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History and Memory as Modes of Recovery in Doron Rabinovici's *Suche nach M.*

The metaphor of illness pervades Doron Rabinovici's novel *Suche nach M.* Virtually every character suffers either a psychological or physical illness that is the physical manifestation of repressed memory or failed identity. In some cases, the memory is of suffering during the Holocaust. In some cases, it is the lacuna of unspoken memories not passed on to a second generation of survivors, hence depriving them of keys to their identity and history. Finally, it is repressed memory of guilt born by the perpetrators. In each case, lost memory warps identity and deforms personal relationships. Rabinovici gives us a sick society begging for a cure.

Throughout it is clear that the metaphor of illness reveals the traces of history inscribed on the body. The more the characters attempt to repress memory, the more the past intrudes itself in the form of physical ties and fetishes that point constantly to the undead past alive in the body of the present. History is not a dead past but a living legacy. In Dani, whose body breaks out in a hideous rash as he detects and takes on the guilt that must be confronted and confessed in order to bring healing. The gauze that binds his wounds can be read as a film strip of transgression and omission. It conceals the wounds while pointing to their source and beyond to their healing. Dani's character ultimately teaches both perpetrators and victims to admit "I did it!", and thus claim their history, memory, and identity. Breaking the silence that is "part of his family's oral tradition" is the healing moment. As Arieh Bein states in the final chapter, removing the bandages, revealing and healing the wound "this is the work of memory" (181).

The role of gender is also quite interesting in the novel. It is Arieh's wife, Navah, whose academic work focuses on the Jewish community in Czernowitz in the 19th century. She urges Arieh not to run from himself or his history, but to confront the past of his people as part of his healing. My paper will focus primarily on history as the past persistent in the present in the form of imprints on the psyche/memory and body. In addition, I will talk about the legacy of the past on present generations. Rabinovici gives us compelling Holocaust survivors as background figures to the real victims and protagonists of his novel, the children of survivors. In this second generation of Holocaust survivors, the symptoms of repressed past and identity become acute, and demand attention and a cure.