

Introduction

Writing eighty years ago, the German philosopher and culture critic Walter Benjamin offered a visionary response to a small ink drawing by Paul Klee that still resonates today:

A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.¹

I think of this while looking at a diptych of photographs titled *Bibliography: Memory Effects*, which pictures six stacks of books, each one on a subject related to the Holocaust. The stacks in the photographs lean together to form an open cave threatened by burning edges, as if the fiery residue of past incendiary horrors and passions are creeping into the scene. The diptych becomes a visual counterpart to Benjamin's fiercely imagined prose; it pictures not the angel of history but seems to allude instead to the wreckage piling up at its feet.

The work is by Buzz Spector and the books are all the ones I read in preparation for writing my own first book *Memory Effects: The Holocaust and the Art of Secondary Witnessing*. As the daughter of Jewish Holocaust survivors from

Poland, writing that book allowed me to work through an obsession with the Holocaust that held me in thrall all my life, always burning at the edges, flaring up when my mother or her fellow survivors told their terrifying tales at our kitchen table. These were often stories of burning shame and humiliation, stories always doused in tears. In *Memory Effects* I began to examine the consequences of those traumatic memories on the second generation, my generation, focusing on the work of postwar artists attempting to come to terms with inherited trauma and its meaning for their own sense of personal and cultural identity.

An artist best known for his work with books, Spector has made other such deftly conceived photographic works as portraits of his friends, just as these messy piles of books on traumatic memory represent something fundamental about me.² Spector turns most of the titles away from the viewer, suggesting all the pages once read and now forgotten. They have become an archive of the inexpressible, the silences of those who perished, and the occlusions of the survivors, who may pluck some facts from memory and order events into stories told and retold in hopes they convey something of the complexities of their trauma, the chaos and terror of events, the horrifying “choiceless choices,” in Lawrence Langer’s phrase. Spector also reveals a few carefully selected titles, among them Cynthia Ozick’s *Quarrel and Quandary* and Bruno Schulz’s *Street of Crocodiles*, Sander Gilman’s *The Jew’s Body*, and John Weiss’s *Ideology of Death*. All of them rest on a foundation that includes the writings of Leon Trotsky, Isaac Deutscher’s *The Non-Jewish Jew*, and *The Book of Questions* by Edmond Jabès. The philosophical theories, cultural and political histories, memoirs, novels, and essays on art and literature all stand in danger of succumbing to the flames themselves. But memory effects are not about the past. How do they shape the present and future? Can the way we remember the past play an active role in fighting ongoing forms of oppression and persecution? These are the questions at the center of this book.

I wrote down some of the stories told to me by my mother as an epilog to *Memory Effects* and read them to her after the book came out, when she was ninety-three. We sat on a bench in the sunshine outside her assisted living home, some sixty years after she had fled Poland. She burst into tears after my reading, exclaiming, “You remembered the stories!” I wept too, and felt a kind of anguished joy, realizing this had been one of my reasons for writing the book—wanting to make sure her memories were remembered. Though *Memory Effects* was about inherited trauma, I hoped that my mother’s reconstructed memories, filtered through me, would also help mobilize Holocaust memory for contemporary emancipatory purposes.

In the still developing field of memory studies, it’s understood that memory is not simply deposited in places, books, and objects as a static and bounded thing. Instead, memory is constantly translated and transmitted through generations, taking shape in new forms of media across disparate groups and cultures. This continual translation and transmittance produces dynamic forms of



Buzz Spector, *Bibliography: Memory Effects*, 2002, interior dye diffusion prints (Polaroid), diptych. (Courtesy of the artist.)

remembrance that transcend fixed ideas of meaning just as they transcend ethnic and national boundaries. Moreover, all memory is mediated by society, language, and representation: films, photographs, artworks, texts, memorials, monuments, stories. Memory and identity are therefore subject to negotiation and transformation, construed as open-ended and inclusive, comparative rather than competitive, so that we may see links between, say, the Holocaust and the mass killing of Native Americans or other forms of race terror and group persecution, and these links become the basis for a new understanding and common political struggle. Though this new model of memory promoted by the field of memory studies is always contingent and contested, it has the potential to shift the scales of discourse in favor of the formerly unremembered, marginalized, and repressed.

The role of memory in the writing of history took on greater importance in the 1970s, and memory studies have boomed in the last several decades. Since the 1990s, memory has become increasingly reconceptualized, especially the central belief that memory functions like a fixed and permanent archive. The interdisciplinary scholar Jens Brockmeier writes, “The traditional model of memory as a static and stable place of storage, where past perceptions and experiences are retained and from where they can be retrieved, proved increasingly to be inadequate—in fact, obsolete.”³ Brockmeier organizes memory studies into four fields: the literary and the artistic, the technological, the social and cultural, and the biological and cognitive, each with its own cultural traditions.⁴

The literary and artistic arenas were the first to interrogate memory and the construction of the self, which began in the early twentieth century and accelerated at the end of the century. In the fields of media and technology, the digital revolution has transformed how we remember into a digitally mediated model with nearly endless possibilities for contextualization, which, moreover, blurs the line between private and public, individual and collective. Rather than an archive, multimedial and networked computers create new contexts that are inherently mutable, changing not only the consumption of memory but also the production of memory. Memory and the global are increasingly studied together as mass media and especially the internet allow events almost anywhere in the world to be viewed globally in real time, a phenomenon that allows such events to be linked to new forms of democratic participation and activism. The global audience for this memory production, which is rooted in the staging of images, transcends the nation and subjects it to global observation and critique. This form of memory activism stimulates a growing moral consciousness expressed in part by the increasing number of public acts of commemoration and official apologies.⁵

We can see the awareness of a global audience already present during the postwar Nuremberg trials in Germany, followed by the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961. Holocaust memory has largely driven memory studies, which has powered the recognition of many other genocides and atrocities in local and global memory cultures. Holocaust memory became a catalyst for memory activism and serves as a universal yardstick against which to measure other atrocities; it is rivaled, however, by imperialist and colonialist experience, which is equal to the Holocaust regarding claims to morality and recognition.⁶

In social and cultural fields such as history, cultural studies, and the social sciences, sites of memory become places where those who experienced trauma share individual and cultural memory. They remain memory sites long after those who were there have died because later generations “remember the memories of others,” in Brockmeier’s phrase. Such memories are continually reconfigured according to the needs and pressures of the present, as new archives are opened or new voices are raised by the previously silenced or marginalized. These new perspectives helped produce new academic approaches on subjects such as postcolonialism, race, and gender studies. An example is the reconstruction of the narrative at Monticello, which puts the stories of enslaved families into the narrative and acknowledges for the first time without equivocation the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and the enslaved woman Sally Hemmings and the children they had together.⁷ Memory, constructed by language and place and defined by social practices, is subject to reconstruction, a process in flux rather than a fixed entity.

The fourth area in Brockmeier’s schema is the field of neuroscience, which is his primary area of expertise, and where a neurological discovery confirms the insights of memory studies scholars in the humanities and social sciences. This

is the understanding that there is no biological correlate to “memory.” There is nothing in the brain that distinguishes remembering the past from perceiving the present or imagining the future, “whether in a visual, acoustical, or tactile mode.” Memory, in other words, has no location; the neuronal circuits are the same for past, present, and future. This suggests that memory must be constructed by a more complex consciousness than that provided by neuronal circuits and this can only be society and culture, language and narrative, which accounts for the widely diverse concepts of memory and time among different cultures. These diverse concepts of memory and time in turn align with different concepts of the self, varied cultural values and worldviews.⁸ The social construction of memory also explains how memory changes, both individually and collectively, as social contexts and public narratives undergo modifications and challenges. Because memories are not fixed and permanent entities to begin with, they are adaptable and changing all the time in response to events, narratives, and changed expectations.

It is a well-studied phenomenon, asserts Brockmeier, which shows that every act of remembering mixes elements of experience from the past with elements of experience from the present, and conversely, all new input encounters experience from the past, which shapes its meaning, texture, and emotional quality. This mutual influence and shaping of experience and memory, both past and present, is the opposite of an archive that encodes, stores, preserves, and retrieves from long-term and short-term storage. Memory, instead, is the product of cultural construction and reconstruction, mediated by intention, and embedded in environments and contexts, including media and technology, art and literature, language and stories, that are themselves subject to historical mediation. Memory is therefore dynamic and unbound, moving across cultures, generations, media, and disciplines.

Returning to the work by Buzz Spector, we might now consider the photographic diptych as a mediated visual memory of the literature, language, and stories of others, some of which may be forgotten even as the image carries their memory forward. The work is made with a media technology now obsolete—the large format Polaroid—coinciding with the era in which these books were written and producing the accidental effect of the burning edges, which not only mediates how we experience the subject of the work but also suggests the fading of the photos themselves and the contingency of memory. Yet the inquiry into memory, place, and identity that originally motivated the writing of *Memory Effects*, for which these books served as a bibliography, and Spector’s subsequent image, is still ongoing in this book, now mediated by other literature, language, and stories, as well as events and experiences in a changed political era.

In *Memory in a Global Age*, Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad argue that even when memory is not invested with universal claims, contemporary debates

about the past are informed by the global context in which they unfold, allowing memory activists to appeal to shared pasts in support of common moral or political agendas.⁹ The debate over Confederate monuments, the opening of a national lynching memorial in Montgomery, or a controversy over a painting of Emmett Till by a white artist, all take place in the era of Trump and other global authoritarians, an era when democratic rights are openly spurned and white nationalism is on the rise, which gives these debates important moral and political significance.

As white supremacism becomes resurgent, social and economic inequality grows worse, and climate change accelerates, racial violence, the global refugee crisis, and immigration become more desperately urgent issues. This global context helps shape the conflicted reception of commemorations and representations of the oppressed. It makes sense then that the memory landscapes for both the Holocaust and American racial violence contend with overlapping questions: How to commemorate histories of persecution and oppression? Who has the right to produce such representation? How does visual representation narratively construct the nation and national identity? The public culture of memory is a site for negotiation and debate because memorials, art, and stories remap cultural memory and change how we think about history, group identity, and ourselves.

The Jewish question and the black question have always been intertwined for me. After our chicken farm went bankrupt, my parents, immigrants and Holocaust survivors, sold chickens and eggs door to door for several years. One day after school, when my mother was ill, my father offered to take me along for a delivery to a single customer. This was highly unusual and surprising since my father had never offered to take me along on the egg route and I had never met any of their customers. But he wanted me to meet this one.

It was 1964, after my mother had put a framed color photograph of John F. Kennedy on the dining room wall following his assassination, and after the lunch counter sit-ins, the Freedom Rides to integrate interstate buses, the racist church bombings, the protests against them, the March on Washington, the voter registration campaigns, the Civil Rights Act. The woman my father wanted me to meet was a black schoolteacher in her mid-thirties, who invited us into her home. I was amazed when my father accepted the invitation and we sat in her living room for an hour while they talked. My father's English was limited and usually he let my mother do the talking. The fact that he wanted me to meet this woman and that we were now sitting in her living room while he spoke in English with her for a whole hour was astonishing.

I no longer remember what they talked about, but I remember my impression of her: poised, cultivated, attractive. How unlikely they seemed, my usually reticent, mid-fifties immigrant father, with his heavy accent, and this African American schoolteacher at least twenty years his junior. She was intelligent, educated, and willing to have long serious discussions with him. I understood that my

father was trying to teach me something about difference and acceptance, about outsiders and kindred spirits finding each other and connecting. I understood that I should not mention this visit to my mother.

I learned more about such relationships several years later when I was fifteen and became friends with Steve, a black boy in my grade. We read each other's poetry and talked about books and music for hours on the phone. Then we began meeting at the public library. One day my father saw me walking with Steve outside the library and there was a pregnant pause as I got into the car. He asked if this was the friend I always met at the library. I said yes, waiting for an admonition to find a Jewish boy. But my father said nothing. I did not think, then, about the black schoolteacher.

My friends were not as accepting. Edith, an older girl I knew and admired, angrily accused me of "using" my friendship with Steve to "show off." Show off what? I wondered. My ability to have friends who were not white? It was clear to me now that whiteness, not Jewishness, was the issue, a category of identity constructed for the sole purpose of differentiating it from blackness. When Jews first emigrated to the United States—along with Irish Catholics, southern Italians, and Greeks—they were seen as a distinct racial group and only gradually became "white," demonstrating the contingency of the concept of whiteness. But it was still hard for me to understand how my friendship with Steve threatened Edith. Then Steve told me his friends teased him relentlessly about me. I was equally shocked by this. The pressure got to him and he told me we needed to stop seeing each other. I was hurt, but I understood that our friends felt somehow betrayed, unwilling to accept that we were kindred spirits.

Our friends' reactions were infuriating and bigoted, enforcing racial difference on both sides that constructed blacks and whites as essentially different, just as Jews had been constructed as racially different by the Nazis. It was disconcerting to realize that I was not just Jewish but "white." As a child, I had thought the two were separate, that I would always be "other." It seemed natural to me to identify with the marginalized and oppressed, natural that Jews, having suffered pogroms, made up half of the revolutionary cadre in Tsarist Russia despite being a tiny percentage of the population, and played a strategic collaborative role in the Civil Rights movement. It does not surprise me now that the artist Dana Schutz, at the center of a controversy about cultural appropriation because of her painting of Emmett Till, is Jewish. For white nationalists today, their racism is equal to their antisemitism, which is still premised on the conviction that Jews are racially different.

In my late twenties, I met D., a charismatic black intellectual. We were both members of the Trotskyist Spartacist League, newly arrived in Detroit, and anti-racist activists who found ourselves attracted to each other one night after a spirited discussion of dialectical materialism. Soon after our first date at a Muddy Waters concert, we moved in together in Highland Park, a working-class black

city surrounded by Detroit not far from the original Ford auto plant. I was his first white girlfriend and he was my first black boyfriend. A highlight of our work was an anti-Nazi mobilization that stopped the Nazis from holding a public rally downtown. I helped organize it; D. was a key speaker at it. About five hundred people came. That night we had a party and danced to Motown with joyful abandon.

But I never stopped being aware of the hostile stares we often received in public, the assumption by the Highland Park police, who would stop me on the street, that I was a prostitute. D.'s favorite fantasy, one that seemed almost pre-ordained for black men and white women at the time, was of him as a big buck seducing a plantation owner's daughter. I was never entirely comfortable with it, finding it difficult to identify with my role, and it seemed to me the owners of those hostile stares had the same fantasy.

To be black in America is to risk humiliation, harassment, or harm every time you are in public. With the election of the corrupt and overtly racist Donald Trump, the dedication of a national lynching memorial and museum in Montgomery in April 2018 came at a time of exacerbated national tensions, embodying the deepening anxieties of a nation long in conflict, where the Civil War, it can be argued, has never ended. White supremacy, always dominant, reared its ugly head with renewed energy, provoking, among other things, local and national conflicts over Confederate commemorative monuments, especially in the American South. The culture of memory "calibrates existing narratives to emergent social realities," observes Ann Rigney, but "remembrance is also a resource for redefining the borders between 'them' and 'us.'"¹⁰

Commemorative monuments can take on new meaning that derives from events occurring at those sites. The Confederate monument of Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, for example, will forever be associated with the murder by a white nationalist of a thirty-two-year-old woman and the serious injury of nineteen others who were protesting a "Unite the Right" rally in defense of that monument in August 2017.¹¹ White supremacists, nationalists, and neo-Nazis chanted, "White lives matter," "You will not replace us," and "Jews will not replace us," correlating their fear and hatred of African Americans and other people of color with their fear and hatred of Jews, who are differentiated from those who are white, while attempting to preserve an increasingly threatened sense of white supremacy.

Suggesting that falling birthrates will lead to white people being replaced by nonwhite people, white supremacists, who also fear that their political and economic supremacy is being undercut by women, believe that white women should not have the right to work or vote, that instead they should stay home and raise families—a throwback to the Confederate South commemorated by the monuments they defend.¹²

The body has also been recognized as a site of social and cultural construction and as a place of embodied knowledge and inherited trauma that influences how we respond to stress. By embodiment, I mean the radically material nature of human existence, in which the lived body makes meaning out of bodily experience. Along with the moods, anxieties, and stories by which parents transmit trauma to their children, recent developments in epigenetic studies show that mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder may be understood as interactions between stress and an individual's inherited vulnerability to stress. Epigenetics explains how external events such as trauma or stress may trigger chemical changes to DNA, which affect how a person's genes are expressed without changing the DNA sequence. These chemical changes can pass to the next generation and even the third generation. This is a major insight into the nature of inherited trauma, a form of embodied knowledge demonstrated in studies of mice taught to fear the smell of cherries who pass that fear on to their offspring, or in studies showing that traumatic stresses on Civil War soldiers affected their sons' lifespans.¹³

Trauma studies, related to the field of memory studies, grew after the American Psychiatric Association officially recognized post-traumatic stress disorder in 1980. More recently, however, scholars have been critical of dominant trauma theory that posits trauma as necessarily inassimilable experience. They reasonably suggest that this understanding may be too narrowly conceived, that it "emphasizes a victim position and potentially fails to give due attention to the expression of agency."¹⁴ This study considers the expression of agency rooted in trauma, both for those who experience it directly and those who inherit trauma.

The gendered nature of experience is also integral to these themes and came into focus with the establishment of memory studies. The experiences of women in the Holocaust, for example, became a systematic subject of study following a watershed conference organized in the United States in 1983. Initially, the work concentrated on recapturing the lost histories of women's experience and memory. The pioneering volume *Women in the Holocaust* (1998) further examined how women's experience was different from that of men, the roles women played in the ghettos, resistance movement, and camps, and how their different areas of expertise and gender conditioning inflected their responses to the Nazi onslaught. It also examined consequences of women's biological differences and their greater vulnerability to sexual assault and abuse.¹⁵

While some feminists raised concerns that women were being reduced to their biology by focusing on pregnancy, motherhood, and sexual violence, others argued that to deny these gendered experiences would be to maintain the status quo that denied women's unique biological and social experiences. Those in masculinity studies have pointed out that men were also humiliated and abused in biological terms and that we must examine male experience in tandem with women's experience to understand the similarities and differences.¹⁶

What the literature has made clear is that we cannot consider the experience of Jewish men to be the norm. It is necessary to see how Nazi policies and circumstances of the Holocaust in multiple contexts constructed gender and how gender inflects traumatic memory and representation, helping to shape cultural memory and inherited trauma. Many scholars argue that using gender as a category of analysis is fundamental to understanding the Holocaust, along with categories such as religious beliefs, political ideologies, social class, or age, even though, in the end, everyone was killed because they were Jewish.¹⁷

In the last decade, the focus on gendered experience has been extended to lynching and racial violence.¹⁸ Not only were 150 women lynched between 1880 and 1930 (of which 120 were black, others white or Mexican), but many more were tarred and feathered, whipped, raped, and burned. In addition, scholars have only recently begun to consider in a systematic way the effects of the lynchings of black men on their wives, daughters, and mothers, the active and activist roles played by women, the transgenerational effects of lynching trauma on families, and the collaborative antilynching activism—or active complicity—of white women. The emphasis on black men has elided the collective effect of lynching on black communities and specifically occluded the experience of black women, which tends to be less visible than the public torture and emasculation of black men. The #MeToo movement, initially launched by celebrity white women who refused to continue to quietly submit to sexual harassment and assault, quickly spread, here and internationally, to black and working-class women, and must also be understood as another outcome of the increasing emphasis on making visible gendered experience.

Calling Memory into Place thus advocates for a renewed understanding of the relationship between racism, antisemitism, and sexism. It engages the overlapping themes of Holocaust trauma, racial violence, and gendered experience, which intersect with the experience of place and embodied knowledge. By investigating relations among place, memory, and identity, we hope to reveal the dynamic nature of memory, which crosses generations, rewrites an understanding of the self, and generates ongoing debates and political struggle by shaping and reshaping the culture of memory.

Place is here conceived as a center for meaning, self-reflection, and belonging, and, conversely, of dislocation, forced mobility, and atrocity. I rely on phenomenology's central insight into place, which is that existence itself is always placed, always situated, and cannot make itself known otherwise. Memory and experience are emplaced through association with embodiment. The embodied awareness of place is therefore fundamental to knowing and consciousness. We always inhabit a place. But memory is also connected to place independently of the body; we might say memory is written upon place and place is written upon the body. The memory of place may refer to unique personal events or to historical events that are transferred across generations. But places, bodies, and memories are subject to change, so that visiting or revisiting a place is as much about the present as the past.¹⁹

This book considers the ongoing construction of memory through memorials, photographs, artworks, and stories, including my own, as forms of representation that inherently structure memory as a collective way of knowing, even if rooted in the personal, producing cultural memory that changes how we understand the past and approach the present, often by remembering what was formerly considered unworthy of being remembered or by reinterpreting its meaning. Put another way, the reconstruction of cultural memory begins a process of unforgetting, like the inclusion of enslaved experience in the Monticello narrative, in order to counter disbelief, construct a sense of empathy, and achieve a greater understanding of the roots of racial and ethnic oppression and of the ongoing struggles for equality and social justice. The goal of this book is to serve as an example of this kind of reconstruction of memory in our deeply troubled political era, marked by ever increasing inequality, persecution, discrimination, and racialized violence. It uses personal narrative, imagery, and analysis to help us see through the eyes of others, whose experiences may be very different from our own, but who embody and connect us to larger histories. As James Baldwin is quoted as saying in Raoul Peck's masterful film *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016), "History is not the past. History is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history."²⁰

Yet we know there is no "pure history" free of cultural trends and representations. The memory landscape in Holocaust representation, for example, includes videotaped witness testimonies, films, photographs, novels, memoirs, written histories, legal proceedings, museum displays, and memorials, which have become inextricably woven together in public memory. Because history is always subject to the political needs and pressures of the historical moments in which such representations are produced, memory and embodied knowledge enrich and deepen history, rendering both memoir and historical analysis dynamic and unbound.

Although I deploy artistic images throughout, which resonate in one way or another with ideas or issues in the text, this is not primarily a work of art history. The images, including works by artists such as Nick Cave, Kwame Akoto-Bamfo, Sally Mann, Annette Messager, Carmen Winant, Diana Matar, and Yael Bartana, among others, for me become another way of knowing; they are capable of producing embodied responses even before we think about what they might mean or why it's important; they construct knowledge that resonates with intellectual analysis and personal narrative, as with the photographic diptych by Buzz Spector.

The essays in this book include cultural and political critique as well as memoir and family history. Because the formal conventions of scholarship often fail to convey the visceral feelings of embodied encounters with places, events, or visual images, the book's structure is an experiment in the mixing and juxtaposition of different writerly formats. While scholarly conventions tend to enjoy a privileged status, my claim is that embodied and experiential ways of knowing are equally valid and construct knowledge in unique and complementary ways.

The book therefore shifts between the scholarly, the personal, and the visual as different ways of knowing, in order to perform in practice an attention to the political and affective dimensions of trauma, memory, and place.

My hope is that such an alternative, hybrid approach might enable new insights into the traumatic legacies of racial, ethnic, gendered, and political violence as they continue to reverberate today. The essays also consider the role of trauma in agency and survival, some more overtly than others, gesturing at ways in which traumatic inheritance might lead to productive effects. These explorations are meant to offer different forms of access to embodied experience and its relationship to the dangers and opportunities of our present political moment in hopes of helping to promote a more just and compassionate future.

Calling Memory into Place is divided into five parts that represent different sites of memory, with two essays in each part that reach backward and forward to resonate with other essays. I use the essay format for the greater freedom it offers. If history is an ongoing interpretive process, the essay allows for the experiential approach of discovery and self-discovery, the freedom to experiment that permits impressions, reflections, and emotions, and the space to produce different ways of shaping knowledge by putting forth an argument or “reading” a visual image.

In the first section on passages and streets, “A Memorial for Walter Benjamin” considers the formal and informal memorialization of individuals, beginning with a memorial in Portbou, Spain, for philosopher Walter Benjamin, who fled the Holocaust in Germany; it opens a space to question the received history and memory of his death. The second essay, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot,” analyzes the persistent street memorials for Michael Brown, who was killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, and the popular slogan that in part attempts to assuage liberal anxieties about race.

The second section looks at two museum and memorial controversies in the United States that focus on how we remember the past in order to change the present. “Why We Need a National Lynching Memorial” examines the controversy over a large public memorial to the nation’s thousands of lynching victims and an accompanying museum on slavery and mass incarceration in America, which opened in the midst of resurgent white nationalism. The essay further reflects on the debate over Confederate monuments and the role of women in white supremacist ideology. “Let the World See What I’ve Seen” critiques the controversial essentialist claims made by critics of Dana Schutz’s painting of Emmett Till in the 2017 Whitney Biennial and further examines the issue of diversity in museums.

The third section on hometowns and homelands further investigates the way memory is rooted in place. In “Seeing What Can No Longer Be Seen” we visit sites of oppression through images, return to my parents’ hometown in Poland, take a tour of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and stop in places once inhabited by Freud and Trotsky in Vienna. “Borders and Walls” analyzes the contested

politics of place during a visit to Israel-Palestine for a world conference on Jewish Studies, including interviews with Israeli and Palestinian artists, a tour of border wall checkpoints, and visits with Palestinian families living on the street after an Israeli court evicted them from their homes in East Jerusalem.

The fourth section on hospitals and cemeteries considers the places of memory associated with birth and death as written on the body and the effects of trauma both remembered and inherited. “Sprung from the Head” explores artworks that evoke lost children and childbirth, and chronicles my attempt to compensate for my mother’s traumatic postwar experience of giving birth in a German hospital with my own birth experience forty years later. “Parallel Universes” recounts my mother’s final days, her surprising command over her fate, her conviction that she had access to a parallel universe, and the traumatic recurrence of Holocaust memory.

The final section on body and mind explores the body traumatized by illness as a site of productive or creative intervention that draws on memory of the past. “Reclaiming the Self” focuses on the visual imagery of Hannah Wilke’s *Intra-Venus* series, a body of photography made during the artist’s mortal illness in which she effectively creates her own memorial before her death. This chapter is meant as a companion piece to the final essay, “The Care of Others,” which is a memoir of my year of breast cancer treatment and my struggle for control and self-advocacy within the medical institution. Wilke’s relationship to her mother and to the Holocaust played a part in how she conceived of her final work, just as my embodied response to illness and treatment was shaped by memory of my parents’ Holocaust experience and my mother’s resilience in the face of that trauma.

The processes of remembering and meaning-making, influenced by cultural forces, make the construction of the self and of culture mutually constitutive. Through the never-ending process of remembering, we interpret and provide meaning to the past, shaping and reshaping culture and our own consciousness, making and remaking ourselves and the world.

