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Third-Generation Holocaust Representation

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CHAPTER 3

Third-Generation Memoirs

Metonymy and Representation in Daniel Mendelsohn's The Lost

We always turn around to stare at what lies behind us, which is to make an impossible wish, a wish that nothing will be left behind, that we will carry the imprint of what is over and done with into the present and future.

— DANIEL MENDELSON, *THE LOST*

It's strange how people are remembered.

— JOHANNA ADORJÁN, *AN EXCLUSIVE LOVE*

What is the truth of someone's life?

— SARAH WILDMAN, *PAPER LOVE*

Forget what's behind you, or behind your family, what use is it? But still there remains that stubborn nudging part of him. The part that keeps on wanting to know.

— KENNETH BONERT, *THE LION SEEKER*

The geographic center of this story is the remote Ukrainian village of Bolechow, the village of Mendelsohn's grandfather Abraham Jäger's birth. While his grandfather fled to America before the war, his grandfather's brother Shmiel, of whom he never spoke, along with his wife Ester and their four daughters, Bronia, Frydka, Lorka, and Ruchele,

were murdered by the Nazis. The family's tragedy was compounded by the fact that Shmiel had joined his brother in America before the outbreak of World War II. However, unable to adjust to the New World, he returned to Bolechow where he lived in relative comfort before the invasion of the Nazis ruptured the lives of Shmiel and his immediate family. Mendelsohn sets himself to excavate their memory in order to fill in the blanks in his family's Holocaust history. As he proceeds on his quest, his own cultural Jewish identity emerges with great clarity. Although his grandfather stoically maintained his silence concerning his murdered brother, Mendelsohn knew—from unarticulated cues—about the fate of his great-uncle, to whom he bore a striking physical resemblance, a fact brought to bear on the young Mendelsohn when, visiting his Yiddish-speaking Bolechow aunts in Miami, the women would weep when he walked into the room. Although his name was never mentioned, Shmiel's presence is accentuated by his absence. Following his grandfather's death, Mendelsohn discovers a packet of Shmiel's letters that his grandfather always kept in his jacket breast pocket, even when he went out for a neighborhood walk. These letters and some old family photographs impel Mendelsohn's quest, an anxious, arduous journey leading him to Israel, Australia, Eastern Europe, Denmark, and Sweden. As novelist Rebecca Goldstein proposes, it is through Mendelsohn's detailed narrative that "the tone of fraught significance is earned, finally carrying the tale of one man—obsessed in his particular way with his own life and family—beyond the bounds of the memoir."¹

In linking his project to the ongoing imperative to bear witness to the tragic events of the Nazi genocide, Mendelsohn situates himself in a third-generation, post-Holocaust perspective:

I am a fervent believer in the necessity of carrying over the testimony to future generations. In a way, the central obsession of the book is: How do you become responsible for other people's narratives? . . . I go to great lengths, I think, to articulate this notion that my generation—the "generation of the grandchildren," as I call it; the grandchildren of those who were adults during the Holocaust—is the last on earth who will have had the opportunity to know people who were survivors . . . I keep referring to my generation, therefore, as the "hinge" generation, because we are

the last ones who'll have been living receptacles for the stories of those who were in the event itself; and I'm acutely conscious, obviously, of what it means to be someone who becomes the "transmitter" of another's stories, another's past.²

Mendelsohn sees his own generation, the third generation since the Shoah, as probably the last generation to have heard the stories of survivors. Such a link to or "hinge" of memory reflects the subtle shift from the remembered past to a future that must reevaluate its relation to a history that can no longer be spoken of with the authority of first-person witness, a history, as Efraim Sicher suggests, "not within living memory."³ Thus the metaphor of the "hinge" both connects generations and structures memory and expression. Nancy Miller, in *What They Saved: Pieces of a Jewish Past*, draws upon a similarly constructed metaphor of the "spline," the connecting piece that holds the corners of frames together, to explain her navigation through the bits of information, fragments she gathers in her attempt to shape or frame the past into a coherent whole. Splines, as Miller suggests, form an apt metaphor for intergenerational transference because splines "fill in the blanks between isolated points" and thus "construct a complete object from limited information."⁴ Like a hinge, a spline, as Miller suggests, "works in two directions: as a way to navigate unknown spaces and as a way to frame the fragmentary map of . . . discoveries" (5). Thus we might understand Mendelsohn's description of the "hinge generation" in one of two interlocking ways: as a generation whose search for knowledge connects the outgoing and incoming generations in the ongoing transmission of memory—just as a door opens inward and outward on its hinges, providing for the passage of memory; and also as a generation for whom memory of the Shoah hinges on the responsible articulation of narratives of the past. The hinge is the axis upon which memory moves; indeed, the future depends on it.⁵

For the hinge generation, memories of the Shoah more often than not are mediated through an intervening emissary, the second generation, who heard stories directly from the survivors. Instead of receiving direct testimony, the third generation is forced to fill in the gaps in the lost recollection of firsthand narratives, however arbitrated such memories always are in their transmission. And so, this generation must intuit, overhear, and distill fragments, "confused quasi-knowledge," as Rebecca Goldstein

calls it, all the while measuring the facticity of transferred information against the artifices of retelling (Goldstein). This anxiety about speaking as the last of the indirect witnesses to the experiences of survivors characterizes third-generation Holocaust representation. Equally fraught is the anxiety regarding the form of that transmission, the insistent reminder that these stories do not belong to them and can only be conceived from the imaginative reworking of piecemeal information, often no more than interpretively fraught clues. Interviews with grandchildren of Holocaust survivors conducted by Nirit Gradwohl Pisano reveal a characteristic pattern of attempts to gather together the fleeing pieces of memory. One interviewee, the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, recollects of her grandmother's belatedly passed on accounts, "I only started getting these little snippets of stories as she was . . . preparing for her departure from this world . . ." "There are things I need to tell you. I didn't tell you these things before; here is what you need to know."⁶ "These 'snippets,' however," as the interviewer suggests, cannot, for the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, "fill the void of history" (Pisano, 145). Another interviewee laments, "It's just gone. That whole generation . . . There's nobody. There's nobody at all. There's not . . . a descendent of someone that can figure out how to piecemeal it together. There's no one . . . The kind of sadness and grief and trauma that's carried on is that there's simply no one. There's no one to carry on the legacy. There's no one to even know it happened . . . It's just gone" (144). As Pisano concludes on the basis of her interviews, "the grandchildren of survivors are continually motivated to confront their parents' and grandparents' experiences, to articulate multifaceted narratives, and to pursue an intergenerational perspective at once removed from and connected to the Holocaust" (46).

Thus, one of the pressing issues for the third generation is how to navigate the space between what Mendelsohn refers to as the poles of proximity and distance. Such tertiary witnessing makes emphatic the complex relation among memory, its staged enactment, and its interpretation, a complexity calling into question the reliability of such narration. As Mendelsohn explains, "Obviously the great problem with the Holocaust, at least as a literary subject, is representation. How do you represent this? There are times where you should feel that language is being stretched to the absolute limit, because one is faced with the problem of representing the unknowable, the unimaginable . . . When I was

writing . . . I felt the exhaustion of the ability of any given sentence to talk about this experience.”⁷⁷ What Mendelsohn is speaking to is, as Ellen Fine puts it, “the difference between the lived experience . . . and the account about the experience.”⁷⁸ The narrative “exhaustion” comes, in large part, from the nagging sense that one is not getting it quite “right,” that, in other words, the language of literary expression lacks not only authority and substance, but also the subjective, individualized experience of its victims. As Mendelsohn puts it, “sometimes you just come up against the dead brick wall of the unknown and unknowable” (O’Hehir). For Mendelsohn, as for others of his generation, the “big picture,” the general outline of actions and measures taken—the collective enterprise of the war against the Jews—is known. What remains a mystery is the particular fate of individuals like his specific relatives: the place, the date, the means of execution, the experience concretized, for, as Mendelsohn fears, “If you get the small details wrong, the big picture will be wrong, too” (17).

In his dogged pursuit of the discovery and transmission of information about his family members before it’s too late, these specific six members of his family cast their shadows over the lacuna in what might otherwise be the unfolding, continuous narrative of his family’s past. Instead of storied lives, taking their rightful place in the permanence of interlocking generations, his great-uncle Shmiel Jäger, Shmiel’s wife Ester, and their four daughters, Lorka, Frydka, Ruchele, and Bronia, disappeared not only from history but from his family’s histories; their omission is an interruption, a severing and discontinuity in the family saga, a disconnection that breaks the ethical, familial, and characterological bonds of lineal descent, as the larger history of the Holocaust does to Jewish cultural descent. The family of Shmiel become a metonymy of the Holocaust as a history. At the outset of Mendelsohn’s journey, all that remains of his absent great-uncle is a name—Shmiel—and a resonant visage in the face of the young Daniel who, “at six or seven or eight years old . . . would . . . walk into a room and certain people . . . would begin to cry” (3), “old Jewish people,” transported back in time, “at the mere sight of me” (5). Of the few remaining fragments, the single, definitive marker of personhood, the “one salient fact, the awful thing that had happened . . . was summed up by the one identifying tag,” the final, “unwritten caption on the few photographs that we had of him and his family,” the refrain: “Killed by the Nazis” (26). This single known fact made abstruse by the

lack of amplifying details, creates an uneasy aperture in Mendelsohn's imagination. Thus, as Rebecca Goldstein conjectures, "A large portion of [Mendelsohn's] edgily attentive psyche is haunted by nightmare events that transpired long before his birth, so that his memory struggles to impossibly reverse itself, to gather up the details of seemingly irrecoverable lives and tragic ends" (Goldstein). In what is either a deliberate or unconscious embrace of intergenerational trauma, Mendelsohn, like others of his generation, will come to recognize his generational place in the ongoing narrative of the past, as Mendelsohn puts it, "the nature of narrative itself as it moves between the remembered past and the real past."⁹ *The Lost* is, among a blurring of other genres and modes of representation, a coming-of-age narrative and thus acknowledges, to borrow a phrase from one of Grace Paley's short stories, what it means to "grow up in the shadow of another person's sorrow."¹⁰ This is, to be sure, an appropriated, borrowed sorrow, but one that is, nonetheless, motivating, catalyzing, and imperative.

For Mendelsohn, the loss of the remote but persistent six—persistent in their absence—takes on mythic yet palpable proportions exactly because of their absence. As Mendelsohn says, "It was the thought of all that we didn't have that . . . made me want to retrieve something from the abyss, to 'fill in the blanks'" (Zisquit, 347–48). Indeed, the exclusion of these particular six from his otherwise "loquacious" grandfather's bountiful stories of family lore only calls attention to a presence that once was, as Mendelsohn puts it, "specific," "specific people with specific deaths," whose "lives and deaths belonged to them . . . the subjects of their own lives and deaths," their aborted stories an allure made all the more seductive because of their omission not only from the family narrative, but from history (Mendelsohn, 502). As Dan Bar-On notes, "Untold stories often pass more powerfully from generation to generation than stories that are discussable."¹¹ And so, Mendelsohn tells us, "out of all this history, all these people" that hover on the fringes of his family, "the ones I knew the least about were the six who were murdered, who had . . . the most stunning story of all, the one most worthy to be told" (15). The family's silence enshrouding their six murdered relatives creates a dissonance and an uneasy incompleteness, a narrative cut short, like the "blackened tendrils" and "decimated strands," metaphorically described by Simon, of her partially severed family tree, whose branches have been broken,

charred, “snipped,” eradicated, leaving in their wake a longing to reassemble the dismembered past.¹² For, as Nancy Miller suggests, “the lure of the puzzle . . . is not so easily resisted” (Miller, 225). There is a kind of insistence to such incompleteness, a calling forth of memory’s haunts, a summoning of that which is unspoken, “the fantasy of the recovery of the past” (O’Hehir). Such recovery is hastened by time constraints. As Mendelsohn explains of the urgency in writing *The Lost*, in the face of such haunting obscurity, “Suddenly, there they are: all your ghosts, stretching out their hands, and offering you these things if you’re smart enough to hear that they’re offering them to you. And there’s a moment after which that offer is going to be withdrawn, when you’re no longer going to be able to remember the past. So it’s a moment you have to strike. And a lot of this book is very self-conscious about time as an element in the search.”¹³ As Emily Miller Budick proposes, “At the same time that it has seemed impossible to speak or write about so unknowable and representable a phenomenon as the Holocaust, it has also seemed imperative not to remain silent about it. This pressure to speak, despite all the hazards of speaking, has intensified as increasing temporal distance has made speaking or writing about the Holocaust that much more precarious and forgetting it all that much easier.”¹⁴ Thus from the ghosts of a former presence, Mendelsohn goes in search of the existence of prior life. In Primo Levi’s words, the victims “crowd [one’s] memory with their faceless presences.”¹⁵ The stories Mendelsohn both unearths and spins do not replace the lost, but rather, give substance to the departed. As he puts it, “I had begun to think of my travels in search of Shmiel’s family as a kind of rescue mission, to salvage from the past some shards of their lives” (Mendelsohn, 178).

The “unmentionable” constraints outlining the ghostly shadows of Mendelsohn’s lost relatives cast a beckoning yet paradoxically impenetrable scrim separating the past from the present (Mendelsohn, 15). Sacrosanct in their “unmentionability,” the lost are rendered “unknowable,” obliterated twice: once by the Nazis and again by way of their absence from the family narrative. As Mendelsohn makes very clear, “The people who killed them wanted to erase them. That was the agenda. Not just to kill them. But that nothing would be left. No memories. No stories . . . That’s the tragedy of these people . . . That’s the essential tragedy of life and history that most everything gets lost” (Naves). As one

third-generation interviewee plaintively asks, “What happens if not a single person can explain or at least assemble some missing pieces of [their] history?” (Pisano, 144). And, for Mendelsohn, the loss is manifold: once in their deliberate extinction, again from his family’s stories, and thrice in Mendelsohn’s implicit sense of his own loss, the unfathomable loss of something he never knew was his to lose. As Ron Rosenbaum, in “Giving Death a Face,” proposes, Mendelsohn “seems to suggest that we can’t look forward until we look back, until we know how we came to be who we are—until we know what we have lost.”¹⁶ Such deliberately executed obliteration and the anguished silence in their wake thus become an insistent challenge from which this grandchild of victims of the Holocaust cannot turn. And so to wrest his lost family from oblivion, Mendelsohn will “leapfrog back in time” (Mendelsohn, 287) and give them material form; he will attempt to resurrect them, as it were, in their particularity, in their ordinariness, those “who had disappeared from history” (171). Mendelsohn’s journey, his travels across the globe in search of his great-uncle Shmiel and his family, will take him on something of, as Ron Rosenbaum puts it, an “Odysseyan wandering and spiraling” to a great many places, but most centrally to the small Ukrainian town of Bolechow, the point of origin and of endings (Rosenbaum). Wiesel writes in response to Mendelsohn’s epic narrative of “a man haunted by six losses,” that the chronicle of his search for the particular “six of six million” reflects a preoccupation among third-generation writers, “an irrepressible need among grandchildren of survivors to make their ancestors speak.”¹⁷ “Is it,” Wiesel asks, “because they fear that with their deaths, something precious, special, irreplaceable will be lost forever? Is this a last opportunity to take possession of a truth that weighs not only on individual histories but on History itself?” (“Why Memory”). For, to be sure, Mendelsohn’s quest to locate the truth of the six missing from his family’s stories, his family’s lives, and his own absent memory, leads him to larger truths, not only about the small constellation of his own family—exceptional only to those who share an ancestry if not a history—but also about the reaches of the Shoah, the dangers in the backward glance (as in the case of Lot’s wife), and about himself, his motivations, and the limitations and the possibilities of empathetic identification. The “search for six of six million,” the few and the many, becomes in Mendelsohn’s detailed narrative, both metonymic and individual, his personal six stand-

ing for something larger than themselves, but also standing for only, tragically, themselves. The unrelenting search for the truth of the lost six, those who were, as Mendelsohn puts it, “erased consciously, purposefully from memory and history,” reveals both the single, individual loss and the magnitude of all those millions of individual deaths (Naves). For, as Wiesel affirms, in Mendelsohn’s pursuit of his own dead, “this writer’s true accomplishment emerges . . . he comes face-to-face with the others” (“Why Memory”).

But this is Mendelsohn’s conundrum: up against the faceless anonymity of the historically documented fact of six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, he will attempt to extricate the six for whom he can give a face, the six whose lives are given meaning, not through their collective dying, but through their having lived, the “concrete” details and actualities that would, as Mendelsohn puts it in his necessarily complex, tangled narrative, “make the story come alive” (Mendelsohn, 502). “Humbled,” as Mendelsohn admits in an interview, by “the unknowability of their subjective experience,” he sets out to reanimate the six members of his extended family (Naves). One of the difficulties, however, for Mendelsohn as well as for others of a generation more increasingly distanced from these events, is how not to abandon the individuals whose lives were lost in the morass and magnitude of the genocide, whose reach extends well beyond spatial and temporal constraints. How is it possible, in other words, to extract and memorialize the individual without losing sight of the scope of such loss? Mendelsohn has suggested that “The project of this book is to rescue particularity from generality . . . What I wanted to do was not to write a history about what happened to millions of people . . . My book is about six people, not six million people. My book is about trying to find out exactly, specifically, what happened to those people” (O’Hehir). This attempt to grasp the particularity of experience is characteristic of third-generation narratives and understandably so. For as we move farther and farther away from the events, the Shoah risks becoming increasingly academic, unexceptional in its place in the lineup of other atrocities, ironically and horribly sanitized by its documented archival lists of statistics, reports, chronicles, memorials, and encomia to the totality of destruction: the Holocaust as abstraction, the Holocaust in principle, the collective at the expense of the individual.

But particularity leads inexorably to the felt necessity to generalize.

Mendelsohn addresses the problematic nature of negotiating the sheer scope of the Holocaust, the events that set into motion and guaranteed the murder of his small band of family members as well as millions of others, all—in both their particularity and their collectivity—victims of the Nazi genocide. One of the many hazards in steering one’s way through the accumulation of facts, numbers, statistics, and occupations, mass graves, concentration camps, and crematoria, is the effect of coming up against the unimaginable in all its shapeless overexposure. Alvin Rosenfeld addresses the paradox for the post-Holocaust generation writing at this particular moment in history:

The very success of the Holocaust’s wide dissemination in the public sphere can work to undermine its gravity and render it a more familiar thing. The more successfully it enters the cultural mainstream, the more commonplace it becomes. A less taxing version of a tragic history begins to emerge—still full of suffering, to be sure, but a suffering relieved of many of its weightiest moral and intellectual demands and, consequently, easier to bear. Made increasingly familiar through repetition, it becomes normalized.¹⁸

The proliferation of diverse modes of representation and artistic mediation made available to a contemporary popular audience both casts light on the events and casts aside the particular, tragic specificity of those events, their moral weight reduced by their iterative representation in multiplying forms of popular media. Thus, as Rosenfeld suggests, “It is not that we know all that we need and want to know about the catastrophe itself. Far from it. Rather, because we have become acutely aware that knowledge of this past is transmitted to us by such a large and diverse body of materials, it is necessary to think about the nature and function of these forms of mediation as well as about the kinds of historical information and interpretation they convey” (Rosenfeld, 2–3). Representation itself, in other words, becomes part of the story needing to be told, a reception story that defines third-generation writing in the very choice of the memoir as a search for facts.

Regarding his attempt to navigate and to control the proliferation of information, Mendelsohn candidly explains: “It was so important to me

to focus scrupulously on just six people, as if one didn't know any of the rest, and in that way to recover a sense of what was done—done to people, as opposed to done to the Jews” (Birnbaum). What Mendelsohn and others of his generation seem to want to avoid is representation that effaces identification, a direct, face-to-face interaction with the sequence of events as they happened to an identifiable someone. As Mendelsohn admits, he was initially stymied by “the limits of the mind. Six million is an unimaginable number . . . you don't grasp it. The mind needs contours that it can imagine” (O'Hehir). The danger in the backward glance, in attempting through the limited projection of the imagination to reenter the past from the receding vantage point of the immediacy of the present is that one ends up looking through the wrong end of the telescope. Events recede rather than magnify, becoming hazier, more indistinct. The scope eclipses the distinct shape and visage of the actual experience of an individual life and, correspondingly, an individual death, both given meaning by their living and by their dying.

In visiting Auschwitz as part of his journey to get at the particularity of the experience of those who witnessed the events he so painstakingly attempts to describe, Mendelsohn will concede “the dreadful irony of Auschwitz”: “the extent of what it shows you is so gigantic that the corporate and anonymous, the sheer scope of the crime, are constantly paradoxically asserted at the expense of any sense of individual life . . . the vastness, the scope, the size, was an impediment to, rather than vehicle for, illumination of the very narrow scrap of the story in which I was interested” (Mendelsohn, 112). Mendelsohn, wandering the grounds of Auschwitz, loses his relatives once again, subsumed by the utter impossibility and weight of such knowledge. Amid the “rooms full of human hair, of artificial limbs, of spectacles, of luggage destined to go nowhere . . . the enormous, vertiginously broad plain where the barracks once stood . . . where the crematoria were . . . to the place where the many, many memorial stones wait for you, representing the countless dead of scores of countries,” all the artifacts of history on show, Mendelsohn's dead are no longer recognizable to him, their fates awash in the collective fate of so many (ibid.). Mendelsohn's project, therefore, is to imagine the specific six into being out of this terrifying wash of collectivity. As part of his intention in writing *The Lost* to “fill in the blanks” of his own family history, Mendelsohn contrives, through his fraught journey to locate six lost

individuals, to open up that disorienting, chaotic landscape upon which so many millions were murdered (Zisquit, 348). Thus for Mendelsohn, “finding a small thing to think about,” becomes “a symbol of the big thing” (O’Hehir). Indeed, Mendelsohn seems to have learned something through the process of locating the particular six individual victims of the Holocaust: “It’s not that you don’t think about the other 5,999,994. It’s that you can think about six people” (O’Hehir). In locating and imagining into narrative life the six murdered family members, Mendelsohn ends up recreating the “big picture.” The focus on the individual, or in this instance the six individuals, inevitably lays bare the rupture in the fabric of life during and in the aftermath of the Shoah. As Goldstein suggests, “the sense with which he’d started—that his six, being his, would turn out to be more fabulous than the other 5,999,994—is subtly discarded for something far more humane and universal” (Goldstein).

However, the universal, for Mendelsohn, presents something of a problem, as it does for the third-generation nonwitness. The trend we see in third-generational literary representations of the Shoah is the focus on the specific, on suffering that has an individual name and face, a preoccupation primarily, but not exclusively, among the third-generation memoirists. Memoir’s generic proximity to fiction complicates the representational issue of particularizing the universal. On one hand, the memoirist wants to remain in the register of fact, and in Mendelsohn’s case, the search that structures the memoir is to give renewed life through the search for facts about his lost family members. On the other hand, the memoir is narrative, and it strives to give weight and meaning to particulars, to generalize them. Indeed, among the novelists who draw upon historical documents of the Holocaust to create the landscapes of their characters’ fates amid the horrors of Nazi genocide, this tension between the languages of fact and story reveals itself persistently. In, for example, Julie Orringer’s novel *The Invisible Bridge*, which spans two continents and four generations of Jews touched either immediately or from afar by the Holocaust, one individual family shapes the writer’s unveiling of the Nazi plan to eradicate European Jewry as its legislated enclosures spread through France and Hungary. In Orringer’s novel, the individual experiences of the young Hungarian Jew Andras Lévi as he embarks upon his studies at the *École Spéciale d’Architecture* in Paris—his desires and tragedies—are the pivot around which history spins its irresistible mo-

mentum. And even when Orringer, in great detail, describes the growing pattern of attacks, prohibitions, and policies aimed at conquering territories and collectively exterminating entire Jewish communities, we never escape the metonymic reminder that each discrete, irreplaceable life matters, the representation of which becomes, as Mendelsohn puts it in terms of his own book, “the armature on which to hang a narrative that was complicated and rich . . . a certain interwar European culture that has vanished; the world of people like my grandfather, European immigrants . . . a certain kind of Jewishness represented by those people . . . the survivors” (Birnbaum).

We see this emphasis on and foregrounding of the particular, idiosyncratic, and distinct lives of individuals—whether imaginatively contrived or based on actual family members—in other works of fiction as well. Some of these novels are epic in their design, spanning wars, decades, landscapes, and generations, include Sara Houghteling’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Natasha Solomons’s *The House at Tyneford*, and Kenneth Bonert’s *The Lion Seeker*. These are all large, sweeping novels that traverse their way through the interstices of individual lives as they navigate the panorama of Jewish history. Although the novel and the memoir are distinct genres, here they exhibit a shared impulse to discover, uncover, and retrieve that which was lost. So, too, this body of literature, either implicitly or explicitly, is weighted by the intergenerational transmission of memory that draws the past into the future, a future mortgaged to the past. As Pisano suggests, the grandchildren of survivors paradoxically “never forget what they didn’t experience” (18). All assume the burden of memory, a post-Holocaust generation that, as Fine suggests, both bears and endures “the psychic imprint of the trauma” that is not their own. This is a generation, as she proposes,

marked by images of an experience that reverberate throughout their lives. They continue to “remember” an event not lived through . . . This non-memory or lack of memory comes from the feeling of exclusion both from the experience, and from knowledge about the experience . . . filled with blanks, silence, a sense of void, and a sense of regret . . . If survivors such as Elie Wiesel bear witness to their descent into Holocaust darkness, their legacy of night has surely cast a long shadow upon the succeeding

generations. On one hand, the shadow is a hovering presence that will not go away, binding those who were not there to those who were, both dead and alive. On the other hand, the shadow is absence, a reflection of the reality that took place but not the reality itself. (127)

Such indirect forms of third-generation representation—the novel and the memoir—show the narrated attempts to recreate, to reflect “the reality that took place but not the reality itself.” And both forms navigate such unknown terrain from a different perspectival reach as they embark on journeys imagined and real, fictive and literal time travels, going back to the point of origin as a prelude to writing. As Rosenfeld suggests, “While there is still much that we do not understand about the Holocaust in its time, there is no escaping its imaginative afterlife, or rhetorical presence, in our time” (8).

While the third-generation novelist, such as Orringer, moves toward history in the details of her narrative, the memoirist, Mendelsohn, moves toward fiction, that is, toward imagining a whole out of its fragmented parts. For both, the tropes of fiction—metaphor, characterization, ventriloquism, and the like—shape the telling. The novelist, of course, might be said to assume more freedom with the facts, yet such distinctions are, we think, finally specious and have more to do with perceptions of proximity and distance, the place of the writer in the temporal, logistical, and spatial unfolding of events. As Mendelsohn suggests:

The interest in and freedom with and exploration of narrativity and storytelling are things I can fool around with because I’m a little bit distant from this tragedy. They weren’t my grandparents. It was a great uncle . . . So I can come at this from a totally different angle, with more spaciousness in my positioning. And part of what the book has the luxury to explore, and even weep a little about, is distance. And so, honestly, when I experience these terrible moments, it’s probably not as loaded as it would have been if it was my grandfather I had been trying to find out about. So I’m aware of the fact that I’m two steps down, but I’m one step horizontal from the epicenter of this trauma. It’s part of the theme of displacement in the book, about not being close

enough . . . The book is as much about distance as it is about proximity. Another thing I want to avoid is falsely claiming a trauma that isn't mine . . . I'm not an heir to the Holocaust, but I am heir to a great storyteller. (Naves)

Such disclaimers aside, Mendelsohn's preoccupation with his familial connection to the murdered six and his inheritance of trauma are central to the unfolding of the narrative about his particular six of six million. While both novelist and memoirist might be said to share, in Gary Weissman's terms, similar "fantasies of witnessing," the memoirist, in particular, goes in search of a "self" in the absence of others (Weissman, 4). The memoirist always runs the potentially narcissistic risk of becoming his own most favorite character. To "heroize yourself" is a tendency Mendelsohn, by his own admission, consciously tries to avoid (Naves). To this end, Mendelsohn is quick to discredit, in his particular case, the generic categorization: "I don't think this is a memoir . . . This is a book about how to use everything in my life . . . my family history and my own relationship with my parents and siblings—how to use all of that to find out about Shmiel and his family and what happened to them" (O'Hehir). Despite such objections, however, Mendelsohn's part in the unfolding of events is crucial to the outcome and is central at the outset of the narrative, as he admits: "You could even say the absolute question it starts out with is, 'Who am I, if I am him? If I'm a reincarnation of [my great uncle], who am I?' My whole book is an attempt to fill in his blanks so I can finally be myself" (Naves). Thus, the third-generational project becomes both self-construction and discovery of the lost past, a tenacious and precarious stalking of the past that unavoidably involves the revision of the present.

Not surprisingly, the quest for the past begins with artifacts, with tangible evidence of the existence of lives lived before the more proximate moment of one's own place in history. Sarah Wildman's search for the woman her grandfather left behind when he fled the Nazi invasion of Vienna begins with a hidden cache of letters found by his granddaughter after his death, the "story of a single person plucked from the enormity."¹⁹ Such artifacts become, for the third generation, the impetus for shaping the narratives of the lives of others. And they hold such magical and fantasied storytelling properties for this generation in particular, be-

cause, in the absence of or the calculated silence of those whose lives might have touched on the lives of the missing, the artifact is all that remains, a touchstone to the past. As Nancy Miller admits in her memoir *What They Saved: Pieces of a Jewish Past*, “I’ve conjured stories from my objects about the people to whom they once belonged. They’ve become evidence, telling details from a family history that was until now lost to me” (5). Thus artifacts—letters, postcards, photographs, family heirlooms—are, as Miller suggests, “like signposts to a journey” whose beginnings are initially mapped by way of these telling objects (5). Although Miller’s memoir is a third-generation account not of those lost to the Shoah, but rather a chronicle of an earlier history, the turn of the twentieth-century pogroms, the narrative not only reveals characteristic patterns that we find in third-generation Holocaust memoirs, but gets us there. That is, although Miller sets out to locate her family’s history in prewar Europe, she inevitably finds herself at that defining moment that reshaped Jewish history. In her attempts to locate the “shadowy status” of her Kishinev relatives, the paternal branch of the Kipnis family, Miller will come up against the “unexpected” (8). Traveling to Moldova and Ukraine in search of “something that would make the lost lives feel real . . . and somehow mine” (158), Miller’s quest for the specific members of the Kipnis family who fled the pogroms to come to America well before the outbreak of war will take her, inevitably, to the Holocaust, where all tracks lead. In search of the place of their origins, “the places my ancestors had lived in and left,” Miller encounters “everything that by definition I could not have calculated. Above all, I had not expected . . . I had not reckoned on . . . the Holocaust. I had not heard about camps in Ukraine and I had not known that a camp had existed only miles from Bratslav, the ancestral village I had only recently located on a map . . . I realized for the first time how close my own ancestors, starting with my great-grandfather Chaim, could have come to elimination in the Holocaust, had they remained. And so, in a way, the Holocaust finally caught up with me” (173). Hers is a journey motivated in large part by her uncertainty and set against the “vague sense of gloom attached to their lives” (8). This journey begins with narratives derived from fortuitously found artifacts, stories “conjured” from “objects about the people to whom they once belonged,” objects from which she contrived “evidence, telling details from a family history that was until now lost to me” (5).

Not unlike the origins of Mendelsohn's journey, the "mute" photographs of his great-uncle Shmiel and his family, Miller's search is prompted by the unanticipated discovery of cryptic objects, exhumed from the past, secreted in the family archives without accompanying, illuminating narratives (Mendelsohn, 7). After the death of her father, Miller, sifting through the accumulated cache of unfamiliar relics, happens upon, as she explains, previously unknown and seductively curious family heirlooms, "baffling items from a Jewish legacy I knew almost nothing about: a formal family portrait glued to crumbling brown cardboard, with a fully bearded, fedora-topped patriarch . . . a receipt for the upkeep of a cemetery grave . . . directions to an unveiling; copies of handwritten letters that appeared to be in Hebrew; an embroidered blue-velvet tallis bag (complete with tefillin); a folder mysteriously labeled 'property in Israel' (including a map); and tightly curled locks of dark-blond hair packed into a cardboard box that once held fancy French soap" (Miller, 3–4). This treasure trove of icons from the past becomes for Miller the discovery of memory in the form of things, objects and artifacts from which narratives of discovery emerge, "objects that offered hints about the missing narrative" (4). For Miller such artifacts—photographs, maps, the stuff of ritual and belonging—become substantive, their tangible weight and design the shape of memory reified and confirmed, objects that, as Miller finds, "once embodied a living tradition . . . a symbolic thread to that inherited past of untold stories" (224–25).

Artifacts thus become, in this calculus, clues; here the object is the signifier of what is lost but also the container of found knowledge. The object of discovery—like an offering—becomes the motivating impetus for the beginning of the encounter with the past. As such, the object becomes tangible evidence of the means of detection; it gives license to proceed on the quest for knowledge. Third-generation Guatemalan novelist Eduardo Halfon, in the short story "Monastery," describes the motivating force behind his autobiographical narrator's resolve to return to the Poland of his grandfather's origins as an unremarkable "little sheet of yellow paper" upon which his grandfather, at the end of his life, wrote his address.²⁰ For the narrator, this scrap of paper carries the weight of history and heritage, "a little yellow testament . . . a little clue to the family treasure . . . a little inheritance left to a grandson" (Halfon, "Monastery," 144). The materiality of this legacy gives substance to the

grandson's claims to his patrimony but also license to proceed on his quest to uncover and resurrect his grandfather's life. This scrap of paper, a material fragment of the past, is more than a pass or a passport to another place and time. It is, as the narrator perceives it, "a mandate. An order. A dictate" (145), a behest to trespass upon the geography of his grandfather's guarded history. And although his grandfather, a survivor of Sachsenhausen, Neuengamme, Buna Werke, and Auschwitz "refused to ever return" to the land of his birth, "refused ever to pronounce another word in Polish . . . deeply offended by his countrymen, and his native land, and his native tongue," and all that betrayed him, the narrator will find in this testament "an itinerary. A travel guide. A few coordinates on the mysterious and uneven map of our family" ("Monastery," 144–45). Here, in the artifact, place and identity—consanguinity—intersect. And thus, the grandson, motivated by an unarticulated and inexplicable impulse will find himself "standing in the Warsaw airport" with this unremarkable scrap of paper in his hand, "clinging to [it] like a talisman" ("Monastery," 145). As the narrator, nonplussed but curiously consoled, recognizes, the piece of paper holding "the last scrawl of his [grandfather's] own hand" was testament to a life lived before the cataclysmic rupture that irrevocably changed the direction of an unpredictable future (*ibid.*). As the narrator allows, this brief directive "was, in short, a prayer" (*ibid.*). And it's a prayer not only for the past, for that which was lost, but also for the future, enjoining the generations to follow. After all, as this third-generation sojourner perceives, their lives are intertwined, his grandfather's history, "a history that in a way was also mine" (*ibid.*). For, as Halfon acknowledges, "In the end, our history is our only patrimony," and thus to be guarded (*ibid.*).

As with Halfon and Miller, Mendelsohn's "search begins with our little family archive—old photographs, letters, postcards," all occasions for narrative possibilities, signposts to the past (Zisquit, 347). These artifacts provide something tangible to focus on and to grasp in the absence of memory and the living voice of those who were lost, or, as Mendelsohn amends, "not so much lost as waiting," waiting, that is, to be wrested from the abstractions of history (Mendelsohn, 43). Such objects—pieces of and from past lives—are stand-ins for those who are absent. So too, such artifacts are surrogates for and thus take the shape of memory. As Mendelsohn explains in contrast to those in possession of memories, "I was

so rich in the keepsakes but had no memories to go with them” (182). In some ways the very presence of extant artifacts suggests what is so obviously missing. In this way, such objects are readily seized upon and transformed by the third-generation memoirist into stories. The objects become narratives. As Mendelsohn explains, finding among his deceased grandfather’s belongings a cache of letters written in his great-uncle’s hand, becomes a moment of discovery and possibility. The letters, like the photographs, become the frame, the scaffolding upon which he erects the lost narrative of his great-uncle’s life: “So this is what my grandfather had been carrying with him, all those years. The letters Shmiel had been writing, in the last desperate year while he could still write, when he thought he could find a way to get out. It had been there, right in front of my eyes, all that time, those summers when I’d idly look at the odd wallet, impatient to go outside and hear my grandfather’s stories, never dreaming of the story that he was carrying in his left breast pocket. It had been there, right in front of me, and I hadn’t seen a thing” (61). Mendelsohn’s grandfather carried in his breast pocket, evocatively close to his heart, the letters from his murdered brother much in the same way that he carries his memories to his grave.

Such a discovery is accompanied by Mendelsohn’s nagging sense of belatedness and his own unwitting participation in the family’s silence. What he fears, of course, is his own inattentive deflection from others, his abdication of responsibility for his own self-serving interests, taken up, as we all are, “preoccupied . . . with the business of living” (73). Coming upon the timeworn letters, for Mendelsohn, becomes “a way of connecting the remote past, in which my relatives seemed to be hopelessly, irretrievably frozen, to the limpid present” (47). Ironically, of course, the present is never entirely pellucid, our motives, intentions, and ambitions never entirely unambiguous even as—or because—we are in the midst of negotiating and maneuvering them. So, too, the present is never as compelling as is the mysterious past. “Limpid,” not surprisingly, resonates with “limp,” suggesting the way in which the present up against the past seems, in contrast, flattened, lacking the gravitas of history and thus more significant, more compelling, than one’s own time. As Mendelsohn says of the “allure” of the faces in the photographs of his dead relatives, “because we knew almost nothing about . . . them; their unsmiling, un-speaking faces seemed, as a result, more beguiling” (7). Finding the let-

ters and photographs becomes the motivating impulse for Mendelsohn, as Paule Lévy suggests, “à combler les ellipses, éclairer les obscurités [to fill in ellipses, illuminate dark spots]” and thus “de soulever la chape de silence, de briser les résistances familiales et d’explorer les non-dits pour arracher les disparus à l’anonymat et l’oubli [to lift the layer of silence, to break the family’s resistance, and to explore things left unsaid in order to wrest the lost from the anonymity and forgetfulness],” but also to direct and sanction his quest.²¹ For such artifacts of memory are also objects of desire signifying, as Mendelsohn suggests, “the strange proximity of the dead,” bridging the gap between the clouded past and the “limpid” present and giving figurative voice to—since in the actual words of—the dead (47). Here the characteristic Holocaust trope of *prosopopoeia*, reanimating the dead, allows Mendelsohn to conjure imagined, fantasized worlds. Thus, much like transferred memory, the found objects, the “detritus of a world upended,” passed along generationally are pointers, providing him with clues to the desired point of traumatic origin (Wildman, 311). Such a possibility emphasizes the recurring importance of returning to the place, the site of catastrophe as well as the events leading up to the traumatic end.

Objects thus represent an individual path to memory. This impulse to create the surrogacy of physical objects as a testimonial to memory might be further elucidated when we consider the placement of such objects in the Holocaust memorial located in Portland, Oregon.²² Dedicated in 2004 to the victims of the Holocaust, the memorial in Washington Park is in many ways a physical manifestation of the way in which objects become sites of memory and imagined lives, not unlike the attention to artifacts in the writing of the third-generation memoirist. Bronze objects, scattered along a cobblestone path that resembles train tracks and leads to a semicircular stone panel, are representations of life before its destruction: a suitcase, a doll, a book, a broken violin, eyeglasses, shoes. (See figures 1 through 4.)²³

These representations of discarded, worn objects represent the flotsam and residue of people who departed in a hurry, their belongings torn from them, or haphazardly abandoned. Such items, scattered seemingly at random, forsaken, are suggestive of individual traces that might form a path to memory. In the midst of collective rupture—the slaughter of families, the shattering of entire communities, the deportation of



Figure 1. Portland, Oregon Holocaust Memorial.
Photograph by Hannah June Choi.



Figure 2. Portland, Oregon Holocaust Memorial.
Photograph by Hannah June Choi.



Figure 3. Portland, Oregon Holocaust Memorial.
Photograph by Hannah June Choi.



Figure 4. Portland, Oregon Holocaust Memorial. Photograph by
Hannah June Choi.

thousands of Jews—the individual items strewn along the pathway suggest the interruption and renting of individual lives, items that once held a specific function and meaning left in abandon, never to be retrieved. Such artifacts, however, have a life in their thingness, as these sculptures suggest, while those who might have once owned them do not. These are objects without their carriers; they exist independently of those to whom they once belonged. The otherwise tranquil, sylvan grounds of the wooded area in which this scene appears are disrupted by the presence of such objects. The landscape is threatening, unsettling, and disorienting for the spectator who trespasses upon such hidden, forested quietude. For the objects lead one to the central clearing in which stands a curved wall upon which are inscribed the names of the dead and words from those who survived. There is an effect of a very real sense of danger in these immovable, fixed objects. James Young, in describing Berlin's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe provocatively captures this sense of disquietude: "Its *Unheimlichkeit*, or uncanniness derives precisely from the sense of danger generated in such a field, the demand that we now find our own way into and out of such memory, alone and together . . . It also demands that visitors actually enter and experience the memorial space . . . the danger implied . . . feels like something closer to an actual, rather than only metaphorical, threat."²⁴ So, too, this threat, this uncanny, familiar yet strange experience of walking among the out-of-place and anachronistic artifacts of memory and rupture that exist out of time creates a spatial and physical barrier, an invisible field, separating the spectator—both participant and interloper—from the safe passage to the outside world. The experience is simultaneously remote and proximate, the navigator both insider and outsider. As Mendelsohn suggests of his own family's meager archive of artifacts and images, there was an "awful discrepancy between what certain images and stories meant for me, who was not there and for whom, therefore, the images and stories could never be more than interesting or edifying or fiercely 'moving' . . . and what they meant for the people . . . for whom those images and stories were, really, their *lives*" (Mendelsohn, 183).

Nevertheless, in the void created by absence and silence, such artifacts come to represent a physical relationship to memory and thus are the beginning of the journey of reconstruction and revision for the memoirist, just as the presence of such objects of memory heralds the end of

the journey for those who were forced to leave such artifacts behind. As Hirsch suggests, such “objects, lost and again found, structure plots of return: they can embody memory and thus trigger affect shared across generations.”²⁵ These representative images in the imagination of the third-generation memoirist exist as evidence of lives once lived, providing, in Mendelsohn’s case, confirmation that “traces of those six might still remain in the world, somewhere” (Mendelsohn, 73). And so, Mendelsohn, like other memoirists of his generation, a “witness to traces,” to borrow a phrase from Simone Gigliotti, will follow the trail of these objects to their defining place of simultaneous origin and rupture.²⁶

Finally, the objects are only of substance because of the stories of return they promise. Vessels of the stuff of undiscovered lives, such artifacts become confused with the stories themselves in a similar way that memory becomes confused with its object container. This confusion might be likened to trauma and its repetitive return: the iteration is not the traumatic experience itself, but rather, the image or impression of trauma, trauma’s constant double. Such doubling, again, blurs time and space, confounding that which is proximate and remote. Here the representative artifact becomes a rhetorical trope, a metonymic substitution of one noun for a totality of anguish. Contained in the simple artifact—a photograph, a letter, a wallet, a map, and the like—is a chronicle of horrors, a history of misery. In the substitution of the container for the thing contained, we experience a dismantling of the conventional meaning of such common terms. They become signifiers, traumatic referents, and as such, bring about a convergence of individual, collective, and historical memory. These and other Holocaust markers function both conceptually and perceptually; language and its associations are reconceived to specify and expand experience, opening up the possibility of interpretation of, that is, the story behind memory’s artifact, the “missing narrative,” contained, preserved in its material shell (Miller, 4). So it is not the object itself, the container, that holds value, but rather the fantasized narrative it contains in the memoirist’s imaginative appropriation of it. As Mendelsohn readily admits, however, “one thing that we always know is that the story that we tell about a person is never the story that they will tell about themselves” (Naves). And so the distance between object and story widens in the process of trying to close it.

Thus such artifacts not only invite the memoirist to go back in time,

but arrest and contain time, if only for the moment of conjuring the narrative suggested within. So too, then, the object is not only a signifier of memory but also of the memoirist's imagination, which might be thought of as the vessel that holds and protects the absent memory of those who were lost. Michael Rothberg, in describing "the traumatic realist project" in memoirs by Ruth Klüger and Charlotte Delbo, eyewitnesses to the accounts they narrate, suggests that such narratives fashion "traumatic realism out of the haunting memories of the past. Such memoirs seek to bring forth traces of trauma, to preserve and even expose the abyss between everyday reality and real extremity."²⁷ While Rothberg's reading of firsthand testimonies explores the project of direct witnessing and the transformation of trauma onto the page, his remarks are useful in suggesting the way in which such representation, rather than "an attempt to reflect the traumatic event mimetically," hopes to "produce it as an object of knowledge, and to transform its readers so that they are forced to acknowledge their relationship to post-traumatic culture . . . It seems both to construct access to a previously unknowable object and to instruct an audience in how to approach that object" (Rothberg, 67). Thus the trauma itself becomes an object, an artifact that bridges the perceptual and affective gap between remote history and proximity, thus conflating spatial and temporal distinctions. The reenactment of trauma conflates real and imagined worlds, moving aside the temporal constraints preventing access. Thus the object of trauma is pushed into the foreground; spatially and perceptually, all other impediments move aside for the moment of realized objectification. For the writer of literary representation of the Holocaust, especially for the memoirist whose testimony is indirect, fashioned from the information and memories of others, the traumatic real must be reified, a made object. In its reenactment, two seemingly disparate modes of recognition must happen simultaneously: the apprehension of the reality of the events and the awareness of the absence of such immediacy. As Rothberg suggests, "The abyss at the heart of trauma not only entails the exile of the real but also its insistence. Traumatic realism is marked by the survival of extremity into the everyday world and is dedicated to mapping the complex temporal and spatial patterns by which the absence of the real, a real absence, makes itself felt in the familiar plenitude of reality . . . only because it knows it cannot revive the dead" (67).

In an attempt to navigate the chasm between the real and the unfathomable, the recognizable and the extraordinary, the third-generation memoirists will attempt to make familiar the unrecognizable landscape of the past by physically traveling to the place of origin, figuratively walking in the footsteps of those who came before them, thus laying claim to that unchartered, unmapped terrain. These are, to be sure, narratives of return. Yet, the third-generation memoirists who travel in an attempt, as Simon puts it in *Bashert: A Granddaughter's Holocaust Quest*, "to reconstruct her [grandmother's] life," will "return" to a place they have never before seen (18). Their journeys to unearth the past and reconstruct the lives of the victims of the Shoah, both those who perished and those who survived, represent less of a return than an unanticipated and uneasy expedition of initiates, recruits to memory. They are less going back than they are setting forth, an incongruous forward march into the past. Kestenberg has proposed that such "rescue missions" create a "time tunnel," "a double reality, one current and the other transposed into the era of the Holocaust."²⁸ Part of the complexity of such navigation is, indeed, the conflation of not only space but time. As Mendelsohn suggests, in proceeding on this ambivalent journey of discovery, the novice must "get used to counting backward—to measuring increasing closeness to your own position in time by means of decreasing numeric values. Of course, this seems only natural when you spend time studying what happened in eastern Poland between 1941 and 1944, since the higher the numeric value of a given year, the lower the quantity of living human beings in a given town: in Bolechow, say. Or, to put it spatially, the closer the year is to the present, the farther away are the moments, the seconds and hours and afternoons, in which certain people . . . were actually alive. In this way, by an ironic machination of history, time and space, distance and proximity, become confounded" (Mendelsohn, 88). To this end, the return might be better conceived figuratively, a metonymic return, as Simon suggests of her trip to the small villages of Brest and Volchin where her relatives perished: "I have come for them" (13). Such calculated maneuverings are, figuratively, a return, to be sure, to a lost time and unfamiliar place, but one that is narrated after the journey to the site of origin or catastrophe, thus a retrospective return through narrative recollection and the ordering and assessment of more proximate memory, competing spaces, and temporalities.

Hirsch speaks to the problem inherent in the notion of return: “The impossibility and implausibility of return is intensified if descendants who were never there earlier return to the sites of trauma. Can they even attempt to put the pieces together . . . or is the point of connection, including the physical contact with objects, lost with the survivor generation? What if several generations pass? What if traces are *deliberately* erased . . . ?” (Hirsch, 206). Such a return by proxy is an attempt on the part of the memoirist to compensate for the gap that exists between distant knowledge and knowing. Motivated thus by “a desire to know what had really happened . . . in whatever detail still remained to be known” Mendelsohn will, as he puts it, be impelled “to leave my computer, to leave the safety of books and documents, their descriptions of events so clipped that you’d never guess that the events were happening to real people . . . to forego the coziness of the records office and the comfort of the Internet, and to go out into the world, to make whatever effort I could, however slight the results might be, to see what and who might still remain, and instead of reading the books and learning that way, *to talk to them all* To discover if, even at this impossible late date, there might still be other clues, other facts and details” (Mendelsohn, 73). In doing so, Mendelsohn will move from the security and familiarity of intellectual distance into the space of memory, the tangible physicality of place, of envisioning place not from afar, but navigating the terrain of that otherwise foreign place, motivated by the desire “simply to go there, as if the air and soil of the place could somehow tell us something concrete and true” (81). Such an attempt to visualize and concretize place and the environs in which one’s relatives dwelled is a persistent preoccupation and fixation in third-generation memoirs. As Simon reconstructs her path to the village in which her grandmother was raised, a village whose borders have shifted over time—Poland, Russia, Belarus—she emphasizes her preoccupation and concern with precision, with identifying the exact location, the streets, buildings, and neighborhoods that delimited her grandmother’s experience, the configuration of her grandmother’s life as mediated and filtered through her mother’s partial memory: “I try to find the school, the well-appointed apartments, the crowded tenements and narrow courtyards of my mother’s memory. I read modern tourist books with little mention of the Jews; I search maps; I question the guides. No one recognizes the street names. Have they been distorted by years of

living?” (18). Time, in this context, might thus be measured, as Hirsch suggests, in terms of its “incommensurability of return—a measure of the time that had passed and the life lived by other people and other bodies in the same space and among the same objects” (Hirsch, 202).

Such regrettable if inevitable distortions of time, memory, and geography, the traces of the past, though cobbled together inexpertly and hesitatingly, compel the memoirist to follow in their tracks, for, finally, as Simon pleadingly insists of her own family’s shattered history, “Fifty thousand Jewish citizens can’t be buried in a forest without a trace. As with Volchin, sooner or later, a bone pokes out from the spring thaw. Sooner or later, a voice croaks from the phlegm of repressed memory. Sooner or later, a strangulated wail hisses between the brain’s synapses. Sooner or later, something emerges of the lives that were once lived” (152). Thus as Simone Gigliotti suggests, “Although the Holocaust took place in the 1930s and 1940s in Europe, its memory routes remain open and continue to guide passengers to the dark places of compulsive return and witness” (203). To this precarious and uncertain end, Mendelsohn’s narrative, like other memoirs written by the third generation, is, as he suggests, “a tale of returning” (Mendelsohn, 493). And they will go far to reach the object of their desire. Mendelsohn’s quest will take him on an odyssey across the globe to the small Ukrainian town of Bolechow, but also to Poland, to Australia, to Israel, following the traces of those who knew or might have known his lost relatives. Simon’s journey will take her from New York to the village of Volchin, now a part of Belarus, a trip that will wind its way to the forest of Brona Gora, to Brest, and to Minsk, a passage that, as she says, “extends from the Old World to the New, from shtetl to metropolitan city, from east to west, from one century to another, and across rivers and seas and oceans” (Simon, 256). For Miller, “the roots of adventure began with a photograph . . . taken in Kishinev circa 1903” (Miller, 175) and took her to Moldova and to Ukraine only to find that “*You only think you know what you are looking for. The corollary to that early lesson of the roots quest is this: what most often proves valuable is almost never what you were expecting*” (158, italics in original text). Adorján’s quest to understand not only her grandparents’ perilous history but their suicides decades later takes her to Budapest, Israel, Paris, Copenhagen, and to the site of Mauthausen, the concentration camp where her grandfather was interred in 1944, about which “we know nothing.

He never talked about it, and if you asked him . . . he replied, ‘We don’t talk about that,’” an “extermination through labor camp,” incongruently “now a museum . . . something about it that suggests a holiday camp, the place is so peaceful, the birds twittering, the sun shining.”²⁹ And although Jérémie Dres will circumvent the site of the death camps in the graphic memoir *We Won’t See Auschwitz*, his illustrated journey to reconstruct his grandmother’s life, “to find her again,” will take him on the trail from Paris to Poland, to Warsaw’s historic district and its “once-thriving Jewish community,” to his grandfather’s birthplace in the village of Zelechów, and to Kraków, “50 km from Auschwitz,” and the site of Europe’s biggest festival of Jewish culture.³⁰

For all its promise, then, the return to the places once inhabited by the third generation’s ancestors is, ultimately, destabilizing. Unsure of what they will find there and, indeed, uncertain of whether such places even exist anymore, the location nonetheless takes the shape of memory, or, as Hirsch describes it, “the act of returning to place and . . . the objects found there inflect the process of affective transmission that so profoundly shapes the postmemory” of those who return long after the events of the past have transpired (Hirsch, 204). Place becomes a replacement for and finally a simulacrum of memory. As Miller suggests, in arriving at the birthplace of her grandfather and great-grandfather, “Here at least is something I can claim to know” (Miller, 168). Of course, the place found is not the place once inhabited. Yet the place is at once unrecognizable and familiar. Like the photographs, maps, letters, and other relics from the past, place becomes a visual, tangible signifier for absence, the physical site, like the photographs, produces an uncanny recognition and, at the same time, a reminder of difference, a startled and startling simultaneous familiarity and alterity in such manifestations of the uncanny. Such belated recognition is achieved through the obsessive preoccupation with such objects as they are zeroed in by the desire to know. For such objects poured over and internalized prior to departure become internalized and made into a recognized feature of one’s own remembered origins. The perceptual presence of artifacts and place, as well as the location of others who were there at the time and who might still remember, become part of the project of integrating and also mediating loss, providing a relation to what is no longer visible. Indeed, as Mendelsohn admits, “I was . . . interested in the life of the Old Country, not merely its

death, and I wanted to see what Galicia looked like, what the topography was, what kinds of trees and animals and people lived there. What kind of place my family had come from” (Mendelsohn, 110). Thus, returning to place produces a kind of double vision, like double voicing, the layering of different perspectives, different positions, times, and histories simultaneously.

Such a return, then, provides the grounds for an imagined reality. For one can return to the place of origins, the place of life, or of catastrophe, or of death, but one can neither relive nor reenact the events or the feelings of those who actually experienced them, even less then, of course, than one could relive one’s own uncanny experience. And no amount of factual data and information or being in situ can produce uncontested knowledge, since, as Mendelsohn discovers, “there is simply no way of reconstructing their subjective experiences” (Mendelsohn, 226). In other words, one can go there, but not be there. As Mendelsohn admits, such knowledge is always gleaned from a distance, from an emotional and affective divide. Such knowledge is always approximate, “something like this” as Mendelsohn observes (237). In trying to reconstruct, for example, his great-uncle Shmiel’s final moments before entering the gas chambers, Mendelsohn reveals, “at that point the gas comes on, and I will not try to imagine it, because he is in there alone, and neither I nor anyone else (except the nineteen-hundred and ninety-nine or so others who did go with him) can go there with him” (240). It is one thing to be there, to see where a particular, documented event occurred, to witness in sanitized retrospect the site of event. It’s another to be there, in this particular case, at the moment of dying, and this is a place to which no one can accompany the person who was actually there experiencing the event: “So we cannot go there with them. All I think I can say, now, with any degree of certainty, is that in one of those rooms, on a particular moment of a particular day in September 1942, although the moment and the day will never be known, the lives of my uncle Shmiel and his family . . . came to an end” (240–41).

Thus no end of iteration, no tangibility of a found or remembered object, will get them there, so that finally standing in the same place or even in a proximate place is at best a weak and ineffectual substitute for direct, unmediated witnessing and experience. As Mendelsohn acknowledges, “whatever we see in museums, the artifact and the evidence, can

give us only the dimmest comprehension of what the event itself was like; why we must be careful when we try to envision ‘what it was like’ . . . not the same as being in that space” (237). Place is not a replica of space, of the affective, visceral, immediate and unambiguous experience of being there. Such an experiential and affective vacuum initiates, not only a return, but a re-return, a return once again to project oneself onto the screen of the experience missed. For Mendelsohn will return once again despite his mother’s objections, “one last time . . . to bring an end to the search . . . to walk again the confusingly twisting streets of the town once more, but armed this time with so much more information than we had the first time we went . . . when we had known nothing at all except six names” (450). Such a return to the place of return is an attempt to master the anxiety catalyzed by loss. The double return is a form of repetition compulsion, to confront not only what we are missing, but what we both fear and desire. The initial journey becomes a kind of rehearsal, practice for the impossible mastery over both the garnering and ordering of information, since the piecing together the onslaught of such knowledge is cumulative, piecemeal. As Simon acknowledges, it’s only “Little by little,” that one begins to form a picture of the events as they transpired (Simon, 162). The reiterative need to return is a symptom of the attempt to master the fear of how little one can ever know. As Miller says of her unconscious motivation in “making a second trip” to the village in which her grandfather lived, she was “enacting a gesture. . . . I could not shake the feeling that I was still missing something, and that I would somehow suffer from that failure, as would my book, unless I returned” (Miller, 206). Returning again is, as she suggests, an attempt “to master the terror of loss . . . returning to the scene of where something was lost . . . fooling ourselves with time travel; if we cannot retrieve the past, we can go back to its places in the present. Playing with loss becomes a way to confront, often not fully consciously, what we are missing, to admit that we are missing something. Sometimes this is something literal: a document, the name of someone in an unidentified photograph, a scrap of paper, pieces of the past that we might have overlooked. But in the end, by returning to the place of loss, we acknowledge our true sadness, which is that we miss what’s missing” (207). Such repetition is an attempt to conquer the fear that one will never know, that the past is irretrievably lost. This repetition is a kind of obsession, a way of both resisting and

succumbing to desire, as if through multiple iterations one will finally get it right and will bring the obsession to a close, a release of the anxiety and longing that holds one captive to the repetition. As Auerhahn and Prelinger provocatively have suggested, “repetition is an *intrapersonal* phenomenon occurring in two stages: One involves an event, the second its reproduction (which includes a reworking in fantasy).”³¹ Of course, such iterations can only occur in fantasy and thus cannot fully reclaim and integrate—make intelligible—the actual experience.

Eduardo Halfon’s short story “The Polish Boxer,” from the short story collection of the same name, captures the tension between proximity and distance articulated by Mendelsohn.³² “The Polish Boxer” begins with something of a joke. Eduardo’s grandfather, a survivor of both Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz, initially tells his grandson that the number tattooed on his left forearm was his telephone number, placed there so he would not forget it. Soon enough, however, the grandson comes to comprehend the “psychological importance of that joke, and . . . the historical origin of that number” (“The Polish Boxer,” 78–79). As a youngster the grandson had imagined various, more often than not ludicrous and hyperbolized scenarios of how his grandfather had received the tattoo, but nothing in the grandson’s vivid imagination could match the stuff of the real story. Indeed, all the fantasizing, the “game of inventing secret scenes of how he might have gotten [the numbers],” produces complicated scenarios involving German officers in black leather, hot irons, clowns on unicycles, and the like, caricatures and cartoon exaggerations suggesting the grandson’s incomprehension of his grandfather’s past (“The Polish Boxer,” 79). The reality of the tattoo, its now-fading digits, is, in its stark, monotonous and routinized simplicity, as the grandson comes to realize, much more horrifying, those “five mysterious green digits that, much more than on his forearm, seemed . . . tattooed on some part of his soul” (79). While the younger narrator—in all his adolescent imaginings—wants to turn the possible scenarios into horror shows, the older narrator comes to realize that, ironically, the real horror is in the routinized, familiar face of horror. The reality is much worse in its simplicity; no exaggeration is needed.

Despite the distance, both chronological and experiential, between grandfather and grandson, they do share certain bonds beyond the relational. They call each other “oitze,” a variant of the Yiddish word “trea-

sure.” In addition, the grandson shares a few drops of the grandfather’s whisky, which the old man drank daily since he had begun having heart problems. Such tangential markers of kinship only suggest the deeply felt but unarticulated connection between grandfather and grandson. While the grandson here is curiously unmoved by the one family photo, “only one,” that hung on the wall by his grandfather’s bed, what he really wants are the stories of the family members the grandson never knew. The faces in the photograph appeared to him not to reflect “real people,” but, rather, “gray and anonymous faces of characters torn from some history textbook” (82). The narrator comes to learn about the Shoah through his grandfather’s cryptic stories, illustrating Wiesel’s contention that “anyone who listens to a witness becomes a witness.”³³ But the third generation remains an incomplete witness, as the world of the Shoah is at a two-generation remove. Moreover, the grandfather himself is, as Halfon recounts, a reluctant witness, only speaking “after almost sixty years of silence . . . something truthful about the origin of that number . . . releasing . . . words stored up for so long” (80).

Secrets and silences underscore the distance between the survivor and his grandson who asks many unanswered questions about the Holocaust. Although the narrator reveals no little ambivalence about the stories to which he is hesitatingly drawn, “fearing something, perhaps the intense transcendence of the moment, perhaps that he might not tell me anything more” (81). Throughout their discussion the grandfather covers his tattooed Auschwitz number with his right hand as if to signify that what happened in the camps will never be understood by those not present. Asked why he was chosen as the “*stubendienst*” of the block of Jewish prisoners, assistant to the one in charge, the grandfather considers the narrator as if they “suddenly spoke different languages” and then simply “smiled, shrugging his shoulders” (83–84). But in the old man’s face the narrator sees the “disguised question inside that question: What did you have to do for them to put you in charge? I saw the question that is never asked: What did you have to do to survive?” (84).

Perhaps the most enigmatic of the secrets associated with the grandfather’s Holocaust experience involves his fortuitous encounter with the Polish boxer with whom the grandfather spoke all night on the eve of his scheduled execution. The boxer, more well schooled in the operations of the camp, informed the narrator’s grandfather that he would be put

on trial the next day. He told the grandfather what to say and what he should not say, thus saving him with words rather than fists. During the trial the grandfather told his interrogator “everything the Polish boxer had told [him] to say and not telling . . . everything the Polish boxer told [him] not to say” (90). The grandson, eager to discover the Polish boxer’s saving words was foiled, ultimately, by the ellipsis in the narrative, as he puts it, “if my grandfather didn’t remember the Polish boxer’s words, or if he chose not to tell them to me, or if they simply didn’t matter anymore, if they had now served their purpose as words and so had disappeared forever, along with the Polish boxer who spoke them one night” (ibid.).

Halfon’s Polish boxer reminds us of the relationship between the grandmother and her granddaughter in Semel’s *And the Rat Laughed*. There, the older woman’s tale of being raped as a five-year-old when she was a hidden child during the Holocaust was completely misunderstood by her Israeli granddaughter. In Semel’s narrative such confusion begs the question: Did the grandmother actually tell her story? Or did she mentally recount it to herself? In Halfon’s story, we are made to wonder whether there was, in fact, a Polish boxer or whether the writer’s grandfather created that figure as a way of reenforcing the fact that survival in Auschwitz was an arbitrary phenomenon. Like the grandson, we “tried to imagine . . . imagine . . . imagine . . . imagine . . . but all I could imagine . . .” was the ellipsis, “absolute silence” (“The Polish Boxer,” 91). Through the cryptic gaps in the narrative, the narrator remains both distanced from and intimately impacted by the Shoah.

The unresolved and unresolvable conclusion to the quest is the inevitable outcome of the return narratives of the third-generation witness. As Miller puts it, those who have vanished, like the places they once inhabited, will be “forever suspended between lost and found” (Miller, 229). As will those who go in search of them. For finally there can be no resolution to loss, particularly for those murdered in the Shoah, now, over half a century later, as Simon laments, “victims of disappearing memory” (102). The third-generation memoirists, regardless of the number of return visits to the actual and approximate sites, still find themselves lost in the fragments of memories, and the accumulation of artifacts and names and dates, and of the places they have traveled. Finally there is no way to bridge the epistemological gap between distance and proximity, and no

amount of reiterations or desire will outwit time's tenacity and, appositionally, memory's diminution. As Mendelsohn writes:

A unique problem faces my generation . . . those who had been . . . seven or eight years old during the mid-1960s . . . a problem that will face no other generation in history. We are just close enough to those who were there that we feel an obligation to the facts as we know them; but we are also just far enough away . . . to worry about our own role in the transmission of those facts, now that the people to whom those facts happened have mostly slipped away. (Mendelsohn, 433)

But beyond the inevitable impasse that by necessity exists between experience and indirect, hazy, and inexact understanding, an experiential innocence—those born in a different time and place—the third-generation memoirist who sets forth on the journey to discover the lost has no adequate frame of reference in which to conceptualize and dispose of the facts he or she uncovers. Finally the limitations of knowing—of imagining rather than fictionalizing—thwart the kind of comprehension and perception that the third-generation memoirist seeks exactly because such limitations prevent identification. In trying to pin down the specific, verifiable certainties surrounding the death of his cousin, Mendelsohn admits partial, if aggravating defeat:

I have often tried to imagine what might have happened to her. Although every time I do, I realize how limited my resources are. How much can we know about the past, and those who disappeared from it? We can read the books and talk to those who were there. We can look at photographs. We can go to the places where these people lived, where these things happened. Someone can tell us, it happened on such-and-such a day. (204)

But finally this is why the belated return fails: one cannot be there at the time in which the events occurred and those long since dead were alive. In resigned response to the inadequacy of being there in that place of hijacked desire, Mendelsohn admits being foiled by the exigencies of

time and otherness, and no amount of information or exertion or return or magical thinking can make up for the lack of interiority that ensures the fixed impasse.

Trumped and ultimately outmaneuvered by time and contingency, Mendelsohn will concede the fixed margins of imperfect knowledge:

All this is, inevitably, approximate. I have been to Bolechow, but the town is not so physically transformed . . . that the Bolechow I visited in 2001 bears only an imperfect resemblance to the place [cousin] Ruchele had to walk through in the house before her death. And even if . . . a photograph of the town existed today that had been taken on October 28, 1941, the day Ruchele was seized, could such a photo give me a precise sense of what she saw . . . So there is the problem of visualization. And what about the other senses? Bolechow, we know, had a particular smell, because of the chemicals used at the many tanneries . . . Ruchele walked to her death that day, did she smell the tangy smell of Bolechow? What is the smell of a thousand terrified people being herded to their deaths? What is the smell of a room in which a thousand terrified people have been kept for a day and a half, deprived of toilets, a room in which the stove has been lighted, a room in which perhaps a few dozen people have been shot to death, a woman has gone into labor? I will never know. (204–5)

In this asyndeton of the textures of fear and anguish, Mendelsohn points to the failure, not only of the imagination, but more importantly of affective transference, a projection of one's senses—the condition of being that person—the ambient sensations and apperceptions of self onto another. Here the ordinary experiences of living in America in the twenty-first century—despite its own capacities for unhappiness, innumerable offenses, and assaults—cannot hope to be compared with the extraordinary experience of the ruptured dismantling performed by the Shoah on the lives of those who experienced it firsthand. As Mendelsohn cautions, “it is important to avoid the temptation to ventriloquize, to ‘imagine’ and then ‘describe’ something for which there is simply no parallel in our experience of life” (226). Yet, throughout *The Lost*, Mendelsohn will attempt to imagine the events as they must have taken place, only to yield

to the persistent refrain, “it is impossible to know,” a haunting melody that accompanies everything that is found. In, for example, his attempt to picture, to imagine his cousin’s death, Mendelsohn writes:

bursts of gunfire, the cold, the shivering. . . . Then another burst of fire. Did she hear it? Was the fervent activity of her mind at this moment such that she didn’t really hear; or, by contrast, were her ears exquisitely attuned, waiting? We cannot know. We know only that her soft, sixteen-year-old body—which with any luck was lifeless at this point, although we know that some were still alive when they fell with a wet thud onto the warm and bleeding, excrement-smearred bodies of their fellow townsfolk—fell into the grave, and that is the last we see of her; although we have, of course, not really seen her at all. (211)

At such moments in the memoir, Mendelsohn will blur the generic divide by drawing upon the language of fiction. That is, at moments of imaginative creation—his attempts to bring the dead back to life, Mendelsohn creates characters from the limited knowledge he has gleaned, filling in the gaps in their narratives. Standing behind the screen of fiction, more novelist on such occasions than historian or memoirist, Mendelsohn gives himself license, at least momentarily, to create whole, unfolding, and coherent narratives out of the mere outlines of discovered facts.

The result of such vacillation between discourse and the lacing or layering of fantasy and reality, as Anna Richardson suggests, establishes in those “Historian-As-Detective” narratives “a dialectic between knowing and not-knowing” that creates the ongoing tension throughout such attempts at literary representation.³⁴ As Mendelsohn admits, “I’ve tried many times to imagine, to envision the experience of Uncle Shmiel and Ester and Bronia But these memories, and those sounds, are impossible for me to imagine since I have never heard the sound that is made by two thousand people being marched to their deaths” (Mendelsohn, 226). Thus the third-generation memoirist must attempt to navigate and, in some ways, circumnavigate two kinds of knowledge, two ways of ordering and constructing knowledge, and both are responses to, as Hoffman suggests, the approach taken to literary representation

of the Holocaust “after such knowledge,” that is, “from an ever-growing distance—temporal, geographical, cultural—with all the risks of simplification implicit in such remoteness” (ix). The third-generation memoirist, even in the face of the profusion of Holocaust artifacts, memorabilia, and modes of representation that have emerged in intellectual and popular cultures in the past two decades—novels, short stories, graphic novels, films, documentaries, photographs, memorials, museums—never knows quite enough. Such prolific access to statistical data, maps, archives, reports, and oral and written testimonies, notwithstanding, one who contemplates the Holocaust from the distance of some seventy years or more only knows so much.

There is no stable shape to memory, no measurement of suffering, no comparisons adequate to the task of bridging the gap between distance and proximity. Tropes of quantity, dimension, and breadth are, finally, feeble, unconvincing, and insufficient. As Mendelsohn suggests, what one is left to draw upon “after such knowledge” is largely desultory and misses the mark: “images and sounds you’ve acquired from films or television, which is to say images and sounds produced by people who have been paid to reconstruct, to the best of their ability—based on whatever reading, visiting, and looking they have done, extrapolated from whatever experiences they may have had—what such events might have looked or sounded like, although that, too, is just an approximation, ultimately” (Mendelsohn, 205). At a remove of three generations or more, one’s own limited, ordinary experiences can’t carry one to the other side, the remote side of knowledge. As Wiesel cautions, “You, who never lived under a sky of blood, will never know what it was like. Even if you read all the books ever written, even if you listen to all the testimonies ever given, you will remain on this side of the wall, you will view the agony and death of a people from afar, through the screen of a memory that is not your own.”³⁵ Ever since Wiesel’s 1985 contention that the one not there “will never know,” Mendelsohn and other post-Holocaust writers have been struggling with the limitations of knowing and the transmission of such knowledge. And, although Mendelsohn will admit defeat—“useless to pretend that I can imagine the suffering . . . even if I have some idea of what happened . . . there is no way to reconstruct” the particularity of this experience—he will continue to write and rewrite, to calculate an

approximation of the experience over the course of some five hundred pages of epic narrative (Mendelsohn, 206).

What is lost in this calculation are not only the six members of Mendelsohn's family, but the means of articulating, not the aftermath of the loss itself and what such loss means to others, but the untarnished, unmediated portrait of their lives at that particular moment in history. While, as Mendelsohn says, it might be "possible to learn some of what transpired . . . These descriptions will of course never allow us to 'know what Shmiel, Ester, and Bronia experienced' . . . but it does permit us to construct a mental picture—a blurry one, to be sure—of certain things that were *done to them*, or rather were *likely* done to them, since we know that these things were done to others like them during the same event. I can look through the available sources and compare them, collage them, and from that arrive at a likely version of what probably happened . . . but of course I will never know" (Mendelsohn, 226; italics in original text). Of course, such qualifiers as "probably" and "likely" are conditional, as is the practice of description and representation, inevitably at a remove. Without a stable and recognizable frame of reference, the closest Mendelsohn can come is to create the "backdrop for this suffering" against which imagined scenarios can be rehearsed (Mendelsohn, 235). Each scenario—"Maybe what happened to them . . . Or maybe . . . But maybe not" (234–35)—is interrupted by the reiterative refrain of its antagonistic other and recalcitrant double: "Impossible to know . . . Impossible to know . . . Impossible to know" (54). Thus, despite Mendelsohn's intention to bridge the gap between distance and proximity, it is, as he ruefully suggests, not only "impossible to know," but "impossible to know *now*," after the passage of so much time and history and memory (206, italics ours). But in an odd way there is some comfort to be taken in not being able to imagine with felt certainty the deaths of the victims of the Shoah since none of the imagined options can ever be acceptable. Thus Mendelsohn, like others of his generation, asks us to consider the ethical obligations of such inquiry, such re-turning, into the past as well as its concomitant forms of expression. For finally the ground he stands upon is not the same ground that gave way under his unknown and fundamentally unknowable relatives. Thus Mendelsohn, as other cartographers of the imagination, in mapping out the territory of absent

memory, demonstrate the ways in which impossible knowledge becomes approximately possible.

In paying homage to the subjectivity of memory, such third-generation memoirs map a course through three essentially different but interlocking kinds or shapes of time. Such narratives, to be sure, call upon (1) *historical* time: what happened when, where, and to whom. But historical time is reshaped through (2) *imaginative*—willed—time: a bending, blending, and reshaping of time, time's return through its reinvention. So, too, there is (3) *narrative* time: time in the telling; narrative that is its own time, thus eroding temporal relations of past and present. These three dispositions of time create in these memoirs a triad but also a triptych, tablets of memory hinged together in such a way that the two outer panels, when folded inward, hide the center. When opened, they expose the absent core. When viewed together as the unfolding texture of memory, time's triptych reshapes the experience of one's vision. Here time (1) stands still, (2) goes back, and (3) extends, is ongoing, both beginning anew and continuing into the future, inviting and invoking. Finally, however, the three shapes of time are measured against *unconscious* time, which is timelessness, extending and unbending them all.