

**Navigating the Kingdom of Night:
Writing the Holocaust**

Amy T Matthews

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Creative Writing

Discipline of English

School of Humanities

University of Adelaide

April 2007

Contents

1.	Abstract	
	3	
2.	Statement of Originality	5
3.	A Brief Outline of the Debate over Fictionalising the Holocaust	6
	Literary Risk and Moral Peril	7
	The Case of DM Thomas' <i>The White Hotel</i>	10
	Holocaust Endings and the Right to Write	13
4.	Fantastic Narrative Strategies: the Use of the Hasidic Tale, Magic Realist Folk Tale and Fable in Holocaust Literature	20
	Yaffa Eliach's <i>Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust</i>	21
	Jonathan Safran Foer's <i>Everything Is Illuminated</i>	28
	John Boyne's <i>The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas</i>	36
5.	Contracts with the Reader: Writers Who Break the Reader/Writer Contract	43
	Jerzy Kosinski's <i>The Painted Bird</i>	44
	Helen Darville's <i>The Hand That Signed the Paper</i>	52
6.	Addressing the Moral Minefield Self-Reflexively: the Case of Art Spiegelman's <i>Maus</i>	66
7.	Navigating the Kingdom of Night: My Journey as a Writer	75
8.	Works Cited for 'Navigating the Kingdom of Night'	87
9.	Bibliography for <i>End of the Night Girl</i> and 'Navigating the Kingdom of Night'	95

Abstract

End of the Night Girl and ‘Navigating the Kingdom of Night’:

End of the Night Girl

Nothing seems to go right for Molly – she’s stuck in a dead-end waitressing job, she’s sleeping with a man she doesn’t even like, and she’s just been saddled with a swarm of goldfish and a pregnant stepsister. The chance discovery of an old photograph leads her into an act of creation, and brings her into contact with the ghost of a woman who has been dead for more than sixty years.

Sixty years earlier, in Poland, Gienia’s family arranges her marriage to a distant cousin. Not long after her marriage to this stranger, the Nazis invade and she has to face life in the ghetto and the horrors of Auschwitz.

End of the Night Girl is a complex fictional narrative in which the lives of these two women, ‘real’ and imagined, imagined and re-imagined, are inextricably combined.

‘Navigating the Kingdom of Night’

Critics, historians and Holocaust survivors have argued for decades over whether the Holocaust should be accessible to fiction and, if so, who has the right to write those fictions. ‘Navigating the Kingdom of Night’ addresses such concerns and analyses various literary strategies adopted by authors of Holocaust fiction, including the non-realist narrative techniques used by authors such as Yaffa Eliach, Jonathan Safran Foer and John Boyne and the self-reflexivity of Art Spiegelman.

Through the course of the essay I contextualise *End of the Night Girl* by turning my attention to works that raise critical issues of authorial intent and the reader/writer contract; for example Jerzy Kosinski’s *The Painted Bird* and Helen Darville’s *The Hand That Signed the Paper*. How did I resolve my own concerns? Which texts

helped me and why? Together *End of the Night Girl* and 'Navigating the Kingdom of Night', one creatively and one critically, explore these complex and controversial questions in a contemporary Australian context.

Statement of Originality

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge or belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. In the case of *End of the Night Girl* there will be a one year embargo.

Amy T Matthews

April 2007