The Representation of Memory: Susan Shulman and the *In Our Memories Forever* Series

by

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Abstract

This thesis serves to analyze how autobiographical memory is deployed in the current series of the Montreal artist, Susan Shulman. Her cycle of nine works entitled In Our Memories Forever (1998-2001) are created based on the archive of photographs and letters written between her maternal grandparents at the turn of the nineteenth century. This essay will discuss cognitive theories on memory and specifically autobiographical memory types in order to examine the construction of memory in Shulman's series of paintings. A thorough investigation of the works themselves will be included. This examination will culminate with a look into how reconstruction theories of memory allow for the conflation of first and second hand experiences in the work. Issues of authenticity and collective remembering will also be addressed.

Résumé

La présente thèse explore la représentation de la mémoire autobiographique dans la dernière série de toiles réalisées par l'artiste montréalaise Susan Shulman. Cette série, intitulée In Our Memories Forever (1998-2001) (Souvenirs indélébiles), comprend neuf oeuvres originales inspirées d'archives de photographies et de lettres que se sont échangées les grands-parents maternels de l'artiste à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle. Cette dissertation présentera les théories cognitives actuelles de la mémoire et, plus particulièrement, de la mémoire autobiographique, dans le but d'examiner la construction mnémonique mise en oeuvre dans la série picturale de Shulman. Elle comprendra une analyse approfondie des oeuvres. Pour terminer, cette étude se penchera sur la façon dont les théories de reconstruction de la mémoire tiennent compte de la fusion des expériences personnelles et indirectes dans ces tableaux. Les thèmes d'authenticité et de mémoire collective seront aussi traités.

Acknowledgments

There are several people without whom this thesis would not have been possible and I would like to extend my deepest thanks to all of them.

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To Susan Shulman, whom I am proud to call my aunt and my friend. Thank you for creating such beautiful works. The opportunity to explore our family history through your images has enriched my soul. I am eternally grateful.

To my family and my loving parents, Sharon and Robert, who have always believed in me and to my wonderful husband, Rob, who keeps me strong each and every day, I dedicate these words to you.

To Moishe and Tziviah and all of my ancestry, thank you for your beautiful spirits, for guiding and inspiring me.

We will always remember.

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Introduction: The *In Our Memories Forever* Series and Autobiographical Memory

"In the book of life...may we be remembered and inscribed..."

-excerpt from the "Priestly Blessing" recited on the Jewish New Year, *The Complete ArtScroll Machzor: Rosh Hashanah,* translated by Rabbi Nosson Scherman with co-editor Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz.

It began with a gathering around my paternal grandparents' dinner table on the Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashana was upon us: a familiar time accompanied by a flurry of activity, excitement and anticipation for the sumptuous cooking my father's parents still insist on undertaking even now well into their eighties. These occasions have always been an opportunity for our family to come together, to celebrate, to take a moment out of our hectic lives and re-connect with one another. This year seemed no different, or so we thought. As the crowd of maybe fourteen or fifteen gathered, the aroma of my grandmother's cooking emanated throughout the entire house. Conversation led to laughter, laughter led to stories and then Susan Shulman, my aunt, friend and painter, shared her annual keepsake gifts with all of those who were present. For the past several years, Susan has been drawing on a particular tradition to prepare her original works: the customary act of eating of apples dipped in honey in the hope of a good and sweet new year. Utilizing this concept, Susan offers up originally designed honey jars beautifully decorated with satin trim, gold ribbons and an annual illustration. But this year, something was a little different: a tightly rolled scroll gracefully dangled from our presents and Susan sat us all down to explain.

Something wonderful had happened. A great discovery, were the words ascribed. In an effort to better understand herself as an artist, my father's sister had been digging around in our genealogy, in a garden thick and dense with the overgrowth of years.

Several years before, one of Susan's favourite aunts, Annie, had passed away. Before she died, Annie had bestowed upon her niece a crocheted pink handbag that contained a mysterious archive. No one had been interested in it, no one had even thought to question Annie about it. What Susan soon discovered was that the content of the documents stored within the purse were extraordinary. It contained letters detailing the journey of our ancestors (the artist's grandparents, and my great-grandparents) and their struggles as they left the oppression and poverty of Russia at the turn of the nineteenth century. They had made their way to England and eventually Canada, where they settled in Montreal for want of a better future and opportunity. To our amazement, there were even more photographs and letters written in Yiddish which Susan was having translated. The artist had decided to share one of these texts with us and read aloud from the citations she had included with our honey jars. The words transcended time and space, echoing with strife, love and patience in the aching words of Moishe Klutch, Susan Shulman's grandfather, for his Russian bride, Tziviah Maron, whom he corresponded with upon his escape from the army in Belarus. His beloved would eventually join him in Canada where they were to raise their family. Suddenly, a window unto the past had been opened and each one of us present was able to glimpse a piece of our family history. The table fell silent. We knew something wonderful had begun.

And it had. Somehow, at every holiday and every gathering thereafter, a new letter was revealed, another fragment of the story. Then came the photographs and other new pieces to add to our family puzzle from which a clearer portrait was emerging. Susan

felt inspired. Not just by the reception of our family and her colleagues but by the essence of the past that informs her being and that had become inextricably linked with her own inner life. So she began to paint.

The images on the canvases fascinated me not only because of a sense of personal bias, but for the history they explored and the legacy they shed light on. I wanted to delve deeper. It was one thing to understand the personal implications of Shulman's work for me as a descendant of the authors of these texts and images. But what intrigued me even more was a theoretical question: how is it that these memory works are enabled to function? Nine paintings have resulted from this exploration by the artist into the past and they are entitled *In Our Memories Forever* series. *In Our Memories Forever*: how, why and by what means? This thesis is an investigation into these questions. It is here that I will attempt to shed light on how memory plays a key role in informing Susan Shulman's memorial works. I will situate current theories of memory in order to ascertain a clearer understanding of what is known about its functioning to date. As well, I will examine specific types of autobiographical memory, being flashbulb and personal memory. These various memory types will serve to derive a working hypothesis on how first and second hand memories conflate in Shulman's paintings. The notion of authenticity and the debate over the accuracy of flashbulb memories will be addressed. Finally, the ramifications of Shulman's remembering will also be considered in light of the concept of collective memory as she undertakes her study and produces her memorial work not only to explore her own past but to also recall for her family and social group.

This discussion will proceed in four chapters. The first chapter, entitled

"In Our Memories Forever: The Theory," will situate in-depth current memory theory and delineate what is known about remembering today. In this vastly new and emerging field, the voices of psychologists, neuroscientists and social scientists alike resonate in exploring what few details can really be ascertained about the human memory system. What is commonly agreed upon is that memory is malleable, subject to change and the integral source of storing and recalling information that enables human beings to function. This ability to retain information that may in part be inaccurate poses potential problems as well as possibilities. The memory type that draws the most inspiration and at times controversy from this fallibility is that of autobiographical memory and its two sub-categories, flashbulb and personal memory. Yet it is these two very memory types that are witnessed in Shulman's memorial series as they allow for the artist to access a time and place she herself could not experience through the text and images of her ancestry. The authenticity of such memory types will also be explored with detailed description of the current academic debate.

"Chapter Two: The Work," will introduce an in-depth look at the nine paintings that comprise Shulman's series executed between 1998-2001. It will also provide an overview of the emerging artist's career. A detailed discussion of important thematic, iconographic and stylistic content will be elucidated as these elements remain remarkably consistent in Shulman's oeuvre and appear in her memory works. Using the artist's own writings and excerpted texts and photographs from the archive, I will provide a detailed study of each painting rich in their evocation of Shulman's grandparents, whether maternal or paternal. Shulman has often said that her paintings are about memory: about linking the

past with the present in order to better comprehend the future. Autobiography is the ultimate thread that ties her works together.

With the understanding gleaned about memory theory and the state of the field today in Chapter One and an in-depth look at the works of the *In Our Memories Forever* series in Chapter Two, the third chapter serves to complexify these discussions. "Chapter Three: The Representation of Memory," elucidates how memory is deployed in the paintings through the act of reconstruction. This conflation allows for the amalgamation of primary and secondary sources of experience to culminate in these majestic images. The process of construction also raises important questions with regard to the authenticity of memory. As well, the works serve to function not only on the level of personal memory but also for society as a whole.

In the fourth chapter entitled "Conclusion: *In Our Memories Forever*: Complexifying Memory," the discussion will be intensified through a brief look at one specific painting and how it serves to acknowledge Shulman's memorial work in itself. As well, a summary of the preceding chapters will be recounted.

On Rosh Hashana, we recite a prayer to be inscribed in the Book of Life, to be remembered for another year. With her memorial series, Susan Shulman has complexified the notion of autobiographical memory and insures that her ancestry will not be forgotten. For me, the chance to explore this series for this thesis has been a great opportunity, a challenge and a gift. I only hope to serve the inscription of memory as well as Susan Shulman, as we remember a legacy that flows as sweetly

Chapter One: *In Our Memories Forever:* The Theory

No one can become what he cannot find in his memories - Jean Amery.

-James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory*

Memory has always intrigued me...These works represent a certain moment in thinking.

-Susan Shulman, *In Our Memories Forever*

What is memory? What is autobiographical memory and how does it inform past and present experience? How do flashbulb and personal memories factor into the experience of autobiography? Are authentic memories possible? These are some of the many questions posed in the field of memory studies today by historians and psychologists alike. Many voices have surfaced in the current field of research. However, a general consensus of what memory is and how it works cannot seem to be attained. What is agreed upon is that memory is malleable, subject to the interpretation of events through the filter of personal biases.[1] Experiences are recalled in detail when deemed to have significantly impacted the individual. This occurs with the formation of what cognitive psychology deems autobiographical memory and its sub-categories, being flashbulb and personal memory.

This thesis will attempt to shed light on these categories of memory as they are deployed in the production of memorial art. This will be examined through the work of Montreal artist, Susan Shulman and a discussion of her most current series entitled, *In Our Memories Forever*. I will explore how the painter excavates her personal memories of the childhood and genealogy through the study of a recently discovered family archive.

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[1] Martin A. Conway, "Autobiographical Memory," *Memory,* Bjork, Elizabeth Ligon and Bjork, Robert A, eds. (San Diego: Academic Press, 1996) 168.

Consisting of letters and photographs of her ancestry, these words and images have proven invaluable to the artist in order to better understand herself and her heritage. I will argue that Shulman deploys autobiographical, flashbulb and personal memories that are reconstructed in order to produce these memorial works. This is accomplished through the conflation of the artist's personal and autobiographical recollections with data gleaned through historical documents that are metamorphosed into memorial works of art. As Shulman writes, "The integrated experiences [of memory] created an umbilical cord between myself and my nourishing ancestors. The blending of all these magical and spiritual moments are reflected in my works."[2] It is the examination of this very "blending" of memory and experience that will inform this thesis, as it does the artist's paintings.

In order to properly comprehend this notion, I will begin this chapter by situating current definitions of memory. This will be articulated through a discussion of how memory functions and detailed discussions of the specific memory types of autobiographical, flashbulb and personal memory. This will provide a working foundation for the consideration of the paintings themselves, that will follow in Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

Memory

One of the most prolific psychologists attempting to answer the conundrum of how memory can be defined is Alan D. Baddeley. The psychologist contends that "...memory is not a single organ like the heart or liver, but an alliance of systems that work together, allowing us to learn form the past and predict the future."[3] Without this

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[2] Susan Shulman, *In Our Memories Forever* (Unpublished).
[3] Allan D. Baddeley, *Essentials of Human Memory* (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 1999) 1.

ability to retain information, human beings would be unable to function.[4] Baddeley also suggests that memory is composed of many systems that "range in storage duration from fractions of a second up to a lifetime..."[5] To support this widely accepted view of memory today, the author provides us with a discussion of the physiological and biological underpinnings of memory. Baddeley begins by suggesting that the "neurochemistry of memory" is still elusive. Little is truly known to date about the how's and why's of memory's functioning.[6] Baddeley suggests that recall requires an underlying process of learning and recognition in order to exist. Due to the fact that learning is "concerned with registering and storing information"[7] it is memory that makes this process possible allowing for storage and easy retrieval of vital information.[8]

In his discussion, Baddeley moves from the biological contemplation of memory to the arena of psychological analysis. The author admits that the idea that memory is divisible into many separate components is not a new one. This concept actually originated in 1890 with the American psychologist William James, and was re-introduced by Donald Hebb in 1949.[9] What ensued in the field of psychology was a hot debate in the 1960's over just how many types of memory exist.[10] Baddeley notes that in 1968, it was a widely held belief that three types of memory were identifiable: sensory, short and long term.[11]

Baddeley defines sensory memory as referring to "the role of storage in the

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[4] Baddeley 4.
[5] Allan D. Baddeley, *Human Memory: Theory and Practice* (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 1997) 3.
[6] Baddeley, *Essentials* 4.
[7] Baddeley, *Human* 7.
[8] Baddeley 5.
[9] Baddeley, *Essentials* 9
[10] Baddeley 10.
[11] Baddeley 10.

processes involved in perception".[12] In contrast, short term memory refers to a type of recollecting that is stored temporarily. In this memory type, the information utilized in order to pursue immediate tasks is discarded when deemed no longer necessary.[13] Finally, long-term memory consists of information which is stored for retrieval over long periods of time.

Of these three types of memory, most individuals associate long-term with a prevailing definition of memory itself. This is due to the fact that long-term memory plays a crucial role in everyday functioning. As Baddeley writes,

> ...some theorists claim that information in memory never disappears, but simply becomes less accessible. Remembering your own name, how to speak, where you lived as a child, or where you were last year or indeed five minutes ago are all assumed to depend on long-term memory. Such memory is primarily concerned with storing information, unlike sensory memory and short-term memory where the storage is an incidental feature of other aspects of the system.[14]

These defining characteristics of long-term memory are also associated with a subsequent memory type known as autobiographical memory.

Autobiographical Memory

According to the psychologist Martin A. Conway, one of the greatest contributors to date in the field of memory research, autobiographical memory can be defined as being compiled of many different types of information that directly relate to the self.[15] As Conway writes, "...one possibility is that autobiographical memories are part of the self-system, providing, as it were, a record of past selves and records of events that were

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[12] Baddeley 19.
[13] Baddeley 19.
[14] Baddeley 17.
[15] Conway 167.

at one time significant to the self."[16]

In his study, Conway suggests that autobiographical memories contain "multiple types of knowledge and are interpretations rather then true records of events."[17] The psychologist cautions that this should not lead us to conclude that autobiographical memories are not accurate. These memories do recall specific events but with a nod to interpretation by the individual. Conway notes that this type of memory usually results in incomplete "accounts of events" due to the fact that an individual's recall is based on the experience of the event as it directly effects themselves.[18]

A further nuance of autobiographical memory can be seen in its direct correlation between recollection and the social community. Given Conway's insistence that this form of personal memory is malleable, this concept can further be problemitized by the work of the French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs. Regarded as the pioneer of modern sociology, in his work, *The Collective Memory*, (1951), the author discusses how memory is influenced not only by a personal interpretation of events but also through the experience of culture. In his chapter, "Autobiographical Memory and Historical Memory: Their Apparent Opposition", Halbwachs defines how autobiographical memory is a form of what is known as historical memory, further subdivided as individual memory (autobiographical) and collective (historical). For the author, the former refers to memory "about an individual who considers them from his own viewpoint" whereas collective memory can be defined as "distributed within a group for which each is a partial

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[16] Conway 167.
[17] Conway 168.
[18] Conway 168.

image."[19] Halbwachs comments on how memories are filtered through the lenses of the individual as they pertain to one's own personal life while often enabling the subject to retain memories for the group. For the author, this apparatus is not isolated, requiring the history of others to "evoke" our own past.[20] As the author writes,

> During my life... I say I "remember" events that I know about only from newspapers or the testimony of those directly involved. These events occupy a place in the memory of the nation, but I myself did not witness them...It remains a borrowed memory, not my own.[21]

These so-called 'borrowed' memories can be seen as a precursory definition to the sub-divisions of autobiographical memory, known as flashbulb and personal memory.

Flashbulb Memory

In conjunction with autobiographical memory, it is equally important to consider flashbulb memory in this discussion. Flashbulb memory is critical in nuancing the working definition of memory itself and allows for the critical operation of amalgamating first and second hand experience in order for Shulman to produce memorial works. If memory can be defined as the ability to store and process information then the concept of flashbulb memory greatly complexifies and expands this function. By its very definition, this memory type allows for the individual to utilize and recall experiences not necessarily accessed through first hand encounters. With this ability, the definition of memory achieves an entirely new level of understanding. We are then permitted to ask: How is it that we can recall events we have not witnessed first hand yet that become an

[19] Maurice Halbwachs, *Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) 50.
[20] Halbwachs 50-51.
[21] Halbwachs 51.

indelible part of ourselves and our psyches? What does this say for the authenticity and moreover, accuracy of recall? Flashbulb memories enable this synthesis to occur while opening up the definition of memory to include multiple sources of stimuli. Moreover, while initiating this broadening of memory's scope, flashbulb also problemitizes the very essence of recollection itself. Even though it is agreed upon that memory is a malleable construction as filtered through personal recollection, flashbulb further allows for the possibility of inaccuracies and personal biases. In Susan Shulman's work, flashbulb memory permits the artist to situate and experience the daily life of her ancestry in order to internalize it for herself. Flashbulb memory allows for the amalgamation of these two sets of experiences that co-exist in the paintings.

Flashbulb memory can be formally defined as "a detailed and vivid memory that is stored on one occasion and retained for a lifetime... Usually... associated with important historical or autobiographical events."[22] This article goes on to note that flashbulb memories are generally formed pertaining to highly impactful world events: assassinations, wars or such travesties as September 11th. Flashbulb memories are equally impactful in relation to events of a personal nature, such as deaths in the family or trauma.

One of the most prominent scholars in the field of flashbulb memory studies today is Aleida Assmann, professor of English Literature at the University of Konstanz, Germany. Dr. Assmann's research is primarily concerned with the notions of cultural and personal memories. In a recent lecture delivered at the Musée d'art Contemporain in Montreal, the lecturer elucidated several notions concerning flashbulb memory formation

[22] "Flashbulb Memory" Summer 2001<http: //www. memorylossonline. com/ glossary/ flashbulbmemory. html.> March 11, 2001.

and their questionable accuracy of detail. According to the scholar, flashbulb memories are established from second hand knowledge that become sensory to the individual. This type of memory includes the ability to retain incredible details of events while remaining uncannily stable and easily accessible to the individual.[23] According to the author, these memories endure in excellent condition over long periods of time without any damage to their integrity. These moments are then accurately preserved with information of events that makes a significant impact on the individual and is transposed into the autobiographical memory. Flashbulb memories evoke a shift in consciousness and bring about great change in an individual's value system. They indelibly effect the individual's self-image. To illustrate her point, Assmann cites the example of a German WWII veteran who claimed in a recently published journal that he had vivid memories of the events that took place at Auchwitz. The soldier had never actually been to the death camp while the Nazis carried out their atrocities but he contends that he has specific memories of the horrors just the same. In fact, the soldier claims that his only encounter with the concentration camp occurred while he was captured by the Russians at the end of the war and taken there. The images of the site conflated in his mind to provide him with memories of the events despite his vicarious experience. He firmly believes that through this assimilation, the horrors of Auchwitz became an indelible part of his own memory and his identity. To illustrate this concept, Assmann cites the soldier's own words: "These are experiences that flow into our bodies... and congeal there forever."[24] Thus, the scholar

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[23] Aleida Assmann, *Memory and Authenticity*, cassette tape recording of the author's lecture given at the Musée d'art Contemporain on March 9, 2001 as part of the *Art and Medicine Symposium* (Montreal: Museé d'art Contemporain, 2001).
[24] Assmann.

argues, that although not derived from primary experiences, these memories can be recalled without much change, requiring no effort "of recollection in order to be true and remain true." All as if it had happened but a moment before. So what does this mean in terms of establishing the authenticity of flashbulb memories? Assmann goes on to note that in the 1970's and 80's, neuroscience experienced a shift in its point of view concerning retention theories. Reconstruction came into favour and memory was finally deemed unstable with adaptive qualities. This malleability is the underlying cause for doubt concerning the accuracy of recall. Bearing this in mind, Assmann poses the question: is authenticity itself still valid? Memories, she contends, are not formed in a vacuum and will always be somewhat flawed.

These "flaws" of authenticity have been further studied in the work of Martin A. Conway. According to the author, the debate surrounding the accuracy of flashbulb memory began in the 1970's with a study conducted by two young psychologists, Roger Brown and James Kulik. The pair became interested in the memories of individuals surrounding news events. They coined the phrase 'flashbulb' in relation to these memory types in order "...to convey the notion that these types of memories preserve knowledge of an event in an almost indiscriminate way - rather as a photograph preserves the details of a scene".[25] However, they did consider these records incomplete. For flashbulb memories to occur, Brown and Kulik concluded that the events had to be unexpected, and that different events would impact people differently - depending on their cultural biases and what was important to them as individuals.[26]

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[25] Martin A. Conway, *Flashbulb Memories* (East Sussex: Lawrence Erlnaum Associates, 1995) 3.

According to Conway, the most predominate critic of flashbulb memory theory is Ulric Neisser, professor of Psychology at Cornell. In 1982, Neisser argued that the assumptions purported by Brown and Kulik were wrong and questionable. The imminent psychologist disagrees with the dependability of flashbulb memory on four points in particular. These are: accuracy, encoding, consequentiality and content.[27] Neisser contends that in terms of accuracy, many flashbulb memories lack specific encoding mechanisms that allow them to be unreliable.[28] Instead, Neisser proposes that flashbulb memories are produced by frequent rehearsal which spontaneously occurred when recalled events were thought and talked about. As for consequentiality, Neisser contends that the importance of events is determined after forming an impression of it. Therefore, in his view, this could not be the critical factor in flashbulb memory formation. In terms of an element of surprise, the psychologist argues that high levels of arousal were associated with a narrowing of attention which clearly would not be conducive to encoding an event in detail.

Conway continues his discussion by providing an analysis of various case studies to illuminate the flashbulb memory debate. One example noted by the author pertains to the attempted assassination of former American president, Ronald Reagan. This case study was originally conducted by David B. Pillemer, professor of Psychology at Wellesley, in 1984. The psychologist assembled a group of eighty-three subjects who were tested at various points in time after the event originally transpired on March 30,th 1981. All of the

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[26] Conway 4.
[27] Conway 17.
[28] Conway 17.

individuals were tested one month after the assassination attempt and forty-four were re-tested after a period of five and a half months.[29] All in all the study consisted of three groups of participants who were asked to complete a questionnaire pertaining to their recollections of the event.[30] The study found that over ninety-two percent of the people tested had experienced some type of flashbulb memory. This certainly gave further proof as to the existence of this form of memory and provided a bit more insight into its functioning.

After Pillemer conducted his now landmark study to expound upon the formation of flashbulb memories, many scholars sought to take the definition of this memory type further. While it has been established that flashbulb memories are produced from vicariously experienced events, another dynamic has been added to the defining features of this branch of recollection. Martin Conway further suggest that flashbulb memories are "*constructed* from different types of autobiographical knowledge."[31] This definition serves to elaborate on the previous notion that this memory type is usually gleaned through a significant response to an emotively provoking event i.e. of personal or great social consequence. As the author suggests, flashbulb memories can be distinguished from autobiographical memories in that they are "unusually detailed, clear and tightly organized."[32] Once these memories become a permanent part of long-term memory they remain continuously available to the individual. Yet, once again, the question of authenticity is called into question. Brown and Kulik originally proposed that even

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[29] Conway 43.
[30] Conway 44.
[31] Conway 111.
[32] Conway 112.

though flashbulb memories are considered durable, the infallibility of such a claim was suspicious.[33] This concept was illustrated in a later study conducted in 1990 demonstrating how Holocaust survivors recalled their experiences with similar key details while other facts were inconsistent. According to Conway, this can be explained by the following: flashbulb memories are merely that, a brief glimpse into the reality of a moment. Given this, they are inherently incomplete yet that does not mean that they are inaccurate.[34] What the author also underscores is that on the whole, flashbulb memories are "remarkably consistent"[35] and can be considered reliable on the whole even if certain details are not one hundred percent accurate. This is further elucidated by the fact that flashbulb memories retain their integrity over long periods of time. For Conway, these memory types are to be viewed as malleable like memory itself, but with "core representations" that remain untouched by time.[36] Flashbulb memories provide us with the knowledge that memories can be formulated of events we ourselves did not witness but are nonetheless meaningful in our lives. But what of those events that formulate autobiography that are of a first hand nature? Are personal memories distinguishable from flashbulb? How do they fit into the scheme of autobiography?

Personal Memory

As with flashbulb memory, personal memory is another sub-category of autobiographical memory. As David Pillemer writes, "memories of personal circumstances

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[33] Conway 112.
[34] Conway 113.
[35] Conway 113.
[36] Conway 113.

are essential components of a fully functioning autobiographical memory system."[37] And personal memory is no exception to the rule, being a formative constituent of autobiographical memory yet differs from it in a very specific way. Personal memory can be defined as a memory predicated on a visual image of a specific event relating to the self.[38] Autobiography requires no such visual component (as demonstrated with the flashbulb memory type). Yet, Pillemer identifies three categories of autobiographical memory functioning that specifically rely on the experience of personal circumstances. The psychologist notes that the first of these functions is communicative. For the author, this type of memory includes a personal recollection communicated to other individuals with layered meaning. As Pillemer writes, "The *act* of sharing personal details with others communicates meaning over and above the particular informational content of the memories."[39] For the author, this very 'sharing' enables the speaker to accomplish significant personal feats. The second type of functioning entails psychodynamics. This memory set enables the individual to recall personal circumstances with great accuracy and detail.[40] Finally, the author notes that directive functions entail personal memories with information regarding behaviour in the past and extrapolations for the future.[41] So what is it that links autobiographical memory, flashbulb memory and personal memory and its specific functions? Why is it that we remember personal circumstances and events at

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[37] David B. Pillemer, "Remembering Personal Circumstances: A Functional Analysis," *Affect and Accuracy in Recall: Studies in "Flashbulb" Memories*, ed. Eugene Winograd and Ulric Neisser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.) 236.
[38] Pillemer 241.
[39] Pillemer 242.
[40] Pillemer 236.
[41] Pillemer 237.

all, with a specific focus on how we were affected throughout the course of events? Pillemer suggests that the answer to these questions is as follows: automatic encoding. For the author, whenever events of great personal consequence and possible surprise occur, we are automatically moved to produce a recollection of it.[42] Whether being recounted orally or visually, or by means of communicative, psychodynamic or directive functions, personal memories are inevitably formed by individuals through the tint of personal circumstance.

So how is autobiographical memory utilized and made visible in the works? What do the paintings consist of , where is the imagery gleaned from? How does the conflation of flashbulb and personal memory permit memory to be reconstructed? If memory is a malleable operation, then is it in this regard that Shulman's homage is created? These are some of the questions that will be elaborated upon in Chapter Three after a discussion of the work itself to follow in Chapter Two.

[42] Pillemer 241.

Chapter Two: The Work

Background

Susan Shulman was born in Montreal and has been painting and drawing since early childhood. She studied at both the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal and the Saidye Bronfman Centre. In 1996, she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Concordia University in Montreal and graduated with distinction. These feats were not accomplished without challenges: while Shulman juggled motherhood and being the Production Director of D-Zign SAB Inc., she managed to exhibit in over twenty-five shows (see figure 1-1) and produce a considerable body of work.

As she writes, "My palette is bright and bold creating tension and conflict between image and feeling. They contain portraits dealing with relationships, rebirths and metamorphosis. These narratives are a continuous introspective search full of exciting and revealing insights with elements of my personal heritage..."[43] Autobiography and personal history are the constant leit motifs that bind Shulman's oeuvre together. In her earlier works, images of motherhood, relationships and her daughter, Amber and their many forays in life together, fill her large canvases and works in oil stick on paper.

One such example typical of the artist's rich iconography and bold palette can be identified in the painting, *Metamorphosis* (figure 1). Completed in 1996, this 30" x 40" oil on canvas is replete with personal stories and archetypal imagery. In the centre of the work, intertwined female and male figures float as if in a single body. The

[43] Shulman, 2.

Fig. 1-1

A Selected list of Susan Shulman's Exhibitions, from 1995-2001

Solo show, December 1995, Belgo Building
Group Show *(Juried)*, June 1996, Concordia University, *Homage to Rolland Smith*
Group Show *(Juried)*, October 1996, Galerie de la ville, *Metamorphoses*
Women's Show, July 1996, Schorer Gallery, *Time Divided*
Summer Show, Aug/Sept 1996, Schorer Gallery, *Artists of the Gallery*
Group Show, November 1996, Schorer Gallery, *Artists of the Gallery*
Winter Show, January 1997, Schorer Gallery, *Artists of the Gallery*
Solo show, March 1997, Schorer Gallery
Women's Show, July 1997, Schorer Gallery, *Time Divided*
Solo Show, June 1998, Galerie de la ville/city hall, *Lifescapes*
Winter Show, Feb. 1998, Schorer Gallery, *Artists of the Gallery*
JAA *(Juried)*, October 1998, Decarie Gallery, *Stand Tall*
JAA *(Juried)*, March 1999, Decarie Gallery, *Dialogue*
J.A.A.*(Juried)*, July 1999, John B. Aird Gallery, Toronto
J.A.A, October 1999, Alef Gallery, *Compact*
Millennium Show, December 1999, Galerie de la ville/city hall, *Missives...*
Winter Show, Feb. 2000, Schorer Gallery, *Artists of the Gallery*
Women's Show, June 2000, Schorer Gallery, *Time Divided*
J.A.A. (Juried), June 2001, Nashville Community Center, USA
J.A.A. (Juried), July 2001, Savannah, USA

Figure 1 - *Metamorphosis*

only containment assigned to them is their mythic emergence from a large female nude painted in a deep violet in the middle of the image. The artist describes this figure as the supreme Goddess, Gaia or Mother Earth, who signifies for Shulman the true "beginning of it all."[44] A black figured Egyptian Goddess presents to the viewer the cityscape of New York, which holds personal significance for the artist due to her many connections to the city. On the left hand side of the image, another familiar vista: that of Montreal. The place of the artist's birth and home is juxtaposed with what she considers her adopted city, where she travels frequently. As the figure of Gaia raises up from the earth, we are also confronted with images of water and fish. The latter holds great meaning for the painter. All her works from this moment on in one way or another, include what has come to be known as her signature fish. As she writes, "Fish is the sperm of future generations. The icon, representing the continuum of history. They are flexible and beautiful creatures from the depths of the sub-conscious. They float or swim through all the multi-level realms, multi-dimensional, personal and ancestral memories".[45] These symbolic creatures are further explored in this work through one fish in particular. On the very bottom left hand corner of *Metamorphosis*, emerging from a bright red blooming flower, the sea creature has been removed from its natural environment, ascending into what appears to be the water surrounding Montreal. A symbolically red painted highway connects it to the city on the right of the image, navigating itself through the artist's inner landscape. Two male spirits look on, perhaps ancestral guides presiding over Shulman's realm, making her memories and aspirations flesh. As she writes once more of her images but specifically, of

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[44] This information was gleaned on October 5th, 2001 in conversation with the artist.
[45] Shulman 21.

her fish,

> They are living beings that remember all and unite the past, present and future fields through the ever-changing currents of life... Fish have been an integral part of my paintings for the past 15 years. They are in all my paintings. Often people would ask me why fish? Originally, I thought perhaps in remembering wonderful times fishing with my family for many summers... But I realize it even goes much deeper... Today, I have come to accept that fish are my creative vehicles. Fish are my symbolic vocabulary that manifest in my paintings. Fish are my emotional magic and are metaphors for transformation and spiritual voyage... I am fish... My magic symbols of fish are a continuous link in all my works".[46]

This work is also typical of the artist's style as it employs her strong colour palette. As she notes of her works, "In my paintings I attempt to maintain the richness of colour, still emitting a strangeness of images. My personal myths evolved from the imagination of my sub-conscience".[47]

Another common theme of personal identity explored in Shulman's work is that of motherhood. Her only daughter, Amber, now fourteen, has been featured in the artist's paintings from the time she was a small child. *Fish Hair 2*, (figure 2), is 20" x 30" and oil on canvas. It was painted in 1996. In this work, Shulman portrays her daughter as a mythic sea goddess, surrounded once again by her familiar fish in brightly coloured hues. The artist notes that her utilization of fish in this work is symbolic of the merging of past, present and future identities. Amber's hair is represented as a school of green fish, with her other companions being brightly coloured sea creatures and a female sea spirit, perhaps representative of the artist's neptunian inspiration. The look in Amber's eyes

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[46] Shulman 21.
[47] Shulman 21.

Figure 2 - *Fish Hair 2*

seems to convey a sense of knowing. In this work as in Shulman's previous paintings, time is a constant theme. The artist successfully meshes representations of her daughter with icons of the past, present and future that can be seen as converging in her personal symbolism. It is the subject of this essay, being the artist's current *In Our Memories Forever* series that will expand these concepts and images even further. As we will see, this series is ultimately informed by primary and secondary memories of the artist and her exploration of her genealogy.

In Our Memories Forever, in Susan Shulman's Own Words

"As a little girl in Montreal, I knew that my maternal grandparents were originally from Russia... I would dream that someday I would find out where exactly they came from".[48] Unbeknownst to the artist, this desire to find the roots of her heritage would become the seed of what she would consider the most important work of her life.
As a child, she would often fantasize about her heritage and her ancestral past. Perhaps her distant relatives were wealthy and lived in a castle, and had to leave all of their belongings behind in order to escape persecution for being Jewish in a land that did not welcome them. Perhaps, as Shulman writes of her childhood reverie, she imagined herself growing up and visiting "...my ancestral castle and discover for all to know that my family came from a long line of Russian royalty. These aristocrats would welcome me back with open arms to reclaim my heritage".[49] Well, what she found didn't exactly fit with her inner child's expectations. Yet, the results were equally fascinating. As the artist notes,

[48] Shulman 3.
[49] Shulman 3.

"Today I am prepared to share my personal research, experiences and findings in relationship to retracing the historical footprints of my roots." In her exploration, Shulman was confronted with learning about all of her grandparents and this required an in-depth study of the places from which they came. These included four shtetls (pales of settlement) in particular. The first of these was Cholui, being the birthplace of the artist's maternal grandmother, Tziviah Maron-bet Margolitz. The second place is Sheliba, being the birthplace of Shulman's maternal grandfather, Moishe Klutch (Hyman Silverman). The third location is Vetka in Belarus where Samuel Shulman, the painter's paternal grandfather was born. The fourth and final place consists of Kaurshon, the shtetl of Shulman's paternal grandmother, Rochel Braunriet in Lithuania.[50] This examination and the series of paintings itself, would not have been made possible save for an invaluable tool she received from a favourite relative. Shulman's aunt Annie Magonet "...had kept in her top drawer an antique pink crocheted bag full of sacred letters. Letters written by my grandparents. Many of the family would watch as she [Annie] meticulously opened up these ancient letters and read them to herself at the dining room table at different events".[51] The artist goes on to note in her recollections that her aunt was transfixed when she would read the passages, as if knowing them completely by heart. However, one regret Shulman is still confronted with is why she never really asked her aunt about them, or simply why no one else had, either. Here was an individual able to unlock so many family secrets and she remained a resource no one had yet tapped into.

Before Annie passed away, she had moved into a permanent senior's

[50] Shulman 3.
[51] Shulman 3.

residence. The task of sorting through her home and belongings fell to Shulman and her mother. As the artist writes, "All that was left was a lot of junk and clutter. She [Annie] had told me to take the bag of letters. I found some dusty old photos, and took a few. Had I even had the slightest notion of their magnitude… I would have taken them all."[52] But Shulman didn't know of their importance at the time, they were simply old photographs, old memories cherished by one but soon to become important to so many. Her aunt soon passed away. Shulman writes that Annie had given her a cherished silver bracelet with ivory accents. She loved it and wore it frequently. One night after a family holiday gathering, she noticed is was gone from her wrist. "I was sick," Shulman writes, "I searched everywhere. I retraced my steps all that day. It was gone. My heart ached for the loss. In my thoughts I pleaded with my aunt to please help me find it."[53] Shulman never did recover it. However, on October 4th, 1998, Shulman says she had a vision of her aunt telling her something. The words she spoke were clear: the most important gift Annie had bestowed upon Shulman were the letters and the artist's obsession began.[54]

In Our Memories Forever is comprised of a series of nine paintings, each consisting of an oil on canvas, painted between 1998-2001. By all accounts of the artist, the works are based on a series of "historical documents, slice[s] of life during 1898-1900 in Belarus and America" amalgamated into creative products with the artist's own "reflections of my heritage search."[55] The correspondences Shulman cites in her images and words were "written while my grandparents were about 18-20 years old, full of

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[52] Shulman 3.
[53] Shulman 3.
[54] Shulman 4.
[55] Shulman 4.

adventure and love."[56] The letters contain the following details,

> The majority of these letters were written concurrently by my grandfather Moishe Klutch and his brother-in-law to be, Moishe Maron. Many letters contained greetings from both of them to many of their respective relatives. They wrote while they were conscripted in the army together and in 1900, as they escaped to the United States and Canada together. They were so close they even had a double wedding with their betrothed from Belarus the same day, August 20, 1902, in Montreal.[57]

A photograph from the events of the day still exists and forms part of Shulman's archive. In figure 3, Moishe Klutch and his bride, Tziviah Maron are pictured together, standing arm and arm, young and full of hope. As we will see, these figures will appear time and time again in Shulman's homage of paintings to her ancestry and herself.

The Paintings

The first painting in the series of *In Our Memories Forever* by Susan Shulman is entitled *The Empress* (figure 4). This oil on canvas measures 24" x 26". Depicting the young Esfira Tziviah Maron, being the artist's maternal grandmother, who is majestic in her foreground placement on the canvas. The young blushing bride as seen in figure 5 is here painted in the absence of her betrothed who was conscripted in the army with her brother, in 1898. As Shulman writes on the process of creating this piece: "I was painting my grandmother, Esfira... and my grandfather Moishe Klutch (Moishe Hyman Silverman). I was blocked in the process of trying to reproduce them accurately. Within the next month, I tried to paint. It was painful. Then, I gave into my own style of painting and my interpretation..."[58] Evidently, once Shulman allowed her symbolic patterns to weave

[56] Shulman 4.
[57] Shulman 4.
[58] Shulman 6.

Figure 3 - Wedding photograph of Moishe Klutch and Tziviah Maron

Figure 4 - *The Empress*

Figure 5 - Photograph of Tziviah Maron

through these images of memory great things began to occur. In the *Empress*, the viewer is confronted with the figure of the artist's grandmother that takes up about ¾ of the space in the foreground of the canvas. She is dressed in a bright red waistcoat over what appears to be a type of lace shirt. Her hair, delicate and in a bun at the very top of her head, is auburn and bright. Scattered throughout her curls are Shulman's fish. The creatures also appear on her jacket. As Shulman writes again of this creation: "THE FISH APPEARED. First my Bubbie's [grandmother] velvet jacket with embroidery manifested into embroidered fish shapes. Then, her hair, which is curly, became curly fish."[59] There is a golden glow around the central figure and she looks out of the canvas. Tziviah's gaze neither addresses the viewer or her beloved. In the background is a representation of Shulman's grandfather, barely visible in the form of a tapestry. He is in his army uniform in the upper left hand corner. As the artist explains of the portrait of her grandfather, " I painted my Zaida[60] woven in a tapestry on a distant wall. This image was symbolic of a sacred tallit[61] with fish fringes."[62] Shulman goes on to note that her grandparents were extremely religious and that these symbols of piety and faith seemed appropriate to her. The artist further tries to identify why the fish appeared once more. "Perhaps, the fish came from my Russian heritage. Is there a meaning to them? I imagined that perhaps the fish represented swimming to America. The fish migrating to another water, another world,"[63] she says, as her grandparents were forced to do. For Shulman, this work

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[58] Shulman 6.
[59] Shulman 6.
[60] Bubbie and Zaida are Yiddish terms denoting grandmother and grandfather, respectively.
[61] A tallit is a prayer shawl.
[62] Shulman 6.
[63] Shulman 6.

seemed to provide the missing link to all her paintings that came before. She finally understood her underlying iconography and felt as if in this moment, everything had led her here.[64]

Shulman goes on to explain the placement of her grandmother in the foreground. The artist recalls how as a child she was fond of Tziviah and regarded her as the matriarch of the family. In the painting, Shulman has placed her grandmother closest to the viewer. The golden hue around Tziviah represents her "goodness and illumination in my [Shulman's] heart."[65] Of her grandfather, the artist writes, "My Zaida is in the background as a constant reminder on her mind, yet he is depicted more as an illusion. When he was in the army, they wrote back and forth. He was stationed in Bialistock with her brother, Moishe Maron." This explains his placement as distant in the background of the painting. But they were never far from each other's minds, as the text from two letters dated 1900 reveals, from Moishe Klutch to his beloved, Tziviah:

> My dear Esfira, from your betrothed Moishe Klutch,
> For a long time my beloved has been in my heart and I would like to define my thoughts for everyone. Man is compared to a single tree. In the summertime, flowers blossom, the rain waters it and it becomes something very beautiful to look at. When the rain is actually falling it is not at its best. That is why I ask God to shine on this beautiful flower. It shall blossom and bear fruit and pretty leaves. I am very grateful to my God blessing me what I yearned for…
>
> Dear Tziviah, Our sweet God will bring us together again soon.
> I am sending some sweets. Please share them and enjoy them with my parents. Please write and tell me what everyone has to say.
>
> Thank God I am in good health. Thank you so much for your good

[64] Shulman 6.
[65] Shulman 6.

> wishes. I ask my dear God to make things only better - not worse.
> Let God send you happy times. Your loving betrothed...[66]

These words are what this painting is all about. As Shulman has stated previously, this series of correspondences was written when her grandparents were not yet married, wide-eyed and hopeful that they would escape their harsh conditions and be together. Here, the artist has attempted to convey that longing between her grandmother and grandfather, while imbuing both figures with her mystery and magical iconography.

Exodus

The second painting in the *In Our Memories Forever* series in entitled, *Exodus* (figure 6). This painting is executed in oil and measures 24" x 36". Whereas *The Empress* hints at the difficult situation confronting the artist's grandparents in Russia, where they faced hatred and discrimination for being Jewish, *Exodus* takes on this subject with full force. This image is disturbing. Three men are represented like cut-out dolls. They face the viewer with their eyes keenly upon us and engaging us. Each figure seems to represent a strange stage of development: the first man, sparsely covered in fish stands with his feet planted in nothing but the blackness of the foreground is almost completely ungrounded. The second, his hands folded across his chest is slightly more planted into a small red ground toward the right hand side of the image. His body is also covered in swarming fish, more so then the first figure. Finally, the third male is the most disturbing. While his feet are firmly visibly implanted in the red, behind him is blackness, far removed from the sun and blue sky of the left side of the canvas. As Shulman writes, "The original

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[66] Shulman 6.

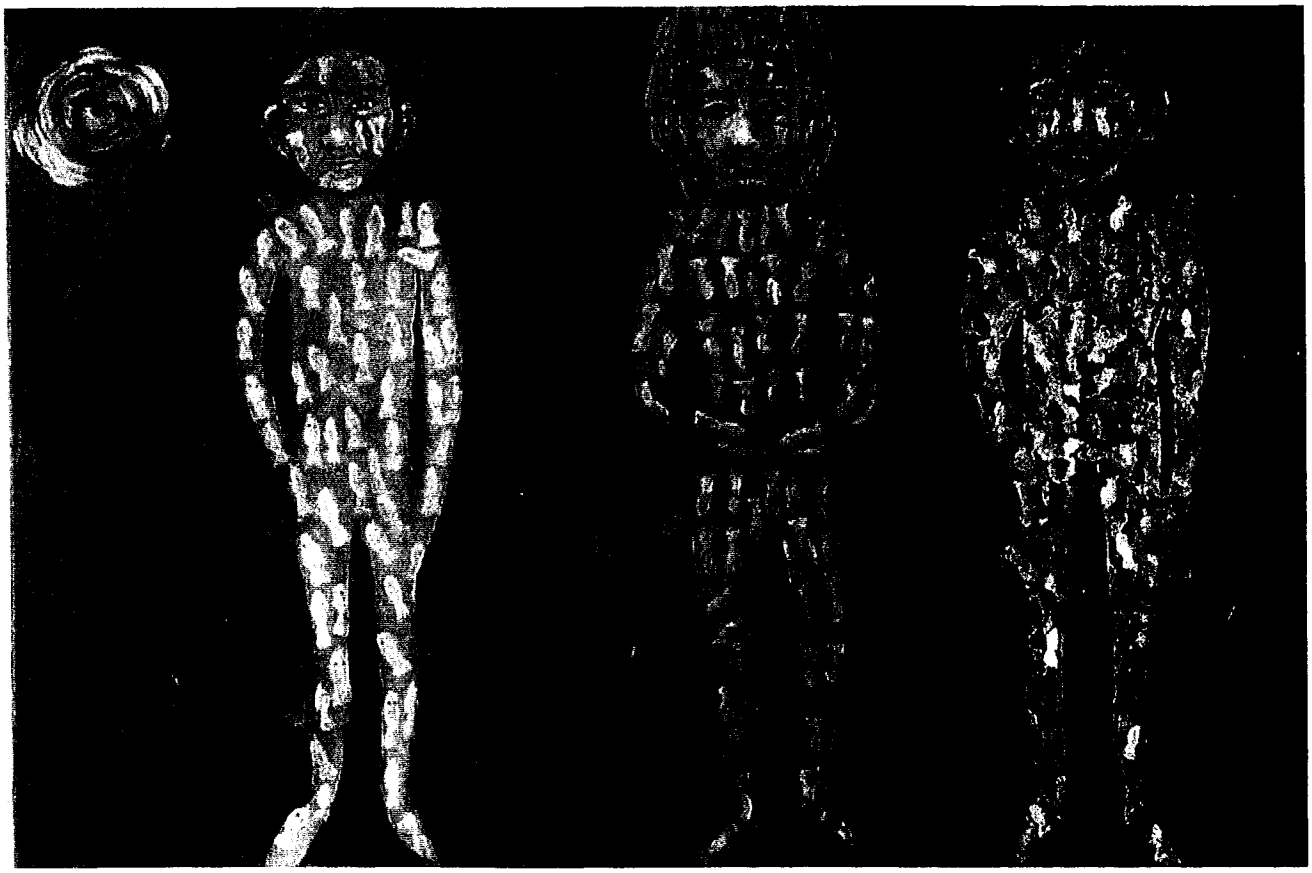

Figure 6 - *Exodus*

concept of the painting was to be three cut-out men (like cut-out dolls, reminiscent of my grandmother or aunt cutting-out paper dolls for me) and I was going to paint various clothes around them."[67] However, what happened instead surprised the artist. "I ended up painting very alien looking men (also based on the concept of being foreigners in America and not truly belonging in their homeland)."[68] As Shulman explains, if we read the painting from right to left, the way one reads a Hebrew text, we understand that the figures become more and more simplified. "The man on the right is very rough and full of fish," she writes, "He almost seems marked with tattoos or disease by the multiple fish. They are in a frenzy. They do not know where to go or how to escape. Time is running out. This man is angry because the Russians are swallowing him up. He must endure the assaults."[69] The second man, she contends, is somewhat undecided. He is terribly attached to the place of his birth, but he has to choose to leave. The third figure has clearly made his choice, "He is not standing on Russian ground. He is on his way out. The fish within him are calmer and ghost-like ancestors being left behind, but," Shulman writes, "the fish are still visible enough though to continue the bloodline."[70] The artist explains that the red mound in the foreground upon which the first two figures are standing is representative of "Russian soil overtaking the Jews. But, it is parted like the Red Sea. There is still time to part before the water drowns them."[71] There is still time for them to make their exodus to America and Canada and live in peace and freedom. "The fish are morphing

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[67] Shulman 8.
[68] Shulman 8.
[69] Shulman 8.
[70] Shulman 8.
[71] Shulman 8.

from the blood, but in this context they represent the Russian seeds beating down the bloodied Jews. The fish within the Jews are still pure and like the Jews themselves, their souls are protected against the evil eye, but they must make a choice again, as they did during Pharaoh's time,"[72] she writes. That choice being to "leave or be destroyed."[73]

Shulman explains that while she was painting this piece, she had a very difficult time. As she was attempting to convey the concept of her ancestors' exodus from Russia in 1900, the painting began to drain her. She claims that she constantly experienced many emotions such as "emptiness, loneliness, depression, fear and nausea."[74] She believes she was feeling much of what her family must have experienced living in Russia with hatred and prejudice at that time. Shulman recalls how in the midst of her research, she came across a 1920s travel book about Russia that claimed that the Jews of that country "...are lazy... yet very educated and should not be allowed to flourish because they would create peasants out of the Russians and climb too high in society. They are a threat."[75] Needless to say, she was incensed at reading such hate literature, knowing full well the scope of what her grandparents must have experienced first hand could have been nothing but exceedingly devastating. Shulman began to read about the pogroms, the organized attacks on the Jewish population that occurred from 1881 following the assassination of Alexander the II. Each occurrence left countless Jews dead and wounded while rendering others homeless due to properties that were ruthlessly vandalized. All in all, these attacks and the mounting anti-Semitism wreaked havoc on the Jewish pale

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[72] Shulman 8.
[73] Shulman 8.
[74] Shulman 7.
[75] Shulman 7.

that collapsed in 1917. "In fact," Shulman writes, "one document that I read concerned the extinction of the Shtetl Cholui, where my grandmother had lived." [76] The atrocities haunted her as she continued to paint.

But Shulman continued and *Exodus* is the result of her own personal trauma experienced vicariously through her research. "I had journeyed to the land of the living dead," she writes, "Only in the end, when I came to terms with the vulgarity of my creation was I able to release the heaviness I felt."[77] The artist's experience is made concrete in the disturbing images of the three figures in the foreground of the work. Each male cut-out seems displaced in the composition, unsure of where he belongs. Like the artist's grandparents in the midst of a society unwilling to accept them or let them live in peace, these figures assume the trauma of existence for the representation of the Jews of the Russian pale.

Alone At the Train Station

Shulman's next work in the series is entitled *Alone At the Train Station* (figure 7). This work measures 24" x 36" and is also completed as an oil on canvas. In this piece, the viewer is confronted by a canvas almost divided into two sections. On the right hand side, a glowing train speeds forward almost as if it is going to transcend the viewer's space. Figures of Russian soldiers bid farewell to their families. Almost visibly shaken with fear, on the left hand side of the canvas, waiting beneath a cave like crevice with a multitude of painted fish, the figures of the artist's grandfather and great-uncle await their fate. The

[76] Shulman 7.
[77] Shulman 7-8.

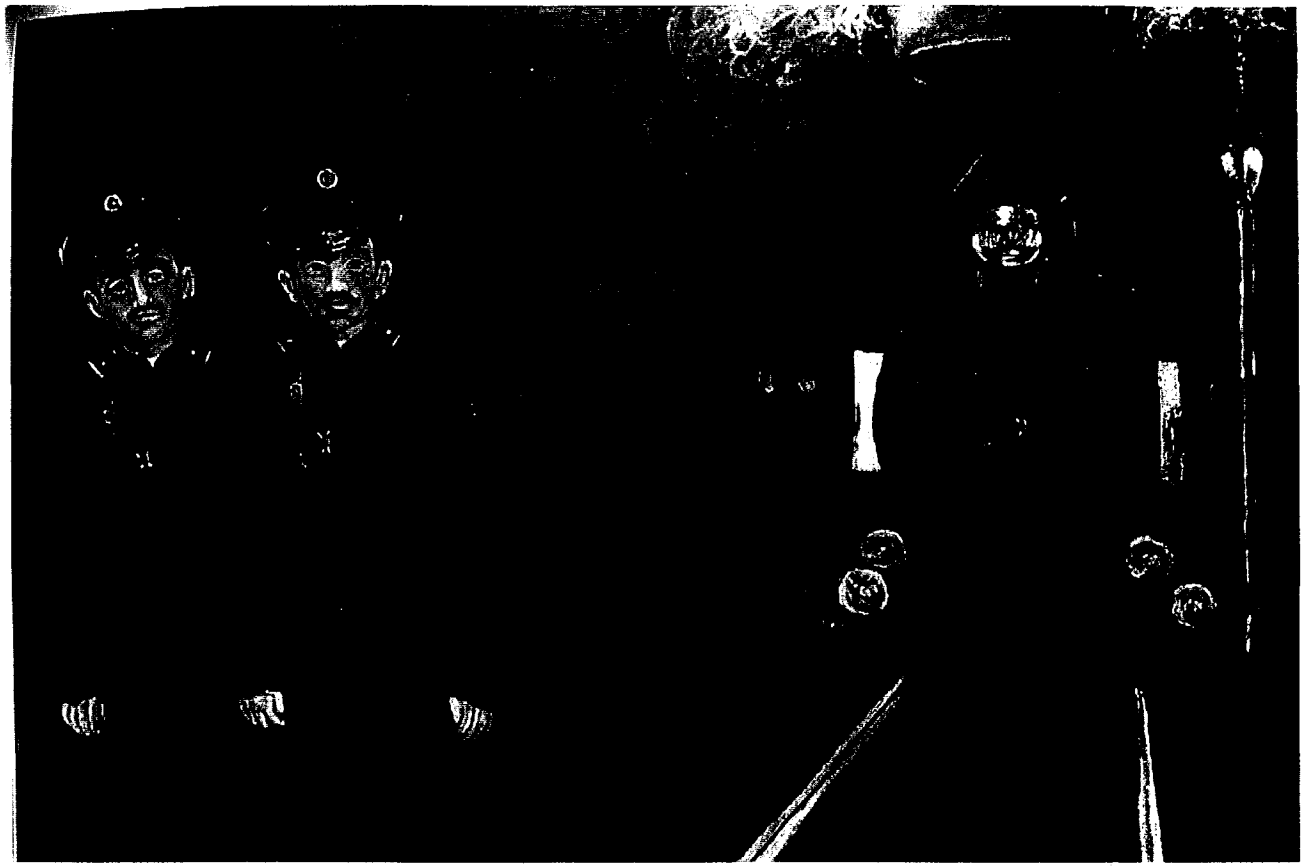

Figure 7 - *Alone at the Train Station*

Figure 5 - Photograph of Moishe Klutch and Moishe Maron

train is coming for them, speeding along a red path. Again, this symbolic icon of Russian soil is carried over from *Exodus*. Dressed in their military uniforms, Moishe Klutch and Moishe Maron are based on a 1898 photograph (figure 8) of themselves, another treasured record found among Shulman's aunt's belongings. As the artist writes, "In this work, I have painted my grandfather… and his brother-in-law to be… at a train station. They are leaning against an imaginary wall. A backdrop incorporated by torpedo war fish falling down to destroy…"[78] Shulman's family members do not want to be aboard that train, conscripted into the army against their will. The Tzar had proclaimed that all young Jewish men were to be enlisted and forced to stay well into their middle age in order to prevent them from having Jewish lives and starting families, in order to eradicate Judaism all together. Here, Shulman writes, "My ancestors are dressed in military garb. They can pass for Russian soldiers but in reality, they are Jewish pious tailors. Out of place as they are in this station."[79]

The artist goes on to explain that the railroad signs have no text. Their destination is yet unknown and representative of those place they will see in the future, those places they will pass through at later dates and times. These signs indicate "stations they have frequented with their unit, stations they have gotten off on when they went home to visit family and stations they would eventually travel through when they escape by train across Europe to freedom in 1900,"[80] Shulman writes.

Further inspiration for this piece can be seen in an excerpt from a letter

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[78] Shulman 17.
[79] Shulman 17.
[80] Shulman 17.

dated 1899, written home to desperately waiting family from one of the brothers (we are not sure of the author, but the sentiments expressed remain highly relevant). As he writes, "Now I take my pen in hand, to describe for you... how we left the train station. I could not understand, how quickly you could leave me. I said some heartwarming things, with so much love. Had you had two more minutes, you would have seen me... my thoughts stopped... I didn't know where to go". From this letter, a sense of the devastation of war and battalion life can be gleaned, a rare glimpse into the mind of a young man fighting for his life in the midst of horror. As the author writes, "All of our younger "murderers" were talking... We went to the head division to congratulate them - saying goodbye... Everyday the newspapers show things becoming worse and worse. When I was in the city, at the train station, I saw a full cavalry and artillery traveling."[81]

The eyes of the young men in the photograph (figure 8) like those in Shulman's painting, are pained and anxious. As in *Exodus*, they appear almost cut out from the wall they stand against, again separate in a land they would call home but from which they had to flee in order to save their lives. With this struggle, Shulman writes, both men became very close, like brothers. They "kept each other safe and sane during this desperate and lonely time. They are in the picture but not of the picture. They are physically waiting for the dreaded train but mentally far away. Their thoughts are with their families in their home shtetls."[82]

Another detail the artist provides us with is that both men are wearing fob watches. In the artist's grandfather's is a photograph of her grandmother which he

[81] Shulman 18.
[82] Shulman 18.

kept with him always. This is how he overcame his loneliness while stationed in Bialystok Ulager 62, Infantry 2nd Company.[83] This is how Moishe Klutch and Moishe Maron survived.

Adieu My Beloved

The next work in Shulman's series is entitled *Adieu My Beloved* (figure 9). This painting is an oil on canvas and is slightly smaller then the previous works. It measures 24" x 30". In this painting the artist returns once again to the theme of the love and correspondence between her grandparents. This time, Moishe Klutch has escaped Russia for London and later New York, leaving his beloved behind. Again, they face an agonizing separation described in Shulman's moving image.

This canvas depicts a large black fish as its central figure. Within it, Moishe sits at his wooden writing desk looking out of the canvas, toward the left hand side of the picture. In his hand and scattered about the desk are many letters, most likely those from his beloved Esfira. Below him, in the lower left hand corner is an image of the Statue of Liberty. She is aglow and almost a reflection in the water - not quite a reality just yet, but increasingly a place of opportunity, symbolizing the eventual crossing over of oceans. It is to the "New Country" where Moishe would eventually bring his bride. There is a vast expanse of blue, perhaps representing the oceans between the two lovers, with a layer of red, reminiscences of Russia once more that surrounds the figures. In the upper right hand corner, the artist's grandmother is present, in her red garb once more. She holds a letter in her right hand, either just received or being sent off and it descends, out of her immediate

[83] Shulman 18.

Figure 9 - *Adieu My Beloved*

space into that of the black fish. Behind her is a curtain which places her within an interior space in Russia, awaiting her beloved's words.

As Shulman writes of this piece, "The giant fish… sailing across the seas of love. Inside is my grandfather Moishe Chaim Klutch. As he sails across the seas from New York from London, he is losing his identity. When he lands, his new name will be Hyman Silverman.[84] His loving betrothed Tziviah Maron, is waiting back in the shtetl of Cholui…"[85] This accounts for the figures physical separation in the image. The artist explains that the correspondence between the two began with Moishe's being drafted into the Russian army in 1899 as a tailor, which was his trade. As Shulman notes, "After months of careful planning he [Moishe Klutch] escaped the army and as many of his generation, had been smuggled through Europe and finally onto a ship from a port in England"[86] bound for the United States. "My beloved grandparents send thousands of words back and forth," the painter writes. "In this particular painting, I wanted to show the physical distance between them, yet depict the love and sureness they felt for each other. They are not worried; they will be together shortly"[87] or so they hope.

Shulman also expands on the fish imagery in this particular piece in the series. She notes, "All the fish within the large fish-boat are sending love to Russia. They are also the protectors of my grandfather. They are keeping him warm, gently caressing his loneliness through his long and frightening voyage."[88] The artist goes

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[84] Moishe Klutch changed his name to Hyman Silverman in order to correspond with his family in Russia for fear of reprisals against them for his escape.
[85] Shulman 9.
[86] Shulman 9.
[87] Shulman 9.
[88] Shulman 9.

on to suggest that both figures are "caught in a moment of contemplation."[89] "My Zaida is writing and re-reading his letter, making sure all his feelings are expressed to his betrothed while my Bubbie is reading and pondering the letter she has received,"[90] Shulman writes. She adds the following: "I do wonder if it is I doing all the reflection. I am imagining what it must have been like. I ponder about leaving a country you call home, leaving a loved one, leaving family and taking that giant leap of faith to the unknown."[91] Their courage is likewise evidenced in the following excerpt from a letter the artist cites as further inspiration for her work and title of this painting. As Moishe Klutch writes in his own words, on March 23, 1900:

> Darling Tziviah, I am not guilty - we only have to ask God to compensate us. I must thank you for writing those golden words in your letter. Your beautiful thoughts - I don't know what to do with such great joy... You don't write enough to your betrothed. He tells you of all his human feelings and you say practically nothing. It gives me great pleasure just to see your beautiful handwriting. Please Tziviah, in your next letter, write a little more about how you feel... I will stop writing because it is already 2 A.M. Don't worry that I'm not asleep at this hour. When I am writing to you my love, I can go an entire night without sleep. As I write to you, pretend I am with you. I must part and bid Adieu my love...[92]

From these words, we can see how important this correspondence was to the artist's grandparents. The letters enabled Tsiviah and Moishe to stay strong in their resolve and to continue to have faith in each other in the hope that their lives would converge and bring them together once more.

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[89] Shulman 9.
[90] Shulman 9.
[91] Shulman 10.
[92] Shulman 10.

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor, (figure 10), is the fifth piece in Shulman's *In Our Memories Forever* series. This work measures 24" x 36" and is executed in oil on canvas. Once again, common visual themes can be found in this work linking it not only in terms of subject matter but also compositionally to the previous paintings. Here, the viewer is presented with an image based loosely on a photographic family portrait (figure 11) of Moishe Klutch, his wife, and two of their children - the eldest girl being the artist's aunt Annie and her baby sister, Rose. The four figures are placed from the center to the right hand side of the canvas. The children seem to be suspended in air in beautiful pink gowns. Annie's hair is tied with ribbon in her auburn curls and she holds a bouquet of yellow flowers. The family is seated in front of an old fashioned Singer sewing machine, the tool of Moishe's trade which is trimmed with the familiar symbol of fish. The background is Russian red once again, reminding us of the family's heritage. A Chanukah[93] candle burns brightly at the top of the sewing machine, where a label identifies it as belonging to the artist's grandfather.

As Shulman writes, "At home, I have the large silver scissors that my zaida used. I also have his weathered collapsible wooden measuring stick. The paint has worn away from the instruments of his trade, but not the memories."[94] The artist goes on to note that she has many recollections of being with her grandfather and watching him cut cloth in order to make custom suits. These are her most vivid memories of him. What she recalls the best is the figure of Moishe Klutch sitting in his ill-lit workroom, shinning a

[93] Chanukah is the Jewish festival of lights.
[94] Shulman 11.

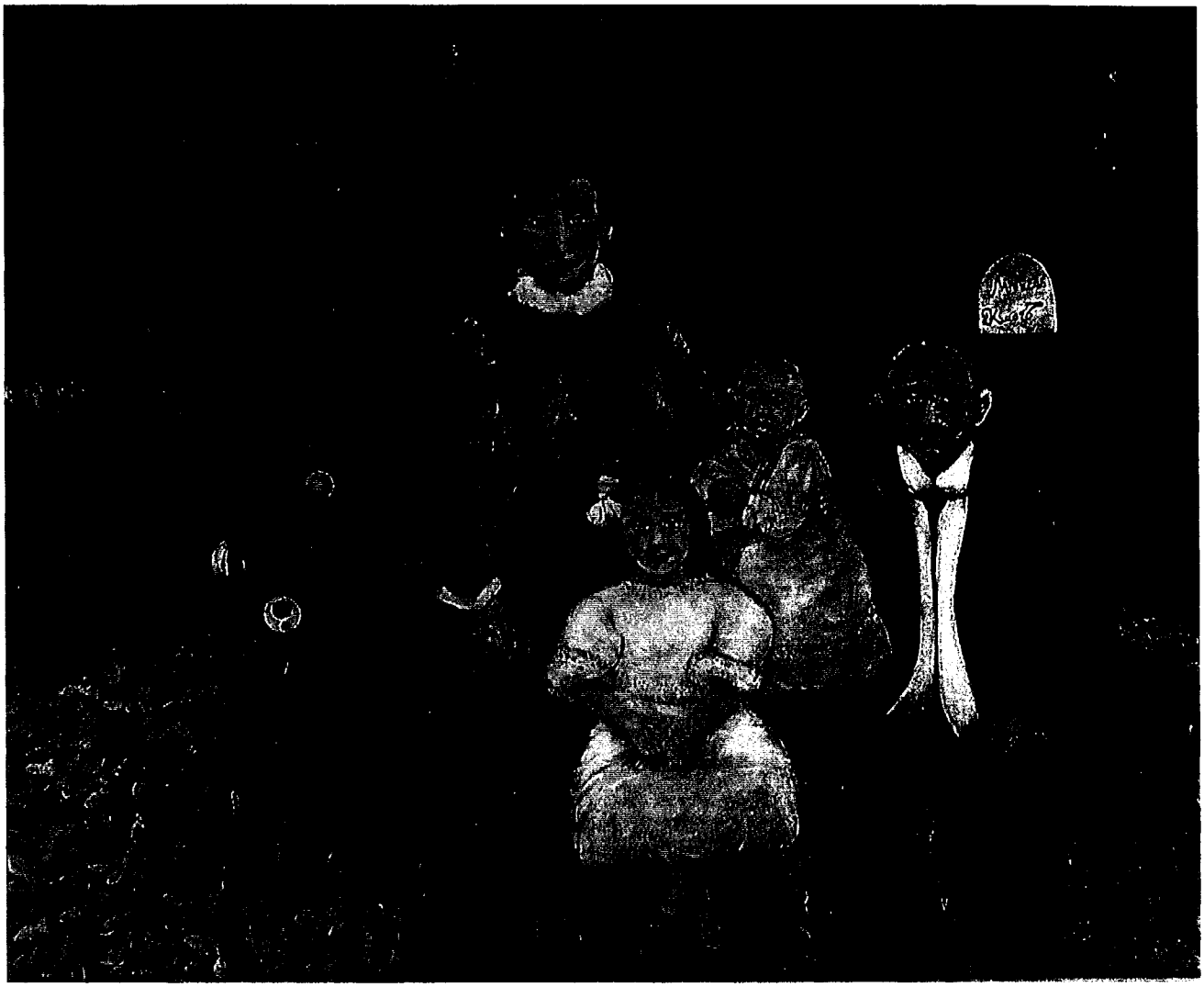

Figure 10 - *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor*

Figure 11 - Klutch family photograph with Moishe, Tziviah, Annie and Rose

bright lamp over the fabric he was using. Shulman goes on to note that her grandfather would customarily roll up his shirt sleeves which would be suspended with garters while he "directed the stitching of the needle over the heavy material..."[95] The painter continues by saying that "the well greased whirling black Singer sewing machine was humming noisily with every movement of the pedal. I remember the smell of oil. He was always so busy."[96]

Shulman notes that the pose of the figures is elegant in what is considered a "stoic postcard setting. Many immigrants sent photos in this postcard format to send back home to all their families. They wore their best clothes to always give the impression that they had a lot of nachas (good fortune), and in turn, their parents and families would be proud of them."[97] It was very important to Shulman's grandparents to project this image, for their families to know that they were thriving in the New Country. As the artist writes again, "This superficially helped ease the loneliness and longing their parents must have felt, at the long distance felt between them and their children. The families left behind in Belarus proudly showed these photos to all the friends and families."[98] In so doing, they were able to connect to those they could no longer physically behold and probably never would see again.

Once again, the artist explains the presence of her signature fish. In this painting, she explains, "...the fish are again icons for past and future generations. They are swimming away to new rivers and ponds, spawning new generations. My fish are also

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[95] Shulman 12.
[96] Shulman 12.
[97] Shulman 12.
[98] Shulman 12.

tears of joy and sadness running into the water. Tears for reclaiming my heritage."[99] As previously mentioned, on the sewing machine, Shulman has included a panel with her grandfather's name in Russian. A name, she writes, "he gave up to come to this country, that I want to be re-instated now. How difficult it must have been to erase his past heritage. The moment he set foot on this continent, he wrote back to his family as Hyman Silverman"[100] for fear of reprisals against his family for his escape. "His proud Russian name was hidden for a century, until now" she writes. On top of the sewing machine Shulman has placed a "celebration candle" instead of thread, "A Chanukah candle shinning bright in memory and signifying my own illumination of spirit in rediscovering my heritage."[101] A celebration for the man who wrote the following so beautifully to his beloved over a century ago:

> Dear Tziviah, Our sweet God will bring us together again soon.
> I am sending some sweets... I ask my dear God to make things
> only better - not worse...[102]

Here, Shulman has attempted to fulfill her grandfather's wishes through this work and series, to make things better in her own way by reclaiming her heritage in the name of her ancestors.

The Esplanade Street Shtetl

The Esplanade Street Shtetl, (figure 12), portrays Shulman's maternal grandparents at a much later stage in their life. This work is slightly smaller then the

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[99] Shulman 12.
[100] Shulman 12.
[101] Shulman 12.
[102] Shulman 12.

previous paintings and measures 24" x 36". It is also executed in oil on canvas. In this image, both of Shulman's grandparents are beautiful and elegant. Tziviah is portrayed again in a regal red gown but not the one of her youth. Her clasped hands clutch a beaded purse and her white hair is perfectly curled. To Tziviah's right, her husband stands dressed in an elegant tuxedo and bow tie, holding the envelope to one of their precious letters. As in *The Empress*, the painter's grandparents glow with a radiant golden aura surrounding them. Finally in this painting the figures occupy the same space, symbolic of their lives spent together at last. Both figures are centrally located in the foreground. In front of them, is the antique statue of a terrier, that remains today outside the house they shared. The ground upon which they stand is again filled with fish, and the background seems to be the inside of a barn.

As Shulman explains, "In the front of my Bubbie and Zaida's home on Esplanade street was a gray and white life-size statue of a terrier dog (figure 13). This dog is part of the history of this home"[103] hence, it's prominence in the painting. The artist explains that this statue became a favourite among children, grand-children and eventually, great grandchildren, who all "rode this pet" and delighted in the fact that it never ran away! In contrast to its permanence, Shulman explains that in the back of the house there arose a new kind of shtetl where stray cats could all find homes and handouts. "My bubbie gave them milk"[104] and fish and chicken and one cat, whom Shulman recalls as Minew, was even allowed to enter inside the house. "They loved my grandmother. The backyard was an enclosed hovel that consisted of a garage that once was a barn for horses... There

[103] Shulman 13.
[104] Shulman 13.

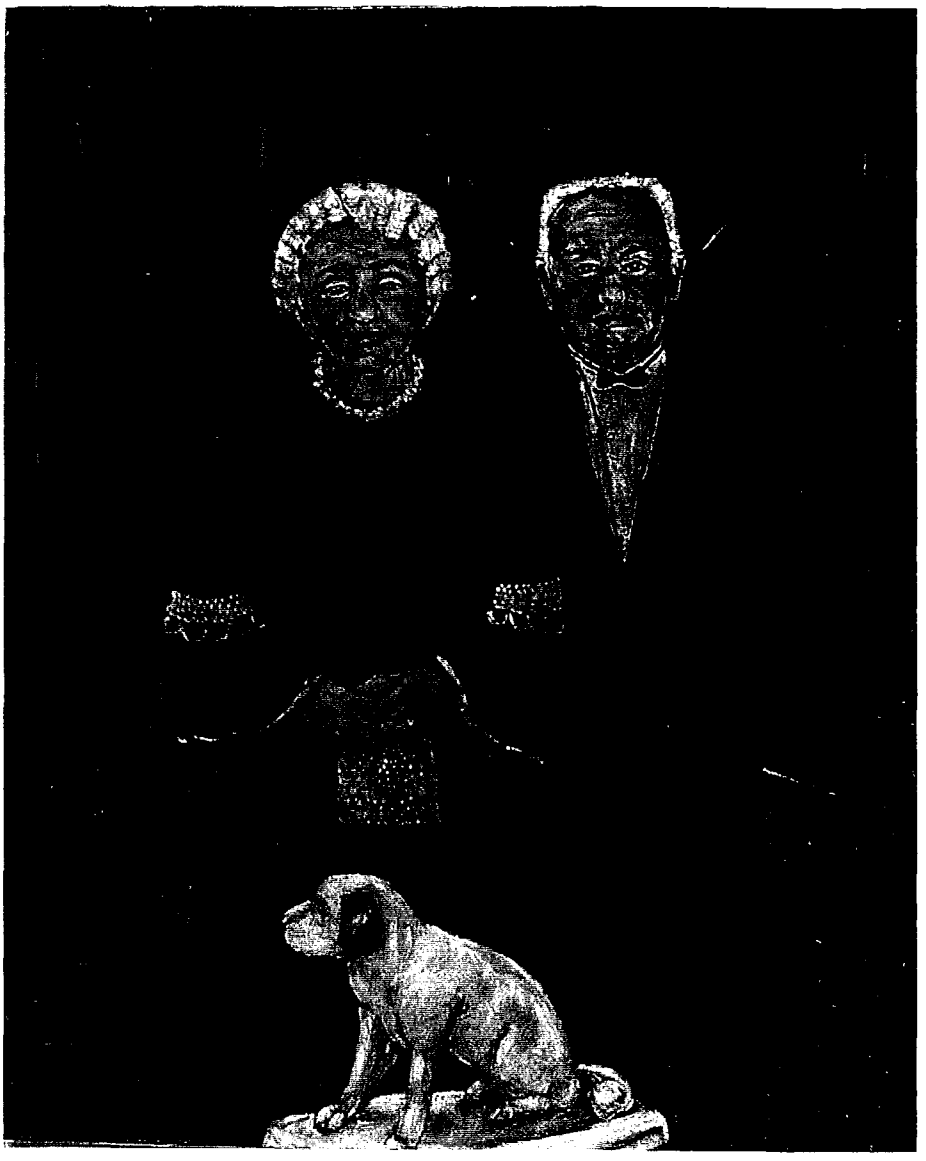

Figure 12 - *The Esplande Street Shtetl*

Figure 13 - Photograph of Terrier Statue with the artist's brother, Robert

was a whole world of creatures living in the back."[105] The artist goes on to describe how her grandparents owned this house that actually consisted of a triplex with "balconies layered above the space."[106] As she writes, "Clothes were hanging down from different floors, and people would scream down to each other. This space was also used to Kosher the chickens… As a six-year-old, I witnessed some of the most strange and exciting events of my childhood."[107]

Shulman goes on to describe the condition of her grandparents in this portrait. "My grandparents are aged in this painting," she writes, "This is the way I loved and remembered then. This painting made me melancholy unlike my other works where I depicted them at earlier ages ."[108] She continues in saying that when she painted Moishe and Tziviah as young adults, the artist herself was far removed from the stories of their youth. But here, at this age, she had her own memories of them which "makes my heart ache."[109] "I am sad," she writes, "because in 1958 they both passed on and I relive this feeling in my painting. That was the first time in my life a blanket of darkness fell through the hearts of my family."[110]

Shulman goes on to further comment on the composition. "In this painting," she begins, "my grandparents are standing behind the statue of the dog becoming part of the monument, a memorial to my Jewish-Russian heritage… becoming immortalized. They are majestically garbed in formal clothes."[111] The artist goes on to note that

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[105] Shulman 13.
[106] Shulman 13.
[107] Shulman 13.
[108] Shulman 13-14.
[109] Shulman 14.
[110] Shulman 14.

the Russian red gown, again a symbol of her grandmother's birth place, adds to her "stately persona" and that both figures are standing on a "calm and shimmering ocean floor. This is the water that brought them to America so long ago. The fish are subtle backgrounds."[112] Once again, this refers to the past, present and future of all things and generations that would follow these souls as they passed on into another realm. "They [the fish] are not the focus, but the linking alphabet in all my works. The backdrop is the wooden fence that hid their intimate lives. This wooden enclosure, reminiscent of a memory of the shtetls left behind in Belarus."[113] Furthermore, Shulman adds, that in this portrait, her grandmother is holding the pink crocheted purse that Annie had given her before her death. As we now know, this is an allusion to the great gift of these beautiful letters that enabled the artist to create this series. Shulman's grandfather, as previously noted, is holding one of the envelopes. "Who could imagine the richness of this gift from my grandparents? My experience with them has gone full circle. This is the end of their lives, but the story of their life lives on forever."[114]

Hi My Name is Hymie Silverman

The next piece in Shulman's series is entitled, *Hi My Name is Hymie Silverman*, (figure 14). The size of this painting is 24" x 36' and is an oil on canvas. In this piece, the artist's grandfather is seen at the moment of his arrival in North America. The images show a tired but confident, handsome young man, suitcases in hand. Behind him

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[111] Shulman 14.
[112] Shulman 14.
[113] Shulman 14.
[114] Shulman 14.

there is a dark black road leading out of the canvas into the viewer's space. The red streets of Russia appear but do not seem to follow him forward. The Statue of Liberty appears in the upper right hand corner and American flags sway from great imposing structures on either side.

As Shulman writes, her grandfather left Liverpool on "Tuesday, August 21st, 1900 and sailed to Montreal."[115] After a long and arduous voyage, he arrived at the port with his brother-in-law to be, armed only with nine dollars between them and a new identity: as the passenger manifest attests, "Passenger #90 Kaplan Maron, 23 and Passenger # 91, Meishe Maron, 20."[116] They were known as tailors from Russia. Shulman's grandfather employed the use of another name for fear of being captured by the Russian army. He was terrified that his family would be punished for his escape. During the course of her research, Shulman discovered a piece of history that proved most enlightening. She had originally believed from the SS Montfort's manifest, that Moishe had originally stopped in New York, hence her depiction of his arrival in the United States. However, much after completing this painting, new information was brought to light. Apparently, they had come to Montreal first, later leaving for a brief stay in the Big Apple, but returning to Canada. Again, these two cities are identified with each other for the artist, as in her earlier work, *Metamorphosis*. As she writes, "The same feelings though would apply to Montreal. They [Klutch and Maron] spent time in both cities, in fact they awaited the arrival of their brides from Russia at Castle Garden in New York City."[117] Shulman also notes that Silverman's

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[115] Shulman 15.
[116] Shulman 15.
[117] Shulman 16.

Figure 14 - *Hi, My Name is Hymie Silverman*

name change also probably occurred in New York, hence her depiction of that city is still applicable. As she comments once more, "Imagine the awe and wonderment when he first stood on the soil of this free land amidst the largeness of New York. At least that's what I thought. In this painting, I wanted to show the buildings of New York, overwhelming my grandfather, alone, strolling down the wide avenues downtown."[118] Shulman continues to add that she truly wanted to capture what it must have been like for Moishe to feel these sensations. "With his suitcases and an address scribbled on a piece of paper given to him... [which is placed in his hand]," she comments, "he embarks on his great adventure. Confident, yet in awe. In his suitcases he carries all his precious memories from home. All his treasured photos and letters that will keep him strong until his loved ones can join him."[119]

Shulman also writes that her palette in this work was quite purposeful. For her, the overwhelming presence of brown described the portrait of an immigrant, young and slightly bewildered by the newness of this glimmering city. "The statue of Liberty that welcomed him only hours ago, is now waving him on to his future. He is in a new and modern world,"[120] Shulman writes. Again, the red sidewalks are symbolic of Russia, here opening up as in the Exodus of the Bible, like Moses, Moishe is being led to freedom.

Forget-Me-Not

The second to last piece in the series to date deals with the artist's paternal grandparents. *Forget-Me-Not*, (figure 15), measures 24" x 36" and is also an oil on

[118] Shulman 16.
[119] Shulman 16.
[120] Shulman 16.

canvas. The painting is similar compositionally to *Adieu My Beloved* but very different in it's content. In this work, the figures of Shulman's paternal grandparents are seen, standing side by side in a ¾ length view, while a large green transparent fish swims across the middle of the canvas. Within the fish, a child's hand seems to reach up into a swimming school of multicoloured creatures. The strong red hue of the foreground moves upward into the female figure's clothing. Within her dress is a baby carriage and pastel coloured fish that swim up and down the canvas. Both figures look lovingly out of the canvas at the viewer.

Again, this piece is loosely based on a sepia family photograph (figure 16) depicting the artist's grandparents and their three children, including her father and aunts. As Shulman writes of this piece, "This work is a tribute to my paternal grandparents... As I was paying homage to my maternal grandparents through my series of paintings, I started to feel the need to paint my father's parents."[121] The only problem, she found, that she did not have a very strong connection to them. "I have wonderful memories of my maternal grandparents," Shulman writes, but none of her paternal.[122] The artist notes that she only had one photograph of her grandmother, as she had passed away when her father was only twelve. The artist discloses that she is actually her paternal grandfather's namesake and since he had passed away only in 1951, there were more existing materials and photographs to examine.[123] "In an attempt to understand my grandmother," the artist writes, "I felt compelled to research her background. I

[121] Shulman 19.
[122] Shulman 19.
[123] Shulman 19.

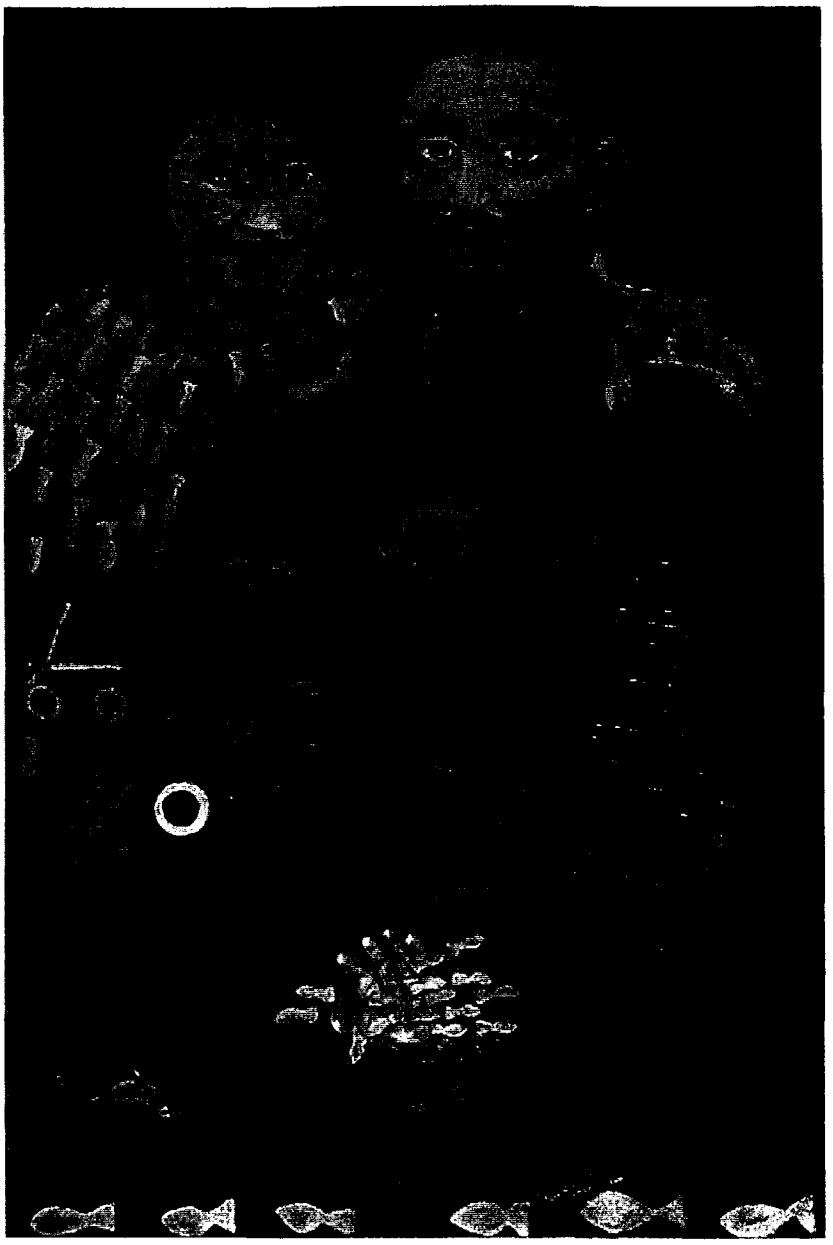

Figure 15 - *Forget-Me-Not*

Figure 16 - Shulman family photograph with the artist's grandparents, Samuel and Rochel, her father, Benjamin and aunts, Rose and Jenny

inquired and received copies of her burial certificate and went to visit her at the cemetery. It was a very emotional experience."[124] Shulman discovered that her grandmother's grave was in an older section of the larger Jewish cemetery in Montreal. It appeared to her, and her mother who accompanied her there, that this area was rarely visited as there were "no stones on any of these graves."[125] I must admit, this was a beautiful section, quiet and very peaceful. As I came closer, I noticed a single blue flower on the bed of her grave - a "forget-me-not."[126] Shulman describes how she planted a few pink geraniums and introduced herself and her mother to the spirit of her grandmother. The artist wanted to assure her that she did not forget her, that she was part of her life and she endeavored to find out everything she could about her. After months of fruitless leads, Shulman finally found out that her grandmother's name had been changed from Rochel Braunriet to Rochel Brown-Shulman, and that she had been born in Kursenai, Lithuania. Shulman could now further explore her portrait.

"This portrait reflects the essence of my grandparents," the artist writes, "...My bubbie is wearing a rich dress laden with fish... The fish in this painting reflect memory."[127] The blue and white fish combine different types of memory, both new and old. Rochel Baurinet Shulman's fish shawl is embracing the artist's grandfather, gently and lovingly caressing his shoulder. "My Zaida," she writes, "is dressed in a military-like uniform. He is very regal and formal. Some fish are military lapels. In reality, he ran away

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[124] Shulman 19.
[125] It is a Jewish custom to place stones on the on the tombstones of the dead to mark the presence of visitors.
[126] Shulman 19.
[127] Shulman 20.

from the army and arrived in Montreal [from Belarus] about 1905. He was considered a free thinker, so his uniform is just an illusion, yet depicting strong beliefs and courage."[128] The railroad in the right hand side of his jacket is, according to the artist, symbolic of her grandfather's escape from persecution."[129] The baby carriage is representative of a child the Shulman's lost as he had died at two-years-old of pneumonia. The hand in the green fish represents another baby who took his mother Rochel's life as they both passed away as she was giving birth to him. "His [the baby's] hand is letting fish memories dissipate into the quantum dimension. They are manifesting new histories for future generations to remember."[130] As the artist writes, these figures plead with us not to forget them. Shulman notes, "The large green fish is my multi-layered vehicle of peace and love of memories from one generation to another. From one plane to another... I have written my family names and shtetls [on the bottom of the fish] so all will know."[131] Again, Shulman uses red to manifest a representation of Russia and the "brilliance that it has brought to my heritage. The blue striped fish swimming against the current is I, in my quest for knowledge and soul searching throughout time."[132]

Fish Tree

The final painting in this cycle of nine works is entitled *Fish Tree* (figure 17). This painting is an oil on canvas and it's dimensions are 24" x 36." Shulman notes in her own writings that the number nine is very important for her, symbolizing "completion and

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[128] Shulman 20.
[129] Shulman 20.
[130] Shulman 20.
[131] Shulman 20.
[132] Shulman 20.

achievement. I have gone full circle, and can go no further in these works."[133] For the artist, nine represents a period of gestation which has come to fruition with the conclusion of her series.

In this composition, Shulman's mystical fish icon appears once more as the central focus of the canvas. Painted in green hues with bright red lips, eyes, and scales, the palette of the large creature remains consistent with the other works in the series. In the middle of the fish itself, a family tree has been depicted out of smaller multicoloured fish. At the top left hand corner, the artist's parents are portrayed, surrounded by golden auras, like those seen earlier in such works as *The Esplanade Street Shtetl.* In the upper right hand corner, twin buildings are alluded to with two fish crashing into them on either side. At the bottom of the right hand corner is a depiction of the artist herself. Her clothes are painted in deep sea blues and her hair has become constructed from fish that flow in to the water surrounding the bottom of the painting.

As Shulman writes, "I chose to depict my family tree in the form of tiny fish..." that for the artist form the scales of her larger "fish of life."[134] These scales serve to protect "the inner core of my legacy depicting my direct ancestral line of generations. My ancestors are represented from the early 1800s to my current family of the year 2002."[135] The artist explains that after years of researching her family history, it was unnecessary to physically name each fish for every member of the family as she had committed each person to memory long ago and chose to represent them here

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[133] Shulman 21.
[134] Shulman 21.
[135] Shulman 21.

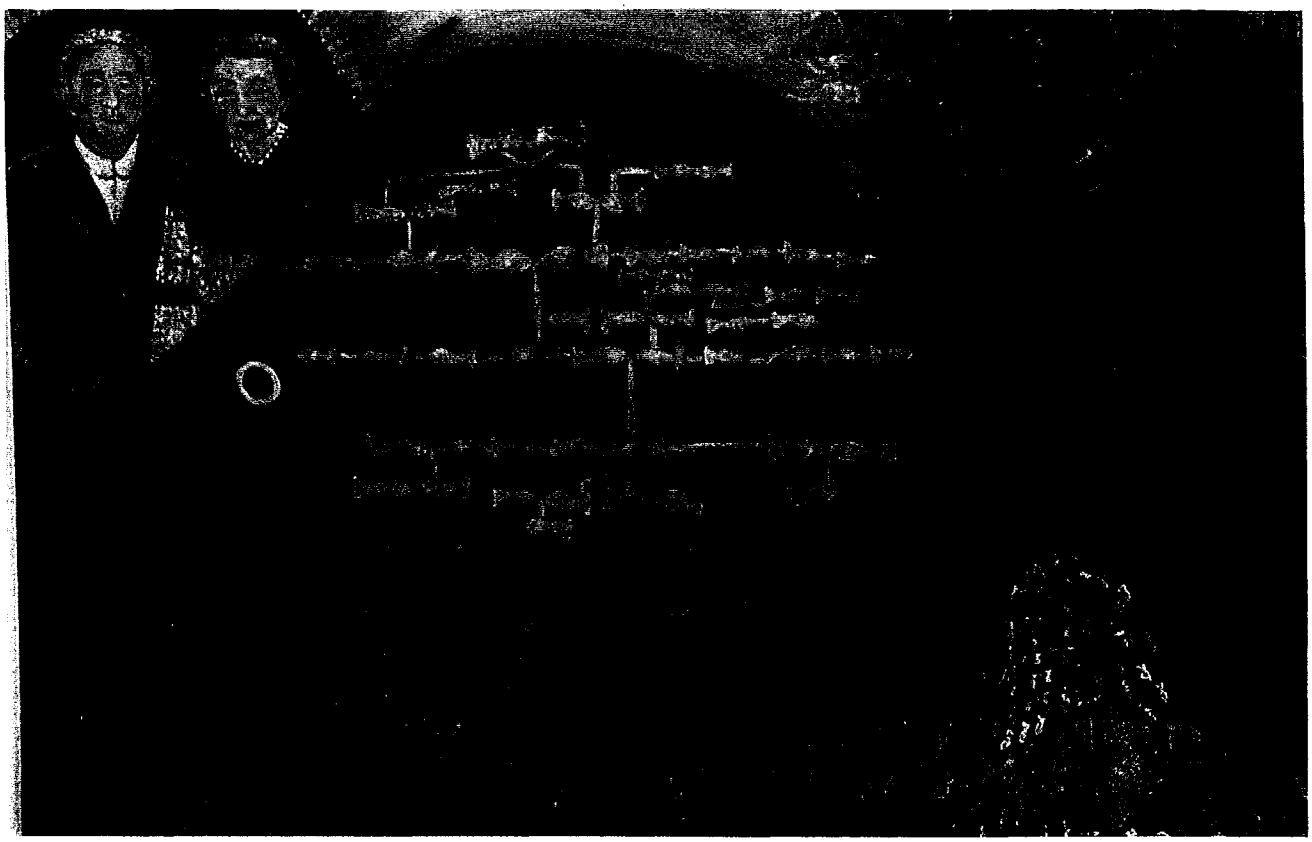

Figure 17 - *Fish Tree*

as part of the whole picture without individuating them. Finally, Shulman writes, she felt it was appropriate to paint a depiction of herself as well as her parents in this final piece. "My parents Benjamin Shulman... and Lillian Shulman[136] ... have been the integral comfort behind my quest for my ancestors."[137] The artist has assigned her parents a "place of honour" in the upper left hand corner of the piece because for her, they have been an unending source of guidance and strength on her long journey of discovery. "They are above me," Shulman writes, "since I have always looked up to them for encouragement... I am below delving into the mysteries of the past."[138]

The artist discusses another important influence on this last work: the horrific attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001. As she writes, "These tragedies affected my creative flow and in order to continue [painting] I had to incorporate this important moment in time."[139] Shulman notes how in being a guardian of her past, she is equally concerned with how such events will impact future generations. After much struggling with whether or not to include these events in her work, she could not deny how important it was to do so. For this reason, Shulman has included the towers as depicted in the background of the right hand corner, overwhelmed by clouds of smoke, being attacked by air in the form of her symbolic fish. As well, she contends that her "Fish of Life" in the center of the painting is now dressed in a military uniform "guarding the harbours of New York and Montreal."[140] Furthermore, Shulman writes that this horror

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[136] Benjamin Shulman is the son of Samuel Shulman and Rochel Braunriet and Lillian Shulman is the daughter of Moishe Klutch (Hyman Silverman) and Tziviah Maron.
[137] Shulman 21-22.
[138] Shulman 22.
[139] Shulman 22.
[140] Shulman 22.

underscores the reason her grandparents fled Europe: in order to live in a free and democratic society without fear of persecution for who or what we are. How could this happen over one hundred years later? How far have we really come?

So how are these memories deployed in the works? How does autobiographical memory aid the conflation of first and second hand experiences? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the following analysis in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three: The Representation of Memory

Susan Shulman's *In Our Memories Forever* series of nine paintings is intimately inscribed by the process of memory. For the artist, each image is an articulation of primary experience and autobiographical memory types. After reviewing current theories of memory in Chapter One and the works themselves in Chapter Two, the present discussion will serve to demonstrate how the construct of memory is deployed in the paintings. In the artist's work, primary and secondary experiences conflate in order to reconstruct memory. Such an amalgamation is made possible with the use of autobiographical recollections. This type of memory allows for the artist to incorporate semblances of her ancestors gleaned from photographs, their own words and her own experiences of them into powerful images. The paintings are constructed compositions just as autobiographical memory is in itself a product of reconstruction. It also seems highly relevant to consider the issue of authenticity as raised by the works. Another way in which the cycle of paintings utilize memory is in its engaging of the process of collective memory. Not only do the paintings serve to remember for the artist alone but also provide her family, peers and society at large with an intriguing look at the past.

Reconstruction: First and Second Hand Memories

So how is the work about memory? How does cognitive memory theory enable us to understand what is at play in Shulman's paintings? Memory is deployed in the artist's cycle of nine works through reconstructed images. These depictions are made visible through Shulman's interweaving of the figures of her ancestry, the experiences she gleans through their own letters and her rich iconography that mesh together in her works.

This reconstruction occurs through the use of the autobiographical memory type. As seen in Chapter One, there has been a significant shift in current concepts of memory from a retention to construction theory. As expressed by Alan D. Baddeley, it is a long standing belief that memories are stored be it for short or long periods of time. However, the existence of autobiographical memory greatly complexifies this notion. According to Martin Conway, this aforementioned memory type relies on several sources of information that are processed through individual interpretation. In this regard, memories are no longer merely *retained* in storage but can be actively *constructed.* What needs to be understood to properly comprehend how the works deploy memory is how is this blending of experiences from different sources at play in the works? How does this construction function and how by extension does it serve to question authenticity? In order to illuminate these key questions in this section, I will examine specific elements in four of the nine paintings. I will also address how many of Shulman's sources are archival photographs and how this relates to the idea of constructed memory while re-defining the boundaries of authenticity.

As seen in such works as *The Empress*, Tsiviah Maron, the artist's grandmother, is depicted as a young woman occupying ¾ of the canvas space. She is elegantly dressed in a red velvet jacket with Shulman's fish represented as metaphors of genealogy. They are embroidered on her lapels and in her hair. She gazes out of the canvas but not directly at the viewer. Her thoughts are obviously turned to the shadowy figure of her beloved in the upper left hand corner. On a sacred prayer shawl Moishe Klutch is in his military garb, present in his absence in his betrothed's world. Clearly, this image is made possible by

reconstructing memory from primary and secondary sources. This confluency is articulated in the concept of autobiographical memory. While Shulman certainly does have her own recollections of her grandmother and grandfather from her childhood, she "interprets" them in relation to her grandparents' own experiences as documented in the archive. With its ability to assemble memories gathered from an individual's experience and those gleaned through secondary means, autobiographical memory (i.e. personal and flashbulb) allow the viewer to understand how memory is being reconstructed in the images. The artist did not know her grandmother as a young woman yet is able to reproduce her state of longing for her husband-to-be through the information she derives from their correspondence. As seen in figure 5, the artist's young grandmother is clearly depicted in a photograph, frozen in a moment in time which unbeknownst to her would serve as the basis for her granddaughter's painting. According to Aleida Assmann, the very term flashbulb memory conjures up metaphoric links to the art of photography. For the scholar, photographs can be seen as unable to isolate a moment in time yet still serving to retain "... an imprint of it."[141] For Edmund Blair Bolles, another important voice in the memory field, this 'imprint' is not so much for the use of retrieval as it is construction.[142] Like Assmann, Bolles contends that photography is a form of preservation of particular moments. It would appear that this shift from retention to construction theories of memory activates the operation of flashbulb memory in Shulman's works. To an even larger extent, this enables the functioning of personal memory. But how? Each of

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[141] Assmann

[142] Edmund Blair Bolles, *Remembering and Forgetting: An Inquiry into the Nature of Memory* (New York: Walker and Company, 1988) xii.

these sub-sets of autobiography draws on vicarious stimuli to inform the memory of an individual. But what separates personal memory from its counterpart is its construction of memory based on images.

David Pillemer writes that personal memory "approximated a 'reliving' of the individual phenomenal experience."[143] Therefore the individual processes the event as if it were directly experienced by them even if it was done so only through vicarious means. This leads to people having "access to autobiographical facts without having access to the corresponding personal memory."[144] Such is the operative function of photography in Shulman's work. Through the comprehensive study of the historical images compiled in her family archive the artist is able to depict events in time she could not possibly have experienced. In such works as *The Empress*, the translation from photograph to painting underscores the deployment of reconstruction. In the aforementioned work, the figure of Tziviah has been metamorphosed from a sepia moment frozen in time to a vibrant, majestic figure. Shulman has projected the strong red hue onto her grandmother's jacket and recreates the delicate brocade as strands of fish. Although the painting bears a faithful resemblance to the photograph, Tziviah's gaze and expression have been slightly altered. The wide eyes of the canvas seem more pained and troubled as if the figure in Shulman's painting, although bearing a likeness to the young woman in the photograph, is far more aware of the difficulties that lie ahead of her in the future. This temporal dialogue between an image of the past (i.e. Tziviah's photograph as a young woman) and the present (i.e. the artist's *interpretation* of the past in a present context) allows

[143] Pillemer 237.
[144] Pillemer 237.

for the amalgamation of several moments in time within the same image. Hence, Tziviah is at once reconstructed from the past yet deployed in a completely new fashion. The memory captured of her in the photograph has been transformed through the process of autobiographical memory.

Photographic references further serve to inform the works by supplying the artist with details about the experiences of her grandparents. In his book, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes provides a reading of a photograph by William Klein that serves to understand the gleaning of historical details through archival means. In the work *Mayday 1959*, Barthes discusses how the viewer can assess "how Russians dress (which after all I don't know): I note a boy's big cloth cap, another's necktie... I can enter still further into such details..."[145] These details are the very things that allow the author to experience a place in time he has not, just as the details gleaned through photographs of Shulman's grandparents allow her to reconstruct memory in the series. How else could Shulman glean the details of Tziviah's dress, her hair, her look. It is through the essence of photography that the memory of Shulman's grandmother's state of being and actual appearance can be utilized in the painting.

Memory is similarly explored through the construction of the past through the artist's own recollection and those gleaned through secondary means in *Adieu My Beloved.* The physical distance experienced by Shulman's grandparents at the time of Moishe's escape to North America is articulated in the composition itself. The great black fish which seems to have swallowed Moishe whole is centrally located in the painting.

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[145] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) 30.

Inside of it, the artist's grandfather ponders over his letters to his bride and reflects on his own loneliness. He looks out of the canvas toward the left, unaware of his beloved behind him or of the viewer. Below him, the Statue of Liberty shimmers in the distance, representing the fate that awaits him. Tziviah's hair and arm move into Moishe's space as she transcends their separateness by lowering a letter into the body of the great fish. She catches the viewer's gaze and addresses us in her longing. Again, the plethora of green fish coalesce in the body of the main figure, symbolizing the generations that will come of this lineage. In this image, the artist constructs memory in several ways. Shulman evokes the experience of her grandparents' physical separation from each other in the distance of the figures in the composition. They do not make contact with each other save through their correspondence as depicted in the form of their letters. The fact that Tziviah penetrates the space occupied by the black fish intimates the connection shared by herself and Moishe that cannot be eradicated despite their different locations. As well, the image of New York as manifested through Shulman's inclusion of the Statue of Liberty denotes their future that is to come. In essence, two levels of memory are being evoked in the image: that of Shulman's grandparents and the artist's own. It is Tziviah's and Moishe's life that are strewn across the picture plane but made visible only through their granddaughter's composition. Furthermore, these "memories" are made accessible for the artist through vicarious sources of reference. In this regard, autobiographical memory can be seen as aiding the viewer in comprehending the process of memory inscribed in *Adieu My Beloved.* As specifically alluded to in the painting, it was through letters and correspondence that Tziviah and Moishe communicated their longing for each other. It

would be these very words that would provide their descendants with a glimpse into their lives. Shulman has commented that the letters she discovered in the archive conjured up tremendous feeling within her of sympathy for her grandparents' situation. She often wondered what it would be like to leave one's home, family, community and country to seek out a better life.[146] It is the operation of flashbulb memory that permits Shulman to glean this information concerning her grandparents' situation in order to inform her image.

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor is another work in the series in which two levels of memory transpire. The first is invoked by Moishe Klutch's own recollections of family, his trade and reminiscences of Russia and shtetl life. The second level on which these occur are through his granddaughter's conflation of Moishe and Tziviah's words and symbols of their life together. In this image, the Singer sewing machine that Shulman's grandfather utilized in his work has taken on a level of prominence in the center of the canvas. It creates a platform on which Moishe, Tziviah and two of their children are placed, somewhat precariously. It is as if they are posing for a photograph. Again, the fish of generations to come are flowing in the watery ground that surrounds the figures. Such an event did in fact transpire. A family photograph that survives today as seen in figure 11 depicts Moishe and his wife and children sitting for a "postcard" photograph. Ultimately, this image would be sent back to Russia for all to see. In these pictures, families would put on their best attire so that their loved ones in the "old country" would assume that they were prosperous and thriving, even though this was not always the case. As seen in *The Empress*, a significant metamorphosis has transpired in this image from it's original form

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[146] Shulman 10.

as a photograph to the current painting. Shulman has faithfully extracted the family portraits but not without changed elements. Like in *The Empress*, Tziviah's gaze has shifted from addressing the viewer directly to looking out toward the right hand side of the picture plane. Moishe's glance has also refocused from being directly at the spectator in the photo to the right side of the canvas as well. Only the gaze of the children seems to remain consistent. Perhaps in this shifting of attention on the part of Shulman's grandparents they are symbolically acknowledging their past selves and past lives in Russia before they became transformed as new incarnations of memory within the work. Even so, the figures have not fully escaped their photographic essences. Even in their transformation as elements of the artist's reconstruction, they still pose as if for the camera, still fixed as in a moment in time. This archival element seems to create an overall collage effect in the painting which is further articulated in Shulman's inclusion of Moishe's Singer sewing machine. The regal chair upon which Moishe sits in the photograph has been replaced by this larger-than-life image of his trade. It is as if the family has been transposed onto it for support, as it would have been the means through which Moishe was employed. Through this conflation, multiple moments of memory are combined within a single image.

Moishe is remembered not only in the depiction of his figure but also in his signature placed on the upper right hand corner of the sewing machine. It is as if he is "signing" the work along with his granddaughter, a significant acknowledgment of his own participation in the evocation of memory in the painting and the series as a whole. By attributing this role to her grandfather, Shulman allows for her ancestry to actively

participate in the construction of her cycle not only through her own conflation but with the sharing of their own experiences. In the background of the painting, Shulman's Russian red has returned inciting a specific reference to her grandparents' homeland. This leit motif is carried through each work as a reminder of the home her ancestry once knew and had to abandon. Hence, even through her palette, Shulman induces memorial work.

The process of construction that is utilized in the work through the transformation that occurs from photograph to painting can be seen as raising important questions for the issue of authenticity. If the series as a whole is based on actual archives, can the images then be seen as authentic? If so, how does this relate to the conflation that occurs in autobiographical memory? As noted in Chapter One, Aleida Assmann cites how during the 1970's and 80's memory was finally acknowledged as unstable and malleable. Given this shift in understanding from retention to construction theory, it became understood that memory can be shaped by factors outside of the self experience as they impact the individual. Thus, the imperfection of memory that allows for the interpretation of events solidifies the deployment of memory that is occurring in the work. The temporal amalgamation of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor* is made possible by this very area of contention in memory studies. Using various sources of memory based in such factual accounts such as photographs and archival letters, Shulman has transgressed the past by inscribing it in her images in the present.

But what if the artist did not possess first hand memories at all? What if memory was strictly deployed through secondary means? The eighth painting in the series entitled *Forget-Me-Not* serves to elucidate this notion of authenticity. This is the only work in the

In Our Memories Forever series by Shulman that depicts her paternal grandparents. This painting was extremely difficult for the artist to undertake as she never had the opportunity to know either her father's mother who passed away in 1925 or her grandfather who died a year before her birth. The artist is his namesake. In this image, Shulman embodies memory in the form of her symbolic fish. "The blue fish are vivid memories," she writes, "as opposed to the white, ghost-like fish that are symbolic of forgotten memories."[147] Even the double entendre of the title of the work deploys memory: "Forget-Me-Not" Shulman's ancestors proclaim, almost as if they are spurring the artist on to create her painting in order for them to exist in the here and now and to be known by future generations. The baby carriage centrally placed on the left hand side of the canvas recalls one of Shulman's grandparents' sons, Oliver, who died of pneumonia at the age of two. In the recurring motif of the central green fish, another child's hand reaches up, seemingly releasing more multicoloured fish. Here, Shulman evokes the memory of Rochel's own death as she passed away in childbirth giving life to the baby within the fish who simultaneously died. As with Moishe's signature in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor*, Shulman has also included text in this image to recall her family names and their shtetls. These words are diligently inscribed on the bottom fin of the central fish. Whereas in *Alone at the Train Station* the railroad serves to remind us of how Moishe Klutch and his brother-in-law were being taken away from their families in order to fulfill their military service, the train tracks in this image function to recall specific events a bit differently. The railroad's presence in Shulman's grandfather's coat symbolize his means

[147] Shulman 20.

of escape from the persecution he suffered in Belarus.

So how is this work created? The details about the lives of Shulman's paternal grandparents were gleaned through elaborate research. The artist took it upon herself to assemble family photographs, telegrams and death certificates that were exceedingly difficult to find given the fact that Rochel's family name had been changed. As with *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor* and *The Empress* secondary sources of experience do conflate in order to produce this image of memory. Perhaps, in this instance, memory need not "....behave like the hard disk of your computer," according to Cornelius Holtorf, professor of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge writes, maybe it need not be "...always accurate..."[148] According to Holtorf, the fallibility of memory allows for one certainty: that the past can be altered.[149] This *alteration* is the very thing that permits the conflation of memory in the work. It is the very nature of autobiographical memories that permits paintings such as *Forget-Me-Not* to exist as they combine factual archival research with a constructed image infused by memory by the artist.

Reconstruction is a complex process that is the underlying operative function of the *In Our Memories Forever* series. As seen in such works as *The Empress*, *Adieu My Beloved*, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor* and *Forget-Me-Not*, memory is constructed through the artist's use of events and experiences gleaned vicariously through photographic images and the text of the archive. The photographs are transformed in

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[148] Cornelius Holtorf, "Social Memory" <http://citd.scar.utoronto.ca/CITDPress/holtorf/2.7.html> January 2002.
[149] Holtorf.

their metamorphosis into painted canvases. In their new identities, the subjects of the works push the boundaries of authenticity and serve to recall the past.

Going Beyond Autobiography: Collective Remembering

Exodus is an image of confrontation. The second painting in Shulman's *In Our Memories Forever* series deals with memory in an interesting and decisively different way from such works as *The Empress*, *Adieu My Beloved*, and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor*. Whereas these aforementioned paintings serve to reconstruct a personalized image of Shulman's grandparents and family members, *Exodus* is the only painting in the cycle that does not depict the artist's ancestry directly. Instead, the fragmented picture plane produces a composition that remembers the social and political strife undergone by the artist's family. It is as if the painter has transcended her own genealogy's experience in order to globally situate history itself. The purpose of the present section is to show how Shulman's memorial paintings not only reconstruct memory for the artist but also for the collective. In *Exodus*, the three males figures arrest the viewer in their uncanny and almost frightening appearance. These three men have tabs on various points of their bodies denoting the shape of cut-out dolls. They are placed in a strange and forbidding environment. The red ground familiar to the other works in its evocation of Russia appears once again in two strips that seem to divide the picture plane. The figure to the extreme left is firmly planted on the Russia red soil. His look is troubled and his body is covered in multicoloured fish that swim all over his body. The turbulent sense about this figure seems juxtaposed against his stoicism. His firm entrenchment in the red ground

seems to denote a type of acceptance of the condition from which he suffers. This can be regarded as evoking the experience of those such as Shulman's grandparents and the alienation they encountered under the cruelty of the Russian regime. The central figure in the work seems caught in the red soil as well but the fish energy within him is less disturbing then his counterpart to his left. The only figure that seems to escape the ground is the male on the extreme left. While the second man begins to dig out of his entrenchment, the figure to his left floats to the side, his feet unencumbered. In this respect, the various stages of what Shulman's grandparents would have had to go through in order to escape is played out in the transformations these figures undergo. Undertaking the necessary psychological steps to leave one's family, home and country behind could be understood in the three figures. The man at the extreme right is immersed in his homeland and knows that he must flee in order to be free although he cannot move. The second figure is less afraid as seen by the fish becoming calmer and his nearing the edge of the red ground while the last figure has freed himself completely and stands where the sun shines in the composition, as opposed to the first figure who is shadowed in darkness.

This painting transcends the boundaries of individual memory in order to evoke the category as proposed by Maurice Halbwachs of "collective memory" or remembering for the group. This transpires in the universality of the image. By not including the specific features of her grandparents, Shulman has contrived a painting that goes beyond the personal to the universal. As the art critic Lynne Cooke writes, the experience of autobiographical memories inform the work of contemporary artists who hope to "forge a

richer, broader, collective biography."[150] This *collective* is represented in the work through the representation of the three figures. In their anonymity, they inscribe the experience not only of Shulman's grandparents but of the Russian Jewish community at large. In this regard, Shulman's painting remembers for those it evokes and acts as a didactic instruction for its large viewership being society itself.

Halbwachs explains that the moment a child begins to inquire about the meaning of the world exterior to himself, it "can be said that he thinks in common with others."[151] That is to say a child is aware of the communal influence and his role as a member of the group to which he belongs. As a function of collective memory, Halbwachs notes that the individual can supersede their desire to strictly retain remembrances as they pertain to the self. [152] In his discussion, the sociologist also clarifies how collective memories provide the group with the ability to recognize itself through time and images.[153] This shift in consciousness for the child can be seen in Shulman's style itself. Her almost naïve bold figures serve to make her ancestors into larger then life figures as conflated in the loving eyes of a child. This is clearly illustrated in such works as *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor* as the imposing structure of the sewing machine on the figures serves to accentuate her fondest childhood memories of her grandfather. He is identifiable through the memories of his profession as a tailor which serves for Moishe's granddaughter to create an open dialogue with the past. In this regard, Shulman's paintings become the

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[150] Lynne Cooke, "The Site of Memory," *Doubletake: Collective Memory & Current Art* (London: The South Bank Centre/Parkett, 1992) 39.
[151] Halbwachs 60.
[152] Halbwachs 50.
[153] Halbwachs 86.

guardians of eras gone by. This is brought to light through their amalgamation with what James E. Young, professor of English and Jewish studies at the University of Massachusetts would call a "collected" past.[154] Young suggests that the only way in which societies can truly remember is through their collective memory banks.[155] It is the assemblage of shared knowledge that permits a glance into a group past and it is Shulman's paintings that act as both child and historian that move beyond a personal past into one that becomes universal. Young writes that Judaism has a long standing tradition of memorial work. *Yizkor Bikher*, or memorial books, were the first narrative works to recall the lives of Eastern European Jewry in the pale of settlement. They record the history of these communities and their eventual destruction. According to the scholar, these books function as burial sites in the absence of physical graves.[156] I contend that memory is similarly deployed in *Exodus* for Shulman. In the artist's choice of utilizing anonymous figures in order to represent the plight of the Jewish people in the shtetls it is as if she has created a global record of their struggle and destruction. As with the absence of identifiable graves given that these communities have long since perished, the unique stories of Shulman's grandparents are transcended in order to delineate the struggle of a collective group.

The last painting in the series entitled *Fish Tree* recalls memory in a similar fashion to *Exodus*: it too functions on a personal and collective level. *Fish Tree* presents the viewer with a familiar central image. The dominating black fish of *Adieu My*

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[154] Holtorf.
[155] Holtorf.
[156] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) 7.

Beloved has been transformed by the presence of its military garb. Within its vast body a multitude of different coloured mini-fish swim energetically. Within the main fish, Shulman has placed a strategic symbol of memory: her family tree with members represented as fish. Once again, the artist uses red to relate the Russian heritage of her ancestry. For the first time in the series, Shulman has chosen to reproduce the images of her own parents in this painting. This symbolic placement evokes a generation that acts as a guide for the artist, a key from the past to the present and future. It is Shulman's mother's parents that are the authors of the family archive. Hence, it is the artist's mother that serves to recall the past and her own experiences of her parents that help to inform the work of her daughter. In this respect, Shulman uses memory in this work to unite generations on a very personal level. Even as the painter chooses to also represent herself in this image and not in any of the previous ones, she interweaves the history of her parents, her grandparents, herself and the generations to come in her iconography of memory. The fish family tree that Shulman incorporates in this work comprises the members of her family from 1800 to the present day. A strange sensation overcame me, the author of this essay, as I looked closely at the lineage included. I too am part of this collective history and I was able to recognize myself, my husband and my parents in the work. I was overwhelmed by this personal connection for this concretely problemitized for me how Shulman's painting utilizes memory as a link between generations. Not only does she succeed in remembering her grandparents and great-grandparents for herself, but also for her contemporaries. For her brothers, sisters-in-law, daughter et al., who will partake in this recovered knowledge to better understand themselves and their origins. Halbwachs

notes that aged relatives tend to "grow in our memory as we are told of a past time and society."[157] Through their own words and documents, these ancestral figures will become known to the younger generations of Shulman's family who were not fortunate enough to have ever known them. The artist's painting provides a means to her family members of the future to connect with their past and to inscribe themselves as part of a community.

Like *Exodus, Fish Tree* does not merely operate on the level of 'personal' collective memory, i.e. recalling for Shulman's family but also in a more global sense of the term. Collective memory is here complexified in the artist's exploration of one of the most impactful horrors of our modern age. When the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center occurred on September 11th, Shulman was in the middle of creating this work. She became blocked and unable to paint. Along with countless millions she was grief stricken by the tragedy. She tried and tried to complete the painting without success. She realized there was only one way she was going to be able to resolve her issues. This would take the form of including the Twin Towers in the upper left hand corner being attacked by two planes in the form of her symbolic fish. The inclusion of this flashbulb memory in the work serves to push the boundaries of collective remembering as it transpires in the image. The artist recalls an international tragedy even though she herself was not present that day in New York. But like the countless millions of viewers of such news stations as CNN, the world "witnessed" these attacks nonetheless. Therefore, the image serves two ends: it recalls both the experience of the artist for the artist as well as for the world.

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[157] Halbwachs 64.

Susan Shulman's *In Our Memories Forever* series is comprised of complex images that deploy memory in several ways. The notion of memory as reconstructed serves to inform the artist's paintings by allowing for the conflation of first and second hand experiences that blend together to produce the work. This amalgamation raises important issues for authenticity that are reflected in the debate over the validity of autobiographical memory itself. As well, Shulman's works function beyond the notion of merely remembering for the artist herself. Through her conflation of images, at times directly related to her ancestry and at others an anonymous portrayal of history, Shulman's work serves to remember for the collective.

Conclusion: *In Our Memories Forever*: Complexifying Memory

As we have seen in Chapter Three, Susan Shulman's *In Our Memories Forever* series of nine works is indelibly informed by the process of reconstructing memories. Whether on a personal or collective level, the work serves to remember for the artist, her family, her community and society at large. Even though *Fish Tree* is the last painting in Shulman's memorial cycle, *The Esplanade Street Shtetl* is an image that pushes the boundaries of autobiographical memory even further and serves to complexify the memory work deployed in the series. In this image, Shulman depicts her maternal grandparents in their later years, still with great majesty but noticeably older. This is the way she remembers them best. This is the way she grew to know and love them as a child. Shulman's grandmother is clad in an elegant red gown, reminiscent of her garb in *The Empress*, now more mature and stately. Her husband stands beside her looking out of the picture at the viewer, as does his wife, with knowing glances. In his hand is a soiled envelope that would contain one of his precious letters. In Tziviah's grasp, another important element: the crocheted pink purse that would be passed down from Annie and eventually to Shulman, herself. In the inclusion of these elements the artist has surpassed the boundaries of memory. No longer are recollections merely deployed in the work but here the painting itself acknowledges its own role in facilitating memory. Not only does Shulman utilize memory in the work but the figures in the painting equally acknowledge her contribution to preserving their memories. The knowing gazes of Shulman's grandparents lovingly describe their appreciation of the work she is undertaking as well as signifying their offering of the archive to her. As alluded to in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor*, it is as if memory is working both ways in this image.

Shulman's conflation of her recollections with that of her grandparents coincides with the actual empowerment of the artist's grandparents as her creations. The presence of the crocheted purse that here adorns Tziviah's arm exists as a constant reminder of the artist's own memories as well as being the vessel of those of her grandparents. Within these documents that both the artist and the figures of her ancestors acknowledge, the jewels of the paintings' memory work are revealed and transformed into the series.

Other elements in the work serve to underscore this dialogue. The red ground symbolic of Russian soil has been abandoned in this image. Instead, the homeland of Shulman's grandparents is invoked in another image of the shtetl: that being the barn in which this scene seems to be taking place. It is a much less forbidding image and serves to recall the roots of the artist's ancestry as it is placed in the background. It does not confine them to it like the red planes in *Exodus* from which the figures need to flee. With the forward glances out of the canvas, Tziviah and Moishe look to the present and recognize their twenty-first century viewers as well as their granddaughter. Unlike in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor* where the figures look out of the canvas to the past, here there is even a nod to the future in the placement of the terrier statue in the foreground of the picture. The dog looks out of the canvas toward the left perhaps acknowledging the legacy that is conflated by both Shulman and her grandparents that will be sustained for future generations. This painting serves to epitomize the confluency of first and second hand memories as gleaned through the artist's family archive and creates an everlasting bond that spans throughout time.

In her most recent cycle of nine paintings, Susan Shulman creates a complex memorial work. This exploration into her own past has led the artist on a great discovery of memories, ancestry and genealogy. As a child, the artist grew up with her mother's parents who had fled from Russia to Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century. Almost one hundred years after their flight, their granddaughter rediscovered their courageous spirits and compelling love story in the magnificent gift of an archive of letters and photographs.

This thesis has analyzed how autobiographical memory informs the work of Susan Shulman's memorial series entitled *In Our Memories Forever*. In Chapter One, the current theories on memory and its various autobiographical types has been explored in order to provide a context for gaining insight into the function of memory in the paintings. Chapter Two has deepened the study of the works themselves while examining the artist's background and genealogy. This discussion then culminated in Chapter Three, where autobiographical memory was examined with regard to how it is deployed in Shulman's work through the process of reconstruction. This conflation allows for the exploration of first and second hand memories in the canvases. Shulman's reliance on photographic sources initiates an interesting discussion between the past and the present. This occurs as the images are metamorphosed from frozen moments in time into paint. As well, this amalgamation pushes the boundaries of authenticity as new works are created from first and secondary sources of recollection. Furthermore, Shulman's paintings serve to remember not only for the artist herself but for a greater collective community.

With the rapid development of memory studies, it is a highly relevant time to pursue a critical investigation into how works of art utilize and are informed by the relationship of autobiographical memories types. Such analyses can certainly allow us to gain greater insight into the motivations behind a work's production and its reliance on memory.

May we be remembered and inscribed in the book of life, always.

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