sheen that allows for that which is lost to be revived, resuscitated and thus brought from invisibility to visibility, converted from the status of being possibly eternally disprized into the status of being valued through its elevation into memory, remembrance and historicity, without both over-determining and fetishizing the death of the past, the otherness of this past, and its dying as both an unruly nostalgic remnant or an eternal symptom of how linear time is presumed to weigh in on and upon history and our experience of it.

The formulation of the both/and applies not only to the temporality of the look back but to the space in which or within which (the past, the present, and the future, and the ruptures therein) this temporality becomes manifest. Both the space between the look and the ruin, and, as well, the time in which the look and such seemingly perennial ruination occurs – its ongoing destruction and construction, an eternal destruction, as W. Benjamin suggested, that presupposes an eternal construction – seem to have an elliptical character. If by ellipsis or by the elliptical, we mean a sort of surreptitious incompletion, perhaps even repression or an omission, of inscription as such from memory, of the meaning expropriated of and from the look and the ruin both simultaneously and respectively. Both the task of looking – the task par excellence of the angel and the materialist historian, even the analysand and the analyst – and the perverse nature of the seemingly eternal ruination as both a construction and a destruction, a constitution and an ongoing reconstitution of historical time in the form of memory in the scene of both remembrance and forgetting remain ascetically incomplete.

Here, loss literalized in the invisibility of the disprized[3] – a word Silverman often invokes in the realm of this scopic fidelity to mark that which exists outside of or on the margins of the visual field of historicity – in the simultaneous instance of both a remembrance and a forgetting, in the very instance of the aforementioned destruction of linear temporality and the recuperative logic of a construction upon which this destruction is founded to exist as elliptical scenes always already exposed to an ethics, an ethics embedded in the triumphant relationality that makes possible the conversion, even the difficult translation, of the invisible into the visible, to make visible the invisible inscriptions of loss, to transfer and convert the objects on the margins of historically exiled subjectivity to the center of remembered discourse.

What[4], then, is coded in the ambivalent structure of the elliptical, or more specifically, what possibly provocative secrets do the ellipsis promise to contain or hold? What is the surreptitious nature of both the figure and ground that, simultaneously, prescribes and proscribes an elliptical way of thinking about sight and visibility, site and the specificity of a space such as the ruin, as metaphor, and, perhaps and even more immediately, the particular modes of operation embedded in the cumbersome task of citation, as such, flanked in that liminal space between sight and site? Put simply, where might we locate the ethical in the ellipsis, or in the aesthetic and linguistic category that the ellipsis appears to implicitly signify, as evocative of the seen and the unseen in the visual scene, the apparent obscene

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[3] Again, I owe a great deal to Silverman's use of this term, most specifically in her 1996 book *The Threshold of the Visible World*, where the "disprized" signifies culturally disdained, despised, and undervalued bodies and images – bodies and images, or images of bodies marked by and inscribed with difference.

[4] Starting from this point on, until the end of the second paragraph on p. 166, this segment, discussing the ethical and political implications of the ellipsis as a linguistic category structuring thought and thinking, was previously published as an introductory essay entitled "The Ethical is Elliptical" for the exhibition catalogue of the 2013 Emerging Artists Series show presented by FADO Performance Art Centre, *.sight.specific.*, curated by Francisco-Fernando Granados. The series was held from March 8 to March 30, 2013, at Xpace Cultural Centre in Toronto, Canada.

margins of the political realm, evocative also of an absent presence, a visible invisibility, and an empty fullness in the social world of the everyday in how we choose to address trauma and traumatic rupture? The answers to these inquiries might be both suggestive of a link that enables us to tie sight to temporal and spatial specificities as such, but might be critically significant in trying to locate the ethical – the irreducible conversion of the invisible into the visible through the look of love, through a loving look, as determined within the angel's glance at the wreckage piling ever so high as always already residing alongside the practice of aesthetic production and its, perhaps necessary, failure to represent the otherness of the ruin, and thus preserve it in its alterity as such, as radically other in and through this failed attempt to inscribe meaning to the otherness of the past.

Hence, when we think of the grammar of the ellipsis, like the clandestine promise inscribed in a footnote, that "negligible wasteland of the text to which its most intimate secrets are banished" (Comay, 2011, p. 28) – yet another sort of visibility and invisibility codified within the practice of textual inscription – as a kind of structural disembodiment and denaturing of language itself; its very cached fault lines and caesuras laid bare for all to see and yet for none to take notice of, it seems viable that the architectural configuration of the ruin comes to mind. The ruin – in its state of incommensurable decay and deterioration – marks and demarcates the aforementioned absent presence, a visibility that is as well simultaneously an invisibility, and an emptiness that at once is both the stigmata of a history of traumatic loss and the ruptured memory of remembered and forgotten pasts. It signals in its very state or stasis of abstraction both the insistent impulse toward the ethical – to make visible the invisible through the look of love that preserves the alterity of that which is other – and an imperative that always already commands the direction of the aesthetic in how we

choose to look at the social world based on that very sense of the ethical. Regarding this abstraction, the making of the abstract in the task of the optical as it is engaged with in aesthetic practice, in how we look at, or rather choose to look at the object of the ruin or the ellipsis to seek out from within its absences the traces of loss and of that which has been lost, we discover both a gesture of recuperative presentation and re-presentation and the very language of poesis that might promise to privilege the ethical in the always already political act of looking. In the final analysis, as is in the case of the ruin, could we not suggest that the grammar of the elliptical, the absent presence embedded in the very structure of the ellipsis, is, at its heart, governed by a task of looking for something that is not either there to be discovered at first glance, or something that has to be conceived of through the practice of citation that ties together sight and site in the aesthetic realm as commandeered by visuality and the visual field? As such, simultaneity announces itself here; it signals both an absence of memory and its eruptive presence, both the tenuous visibility and the presumably intangible invisibility of the other in the past and the otherness of the past, both visuality and the negative or the negation of this visuality in the failure to inscribe meaning vis-à-vis the practice of textual or aesthetic representation. Hence, W. Benjamin's statement appears to ring true again: "[in] the ruin, history has physically merged into the setting…in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay" (W. Benjamin, 1998, p. 178) – the ruin, or the spatial and temporal ellipsis that it becomes, signifying visible remnants and present fragments, only ever announces the course of irresistible decay, the degradation of memory in the aftermath of forgetting.

Here, again, a distinction I prescribed to earlier seems important to be rehearsed – the differentiation of the task of the look, or looking, as an experience of optical ambiguity as

opposed to simply a visual experience in the realm of aesthetic practice. Let us remember in that instance, I suggested that optics or the optical do not have to pertain to the structure of what can or cannot be seen; it, as in the case of the look theorized here, goes both along with sight and beyond it, beyond see-ability, and even the limits of the visual field as prescribed by the site of the unconscious life of the subject and how it could be cited – inscribed with meaning, represented within the realm of textual and aesthetic praxis.

As such, again to remind us of the tenor of this distinction, one might garner that the the optical ambiguity addresses a psychical experience of looking for something that may not be seen at first glance or not at all, and may not even be a scene, in the visual sense, in the unconscious. Here, it might, to reiterate, resemble the task of an archeologist excavating a dig at a ruin site, searching for that which s/he does not already know, or a translator for whom language becomes the site of linguistic annulment and ruination, the task and space that accommodates the elliptical in the name of a destruction of the old for the sake of a tenuous construction of the new, a construction that presupposes an always already a priori destructivity. Hence, without beleaguering the point further, the optical experience, as such, as in the case of the enigmatic nature of the ethical look that the aesthetic commands from the depths of the limits of its own ability to present and re-present the world, is the very structure of play that governs light and dark; it, as such, sees in itself the structure of an interminable loss itself, in the scripted looking at, to see what remains, of that which might not be immediately visible to the conscious – the aforementioned loss inscribed in the structure of the ellipsis.

Such an ethics of looking at loss, as in how we might come to consider its optical ambiguity, might become the very governing force in how one looks – looks at the past, at

history, at memory, at remembrance and at forgetting, at the social, the political, and the aesthetic – because it sees what is right in front of it and, as well, seems to go beyond the tendency to see only what is visible, to see only into what is present or given over to presence. Hence, as I made the suggestion prior to the here and now, it does not merely gaze at the ruins of time, memory, and/or historical consciousness, it tries to look for meaning in the loss embedded in the disembodied structure of the ruin itself; it sees in what remains the uncanny familiarity between the life of the past and life in the present, and seeks to understand what lies beyond and beneath the fragile skin of subjective political and/or personal trauma or of the horror that the ellipsis, the site of the unseen realm of the unconscious, chooses for the tentative purpose of inscription, sightedness and citation.

Material presence, like historiography or history, even theory as inscription of truth and knowledge, as such, is not always a signifier of visibility; it does not promise the presence of deeper more seemingly absent remnants or fragments nor does it offer up much in regards to the earlier mentioned intentionality of psychical life at the level of the unconscious. The ruin or the wreckage that the angel cannot help but look upon signifies as much about absences as it does about what might be visually present – the material fragments of the material history of catastrophe, as missed political and ethical opportunity. The materialist historian's task, thus, as is the same as the angel's, is one in which the task of recuperation starts precisely at the moment in which the look of love destroys to create anew or find anew other fragments buried deep in the elsewhere of space and in the other times of temporality, spaces and times not easily visibly appropriable. The ellipsis – the textual inscription of loss, repression, and omission – is as much about the unsaid as it is about the said that precedes or succeeds it; it marks the site of an incompletion while also announcing

the desire for completion. In the spoken realm of linguistic articulation (or the lack/absence of such articulation, as the case may be), the ellipsis might be found in the silences that exist in a setting such as the analyst's couch – the inability to speak, or the difficulty at entering the task of speech, to translate loss into language, because that very language limits our ability to symbolically procure for this loss an adequate representation. As such, the silences – in textual, aesthetic, or spoken re-presentation – bear as much the mark of the unsaid as it does of the very said and saying that precedes and succeeds it.

What remains, or, rather, seeing what remains becomes the difficult task of the materialist historian, the artist or the aesthetic practitioner, the analyst, and the angel who looks back to make visible the invisible through her/his act of looking back. Seeing what remains, as the title of this project – a title that I borrow from Eric Santner's own compelling work *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life* for reasons that will become clear momentarily – suggests and has attempted to practice and sustain throughout its discursive progression, then is a seeing that comes from looking at loss in the precise nature of those inscriptive practices, be it the rhetorical practice of academic writing or scholarly work, or the creative tendencies showcased in the work of the novel or the poem, or photography, film, or painting, even the speech uttered on the analyst's couch. Here, again, the attempt is to give this loss meaning, to make visible that which is optically elusive to us at first glance. What remains – after, and in the aftermath of, loss and the failed attempts at inscription – becomes the central question in the final analysis, precisely because of the invisibility it still garners and allows to reside within the interstices of ruined memory, further ruined through remembrance and forgetting, and even further ruined by representation, but existing as and preserved precisely within the status of it being ruined and signaling its own incompletion.

Representation, itself, becomes a ruin. Santner, in an attempt to think through the difficult efforts of scholarly post-modernity to articulate adequate responses to the nature of difference as it exists in the world offers us this:

> In recent years, as part of a more general effort to dismantle the impediments to tolerance and cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly "global" age, scholars have attempted to historicize those impediments, to provide a genealogy of their origins. The thought and hope behind these efforts is that a better grasp of the historical roots of intolerance – of patterns of ethnic, religious, and national enmity – will help people throughout the world to work through these antagonisms and establish a genuine "ecumenical" framework for living with difference. (Santner, 2001, p. 1)

And so, it might be perhaps against such a notion of an origin to violence that the both/and applies, thus as well, to language and silence, to representation and its failure, to seeing, and the very unseen in difference, to both the pristine and the obscene, to seeing and to the obverse of seeing in its inability to lay to sight otherness and the past, and, as well, the nominal otherness of the past – the simultaneity of both the failure of inscription and the irresistible desire for it, the endless inscription of knowledge and truth into the rhetorical crypt of language, the annals of history, its seemingly eternal tomes, to give it meaning, to give otherness meaning itself, and to give the past meaning for the purposes of present living. What remains after loss however, after inscription, after language or representation, in the in-between signified by the silence that textual production is claimed by, the silence in between the angel and the object of its look? What remains, however, after the work of theory (besides even more theoretical work), in the always already incomplete structure and nature of such rhetorical and scholarly task plied and manipulated under the heading of knowledge production? What remains when difference cannot be accounted for adequately in or through the work? How do we account for this difference beyond a desire to represent it, assimilate it

into the very structure of representation, or speech and writing? It would seem the simultaneity of representation and its failure appears to haunt any attempt at politicizing or historicizing otherness, or the otherness of the past as such. Remains and remainders are always subsequently populated by theoretical potholes and landmines, pitfalls and shortfalls as such, erupting at the seams, waiting under the pressure of an almost unnerving patience to explode and thus always prepared to blast our sense of any linear form in which time might appear as allying itself with representation and historicity.

While as it was discussed in great detail in the first chapter as to what inaugurated much of the concerns that led to the analyses undertaken here – a simultaneous instance of both mourning and melancholia associated to the loss of my dissertation advisor, Roger, in the confrontation with the trauma implicitly inherent in such loss, and in the subsequent aftermath of coming to certain realizations that psychically associated Roger's passing to the passing of my maternal grandfather by way of the unconscious capacity found in the work of transference, and thereby surreptitiously arousing in me memories of an early childhood encounter with trauma, as articulated in the scene of my experience of being under analysis – a minor but significant diversion is necessary to announce yet another instance in which I was brought to this work, a work fundamentally about invisibility.

In the early days of my post-secondary schooling, in a class on post-colonial literature, I confronted – or was rather confronted by – Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's rigorous and now canonical essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Years have passed since I first read this essay and in the years that have ensued between that first time and the present moment, I have had the opportunity to return to it time and time again, as though in the form of an impregnable repetition in order to understand the meaning of a particular image that it

has unwaveringly conjured in the form of a haunting that it seems to necessitate in much, if not all, of my theoretical, political, and therapeutic commitments. Toward the end of her essay which becomes a sort of survey of how different theoretical strains have attempted and subsequently failed in doing so to respond to or even merely articulate subjectivities, othered and subaltern, outside of history, evicted from knowability and cultural memory – be it Marxian interpretations that attempt to operationalize the marginal figure through the revolutionary impulse of the assumed proletariat, or Foucauldian implorations on power and knowledge that attempt to describe the state's relation to marginality through its ever-disciplining, eliding, and violative impulses, or psychoanalytic theory that seeks to give an explanation of and for such impulses in the colloquial sense under the rubrics of desires and drives within the realm of the unconscious – Spivak describes a moment of reading the unreadable or the inarticulate. By describing in detail the suicide of a young girl from Kolkata during the heyday of the Indian independence movement, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, Spivak stages what is essentially the potential for a reading of and about bodies, disprized, disdained, and long considered abject, that seemingly exist on the outside of historical logic and rationality – a figurative ruin in the manner of a corpsed body of the other. Here, Bhaduri in her act of committing an "unexplainable" suicide was rendered unreadable, for even years after the act, as Spivak is quick to point out:

> Nearly a decade later, it was discovered that she was a member of one of the many groups involved in the armed struggle for Indian independence. She had finally been entrusted with a political assassination. Unable to confront the task and yet aware of the practical need of trust, she killed herself.
>
> Bhuvaneswari had known that her death would be diagnosed as the outcome of illegitimate passion. She had therefore waited for the onset of menstruation. While waiting, Bhuvaneswari, the *brahmacarini* (Sanskrit for one consigned to celibacy till wedlock) who was no doubt looking forward to good wifehood, perhaps rewrote the social text of sati-suicide in an

> interventionist way. She generalized the sanctioned motive for female suicide by taking immense trouble to displace (not merely deny), in the physiological inscription of her body its imprisonment within legitimate passion by a single male. In the immediate context, her act became absurd, a case of delirium rather than sanity. The displacing gesture – waiting for menstruation – is at first a reversal of the interdict against a menstruating widow's right to immolate herself, the unclean widow must wait, publicly, until the cleansing bath of the fourth day, when she is no longer menstruating, in order to claim her dubious privilege [of sati].
>
> In this reading, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri's suicide is an unemphatic, ad hoc, subaltern rewriting of the social text of sati-suicide as much as the hegemonic account of the blazing, fighting, familial Durga. The emergent dissenting possibilities of that hegemonic account of the fighting mother are well documented and popularly well remembered through the discourse of the male leaders and participants in the independence movement. The subaltern as female [however] cannot be heard or read…The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with "woman" as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task, which she must not disown with a flourish. (Spivak, 1988, p. 313)

My reprisal of this provocative scene from the very final part of Spivak's essay is not to give the text a reading in and of itself. Spivak's reading, itself, is far more superior than anything I could offer to the gendered inscriptions that have been given meaning to in both the act and its subsequent exegesis. However, the stark image that Spivak has offered in her essay of self-annihilation in the manner of Bhaduri's suicide, consequentially codified and typified as political self-sacrifice, has left its trace on me in regards to my ongoing concerns regarding mourning and melancholia within the scene of the difficult task that lies at the feet of the materialist historian. I do not want to impose psychoanalysis or a psychoanalytic reading on the suicide itself, nor do I want to analyze its socio-political and/or historical import and merit. If anything such impositions seem frivolous precisely in light of what, in the final analysis, Spivak poignantly concludes, that "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak, 1988, p. 313). Rather, however, the image as it relates to much of my theoretical (and

political) preoccupations, without fetishizing it or commodifying it, renders itself in the manner of an instauration wherein a new concern might be effused from it, a concern that relates to the very experience of both mourning (letting go of the body) and melancholia (holding on to the political meaning of its remainder, its corpse), and the angel's look and the ruined structure of catastrophe, which in this scene is signified by Bhaduri's death. For me, this other insight that the image offers, and that which continues to haunt me, regards not so much whether speech is viable or possible for the subaltern other, or if inscription – theoretical, socio-political, philosophical, psychoanalytic or even theological – could render the subject meaningful. Rather, for me, the question that continues to be evoked concerns itself with the aftermath of the death itself, the aftermath of the loss signified by the death of the other or the subaltern. Can we, as such, then mourn Bhaduri outside of normative attempts at historicizing her death or giving her death a meaning inscribed with political substance? What would mourning Bhaduri look like? Is it possible to mourn this death outside of representation or inscription? Or, is representation and inscription, theorizing vis-à-vis prescribing and instituting the body with an apparent sense of it being readable, the only way toward the formation of its subjectivity, and thus also the only way to subsequently mourn the subject? If the task of the historical materialist is to take seriously the Benjaminian concern that "every image of the past…threatens to disappear irretrievably" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255), then can the image of Bhaduri's death be invoked to think through how it might have something to offer us with regards to tying, even binding, the past with the present? How can we simultaneously render Bhaduri's death and subjectivity as both readable and mourned in the same instance? And, if the angel's look at the wreckage of catastrophe is a look of love against erasure, against forgetting, knowing fully well that

forgetting occurs in the same instance as remembrance, then can Bhaduri, and the subaltern figure of otherness be seen? Can otherness as such, the other in the past, and the very otherness of the distant past be seen, prized, and elevated by making it visible through the look back that the angel seems to hold?

Against erasure, and furthermore against invisibility seems, to me, to be the concern when thinking about both Bhaduri's subjectivity, and my own relationship to a mourning and melancholia that both destroys and deploys my memory of Roger and my grandfather. What did the two, *both* the one *and* the other mean to me? Words and language limit me, as was discussed in great detail in the chapter that inaugurated this project. However, there was an attempt to represent their significance through the task of remembering that significance, while being aware and cognizant that forgetting follows remembrance so immediately, and without fail, at the latter's heel. The difficulty to speak and toward speech itself in the sessions with my psychoanalyst which followed immediately after Roger's passing signifies the difficult task of memory and the limitations therein. Rendering relationality by investing it with the descriptive powers of language is a wrenching wherein the unspeakable meaning inscribed in the relationality that exists between myself and the other is both stripped apart and renewed; rendering into language, thus as well, means destruction, perhaps nevertheless a necessary and unavoidable destruction. Destruction presupposes construction as we know through an earlier argument I alluded to made by W. Benjamin, and as such a destructive looking presupposes the desire to make visible the other and the otherness of the past for the value it might hold for present life and living. It is under the auspices of this looking, this destructive looking that allows for a renewed construction of the past, that the earlier

mentioned comments put forth by Silverman become all the more undeniably significant for me here. Again, a reprisal seems essential for my present purpose:

> What Freud calls "the cure by love," on the other hand, represents the triumph of relationality; it is a cure through and for displacement. The cure by love frees us from fixation through the formation of a new libidinal relation. Indeed, its whole point is to bring about the reconstitution of the past in the guise of the present. To the degree that what was asserts its priority over what is, the cure by love has failed. Although Freud himself tells us that we must love or fall ill, we are not accustomed to conceptualizing love as a cure. We are generally less aware of its medicinal properties than of its powers of intoxication. This is because we are accustomed to thinking in narcissistic ways about love. *Hiroshima, mon amour* encourages us to approach this topic from the other direction: from the direction of what is loved. It asks us to conceptualize love not in the form either of the aggrandizement or rapture of the one who loves, but rather in the form of care for the world. It suggests that creatures and things are in need of this care because without it they cannot help but suffer from the most serious of all maladies: invisibility. (Silverman, 2005, p. 42)

To look at the past, the other in the past, or the past as otherness itself means to remember otherwise in a manner that regards this past as radically other, as radically lost to its own othering and, as well, as radically dissonant from myself, but simultaneously an irrevocable part of me. To attenuate that sense of loss we might feel in the death or dying of the past by engaging in the task presented to us by the notion of a cure by love, via the work of the look that both remembers and forgets and both mourns and holds on within the experience of melancholia, or via the work that the look attempts to endeavor in is to begin to remember with our eyes, to make visible the optical nature by which invisibility relies far too much on representation without or in the absence of any greater intentionality outside of or beyond the inscription of meaning. To love the past or to admit to loving the scopophilic relationship we might have with the past is to acknowledge its almost inscrutable presence, to as Freud stated remember that “the patient’s state of being ill cannot cease with the beginning

of his analysis, and that we must treat his illness, not as an event of the past, but as a present-day force" (Freud, 2006b, p. 396). It means to realize the undeniable bond that seems to stretch across temporality – between the past, the present, and the future to come – precisely in the instances that allow for our experience of this temporality to be informed only by ruptures. It also means to regard the temporality of the look as existing in the moment of an insistent instance signaled by temporality's very own rupturing, and that the look of the angel does not exist in the past, does not reside in the present, nor does it belong to an enlightened future alone. In a sense, the look and the cure it breathes in the looking, of love, belongs to all times already past and those yet to come, and to every now-time in between.

In what follows, I will engage in a comparative gesture that will enable me to further iron out the ways in which the look and the cure by love that I propose it promises invigorate the bond between the past, the present, and the time to come. After the said gesture, it is my desire that the project will close on the note of the redemptive move – redemption being of paramount significance here in the final movement of this study – that compels us to keep looking and especially looking back, as does the angel, the materialist historian, the analysand and the analyst, in the hope that we inherit the past for the life that is to occur in the present and in the time to come. By looking back, we are making a claim to love against the erasure and the invisibility of the past; we are, as well, looking to see what remains and in the very remains that which we cannot help but remember because we also regard these remains under the fear of forgetting. As such, this look of love attempts to rewrite an intriguing and frightening, yet long familiar and for this reason deeply uncanny, notion proposed by the character of the French woman in Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima, mon amour* that "forgetting will begin with our eyes" (Halfon et al. & Resnais,

1959) and that these eyes are always already primed to continue to search the ruins interminably and in the name of a love that makes the invisible visible, and makes this visibility the very site and sight of the possibility for a justice *both* toward the past *and* toward ourselves.

**That Symbol of Love's Forgetfulness**

What would it mean to narrativize a story of love within the scene and space, the site and in the sightedness decreed by an almost uncanny locale, of an almost unimaginable horror? What would it mean to place a story of an impossible love, to conjure and fashion it as though out of a sheer sense of necessity, within the scopic realm of an impossible-to-imagine-or-name horror? What would this coalescence of love and horror mean for memory-work as such? If to love is to make visible the invisible frayed edges of subjectivity in the moment of catastrophic annulments handed over to and upon our sense of a linear historical time, then what would it mean to "see" horror as the very signifier of a memory-work that exists at the interstices of both remembrance and forgetting? At first glance – this "glance," here, becomes the reminder and remainder of what the theorized look seems to have in store for us under the weightiness of a history always piling wreckage in front of us – it would seem the task of love, in the sense of conjuring the invisible, is to apotropaically ward off the horror that attempts to diminish the wreckage as much historical detritus and accumulation. However, what would it mean if this horror – of the ruin, of the omission signified by the ellipsis, or the repression that memory seems to always already announce in the wake of remembering – is almost irresolutely essential for the work of memory, the work of remembering itself? What if this horror – outside of it being codified as either sublime aesthetic commodity or vulgar fetish object – is inextricably linked to the look, and more

precisely the look of love, as I suggest it here, staged and restaged by W. Benjamin's reading of Klee's angel? What if the look of love could not exist if not for the horror, the horror of invisibility and of erasure as such, haunting us, as though already signaling to us the fear that W. Benjamin proposed where, lest we forget, "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present…threatens to disappear irretrievably" (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255)? What if, in the final analysis, the very task of looking intends toward the unearthing of the horror – an ongoing and almost never-ending, even compulsive, unearthing, like at a ruin site or at an archaeological dig – that the wreckage keeps piling, so that suffocated histories might breath new air beyond and outside of their possible catastrophic end?

In this sense, within and under the heading of such an intended look, it almost seems to rehearse the very intentionality of psychical life and how it unravels upon the analyst's couch, and furthermore even so unravels unconsciously outside of the scene of analysis – the intended look, as it evolves over the course of analysis and beyond it, suggests not so much a further repression of horror in the face of trauma, rather it becomes suggestive of a further and almost eradicable desire to confront it, to name it, to unhinge it from the scene of forgetting and/or repression. The otherness of the past, or the other as the past, or the past as other to oneself or to the present, is then revived as though breathed into with new life by the kiss, akin to that of a "princely" stranger – the analyst provides the necessary armature for this figure of the stranger within the scene of psychoanalysis. Released from dormancy, the crypt of a repressed sleep whose temporality might not be immediately knowable or even recognizable to us where the past becomes the very lived present in which we exist, memories then make and remake the subject anew within the scene of analysis. It is as though this is the very intentionality behind the work of and done in analysis – to awaken

subjective life to the traumatic lived experience of the unconscious, to revive the subject from beyond the dusty weight of a posthumous obsolescence of memory itself, as intended by the repression the wreckage might preeminently appear to proclaim.

As such, in order to further explicate on this turgid negotiation – between the simultaneity of *both* love *and* the horror it surreptitiously appears to enliven in and through the angel's look at ruined sites scarred by the catastrophic annulment of historicity and temporality, of *both* remembrance *and* forgetting, of *both* mourning and melancholia as I have suggested earlier – it seems almost imperative to stage it within the scene of an analysis, a comparative analysis, of two texts that appear to speak to, even respond to, one another. The two texts under consideration here, thus, are Marguerite Duras and Alain Resnais's 1959 film *Hiroshima, mon amour* and the more recent cinematic offering made by Michael Haneke, his *Amour*. At first glance, it would appear as though, as Silverman suggests in her brilliant study of the former film, that both films are about the "failure to see…and the impossibility of remembering" (Silverman, 2005, p. 33). Alongside and against this suggestion, I would also most immediately add that both these films are about looking, or rather the look back at the interminable wreckage of subjective life as it flares up within and fades away in the contextual and perceptual past as signified by lost and/or repressed memories of this subjective life. More specifically, as the case may be and as I will further argue here, the looking occupies or rather takes place within the zone of an impossibility – the impossible tie that seems to bind love with horror, the horror of oblivion, the horror of forgetting. Such a looking, thus, situates itself against any repressive impulse that might be suggested within or suggestive of the pronouncement made by one of the central characters

of Duras and Resnais's film, the eponymous character of the unnamed French woman, that "forgetting will begin with our eyes" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959).

A synoptic repose seems necessary to outline both films. *Hiroshima, mon amour* occurs over the course of a day and a night. A French woman, an actress, who we know only as "the French woman" till the very end of the film, is in Hiroshima shooting a film about peace – "What else could you make in Hiroshima?" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) she will come to ask her nighttime paramour. She meets a Japanese man the very day before her departure who she will take on as her lover for a night – "All we can do now is kill the time before your departure," (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) he will tell her solemnly on the literal eve of her departure after the filming, or rather her part of the filming, has been completed. Theirs, we are quick to learn, is an impossible love – an impossible love in an impossible place, upon an impossible landscape. Duras, in the film's screenplay which was published two years after the release of the film, will remind us that "their embrace – so banal, so commonplace – takes place in the one city of the world where it is hardest to imagine it: Hiroshima" (Duras, 1961, p. 9). The impossibility of their love is marked by both its own temporal and spatial limitations. Temporally, they are confined to "their embrace" which can only take place till the moment of her departure, a limited time span limits their erotic and romantic exchange. Spatially, it seems almost sacrilegious to think of a love story blooming and blossoming at the very site of a horrific and catastrophic disaster, Hiroshima. It is almost as sacrilegious, this impossible love as such upon such an impossible landscape, as how the French woman comes to describe Hiroshima, as having come to exist in the immediate aftermath of the devastation: a Hiroshima "blanketed with flowers…[there] were cornflowers and gladiolas everywhere, and morning glories and day lilies that rose again from the ashes

with an extraordinary vigor, quite unheard of for flowers till then" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959). The imagistic rendering is necessarily suggestive, forged out of perhaps sheer necessity, of an impossible love that can only find its home upon an impossible landscape – both are married and have children; his wife is away, she is away from her husband who remains in Paris while she is in Hiroshima for the shoot. The wedding of love (its romantic and romanticized beauty in the very structure of it being impossible in a sense in this scene) and horror in their simultaneous occurrence seems almost arranged, fixed as the case may be.

At precisely the moment where a narrative as such could become predictable, *Hiroshima, mon amour*, then veers outside of the course of and beyond just being a story about an impossible love on an even more impossible landscape. It, in fact, uses this impossibility to stage a "drama of vision" (Silverman, 2005, p. 41), as Silverman suggests, wherein the French woman's relationship to Hiroshima and the Japanese man is only made possible as such due to her past, that this presence of an impossible love as it happens in the span of a nighttime tryst on an impossible landscape could only be made possible due to another impossible love that belongs to the past of the French woman. 14 years prior to her arrival in Hiroshima, she was a young girl of 18 who grew up, amidst the war, in a small town called Nevers. In her youth, she found herself in love with a German soldier – "[My] dead lover is an enemy of France," (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) she would recount to the Japanese man as she tells him the story of her earlier impossible love that made their own impossible love possible in the present hour, on the eve of her departure – a man who would ask her to marry him as the war was about to end. Then, on the eve of their departure from Nevers, when she was to return with him to his home in Bavaria, while he was waiting for her by the banks of the river Loire, he is killed by one of her townsfolk, and she finds his

dying body there. She remains with the body, lying atop it – she lies atop it not wanting to leave the body of her dead lover untended, as though like an Antigone who claims the ethical vis-à-vis her desire to place soil atop and thus bury her brother Polynices – as it loses both heat and life, turning into corpse under her very own body, until the very next day when it is removed. What follows is a yearlong period of mourning, where, as though in the form of a descent into madness, all she sees is him and her love for him. In a way, as Duras describes her, one might consider her a woman "more in love with love itself" (Duras, 1961, p. 111).

***Figure 7.* Still from *Hiroshima, mon amour*.**

She preserves this love, keeps it close to her heart, in the style of a rigorous, committed, and passionate melancholic, and as though she herself forms or rather becomes the very tomb for this love and for her dead lover. She does not speak of this love to anyone – to no one, not even her husband. She fears speech might be a form of unbearable, even unforgivable, betrayal; she holds the story of her impossible love near and dear to her heart, as though she is still in a state of an as-yet-to-end mourning for her dead lover. Language – the narration of their impossible love – would reduce their love to just the space of a story, "a

story that could be told" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959). She fears that this will signal the end; that the mourning will ultimately annul their love, make him, his image in her past, finally and irrevocably fade away from her. It is this story that, in what was supposed to be a mere one-night affair, she tells to the Japanese man. Silverman renders this moment so poignantly in her own description of it:

> Now in Hiroshima, comes the ultimate betrayal: she tells the story of her impossible love to the Japanese man. She gives to a second man what belongs to the first: herself. "I told our story," she says to her dead lover in a voice-over monologue late in the film; "I was unfaithful to you tonight with this stranger. I told our story. It was, you see, a story that could be told." (Silverman, 2005, p. 34)

In what happens over the course of the film – the course of a short, perhaps too short, day and night, right before her departure into a future time and space where "[they'll] probably die without ever seeing each other again" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) – she retells the story of her impossible love to her new impossible lover, the Japanese man, because he almost in the style of a psychoanalyst solicits the narrative of her erstwhile impossible love, its inscriptive transference upon him and their present condition in the moment of their tryst. He implores her to speak of her youth in Nevers, particularly after recognizing her refusal to do so, when she states, "Nevers is the city in the world, and even the thing in the world, I dream about most often at night. And at the same time it's the thing I think about the least" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959).

***Figure 8.* Still from *Hiroshima, mon amour*.**

Repression seems to announce itself here quite obviously – an unresolved past that has not been rendered into language appears, seeking resolution, in her dreams. She is unsure as to why he insists on asking her, almost resolutely, to speak of Nevers and more specifically of her impossible love relationship with the German soldier. When she asks him of his insistence, "…why?"; his response seems to almost in one swoop proclaim and pronounce both the Benjaminian and Freudian concerns regarding the past. He responds as such, to her inquiry regarding his persistence to have her speak of Nevers and her impossible love:

> Because of Nevers. I can only begin to know you, and among the many thousands of things in your life, I'm choosing Nevers…[It] was there, I seem to have understood, that you were so young…so young you still don't belong to anyone in particular. I like that….[It] was there, I seem to have understood,

> that I almost lost you…and that I risked never knowing you. (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959)

In a sense, as I have just suggested, this seems to rehearse both the Benjaminian and Freudian concerns regarding the past, wherein “every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 255) and where “the patient’s state of being ill cannot cease with the beginning of [her/his] analysis, and that we must treat [her/his] illness, not as an event of the past, but as a present-day force” (Freud, 2006b, p. 396). Furthermore, it also, without fail, seems to announce the other earlier mentioned Freudian observation: “If someone’s need for love is not entirely satisfied by reality, [s/he] is bound to approach every new person with whom [s/he] meets with libidinal anticipatory ideas; and it is highly probable that both portions of [her/his] libido, the portion that is capable of becoming conscious as well as the unconscious one, have a share in forming that attitude” (Freud, 1958, p. 100). It is as though, he knows that their meeting would not have been possible, had it not been for this erstwhile past that which he insists she pronounces through her encounter with him. It is as though, he wants to embody that very past, have her embody it through her encounter with him in this very present instance of their romantic interlude. He commands the transferential encounter, as a way to have her become visible to him, to pry her into visibility. He also believes that his own visibility is at stake here. While his visibility is dependent on her relationship to her past, it is as well dependent on its very unearthing, its release from the crypt of a 14-yearlong silence, he is also aware that it is precisely only through her release of this past into the ether of time, that he can be, come into the scope of her visual field as well. The elliptical space between her and him is bound up in the unseen past that she must relinquish in order to allow

him to enter her visual field. Without, this subsequent invocation into language of her past, as in without her betrayal of her past love, he cannot be, or rather, he cannot come to be. In a sense, this stages the very theatre of simultaneity, of both mourning and melancholia, of both remembrance and forgetting, of both her German lover and her Japanese tryst existing in the same scopic realm. There cannot be one without the other – the past cannot be without its utterance in the present moment, the present could not have been possible without the past's shadow cast over it, and as such, the story of her impossible love with the German soldier could not have been relinquished and given over to the structure of mourning if she were not to have uttered it, for the first time in 14 years, to the Japanese man, and the Japanese man, simultaneously, becomes the figure of a scopic retrieval and representation, like the angel, he remains to "awaken the dead" through his look upon her.

*Hiroshima, mon amour*, in this manner, becomes a narrative of both an impossible but necessary looking and an impossible yet necessitating love. In the scenes that open the film to the audience, the French woman insists on claiming to have "seen" the horrors that were visited upon Hiroshima on the fated day of its atomic devastation; that her visit has proven most eye-opening, for it has allowed her insight into the traumas of the city's now-distant past – she appears to come to this insight vis-à-vis visits she makes to the museum built in memory of the disaster. The Japanese man, in a dialogue that seems as though to rehearse an almost lyric refutation, annuls her every claim toward this apparent scopic fidelity. To her every such claim that states that she "saw everything...[everything]," (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) he responds with a negation, "[You] saw nothing in Hiroshima…[nothing]" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959). It is only in the very final scene of the film, after she had impressed upon him (upon the behest of his insistent solicitation) the story of her impossible

love and imprinted him with both a simultaneous instance of incorporation and excorporation that both ties him to and relinquishes him from her dead German lover, that he calls her, while intently looking into her eyes, by her “proper name.” In this instance, when he grabs a hold of her arms and looks at her, she utters the words, “Hi-ro-shi-ma…Hi-ro-shi-ma. That’s your name” (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959). It is as though, in this instance, after the long journey out of the night of her past, and into the day of their future, a future spliced into two, in which they will have to part and go their separate ways and will have to relinquish their impossible love for one another, like the impossible love that she had to relinquish herself from in the past, she finally was able to see him as other than, and outside of, the earlier story of an impossible love.

***Figure 9.* Still from *Hiroshima, mon amour*.**

Here, in the final scene, she sees in Hiroshima – a ruin metaphorized in the shape and form of both the man and the city – something outside of her past in Nevers, knowing fully

well that this final “seeing” as such was only possible, could only be plausible, in the looking that he forced her to enact upon her own past, upon Nevers. It is in this precise moment, where he, while placing a palm upon her mouth indicating that she need not speak much more, for the “cure” has been instilled, had taken to her, that he calls her by the proper name he gives her, but only after first agreeing with her calling him “Hiroshima.” “That’s my name,” (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) he says, “Yes. Your name is Nevers. Ne-vers-in France” (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959). It is only through this cure by love that he is able to finally agree in her seeing. It is only through her being able to see both the past as the past, having its forces play out their dynamism in the present instance, and in her ability to see the present – Hiroshima outside of its horror, both in the form of the city as it exists in the present conjecture and in the form of her present love – that she is able to be given the credible task of being a witness to both herself and him, in the time and space of their impossible love upon a very impossible landscape. This is the very epitome of finding love amidst the ruins of the past for the purposes of present life and living, amidst the grief and promise inscribed in loss.

***Figure 10.* Still from *Hiroshima, mon amour*.**

Perhaps, even the most casual cinephile could not help but notice or recognize the resonances between Duras and Resnais's lyrically-charged depiction of an impossible love in the scene of an unimaginable horror and Michael Haneke's seemingly more severe and restrained narrative *Amour*. In fact, one might even go so far to say that Haneke's use of both Emmanuelle Riva and Jean-Louis Trintignant, as the actors playing the central figures in his film, seems almost highly intentional. In a manner of speaking, from an assessment of his choice of auteurs, it would appear *Amour*, thematically, seems to pay both an homage and provide a response to both *Hiroshima, mon amour* and, as well, Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Rouge*. For my purposes here, it might prove most helpful to only limit my comments to how

the film seems to stage a particular dialogue with the former. My interest is precisely in how the text acts to revise the way in which the look becomes staged in Haneke's text. Here, the look is more localized, as one might argue, and as such the look derives a different sort of relationality, a different but still relative sort of "cure by love" as its central intentionality.

Let me begin by stating some of what might be considered the more obvious moments of similitude and difference between the two films. While *Hiroshima, mon amour* is about a return to a geographic landscape, a space of an erstwhile devastation, which becomes the ground for an impossible love that is nurtured by and within the encounter of the French woman with the Japanese man, *Amour* stages a love relationship that is seemingly legitimized through the bond of what could be considered the legal prescriptions inscribed upon two people under the bounds of marriage. While the love relationship in *Hiroshima, mon amour* is confined to the limitations placed upon it due to the possibility of it being temporally displaced, even annulled, at the end of the French woman's stay in Hiroshima, there is nothing that spatially seems to confine (though it is limited by the memory of the horror that the city has experienced and that haunts the entire backdrop of the film's narrative itself) the narrative and its sense of flow. Spatially, the narrative moves from her hotel room, to the Peace Square in Hiroshima, to his home, to a bar where she recounts the story of her past love to him, and then into the nighttime streets of Hiroshima. There is even movement between Nevers and Hiroshima, movement between past memories and the present instance of their erotic tryst. It is as though, spatially, the narrative is not restrained and cannot, nor should it, be restrained. It moves and becomes informed by this movement as though it reflects a movement in and through the very unconscious processes that govern its characters, most specifically the character of the French woman, played by Riva.

In what appears, at first glance, to be in direct contradistinction, *Amour*, seems to be highly confined and restrained by the space in which it occurs. It is, also like the former film, a story about love and the look of love as I will suggest it here, at what remains in the possible aftermath of impending loss. Here, however, unlike in the case of *Hiroshima, mon amour*, where the love transports itself and the characters that live to tell about it or represent it across both temporal trajectories and spatial mappings, both the look and the love it is commandeered by induces a sort of severe, almost necessary, claustrophobia.

***Figure 11.*** **Still from *Amour*.**

Unlike, *Hiroshima, mon amour*, which is peopled by occasional crowds, heavily saturated with images of the past and present being interchanged and interwoven with one another, as though in the form of a montage instantiating what appears to be a series of images signaling ruptured temporality, *Amour* invites us into the space of an almost

claustrophobic encounter with intimacy itself. The love here is relegated to the intimate space of a Parisian apartment, in which Georges and Anne, the old married couple played by Trintignant and Riva, live. Furthermore, unlike *Hiroshima, mon amour*, which is driven not merely by a rich tapestry of images, but also is held up by a layered dialogue that produces the affect of a lyric exchange between the French woman and the Japanese man, the dialogical exchange between Georges and Anne is sparse, at best, and even non-existent at times, thus heightening the sense of claustrophobia that the film might induce in the characters themselves and in the audience.

***Figure 12.* Still from *Amour*.**

*Amour* also is a story about corporeal decay, which then translates into the decay of intimacy as such, at its core. While, the former film is about a romantic tryst between strangers, an impossible love played out upon an impossible terrain, the latter film stages the very impossibilities that play out within the variegated experiences that both inform and

devolve the intimacy of married life, especially within the scenes of aging, corporeal deterioration, and bodily ruin. *Amour*, again at its core, is about an old married couple, aging, and where one member of the couple, here the man, Georges is found to have to care for Anne, his wife, after she has suffered a stroke. What ensues is a measured yet still severe insight into the slow deterioration not only of Anne's corporeal existence, but also, more significantly, of their married life as it devolves in front of the audience's look.

Both films are also, perhaps most importantly, about love – French films about love, but in both films, Paris, that oft-times highly fetishized site, the very seeming global capital, as the case may be, of romantic love, is absent from their respective narratives. In *Hiroshima, mon amour*, Paris would signal the end of their impossible love, between the French woman and the Japanese man; it announces her departure, first from Nevers in her past, then from Hiroshima in her present, this latter being a "city tailored for love," (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) from the fantasy that the tryst with the Japanese man has made possible, and a return to her familial life. Paris signifies the impossibility and rupture itself – it both implies and implicates an outside of and to this romantic interlude; it, as well signifies, an outside to memory itself for the French woman, an outside to and of remembering her erstwhile German lover and an outside, now, as well to and of remembering her tryst with the Japanese man. In *Amour*, the narrative confined to the walls of Georges and Anne's apartment seems to elude and even evade any form of outside life. People enter their home on occasion – the nurses they hire and the neighbors below come to help out when Anne's physical condition worsens; their seemingly (at least in how Haneke portrays her) hysterical daughter demands, on occasion, access into their private life, demanding to know how Georges is caring for

Anne – and as such Paris is always an external figure, an exteriority kept apart from the interiority of their intimate life.

In the opening scene of *Amour*, we see an instance that perfectly dramatizes this distinction between the exteriority and interiority of life outside and inside the apartment. Here, in this scene, we see the police barging into the apartment; it appears that the apartment had been locked and closed shut to prevent external intrusion. It would, as well, appear that the door to Anne's bedroom has also been locked and literally taped shut. The police have to again force entry into this room as well to gain access to it, and here, we find Anne's now-decaying corpse placed almost in funereal neatness, laid atop her bed, and in the manner of a sort of deathly posture one might expect with a body placed in a coffin, surrounded by petals and now-decaying flowers.

***Figure 13.* Still from Amour.**

When the chief of police enters Anne's bedroom, after it had been opened by one of the attending officers, the first thing he notices about the room itself – apart from the corpse lying on the bed – is that its windows had been left open. He asks the attending officer if he had opened the window upon entry into the room, to which the officer answers him, "No…" It becomes clear that the window had been left open, before the doors to the room had been locked and taped shut with Anne's body left to decay on her bed. Rather than reading this as an instance in which Paris is allowed to enter their apartment, one might alternatively install upon this scene a reading of how the windows were left open to release the smell of the decaying corpse of Anne's body. Rather than letting Paris or the external world in, the external world is, however, given over to, or rather even imposed upon with, the stench of a corpse now in the state of decay.

There are also other instances in which the external world is clearly demarcated as other to or outside of what exists within the confines of Georges and Anne's apartment. What signals the existence of this external world, as arriving into the confines of the couple's intimate life, comes in the form of news – Georges reading to Anne the newspaper (the narration of "reality" from outside of their intimate life), Anne reading out aloud her horoscope reading to Georges (the pronouncement of fantasy or "non-reality" exterior to her physical condition), or the couple listening to the news on their radio. The exterior world is so deeply barred from entering the couple's intimate life such that we see – in a scene that immediately succeeds the discovery of Anne's dead body by the police, where we are taken back to the past, not in the form of a flashback, but literally taken back to the past where the story supposedly begins, before she became ill – that after the couple returns home from a night out, at a concert, they discover that their lock had been tampered with by possible

burglars, however to no avail. Furthermore, the exteriority of Paris is, again, precisely highlighted in the scenes where we see it exist, as an almost blockaded image beyond the windows of the apartment itself, blocked from clear vision by the translucent curtains that attire the apartment.

***Figure 14.* Still from *Amour*.**

Having forced Paris into what appears to be a literal exile, into the outside of their intimate life, all that remains – the very "what remains" when after the gloss of possible romance, its foundational youthfulness and its erotic possibility, is evicted to a distant exteriority – is a narrative of impossible yet necessary looking, quite similar in nature to Duras and Resnais's film. Haneke insists that we look, intently and with an intentionality that both prevents and resists an aversion of our look from the narrative of love and horror that unfolds in front of us, the audience. Here, rather than as in the case of the former film where the audience is only witnessing a narrative unfold of an impossible love between strangers – a "story that could be told" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) or seen as the case may be – we seem more directly implicated by Haneke's scopic narrativization. To borrow a turn of

phrase that I alluded to earlier, suggestively used by Silverman, here the "drama of vision" (Silverman, 2005, p. 41), as the demand to look and not avert our look, is best exemplified in yet another one of the opening scenes that stage this film of looking. Before returning to their home, after a night out, to find that their lock had been unsuccessfully tampered with by potential burglars, we look at a scene in which we find Georges and Anne are members of an audience at a classical music concert. As the film's audience, we are forced to look at this other, more internal, audience that appears to be looking back at "us," in it being staged as though it faces us. However, we also come to realize that this is not merely a case of the fourth wall being shattered by this look drawn out from the interiority of the film itself. Rather, it is still only a scene of a unidirectional look upon this filmic audience by us, the audience that watches the film. In a sense, we look at this audience, but our look is neither returned nor known. Like the ruins and wreckage that the angel is submitted, submits itself, to look upon, we are forced into a looking that we are insisted upon to take and enact by the film. However, this look, too, is not returned. The past does not return the look, rather it demands our looking for its ongoing destruction and construction, its recuperation and constant preservation as always already changing. Haneke does not break the fourth wall; rather, how he implicates us, his film's audience, is through the insistence of a relationality that can only seem to arrive from our look as being persistently demanded of and for, without an expectation of a return in kind. This evocative staging of a "looking without returns," as I would prefer to characterize it, seems to dramatize the compelling notion proposed by Silverman, that "the world is not 'for' us; rather, it is we who are 'for' the world" (Silverman, 2005, p. 46). Looking, as such, comes from us on to and upon the world construed in the film, and not on to us from the world, or the audience in the film looking back at us. This is

not a proposal for an anthropological looking that studies and further objectifies the past, history, memory, or the disprized as such (the death of Bhaduri, the deterioration of Anne's physical health), but a looking that attempts to preserve the alterity of that which is looked upon for the sake of what it means to ethically relate through the experience of being called upon to be a witness. As such, as Silverman reminds us:

> Looking can take place only where there are perceptual forms. This is because it is only within the infinitely variegated bodies of other worldly beings that our desire can take shape. Without those bodies we would literally see nothing, no matter how strong the force of our desire. (Silverman, 2005, p. 44)

Confined to looking into an apartment, with very little exiting or entering the visual field of its space, we are forced into this looking – imprisoned, both spatially and temporally by it, as in the case of the angel petrified in and by its look at ruins – as witnesses who cannot help but look at the complexities of how love and horror become staged alongside one another. As Anne becomes ill and as her condition deteriorates – as mentioned earlier, she suffers from a stroke in the very early part of the film and then suffers a second stroke that leaves her fairly dilapidated and incredibly dependent on Georges for her care – we are forced to bear witness to the unfolding and unraveling of Georges's and her intimate life and relationship. One might find the severity of the staging of the scenes in *Amour* overwrought, overwhelming even, with a sense of penitent and strict didacticism in how our look is expected to present the world to us. We are forced to look at and upon Anne's bodily and corporeal deterioration with anything but indifference – we are reminded of how Riva's French woman, in *Hiroshima, mon amour*, tells the Japanese man that for the French people the atomic devastation of Hiroshima signaled, "the beginning of an unknown fear for us…and then indifference and then the fear of indifference as well" (Halfon et al. & Resnais,

1959). We, as audience, cannot be indifferent to what we are called upon to witness by Haneke. Brightly shot, confined to the claustrophobically affected and limited space of their apartment, we are shown the body and embodiment as such to be so incredibly and irreducibly impacted by the deterioration that is visited upon it. We cannot remain disaffected by the way in which horror and the horrific outline themselves within the film. It is as though, like Duras alluded to how the embrace, “so banal, so commonplace,” (Duras, 1961, p. 9) of the French woman and the Japanese man in *Hiroshima, mon amour* “takes place in the one city of the world where it is hardest to imagine it,” (Duras, 1961, p. 9) the horror that then visits the intimate life of Georges and Anne seems equally banal and commonplace, yet still a horror upon which we cannot help but look and keep looking.

***Figure 15.* Still from *Amour*.**

This is only further intensified by the sense we might get, as audience members, of how the temporality of aging, as such, and that of corporeal deterioration moves along at

what appears to be an incredibly sluggish pace – like the confinement of space, temporality itself seems to have stopped; time both inside and exterior to the apartment as a conceptual framework for governing life seems to have been annulled. While aging itself appears to indicate a certain sense of temporal progression or progressivity – into the future of dying and possible death for Anne – the images rendered within the time and space of their intimate life and its subsequent devolution almost act and impose upon any sense of progressivity. We are forced to look at each scene in the film in its sense of being unique and uniquely outside of a progressive narrative – an instance of an intense now-time, in which anything could happen to change the course of the narrative, an instance in which visibility comes to prize and elevate the corporeal at every turn, a visibility that exists and insists outside of temporal or spatial parameters; aging occurs but only in the instance of narrative rupture, or in what Anne Michaels's suggested in the context of her novel, "the gradual instant" (Michaels, 1996, p. 77).

What is elevated here into history and subjectivity, like the ruin in the case of the angel of history or the past in the case of Riva's character in *Hiroshima, mon amour* through her encounter with the Japanese man, is the very sense of the corporeal precisely at the very instant of its persistent sense of ruination. There are several instances when this temporality of bodily incapacity is given over to, or held back by, nostalgic attempts at melancholic resuscitation. They hold on to their memory of Anne as they also simultaneously prepare to mourn her. As her condition worsens, we see Georges attempting to recuperate his memory of her in a time when she was well, when she would sit at their piano playing. We also see their daughter Eva – during a visit home, while sitting with Georges and talking to him about Anne's ill health – reminiscing on how, as a child, she remembers "[listening] to [Georges

and Anne] making love…[that] this always reassured [her]. It gave [her] a feeling that [they] loved each other and that [they'd all] always be together" (Menegoz et al. & Haneke, 2012). It is as though this constant push and pull, occurring in a simultaneous instance, this simultaneous instance of both progression and regression, between both her unstoppable progression and deterioration into death and the simultaneous recuperation of her in the form of past memories, of how she could be remembered by them as having existed in the past, seems to steadfastly gesture toward a time that neither belongs to the past and the present, nor to the future to come.

***Figure 16.* Still from *Amour*.**

In a sense, Haneke wants this time, the time of trauma and its attending displacement, in the space of the apartment to be contained, just as the space itself is contained, by the look we are, it would seem, asked to offer the narrative. As such, while she becomes unrecognizable to Georges and the occasional others in the film, in the present conjecture the film outlines, it centers around a look that claims to straddle the difficult line between recognizability (of the past) and unrecognizability (in and of the present). As she becomes

more and more unrecognizable to him, as her health continues to deteriorate, both the audience and Georges are called into or demanded upon to look at Anne – in the true manner of an Orpheus whose look back destroys the past to release it, to sustain the visibility of presence or the present instance. What is elevated into history and subjectivity through its preservation as radically other – the past and present as being radically other to each other – is also elevated through the nature of how the beloved becomes visible, comes into visibility or appearance. As she becomes unrecognizable to him, her image of herself in front of him becomes other than what he has known for so long or remembers.

In a scene earlier in the film that almost acts as a premonition of this disjuncture to come, in the manner of an unrecognizable relationship between the past as he remembers, of how she used to be, and the present, of how she has come to be, we find this temporal displacement being rehearsed in an exchange between Georges and Anne. In this specific scene, however, the roles are reversed. After Anne has returned from the hospital from having been taken there immediately after she had suffered her first stroke, we find her and Georges having dinner one evening and engaging in a conversation that plays out the temporal displacement between the past and how it is remembered and the alteration that might insist itself upon this remembered past. Here, we have Georges recounting to Anne a story of himself as a young man. The story is one of him having gone to watch a film in his youth, and how when asked by a man in his town to recount the film's story, Georges would cry in his retelling of the narrative, allowing the emotions that welled up in him to show in this very retelling, as a result of what appears to have been an emotionally-charged film. The story itself eluded his memory altogether as he was retelling this incident to Anne, but as he claimed the emotions were still present, alive, and well. Even in the instance of his retelling

this narrative now to Anne, he claimed embarrassment, that he could not remember the story of the film he had watched; rather, all he could recall were the powerful emotions it inspired in him and that burst out on to the scene upon being asked by the man to retell the story of the film itself. He tells Anne, “I don’t remember the film…but I remember the feelings…I was ashamed to cry…but telling him the story made all my feelings and tears come back…I just couldn’t stop” (Menegoz et al. & Haneke, 2012). Anne responds quizzically, “That’s sweet. Why have you never told me this?”; to which he responds, “There are many stories I’ve never told you.” She responds jokingly to this, “Don’t tell me you’re going to ruin your image in your old age?” He asks, “But, what is my image?” She leans forward, looks him straight in the eye and says, “Sometimes you are a monster. But you’re nice.”

The monstrous nature of the image of oneself in the present as being a severely altered image cut off from the past, and then the very coming to terms with this monstrosity as the precise manner in which looking might enable an ethics of a triumphant relationality founded on the act of looking at the other, or the other of the past, or the past as otherness itself is what remains of the film. Anne’s physical health continues to deteriorate over the course of the film. Right before his and our eyes, she becomes further incapacitated. Her speech starts to slur, she is unable to feed or bathe herself, and, at times, she begins to resemble a child who is unable to take care of itself. In a scene, earlier in the film after she had returned from the hospital, she tells Georges (after he had just recounted to her his experience of having gone to a friend’s funeral, while leaving her alone at home unable to attend the funeral herself), “There’s no point in going on living. That’s how it is. I know it can only get worse. Why should I inflict this on us, on you and me?” (Menegoz et al. & Haneke, 2012). She states this in the hopes that we see her; that Georges, as well, himself

sees her in the state that she is in. She demands a look and looking that might clarify how she is recognized within her deteriorating state. In that instance, he refuses to look at her and, thereby, also see and recognize her in her current state through his response, “You are not inflicting anything on me” (Menegoz et al. & Haneke, 2012). This return of the look back upon himself, as in how he expresses it within the “not inflicting anything on me,” is notable precisely because Anne did not merely include him as the site and sight of affliction, but, most importantly herself, as shown in her original “on you and me.” In this instance, she demands the cure by love in and through how he perceives her, and she demands to be looked upon, beyond the mere malady that has caused the ruin of her physical state; she demands a release from the stagnancy of invisibility. Furthermore, in what follows in this dialogue between Anne and Georges, as I have recounted it below, we see a dialogical encounter that seems to suggest a resonance to, and a reimagining of, the dialogue between the French woman and the Japanese man in Duras and Resnais’s film, when she claims to have seen “everything in Hiroshima,” and when he subsequently challenges her scopic claims in being a witness to history’s catastrophe:

> *Anne*: You don’t have to lie, Georges.
>
> *Georges*: Put yourself in my place. Didn’t you ever think it could happen to me too?
>
> *Anne*: Of course, I did. But imagination and reality have little in common.
>
> *Georges*: But things are getting better and better every day.
>
> *Anne*: I don’t want to carry on. You are making such sweet efforts to make everything easier for me. But I don’t want to go on. For my own sake. Not yours.
>
> *Georges*: I don’t believe you. I know you. You think you are a burden to me. But what would you do in my place?
>
> *Anne*: I don’t want to rack my brain over this. I am tired, I want to go to bed.

In *Hiroshima, mon amour*, what the French woman appears to have a claim over is the very act of looking and, thereby, apparently the act of witnessing Hiroshima. It is this claim that the Japanese man prevents her from making at her every insistence that she has seen "everything." Here, she can only claim to have seen "everything" at the very end of the film when Hiroshima appears outside of the scopic inscription that she has given it through markers that signify the authenticity or the authentic experience of its overarching sense of tragedy. It exists outside of her visits to the museums, or her encounter with survivors of the disaster, or even her playing a role in the film within the film about peace. Rather, it exists in and through herself, her own desires for it and what she intends through her looking upon it and the Japanese man – Hiroshima needs to be seen through herself, made to appear as such through her own invocation of it through her relationship to her past and the impossible love it is marked by, as a way to see it as a force in the past laying its impact on her present life and her encounter with the Japanese man. On the subject of the optical nature of this appearance and the looking that the demand of vision – seeing what remains or what cannot be easily perceivable to us, the otherness of what lies in front of us, the very otherness of the structure of the wreckage as ruin – that is initiated in *Hiroshima, mon amour*, Silverman suggests:

> *Hiroshima, mon amour* shows that care comes into play primarily at the level of vision. When we care about something, we see it. We allow it to appear. This is a world-making event in the ontological rather than the existential sense of the word. Appearance represents in the inauguration not of "being" in the simple sense of the word, but rather of Being. What appears shines for us; it is radiant. It has that perceptual vividness and intensity that we normally encounter only in our dreams. Resnais and Duras show us that other beings can become visible for us, in the strong sense of the word, only by becoming the transformative reincarnation of what we have previously loved. They can appear, and so Be, only if we allow them to figure forth in a new form from that constellation of memories that determines what we care about. This

> means inserting them into that network of signifiers that most profoundly defines what each of us is. (Silverman, 2005, p. 43)

It is this that Anne claims – a "shining" visibility and a presence, an appearance outside of Georges's remembrance of her. What she demands at every turn in the dialogue recounted above is for him to see her outside of him and outside of his memory of her. Prying into visibility, through the cure by love that the look of love might intend, necessitates the other to appear, to be articulated and thus elevated vis-à-vis that articulation as outside of our reminiscence of them in our past. Following Silverman, it is how she might come to be, as such, if he were to see her in his looking as this radical other. What she also demands is a reconstitution of his desires, not so much for him to preserve his image of her from the past, but such that it might accommodate what she is offering him in her present state, what she is in the process of becoming. It is not so much, as well, a simple relinquishing of the past for the purposes of the present or present living, but a scene in which the past and the present might have to be held together in the simultaneity of this instance. This simultaneity is most significantly depicted in the climactic moments of the film when Georges walks into their bedroom because Anne is calling out for help, in much pain. As a way to calm her down, he decides to tell her a story from his childhood. As she slowly relaxes, becomes quieter, and listens to his story, in his serene, soothing voice, he reaches over and grabs a pillow by her side, which he then proceeds to use to suffocate her to death. Rather than making a possible moral or ethical case for or against euthanasia, a more productive and generative manner by which we can enter this scene is to think carefully about how in this moment, where he finally sees her – in all her physical pain, in all her incapacity and deterioration as a frail body in ruins unable to cope with its own decay – we see that Georges preserves, as well,

simultaneously, her image of him; it is as though this preservation, reminds us of what she was heard saying to him earlier in the film: “Sometimes you are a monster. But you’re nice.” Here, love and horror, or the horrific, come to meet in this instance of a mutual appearance. The monstrosity of the gesture and the kindness in it (outside of any moral discourse governing such killings) seems to signify a meeting of the look and the world that demands it. It is as though in “giving her up to oblivion” (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) – as Riva’s character did with her dead German lover toward the end of *Hiroshima, mon amour* while simultaneously holding on to his memory in the incorporation of it she places within the Japanese man – Georges simultaneously mourns her by looking upon her corporeal deterioration as outside of his remembrance of how she was in the past, and as well holds on to her impression of him, her own articulation of how she perceived of him, as a “monster [who is] nice.” This simultaneous permission he allows himself in regards to forgetting her while remembering himself through her fantasy of his seems to enact the appearance that requires both the look and the ruin and the space and time in between them. As suggested earlier, this look is a meeting of the world and the one who looks – the materialist historian, or the angel, and the wreckage of catastrophic temporal annulments piling high in front of their feet. Here, as Silverman brilliantly suggests, appearance is a disclosure:

> Appearance is a complex event, and one that exceeds our usual explanatory categories. It is neither strictly subjective, nor strictly objective; rather it occurs only where there is a “meeting” of look and world. This is because although we alone can look in the way that releases the world into its Being, we do not ever ourselves initiate this action. On the contrary, when we light up the world in this way we are always responding to its own appeal to be so illuminated. Creatures and things might be said to intend toward appearance: to solicit the performance of the action in which we engage when we speak our language of desire. The Being that we confer upon creatures and things is thus paradoxically their essence; we do not so much “create” it as “disclose” it. (Silverman, 2005, p. 44)

One might argue that Georges kills Anne as a way to preserve her in his fantasy of her, as a way to cope with the lose of this fantasy by annulling her life at precisely the instant when it appears as irreversibly other to his own memory of her in the past. However, it is precisely to her, to her demand to be looked at, that he seems to be responding. He responds to her demand of her seeing – "illuminated" – in him a "monster [who is] nice." She calls him by this name, in a similar vein as Riva's French woman called the Japanese man by the name "Hiroshima." In a manner of speaking, his response by wanting to fulfill her erstwhile wish/desire to not "[want] to carry on" is also a response to this calling or demand, and it is a return address that seeks to look upon her, make her visible to both him and herself in this final instance. Here, in this final act of a monstrous kindness – in the act of killing her, as she had desired earlier in the film – he "sees" her outside of his image of her, shining and illuminated in how appearance comes to prize the disprized by making her visible. He releases her from the crypt of his imagining and thus from invisibility. This love is anything but easy. It is a loving disclosure of the violence embedded in its necessary impossibility. Like the Japanese man who states to the French woman after she has disclosed to him the story of her past impossible love and, as well, indicated to him that he is the first and only person to have heard this story, be a witness to it, in 14 years, "In a few years, when I'll have forgotten you, and when other such adventures, from sheer habit, will happen to me, I'll remember you as the symbol of love's forgetfulness…I'll think of this adventure as the horror of oblivion" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959); similarly, Georges mourns Anne in the disclosure of her subjectivity. Appearance comes at a severe price in this scene of exposure, because it is an appearance that cannot be simply characterized as either a scene of mourning or a scene of melancholia, nor can it be regarded as remembrance or repression. Here,

remembrance, like its figural other forgetting, “will begin with our eyes” (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959). Like the angel of history that looks intently and with intentionality – to awaken the dead – at the ruins of historical consciousness, remembering and forgetting are situated in how the look experiences time and its rupture, and in how this look back does not, as suggested earlier, belong to past, the present, or the future to come, but belongs to all times and every time, and is the very fissure in temporality, like the ruin becomes a fissure in space, that signifies the unseen in the invisible.

**What Remains, in the Future Anterior**

One possible way to describe the ontological nature of life is to understand the very core of that most singular of experiences that seems to structure subjectivity or subject formation, the simultaneous experience, as I have suggested throughout this project, of both mourning and melancholia; the coming to terms with the seemingly materialist and commensurable experience that traumatic loss gives way to, that is inevitably both more than, even overflows any sense of, its materiality and its commensurability – eternal, perennial, almost endless loss – and the very experience of the trauma itself associated to this loss in the space, the space between the look and the wreckage, and time, the very time of the look itself, of this simultaneity. This way of thinking about subjective life – both grievable and grieving life, because though mourning is always mourning for lost life or living, it is mourning only ever enacted side-by-side within the structure of a melancholic dissatisfaction on the part of the living forced to relinquish the loved object while, as well, holding onto the affectivity inscribed in loss – resides neither in the realm of liberal cynicism nor should it claim to be presumably realist. Alternatively, this way of thinking about life is structured around an insistence on the ethical, the very sense of ethics, founded on loss, on how loss can

be remembered and forgotten simultaneously, an ethics of loss that temporally ties past life with present living or livability, as such, such that the invisible might be brought into visibility through the very look of love we might confer upon the otherness of the past, so that we might triumphantly, as the case may be, relate to the past-ness of the past in order to remake it for the present and the future to come.

Trauma, here, would thus signal a rupture, an unexpected break or interruption, in any sense of a linear time we might have or hold on to, and its temporal demarcations, marked by quotable dates that initiate themselves into forming a collage of events – alternatively, here, this time is ripped apart as such, broken, punctured, or annulled in the precise now-time of this loss. Let us remember, thus, as Rebecca Comay has suggested and which I have mentioned earlier, it "marks a caesura in which the linear order of time is thrown out of sequence. [We] compound this temporal disorientation every time we try to quarantine trauma by displacing it to a buried past or a distant future" (Comay, 2011, p. 25). Loss, then, seeming to live in the anteriority of a future already come to pass, already become past, becomes ultimately perhaps loss of time itself – the time we could have had together, the time we could have had to remember, a time always already either too late or deferred, perhaps even, simultaneously *both* too late *and* deferred, repressed, or forgotten or that which we could have had to prepare ourselves for this persistent sense of a loss just around this or that figural or metaphysical corner. In this scene, repetition, too, or rather remembrance and forgetting as that which repetition is impelled and propelled by, orbits this experience of loss, this prescient loss of time, and as such, each time we remember and forget, and repeat this gesture, or have the impulse to repeat the gesture of looking back at the past from the instant of the present juncture, the very experience of looking at loss, this repetitive psychical

movement is a promise that in the "this time around" inscribed in the very tentativeness of the act of looking back, we hope, not against loss, but that we can finally live together, in communion, with this sense of loss; to live in communion, as such, with the ruin and not merely either commodify or fetishize it.

To live in communion with this sense of loss then would seem to be what the angel's regard appears to both signal and adhere to. If this look of the angel is a look of love at the wreckage of historical catastrophe piling up, ever so tentatively, then it would have us, in this final instance, consider the very time of the look of the angel, the materialist historian as such, for this time of an arresting now, the now-time of temporal displacement and disruption, seems to be uniquely as well a time in which both love and horror become both recuperated and destroyed in the look back that claims to make visible the invisible in historical consciousness. This simultaneous constructivity, a productivity or progression, *and* destructivity, a regression as such, marks the very instance in the now-time where redemption becomes experienced in how time itself is destabilized by and through the look back. This look back, of presumably love both of and for the past, occurs in a temporality that cannot easily be named beyond it being called a now-time. However, what exactly is this now-time of the look of the angel, as such? It appears, arguably, to be the time of *both* trauma *and* redemption. Hence, the more immediate query would be to ask, here, what is the time of this redemption in the look back, the time of love itself as mobilized by this look upon the traumatic past?

This time of the look – elliptical and therefore not easily knowable, like the space and spacing between the look and the ruin – seems to be an instance that belongs to all times, simultaneously. Here, the look, and the moment in which it occurs, as suggested earlier, does

not merely belong to the past, nor does it reside easily in the present, or the future to come. It appears that it stages itself as a look that occurs in, as though petrified and transfixed in a manner that causes it to belong to, all times simultaneously – a bridge across these temporalities becomes formulated through this look. Examining closely this complex bridging that occurs in how it is conceived, it appears the look is at the past, but it is a look from the extreme presentism as signified by the now-time in which it occurs, but it is, as well, a look that cannot help but anticipate, be anticipatory of, the future into which the angel is being propelled. What signifies, perhaps even best exemplifies, the manifestation of the look in temporal terms is the very tense of the future anterior – it marks the simultaneity of all temporalities occurring, as necessary to occur precisely in the moment of their simultaneity as the very temporal caesura that infiltrates linear temporality, in order for redemption to be possible. As such, redemption or the redemptive occurs in the moment of what has, in the present instance, appears to have already come to pass – the "will have come to pass" of traumatic loss, and what the look seems to shine upon, the wreckage or the ruin, to bring into visibility a past already invisible and set aside. Let us now look at this future anteriority in how it is staged within both the films I have analyzed here.

In a scene that verbally names this future anteriority within the context of speech, the Japanese man in *Hiroshima, mon amour* – after the French woman has recounted the story of her past to him at his own behest, within the very realization that they are about to part ways forever at the very moment when it becomes clear to him that their love is as doomed to be impossible as her past love relationship with her erstwhile German lover – states, as I have already mentioned this earlier, "[In] a few years when I'll have forgotten you, and when other such adventures, from sheer habit, will happen to me. I'll remember you as the symbol

of love's forgetfulness. I'll think of this adventure as of the horror of oblivion. I already know it" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959) The Japanese man anticipates, while "already [knowing] it," a remembering that can only take place amidst a forgetting. As well, he can only anticipate a forgetting that is mired by the weight of the memory of the past in its very experience of being lost. He does so – this invocation of the image of the past – in the present moment within the film, where he has to make this anticipatory proclamation of something that will have already come to pass, become the past, in the future to come, their future apart, a future that marks the very nature of the impossibility of their love. He also, in this instance, simultaneously announces the relationship he has toward the past, as it has already come to pass in the future he proclaims. Here, the uncanny nature of the tense of the future anterior signifies something both long familiar yet deeply feared, in the very sense that Freud intended in his characterization of the term "uncanny" – on the one hand, the simultaneity of both remembrance and forgetting, and, on the other hand, as well, the simultaneous temporal occurrence of the past, the present, and the future in which this remembrance and forgetting will occur, as one might insist upon it as a form of look, a look of love, at love's own capacity to forget and remember forgetting, in the very now-time of the film.

Similarly, in *Amour*, there occurs a scene wherein while Georges and Anne are having a meal one evening after she had returned from the hospital, she interrupts the meal by asking him to bring their photo albums, so she might look through them. Showing some resistance to her request, he asks, "…now? But, why now?" (Menegoz et al. & Haneke, 2012). She insists on looking at them, in that very moment as the scene unfolds for us. He, then, gets up from the kitchen table, to look for the albums, while she pushes aside their plates and cutlery to make room for them. When he returns with the albums and when she

begins to look through them, it is obvious to the audience that Georges is visibly irritated by this interruption to their dinner. However, Anne ignores him and continues to look through the photos in the albums – images of her and him, when they were young; when it appears, as could be garnered from the photographs, their whole lives lay ahead of them. The photographs, in and of themselves, do not hint at or even attempt at anticipating what lies ahead of them – aging, old age itself, and bodily deterioration and incapacity. As she looks at the photographs in the album she is browsing, she says, "It's beautiful." He asks, "What?" She responds, "Life…;" she continues elliptically, "…so long…long life." He stares at her – a sort of look in and of itself – when she says this. She, aware of his stare, says, "Stop watching me." He responds, "I wasn't watching you." She responds in turn, "Of course, you were. I'm not that dumb yet." He stares at her, as though he is staring at a person who has entered the state of senility and as such is now browsing through old photo albums, as though in a state of possible nostalgia induced by such senility. It is a stare, a look that does not prioritize or privilege her visibility; rather, it maintains her invisibility to him, under the guise of presumed senility.

Without reading into this scene any hint of either nostalgia or irony – as one might be wont to (and justifiably so) read into it – what is interesting regarding it is the very way in which temporality is structured in the gesture of Anne looking through the old photographs. As an act, it ruptures the present moment of them having dinner. Furthermore, she insists, "…please," that it happen in that immediate moment, when he asks, "…now? But, why now?" The photographs, in and of themselves, do not, as I have suggested, anticipate the future that is to come, the future in which they exist in the present moment – the future is unknown to the lives captured and represented in these photographs. They are images from

the past that she looks through in the present instance, images that undoubtedly, despite the absence of any anticipation of the future that lies ahead of them is still very much in communion with this future, bound to it by the look she gives it from the present instant, which is also the future of the life in the photographs themselves. As such, the very act of sequestering or, as Comay suggested, "quarantining" trauma – the traumatic sense of loss of oneself, in this scene within the experience of aging and corporeal decay – intensifies the retroaction that is implicitly the very essence of the future itself, in the very sense of an always already state of becoming that cannot help but be both delayed and a priori suggestively anticipated. This gestural enactment of looking at the past, within the moment of the present, as one irrevocably gets pulled forth into the future anticipates a deferral or belatedness – the Freudian *Nachtraglichkeit*[5] – in the becoming that is to come, but delayed in the very tendency and the tending toward of the demand one places on oneself to look back to see in the looking what remains. To remember in the throes of forgetting, the "symbol of love's forgetfulness," regards this retroactivity in memory-work as central to the becoming that might be possible, in the way in which a redemption or redeeming of the past for present life and the future to come might come to make visible that which is not immediately so. It appears to be impossible for visibility in the gesture of remembering, of the past, to exist outside of this hold (read: melancholia) of memory upon the psychical life of the subject, precisely because to relinquish (read: mourning) memory would be both gravely plausible and always already feared; everything could change or be lost in an instance. As such, remembering or memory, as Derrida suggested:

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[5] In his *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud advances the theory of Nachtraglichkeit – belatedness or deferred action – where in we find a "pathogenic effect of a traumatic event occurring in childhood...[manifesting] retrospectively when the child reaches a subsequent phase of sexual development" (Breuer & Freud, 1895, p. 246). As such, this belatedness or afterwardness could be described as a delayed response, due to repression and possible forgetting, to the traumatic event in one's past.

> [is] not just the opposite of forgetting…to think memory or to think anamnesis, here, is to think things as paradoxical as the memory of a past that has not been present, the memory of the future – the movement of memory as tied to the future and not only to the past, memory turned toward the promise. Toward what is coming, what is arriving, what is happening tomorrow. (Derrida, 1995, p. 385)

This "promise" of and in the future could be given the name and valence of redemption, as such. Redemption, of the memory of the past, is never redemption outside of its own relationship to the present and to the future or futurity. Redemption, too, in how it is conceived of in the rupture that the look of the angel seems to enact upon temporality in the very movement to look back, as it is being impelled into the future, is the meeting place of the Freudian sense of belatednesness regarding traumatic loss and the Benjaminian conception of catastrophe, or the catastrophic, as the missing of the opportunity, or missed possibility, to conceive of the time of the past differently, or to remember it otherwise for present life and living, under the shadow of the displaced and quarantined trauma. The very legibility of this redemption, the redemptive look of love of the angel, resides in the time of the future anterior, the time in which trauma becomes realized and realizable, and subsequently inheritable, in the precise instance when both the belatedness of the melancholic's difficulty at relinquishing the past's losses, and the subsequent mourning that catastrophe produces might meet – a time where the past, the present and the future may meet. As such, redemption leaves behind the necessary stigmata of the look of love, that claims to make the past visible in every moment as it is released retroactively upon the site and scene of the now-time of the present – this mark of redemption, or redemptive love, consequentially ties the past with the present, and the future to come, as suggestively foretold to us by W. Benjamin in his now-famous Thesis II:

> The past carries with it a hidden index by which it is referred to redemption. Doesn't a breath of the air that pervaded earlier days caress us as well? In the voices we hear, isn't there an echo of now silent ones? Don't the women we court have sisters they no longer recognize? If so, there is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Then our coming was expected on earth. Then, like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak messianic power, a power on which the past has a claim. (W. Benjamin, 1968, p. 254)

If, as W. Benjamin suggests "our coming was expected on earth" and if "[in the guise of the ruin], history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay" (W. Benjamin, 1998, p. 178), what we are inheriting from it – the past, as such, or rather our past – is precisely what can be redeemed from the very past-ness or otherness of the past; what was left and what remains unresolved within the missed opportunities or possibilities – ethical, socio-political, psychical, and, even, theological – that the past presents to us in the form of its inscrutably remarkable imprint as dealt with upon present life, an imprint signifying lost time and the very loss of time that will be felt in the present and the future to come. This redemption, as in the form of a look of love that is directed at the ruins of historical time, or rather at the very ruining of historical temporality understands how the recuperation it enables is about the re-inscription of history outside of the normative tales we are told or tell ourselves regarding the traumatic past. The time of trauma – the rupturing of linear temporality – manifests itself in the temporal displacement that the look initiates in the now-time in which it occurs; it is, in this scene, a revolutionary look back of the cure by love to redeem the invisible, in the form of missed possibilities within how historical telling and retelling might be transferred over and inherited, as the case may be. Werner Hamacher's evocative reading of Thesis II clarifies for us the significance of what is understood by and inscribed within the missing of such possibilities, and what missed

possibilities would signal regarding the way in which redemption acts to bridge the past, the present, and the time to come at precisely this instance of what is missed within the moment of temporal displacement:

> Redemption…is meant most prosaically: a redeeming (Einslosung) of possibilities, which are opened with every life and are missed in every life….Each possibility that was missed in the past remains a possibility for the future, precisely because it has not found fulfillment. For the past to have a future merely means that the past's possibilities have not yet found their fulfillment, that they continue to have an effect as intentions and demand their realization from those who feel addressed by them. When past things survive, then it is not lived-out (abgelebte) facts that survive, facts that could be recorded as positive objects of knowledge; rather what survives are the unactualized possibilities of that which is past. There is historical time only in so far as there is an excess of the unactualized, the unfinished, the failed, thwarted, which leaps beyond its particular Now and demands from another Now its settlement, correction, and fulfillment. (Hamacher, 2005, p. 40)

When past things survive in the scene of redemption, what is inherited within this moment of temporal displacement or rupture seems to be a particular kind of impossibility – a missed possibility in how historical time might be conceived of within the context of a simultaneous remembrance and forgetting. It is reminiscent of the impossibility I alluded to when speaking of the impossible love shared by the French woman and the Japanese man in *Hiroshima, mon amour*, which remembers within itself the impossible love she shared with her German lover. In a scene immediately after she had recounted to the Japanese man the story of her impossible love, she states while looking at her own reflection in a mirror, addressing her now long-departed German lover, "Look how I'm forgetting you…Look how I've forgotten you. Look at me" (Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959). She returns to this trace of the past – a past thing surviving in the moment of a redeeming – again precisely when she states a similar sentiment in relation to the Japanese man in the closing moments of the film, "I'll forget you! I'm forgetting you already! Look how I'm forgetting you! Look at me!"

(Halfon et al. & Resnais, 1959). It is as though this scene of both a transposition and transferring of the past upon the present moment, as well anticipates the future, in what can be redeemed from the past on to the stage of the present and the future to come. The possibility of actualizing the past relies on the weight it bears for the future, for every now-time that emerges in the time to come. Here, in this look back at the past, in this scene of a repeated invocation, the dead are awakened as the future emerges from the past, as the past itself is redeemed in the backward glance of the French woman. What is inherited in this scopic field of the French woman, by her, is the very displacement of time within the confrontation she has with her traumatic past in the present moment.

Likewise, in the final scene of the film when proper names are given and assigned by each to the other – first by the French woman who refers to the Japanese man as “Hi-ro-shi-ma” and then by the Japanese man who responds to her naming practice by calling her “Nevers, Ne-vers-in France” – what is happening in this revelatory moment is an acknowledgment precisely of this temporal rupture, displacement, or dissonance. The French woman finally does see “everything;” Hiroshima, both the city and the man, become visible to her outside of the structure or nature of authentic truth claims regarding being a true witness. She sees Hiroshima from within the space of her own past and through what Silverman suggests is the “language of [her] desire” (Silverman, 2005, p. 40); can only relate to this present instance from the depth of her past and the desire that stems from within it – in a way, it is precisely only upon such an impossible landscape such as Hiroshima that one can imagine a love so banal, so commonplace, even so blasphemous, and yet so special blossoming. This is radically distinct from being a mere moment of the one appropriating the past of an other; rather, in allowing her past to be the lens with which she seeks to see

"everything" in and about Hiroshima, she fulfills the important dictum, I announced earlier, offered to us by Silverman, that "the world is not 'for' us; rather, it is we who are 'for' the world" (Silverman, 2005, p. 46). She makes the world of Hiroshima visible in her seeing and naming of the Japanese man, precisely through the language of her desire, a desire whose home is her very own past. The Japanese man, in referring to her as "Nevers, Ne-vers-in France" is not consigning her to her past or "returning" her to France; rather he accepts her seeing Hiroshima for the first time in the entire narrative, and accepts it precisely because this "seeing" could not be possible through their chance encounter had it not been for her past and how it bore its mark upon their own meeting.

In *Amour*, as well, a displacement occurs in how time comes to play a radically significant role with regards to what is being redeemed within the present as it outlines itself in the film's narrative and what is being inherited from the confrontation with the past as such. The film opens (or rather begins) in what we, the audience, understand to be the present, wherein we find the police forcing entry into Georges and Anne's apartment to find her decaying corpse laid atop their bed, in their bedroom which has been sealed shut with tape, and with Georges nowhere to be found. It is as though, in a way, he has disappeared, become invisible as such, after leaving behind Anne's body in all its decaying visibility. The film, then, takes us through the temporality of when its narrative is for the most part set within, the immediate past of Georges and Anne's relationship prior to this scene, that led to this very scene of the police forcing entry into their apartment and then subsequently into their bedroom. The film moves from the present with which it opened, into the immediate past that led to this present instance, and then ends again with the very immediate present, wherein we find their daughter Eva entering their now empty apartment, after Anne's death

and Georges's disappearance. Eva walks into the apartment, goes into the living room and sits down on a chair. The film ends with a wide shot taken from afar, from the hallway of the apartment, looking in on Eva sitting on the chair in the living room, looking away from the camera; the film ends with her being watched by us, the film's audience. The film ends, thus, on this precise instance at which a redemption might be had vis-à-vis what it is that we might find as being inheritable from the film's temporal sensibility. This inheritance – as is the look that Eva seems to imprint on the apartment and as is the look we are made to have in our very watching of Eva regarding the apartment from her space on the living room chair – is a difficult look that lives somewhere between the remembered and forgotten past. In our watching her, we imagine, now in the space of her parents' empty and abandoned apartment, that she might be considering what has occurred in the immediate past – her mother's death and her father's subsequent disappearance. We are left looking at what remains – her – in the aftermath of the narrative of loss we were given in the past of the film where we saw Georges and Anne having to contend with the latter's ill health and physical deterioration. This look of love tries to awaken this past, but the difficulty, or rather the impossibility to do so is evident in the weightiness this final moment of the film seems to exude. Inheritances – the space of their erstwhile apartment and the time of what traumatized them – are burdensome but necessary nonetheless. They seem to gradually, so slowly as though in the manner of a glacier, actualize the past for present life and living.

This is how mourning and melancholia appear to operate to structure our experience of loss, in the very difficult task of holding the loss of the image of the past, as simultaneously both necessary and difficult, precisely in our desire to relinquish ourselves from its hold. Like the look of the angel, or the materialist historian, the poet, or the

photographer and filmmaker, inheritances that attempt to redeem the past bear the mark of indelibility on the present and the time to come. This is how I experienced the loss of my grandfather, and this is how that prior loss became realized and realizable – actualized, as such – in the now-time of its incredibly felt and ineffaceable remnants, transferential in nature, within the space and time of the loss of Roger, my advisor. The look of the angel of history – a look mired by the desire to cure history of its traumatic ills with redemptive love, to "awaken the dead" as such – at the ruin of historical time (and at what remains of the very ruins themselves) informs us that this look is not merely redemptive (of missed opportunities suggestive of temporal displacement), but, as well, revelatory (of allowing us to ethically be displaced by the other or others of history and history's incumbent loses, through them becoming visible to us), revolutionary (because it literally kills historical time in the very moment of the look at the past), and a look of always already returning to repeat the (im)possible confrontation that we are continually bound to have with our long-drawn-out love relationship with trauma itself. All remembrance and forgetting is but a remarkable reminder and remainder, an eternal ruin, of this love of and for our respective traumatic pasts. All love, as such, is a remembrance, an almost interminable repetition of and against the horror of its oblivion, of and against the horror of that most serious of all maladies – invisibility.

## Coda: On Becoming-Loss

To "awaken the dead" would mean to awaken from the self-imposed sleep that resists seeing what remains, for as we already know by now this waking or wakefulness is the very paradigm, as Benjamin suggested, of remembrance. In fact, one might even suggest that the cure by love, the very cure against the subject's invisibility would require a state of perpetual and perceptual insomnia to contend with and respond to the dead and the past, and their very sense of being other to ourselves. The uncanny quality of the ruin is situated within the perceptual ability to look and see in the remains what might not easily be given to being seen at first glance – to excavate from within the depths of subjectivity what traumas lay buried, untended to, and profoundly repressed. Such a confrontation gives forth new ways to address historical memory outside of a temporality presumably understood as already linear, and rather within a temporality that only appears to know itself through its own ruptures and caesuras. Between seeing what remains and the nature of invisibility that subjects may be visited upon by, the uncanny character of the ruin also would appear to be based on an ethics founded upon a sense of irretrievable loss; in this scene, the ruin as metaphor for such loss, exposed like a wound – memories in flux between recuperation and repression, between remembrance and forgetting – is the very structure of a subject that experiences its being as always already orbiting the sensibility of being in the state of becoming-loss. The ruin – both in and as memory – thus, both enigmatically careens and explicitly announces what it means to exist as such a being, always under the threat of becoming invisible, of becoming loss itself.

We see this sense of becoming-loss in Jakob's obsession with his past, with his near-penitent fixation upon his memories of his sister Bella. We wonder what or who Jakob might

be, outside of his relationship to this past he seems so fixedly directed to in everything he appears to endeavor to do – be it in his attempt at writing poetry; be it in his task of becoming a translator of poems; be it, even in his attempt at forging and maintaining new familial and intimate relationships in the aftermath of the loss he was forced to suffer as a result of the war. It is as though Jakob cannot "be" unless this loss is what he himself begins to embody. It is as though, as well, that he becomes the very emblematic embodiment of the invisibility that he seems to always already be directed toward – the losses that he fervently tries to hold onto in his memories, precisely as losses. The look of love he directs toward his past enlivens this past, gives it life and a visibility that exceeds both it and him, as well. It is a look that awakens the dead while also finding himself within the grasp of a perceptual insomnia; a necessary insomnia, needed precisely because it responds to the past, responds to what was lost to it, while recognizing the loss as loss itself, a loss always already given over to being absorbed by the past.

In the case of Maisel's canister photographs, the seeing of what remains is literalized as physical ruins, then as ruins that preserve memory for the time to come – firstly in the remains that the canisters themselves signify, and secondly in the remains that the photographs, both the space and the time of these photographs as discussed earlier, come to embody. What is lost, or found in the state of becoming-loss itself, is doubly impacted, doubly affective, and doubly valorized through their being under the threat of disappearing irretrievably. However, what possible audiences of these images might be asked to, or demanded upon, to respond to is the very nature of the remainders themselves – structural, photographic, spatial, and temporal – and how these remainders always already exist as loss,

open to the push and pull that both remembrance and forgetting, and both mourning and melancholia, enact.

If, as the French woman in *Hiroshima, mon amour* suggests, "forgetting will begin with our eyes," then what Duras and Resnais's film exemplifies for us is that remembrance will, as well, be optically-charged. To remember the past, as in the case of the psychoanalytic encounter that the film stages between the French woman and the Japanese man, is to maintain a wakefulness and an alertness to how that very seemingly forgotten past becomes the very present force one might come to embody in the instance of the present. The French woman could only regard the present through the scopic fidelity she was able to enliven and continue to maintain as it was directed toward her own past. Her past became the very present-day force that she could not refuse to acknowledge after what appears to be a 14-yearlong silence and would, subsequently, come to feel in and through her encounter with the Japanese man, while her past would also be recuperated as a result of the solicitous nature of this encounter, a solicitation that resembles the solicitous character of a psychoanalyst encouraging the associative tendencies always already present in an analysand.

Similarly, *Amour* also stages the intimacy that visibility might make possible. Georges and Anne's intimate relationship is a game, even an elderly dance, of love that the two engage in over the course of the film. Anne demands Georges to see her, what remains of her after the stroke that leaves her completely under his care, debilitated. He, at first, refuses to see her in this new state; he would rather preserve her as she was, in his memory of her – able-bodied, physically and emotionally attuned to her surroundings, his still-well partner and wife. Georges's refusal to see her as she has become only compels Anne to demand a seeing, and thus a visibility, even more fervently. As her state deteriorates,

Georges can refuse to see no longer, and we, as audience and simultaneous witness to the narrative as it continues to play itself out on the screen in front of us, are also demanded upon to recognize the deterioration and decay that is unfolding before us. Here is a looking that is expected, demanded, and even compelled from us, and here is a looking that we cannot refuse to partake in precisely because it commands us to never look away from the loss that is being depicted. What is envisioned in our looking and also in Georges looking is the very state of what it means to experience a being becoming-loss. By becoming the claimant of the position of witness to this becoming-loss, we are, by extension, as well, living in communion with and coming to surreptitious terms with this loss and ruin, as such.

The angel of history, as Benjamin invoked it in his reading of Klee's powerful painting, cannot be extricated from the look it offers to the catastrophic wreckage piling skyward at its feet. In a sense, the angel, while being fixed in the dramatic demand to look back at this wreckage is the look itself – it is not merely looking, but becomes the very embodiment of the look it adheres to. It becomes the very temporal rupture it instantiates through this look, and this look becomes that precise look of love that responds to what becomes inevitably given over to loss. This look, however, also realizes its own failure, that what is being responded to in and through its glance at what has been lost to the past can only be responded to as loss itself precisely at the very same instance of its possible recuperation. Remembrance and forgetting, mourning and melancholia both reside in the tentative space of this loving look back that attempts to "awaken the dead," cure the dead of its possible invisibility, its plausible disappearance. Despite the knowledge that this awakening of the dead is always met with an implicit failure to do precisely that, the look keeps attending to the dead as though in the form of an unending attentiveness, a persistent insomnia upon

which the dead and the past depend. There are many different ways to signify the mourning and melancholia I embodied in my experience of the passing of my dissertation advisor, Roger, and the subsequent psychical associations I had of that passing in relation to the death of my grandfather, and the relationship that death held in place to the childhood trauma I outlined earlier in the course of this project. We may refer to this struggle between mourning and melancholia under the heading of such terms of reference as repetition, repetition compulsion, repetition with difference, transference, and so on. The word "love" – an oldest sense of love, an uncanny love more familiar and deeply feared – seems to resonate more profoundly within how I understand this struggle between the desire to hold on to what might be remembered and the simultaneous desire to let go of the dead. Here, such a love, as embodied in the work of the historian or the psychoanalyst, or the subject who remembers, becomes the very act, the very cure, toward making the other visible to me in the throes of her/him becoming possibly forever invisible. This is what it means, as I suggested earlier, to find love – of self and other, between self and other – in the ruins and in what remains.

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