Navigating the Kingdom of Night:

Writing the Holocaust

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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