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Introduction: Theorizing Multidirectional Memory in a Transnational Age

Beyond Competitive Memory

In a characteristically provocative essay on the relationship between racism and anti-Semitism in contemporary America, the literary critic Walter Benn Michaels considers the seemingly incompatible legacies of slavery and the Nazi genocide in the United States:

Why is there a federally funded U.S. Holocaust Museum on the Mall in Washington, DC? . . . The difficulty of coming up with a satisfactory answer to this question has produced a certain exasperation among African Americans, memorably expressed by the notorious black racist Khalid Muhammad when, in the wake of a visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, he told an audience at Howard University on 3 April 1994 that “the black holocaust was 100 times worse than the so-called Jew Holocaust. You say you lost six million. We question that, but . . . we lost 600 million. Schindler’s List,” as Muhammad put it, “is really a swindler’s list.” The force of these remarks consists not in the absurd Holocaust denial but in the point—made precisely by his visit to the Holocaust Museum—that commemoration of the Nazi murder of the Jews on the Mall was in fact another kind of Holocaust denial. Why should what the Germans did to the Jews be treated as a crucial event in American history, especially when, given the absence

of any commemoration of American racism on the Mall, what Americans did to Black people is not!¹

In this passage Michaels takes up one of the most agonizing problems of contemporary multicultural societies: how to think about the relationship between different social groups' histories of victimization. This problem, as Michaels recognizes, also fundamentally concerns collective memory, the relationship that such groups establish between their past and their present circumstances. A series of questions central to this book emerges at this point: What happens when different histories confront each other in the public sphere? Does the remembrance of one history erase others from view? When memories of slavery and colonialism bump up against memories of the Holocaust in contemporary multicultural societies, must a competition of victims ensue?

Michaels's stance toward his example in his essay on anti-Semitism and racism is somewhat cagey; he acknowledges Muhammad's racism and the "absurd" nature of his Holocaust denial, yet he seems simultaneously to embrace a fundamental feature of Muhammad's argument. Like Muhammad, Michaels implies that collective memory obeys a logic of scarcity: if a Holocaust Museum sits on the Mall in Washington (or just off of it, as is the actual case), then Holocaust memory must literally be crowding the memory of African American history out of the public space of American collective consciousness. There are plenty of legitimate ways to engage critically with the fact and function of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and there is certainly a great need to engage with the ongoing fact of American racism, but Michaels's argument begs some important questions: Does collective memory really work like real-estate development? Must the claims of memory always be calculated according to their relevance for national history? Is "commemoration of the Nazi murder of the Jews" really a form of "Holocaust denial"?

Although few people would put the matter in such controversial terms, many other commentators, both inside and outside the academy, share the understanding of memory and identity articulated by Michaels. This study is motivated by a sense of the urgency of the vexing issues that Michaels raises, but it challenges the widely held ideas about the nature of collective memory and its links to group identity that undergird Michaels's provocations. Like Michaels and, indeed, Muhammad, many people

assume that the public sphere in which collective memories are articulated is a scarce resource and that the interaction of different collective memories within that sphere takes the form of a zero-sum struggle for preeminence. Because many of these same commentators also believe that a direct line runs between remembrance of the past and the formation of identity in the present, they understand the articulation of the past in collective memory as a struggle for recognition in which there can only be winners and losers, a struggle that is thus closely allied with the potential for deadly violence. While there can be no doubt that many manifestations of contemporary violence, including war and genocide, are in part the product of resentful memories and conflicting views of the past, I argue that the conceptual framework through which commentators and ordinary citizens have addressed the relationship between memory, identity, and violence is flawed. Against the framework that understands collective memory as *competitive* memory—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources—I suggest that we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative. This shift in perspective allows us to see that while Muhammad and Michaels both speak of Holocaust memory as if it blocks memory of slavery and colonialism from view (the model of competitive memory), they actually use the presence of widespread Holocaust consciousness as a platform to articulate a vision of American racism past and present. This interaction of different historical memories illustrates the productive, intercultural dynamic that I call multidirectional memory.

In focusing on the politics of commemoration, Michaels criticizes the role memory plays in public discourse about the past and its impact on the present. As its title indicates, this book also places memory at the center of analysis, although it adopts a less skeptical position toward its object of study than does Michaels. But what is memory? And why does it feature so prominently in this book? These are crucial questions that I will return to below and throughout this study. The literature on memory is enormous and continues to grow at a staggering rate—a growth that has itself become an object of study!² For now, let me note the useful minimalist definition from Richard Terdiman that orients this book: memory is the past made present. The notion of a "making present" has two important corollaries: first, that memory is a contemporary phenomenon,

something that, while concerned with the past, happens in the present; and second, that memory is a form of work, working through, labor, or action.³ As Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche write, “Memory [is] a symbolic representation of the past embedded in social action”; it is “a set of practices and interventions.”⁴ *Multidirectional Memory* considers a series of interventions through which social actors bring multiple traumatic pasts into a heterogeneous and changing post–World War II present. Concerned simultaneously with individual and collective memory, this book focuses on both agents and sites of memory, and especially on their interaction within specific historical and political contexts of struggle and contestation. Making memory the focus of this work allows me to synthesize concerns about history, representation, biography, memorialization, and politics that motivate many scholars working in cultural studies.⁵ Not strictly separable from either history or representation, memory nonetheless captures simultaneously the individual, embodied, and lived side *and* the collective, social, and constructed side of our relations to the past.

In both its individual and collective versions, memory is closely aligned with identity, one of the most contested terms in contemporary debate. What is the relation between memory and identity? As readers familiar with the writings of Walter Benn Michaels will know, his purpose in propounding an implicit theory of competitive memory is not in any way to valorize memory or collective identity. Indeed, much of Michaels’s work has offered a thoroughgoing critique of both memory and identity and what he sees as the straight line that connects them in mutual confirmation. This attitude certainly differentiates him from Khalid Muhammad, who enters the arena of competitive memory in order to stake out a claim for a militant black identity. My perspective differs from both of these polarized positions. Unlike Michaels, I don’t see all claims of memory or identity as necessarily tainted; instead, I see such claims as necessary and inevitable. But unlike Muhammad, I reject the notion that identities and memories are pure and authentic—that there is a “we” and a “you” that would definitively differentiate, say, black and Jewish identities and black and Jewish relations to the past. I differ from both of these positions because I reject two central assumptions that they share: that a straight line runs from memory to identity and that the only kinds of memories and identities that are therefore possible are ones that exclude

elements of alterity and forms of commonality with others. Our relationship to the past does partially determine who we are in the present, but never straightforwardly and directly, and never without unexpected or even unwanted consequences that bind us to those whom we consider other. When the productive, intercultural dynamic of multidirectional memory is explicitly claimed, as it is in many of the cases I discuss in this book, it has the potential to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice.

The understanding of collective remembrance that I put forward in *Multidirectional Memory* challenges the basic tenets and assumptions of much current thinking on collective memory and group identity. Fundamental to the conception of competitive memory is a notion of the public sphere as a pregiven, limited space in which already-established groups engage in a life-and-death struggle. In contrast, pursuing memory’s multidirectionality encourages us to think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction. Equally fundamental to the conception of competitive memory is the notion that the boundaries of memory parallel the boundaries of group identity, as we’ve seen with Michaels and Muhammad. As I struggle to achieve recognition of *my* memories and *my* identity, I necessarily exclude the memories and identities of others. Openness to memory’s multidirectionality puts this last assumption into question as well. Memories are not owned by groups—nor are groups “owned” by memories. Rather, the borders of memory and identity are jagged; what looks at first like my own property often turns out to be a borrowing or adaptation from a history that initially might seem foreign or distant. Memory’s anachronistic quality—its bringing together of now and then, here and there—is actually the source of its powerful creativity, its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones. Finally, those who understand memory as a form of competition see only winners and losers in the struggle for collective articulation and recognition. But attention to memory’s multidirectionality suggests a more supple social logic. The struggle for recognition is fundamentally unstable and subject to ongoing reversal, as Hegel recognized with his famous “Master/Slave

dialectic”: today’s “losers” may turn out to be tomorrow’s “winners,” and “winning” may entail learning from and adopting the rhetoric and images of the other. Generally speaking, moreover, the examples of multidirectional memory explored here are much too ambivalent and heterogeneous to reduce too quickly to questions of winning and losing—which is not to say that there is little at stake in articulations of collective memory, for quite the contrary is true.

In order to demonstrate the stakes of the past in the present, *Multidirectional Memory* takes remembrance of the Holocaust as its paradigmatic object of concern. Michaels’s and Muhammad’s choice to stage the problem of the stakes of memory and identity in relation to the Nazi genocide of European Jews is not accidental. Indeed, there is probably no other single event that encapsulates the struggles for recognition that accompany collective memory in such a condensed and global form. While, as historians have demonstrated in multiple national contexts, public Holocaust memory only emerged belatedly as a widespread collective form, the last half-century has seen such memory move toward the center of consciousness in many Western European, North American, and Middle Eastern societies—and significant inroads have been made throughout the rest of the world as well. The spread of Holocaust memory and consciousness across the globe sets the stage for and illustrates perfectly the multidirectional dynamic I draw attention to throughout this book.⁷ I argue that far from blocking other historical memories from view in a competitive struggle for recognition, the emergence of Holocaust memory on a global scale has contributed to the articulation of other histories—some of them predating the Nazi genocide, such as slavery, and others taking place later, such as the Algerian War of Independence (1954–62) or the genocide in Bosnia during the 1990s. Because of the Holocaust’s salience to the relationship of collective memory, group identity, and violence, an exploration of its ongoing public evocation in multiple national contexts stands as the central example of this book’s exploration of multidirectional memory.

But multidirectional memory, as its name implies, is not simply a one-way street; its exploration necessitates the comparative approach I adopt here. My argument is not only that the Holocaust has enabled the articulation of other histories of victimization at the same time that it has been declared “unique” among human-perpetrated horrors (a point to

which I return below). I also demonstrate the more surprising and seldom acknowledged fact that public memory of the Holocaust emerged in relation to postwar events that seem at first to have little to do with it. Here, we can observe that Michaels’s and Muhammad’s staging of Holocaust memory in competition with the memory of slavery, colonialism, and racism is also not accidental. As a series of case studies treating intellectuals and artists ranging from Hannah Arendt and W. E. B. Du Bois to French anticolonial activists and experimental documentarians will demonstrate, early Holocaust memory emerged in dialogue with the dynamic transformations and multifaceted struggles that define the era of decolonization. The period between 1945 and 1962 contains both the rise of consciousness of the Holocaust as an unprecedented form of modern genocide and the coming to national consciousness and political independence of many of the subjects of European colonialism.⁸ This book argues that far from being an arbitrary conjunction of two separate histories, this observation about the early postwar period contains an important insight into the dynamics of collective memory and the struggles over recognition and collective identity that continue to haunt contemporary, pluralistic societies. The fact that today the Holocaust is frequently set against global histories of racism, slavery, and colonialism in an ugly contest of comparative victimization—as is the case in Muhammad’s infamous speech and in the pronouncements of many “defenders” of the Holocaust’s uniqueness—is part of a refusal to recognize the earlier conjunction of these histories that I explore in *Multidirectional Memory*. But the ordinarily unacknowledged history of cross-referencing that characterizes the period of decolonization continues to this day and constitutes a precondition of contemporary discourse. The virulence—on all sides—of so much discussion of race, genocide, and memory has to do, in other words, partly with the rhetorical and cultural *intimacy* of seemingly opposed traditions of remembrance.

From Uniqueness to Multidirectionality

One of the major stumbling blocks to a recognition of the interactions that take place among collective memories is the belief that one’s own history, culture, and identity are “a separate and unique thing,” to adopt a phrase that W. E. B. Du Bois uses critically and that I discuss

further in Chapter 4. This is especially true when it comes to thinking about the Nazi genocide of European Jews. Along with its “centering” in public consciousness in the last decades, the Holocaust has come to be understood in the popular imagination, especially in Europe, Israel, and North America, as a unique, *sui generis* event. In its extremity, it is sometimes even defined as only marginally connected to the course of human history. Thus, Elie Wiesel has written that “the Holocaust transcends history,” and Claude Lanzmann has claimed that “there is an unbreachable discrepancy” between any of the Holocaust’s possible historical causes and the ultimate unfolding of the events.⁹ Even arguments for uniqueness grounded in history sometimes tend toward ahistorical hyperbole. In an essay that seeks to differentiate the Nazi genocide from “the case of the Native Americans,” “the famine in the Ukraine” under Stalin, and “the Armenian tragedy,” Steven Katz argues that the “historically and phenomenologically unique” character of the Holocaust ensures that the Nazi genocide will differ from “every case said to be comparable to” it.¹⁰ Initially, asserting the uniqueness of the Holocaust served to counter the relative public silence about the specificity of the Nazi genocide of Jews in the early postwar period that many historians of memory and students of historiography have described. Such assertions thus played a crucial role in fostering understanding of the genocide and generating acknowledgment and study of its horrific particularities and traumatic legacies. Although one of my purposes in *Multidirectional Memory* is to complicate this view of the early years of silence by drawing attention to articulations of Holocaust memory that have remained absent from the standard corpus, I certainly agree that in the first postwar decades there was a necessity to assertions of the Holocaust’s specificity.

But, even if understanding of that specificity has not become universal today (and what historical understanding ever does?), by the time Wiesel, Lanzmann, and Katz were writing, acceptance of the uniqueness of the Holocaust was widespread. At the same time that this understanding of the Nazi genocide emerged, and in direct response to it, intellectuals interested in indigenous, minority, and colonial histories challenged the uniqueness of the Holocaust and fostered research into other histories of extreme violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Many of these latter intellectuals have argued that, while it is essential to understand the

specificity of the Nazi genocide (as of all events), separating it off from other histories of collective violence—and even from history as such—is intellectually and politically dangerous. The dangers of the uniqueness discourse are that it potentially creates a hierarchy of suffering (which is morally offensive) and removes that suffering from the field of historical agency (which is both morally and intellectually suspect).¹¹ This critique of uniqueness discourse undergirds Michaels’s and Muhammad’s complaints about the place of the Holocaust in U.S. public culture.

Despite their obvious intellectual and political differences, however, many proponents and critics of uniqueness share the model I’m calling competitive memory: that is, both groups tend to understand memory of the Holocaust as taking part in a zero-sum game of competition with the memory of other histories. Thus, on the one hand, the proponents of uniqueness assiduously search out and refute all attempts to compare or analogize the Holocaust in order to preserve memory of the Shoah from its dilution or relativization. Deborah Lipstadt, one of the leading scholars studying Holocaust denial, suggests links between those who relativize the Holocaust through comparison and analogy and those who deny its very existence; both groups, she argues, blur the “boundaries between fact and fiction and between persecuted and persecutor.”¹² Blurring is also the concern of literary critic Richard Golsan. In a discussion of the trial of Maurice Papon, a French police secretary-general during the Vichy period who will play a key role in this book, Golsan worries that comparison between French complicity in the deportation of Jews and French persecution of Algerians during decolonization, which Papon was also involved in, “could only deflect the focus from the Vichy past and, more significant, blur the specificity of the Final Solution.”¹³ On the other hand, critics of uniqueness or of the politics of Holocaust memory often argue, as do Michael and Muhammad, that the ever-increasing interest in the Nazi genocide distracts from the consideration of other historical tragedies. For instance, in his study of the creation of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Edward T. Linenthal expresses a concern that “official Holocaust memory may also function as a ‘comfortable horrible’ memory, allowing Americans to reassure themselves that they are engaging profound events, all the while ignoring more indigestible events that threaten Americans’ sense of themselves more than the Holocaust.”¹⁴ In

one of the more extreme versions of this argument, David Stannard asserts that the uniqueness argument “willingly provides a screen behind which opportunistic governments today attempt to conceal their own past and ongoing genocidal actions.”¹⁵

There is, of course, some truth in both of these views. Relativization and banalization of the Holocaust do take place, although perhaps more frequently at the hands of a culture industry that seeks to exploit its currency than among marginal or oppositional intellectuals and activists. Conversely, undue stress on the singularity of the Holocaust at the expense of its similarities with other events can block recognition of past as well as present genocides, if not generally with the full intentionality implied by Stannard. The fact of such a blockage of recognition is one of the lessons of Samantha Power’s convincing study *A Problem from Hell*. In summing up her account of American response to the threat and actuality of genocide in the twentieth century, Power writes that “perversely, America’s public awareness of the Holocaust often seemed to set the bar for concern so high that we were able to tell ourselves that contemporary genocides were not measuring up.”¹⁶ Memory competition does exist and sometimes overrides other possibilities for thinking about the relation between different histories.

The existence of such contradictory and intractable positions on the uniqueness of the Holocaust suggests that the controversy is not an empirical, historical one. Rather, as Fredric Jameson has argued with respect to the related and more general issue of historical periodization, such controversies always turn on the deployment of narratives, and not on facts that can be objectively adjudicated: “The decision as to whether one faces a break or a continuity—whether the present is to be seen as a historical originality or as the simple prolongation of more of the same under different sheep’s clothing—is not an empirically justifiable or philosophically arguable one, since it is itself the inaugural narrative act that grounds the perception and interpretation of the events to be narrated.”¹⁷ If the place and status of the Holocaust is not determined purely through recourse to the historical archive, as Jameson’s argument implies, then getting beyond the deadlock characteristic of the uniqueness debates requires thinking about the work of memory and representation—the consequential arenas in which narrative acts shape understanding.¹⁸ The competitive memory

model functions something like what Michel Foucault, in the introduction to his *History of Sexuality*, calls “the repressive hypothesis.” Foucault argues that the popular notion of sexual prohibition in the Victorian age should not be made “into the basic and constitutive element” in a history of sexuality because “negative elements” were “only component parts that have a local and tactical role” within a larger incitement and dissemination of discourses on sexuality.¹⁹ Similarly, I would argue that the negative elements of the competitive memory hypothesis are only component parts of a larger dissemination of memory discourses.

An overly rigid focus on memory competition distracts from other ways of thinking about the relation between histories and their memorial legacies. Ultimately, memory is not a zero-sum game.²⁰ Instead of memory competition, I have proposed the concept of multidirectional memory, which is meant to draw attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance. Thinking in terms of multidirectional memory helps explain the spiraling interactions that characterize the politics of memory—the fact, borne out by Muhammad’s reference to the “black holocaust,” that the use of the Holocaust as a metaphor or analogy for other events and histories has emerged precisely because the Holocaust is widely thought of as a unique and uniquely terrible form of political violence.²¹ Assertions of uniqueness thus actually produce further metaphorical and analogical appropriations (which, in turn, prompt further assertions of uniqueness). However, such moments coexist with complex acts of solidarity in which historical memory serves as a medium for the creation of new communal and political identities. It is often difficult to tell whether a given act of memory is more likely to produce competition or mutual understanding—sometimes both seem to happen simultaneously. A model of multidirectional memory allows for the perception of the power differentials that tend to cluster around memory competition, but it also locates that competition within a larger spiral of memory discourse in which even hostile invocations of memory can provide vehicles for further, countervailing commemorative acts. The model of multidirectional memory posits collective memory as partially disengaged from exclusive versions of cultural identity and acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites. While I hold that understanding

memory as multidirectional is ultimately preferable to models of competition, exclusivity, and exceptionality, I also consider cases in this book where memory's multidirectionality functions in the interests of violence or exclusion instead of solidarity.

Rethinking Screen Memory

Some critics targeting the Holocaust's alleged domination of the spheres of collective memory adopt a psychoanalytic terminology and describe remembrance of the Holocaust as a "screen memory" (*Deckerinnerung*). According to this Freud-inspired argument, memory of the Holocaust doesn't simply compete with that of other pasts, but provides (as the arguments of Linenthal and Stannard alluded to above suggest) a greater level of "comfort" than confrontation with more "local" problems would allow. Thus, in a sophisticated version of this argument, film scholar Miriam Hansen speculates that "the popular American fascination with the Holocaust may function as a 'screen memory' in the Freudian sense, covering up a traumatic event—another traumatic event—that cannot be approached directly. . . . The displaced referents . . . may extend to events as distant as the genocide of Native Americans or as recent as the Vietnam War."²² While Hansen's argument echoes Michael's, her emphasis on displacement—as opposed simply to silencing—opens up a potentially more productive approach to the relation between different traumatic events. *Multidirectional Memory* incorporates psychoanalytic insights, such as Hansen's, but my reading of Freud shows that his understanding of screen memory approximates the multidirectional model I develop here rather than the model of competition: the displacement that takes place in screen memory (indeed, in all memory) functions as much to open up lines of communication with the past as to close them off.²³

Memory is, as Freud recognized, primarily an associative process that works through displacement and substitution; it is fundamentally and structurally multidirectional, even though powerful forces are always trying to shape it according to more or less rigid psychic or ideological parameters.²⁴ In the 1899 essay "Screen Memories" and again a decade later in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud tries to understand why some memories from childhood are preserved and some are not. In

particular, he asks why "the content of some people's earliest memories consists of everyday impressions that are of no consequence and could not have affected the child emotionally, but were nonetheless noted in copious detail . . . whereas other, roughly contemporaneous events are not remembered, even though the parents testify that the child was profoundly affected by them at the time."²⁵ Pursuing networks of associations between the particularities of a memory and other events in an individual's life, Freud determines that the banal memory of the everyday is in fact a *screen memory*, "one that owes its value as a memory not to its intrinsic content, but to the relation obtaining between this content and some other, which has been suppressed" ("Screen" 19). Despite its apparent innocence, screen memory stands in or substitutes for a more disturbing or painful memory that it displaces from consciousness. (Note that the screen memory is at some level authentic, according to Freud; it is not a mere fantasy.) The mechanism of screen memory thus illustrates concretely how a kind of forgetting accompanies acts of remembrance, but this kind of forgetting is subject to recall.²⁶

As Freud clarifies in "On Childhood Memories and Screen Memories," a chapter in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, the content of the screen memory has a variety of "temporal relation[s]" with "the subject it has screened out." He distinguishes between "retrospective," "anticipatory," and "simultaneous" screen memories in order to clarify that the content of a screen memory can be formed by projections from repressed memories that happened after, before, or at the same time as the remembered events.²⁷ Noting the temporal complexity that Freud finds in childhood memories (and pointing out that the memories at stake in "Screen Memories" are probably Freud's own), Hugh Haughton writes that "the notion of the 'screen' or 'cover' becomes increasingly many-layered and multidirectional."²⁸ The English translation of *Deckerinnerungen* (literally, "cover memories") as "screen memories" is thus apt, if not literal, since such memories do encapsulate two notions of the "screen": they serve both as a barrier between consciousness and the unconscious, and as a site of projection for unconscious fantasies, fears, and desires, which can then be decoded. Consequently, screen memory is, in my terminology, multidirectional not only because it stands at the center of a potentially complex set of temporal relations, but also—and perhaps more importantly—because

it both hides and reveals that which has been suppressed. The example of screen memory—which as with so many concepts in Freud begins as a special case but ends up seeming to encompass almost all acts of remembrance—suggests the limits of the model of memory as competition. While screen memory might be understood as involving a conflict of memories, it ultimately more closely resembles a remapping of memory in which links between memories are formed and then redistributed between the conscious and unconscious. To be sure, the truths of memory are often in tension with the truths of history; as with many of the multidirectional exchanges that I consider here, the “motives” of screen memory are “far removed from the aim of historical fidelity” (Freud, “Screen” 21). Yet both screen memories and multidirectional memories provide access to truths nonetheless, truths that produce insight about individual and collective processes of meaning-making. Thinking about screen memories and multidirectional memories as less “pathological” than “normal” proves to be a boon to interpretation.²⁹ Awareness of the inevitability of displacement and substitution in acts of remembrance points toward the need both to acknowledge the conflicts that subtend memory and work toward a rearticulation of historical relatedness beyond paradigms of uniqueness.

If multidirectional memory functions at the level of the collective as screen memory does at the level of the individual, there remain obvious difficulties with moving from Freud’s model to a discussion of the intersection of memories of the Holocaust and colonialism. First, while screen memory is individual and biographical, multidirectional memory, as I use it, is primarily collective and historical, although it is never divorced from individuals and their biographies either. Additionally, while screen memory replaces a disturbing memory with a more comforting, everyday scene, the multidirectional memory explored here frequently juxtaposes two or more disturbing memories and disrupts everyday settings. These are important distinctions, but further reflection also helps to modulate the apparent starkness of the differences between screen and multidirectional memories.

Let’s take these difficulties one at a time, beginning with the question of what we mean by collective memory. The work of the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs is crucial here since it helps to break down the commonsense opposition between individual and collective memory. For

Halbwachs and the tradition that has emerged from him, all memories are simultaneously individual and collective: while individual subjects are the necessary locus of the act of remembrance, those individuals are imbued with frameworks common to the collectives in which they live.³⁰ The frameworks of memory function something like language—they provide a shared medium within which alone individuals can remember or articulate themselves. The philosopher Avishai Margalit’s distinction between two forms of collective memory, common and shared, helps clarify further how memory operates beyond the individual: “A common memory . . . is an aggregate notion. It aggregates the memories of all those people who remember a certain episode which each of them experienced individually. . . . A *shared* memory, on the other hand, is not a simple aggregate of individual memories. It requires communication. A shared memory integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember the episode . . . into one version. . . . Shared memory is built on a division of mnemonic labor.”³¹ The memory at stake in multidirectional memory, and indeed in most collective memory today, resembles Margalit’s shared memory. When we talk about collective Holocaust memory or about collective memories of colonialism and decolonization, we are talking primarily about shared memory, memory that may have been initiated by individuals but that has been mediated through networks of communication, institutions of the state, and the social groupings of civil society.

In contemporary societies, mediascapes of all kinds play a predominant role in the construction of the memory frameworks described by Halbwachs. While global media technologies make possible a new kind of common memory, via the creation of global media events that all might witness simultaneously, the lack of an Archimedean point of reference ensures that even memory of such events (like the attacks of September 11, 2001) will ultimately more closely resemble shared memory with its division of labor and calibration of different perspectives. Both Halbwachs and Margalit, however, seem to overestimate the degree to which collective memory will converge into “one version.” Multidirectional memory is collective memory insofar as it is formed within social frameworks; it is shared memory insofar as it is formed within mediascapes that entail “a division of mnemonic labor.” Yet the concept of multidirectional memory differs from both of these others because it highlights the inevitable

displacements and contingencies that mark all remembrance. Collective memory is multilayered both because it is highly mediated and because individuals and groups play an active role in rearticulating memory, if never with complete consciousness or unimpeded agency. Competitive scenarios can derive from these restless rearticulations, but so can visions that construct solidarity out of the specificities, overlaps, and echoes of different historical experiences.

The other difference between screen memory and multidirectional memory concerns the question of the affective charge of the memories at issue. For Freud, screen memories stand in for and distract from something disturbing—either a traumatic event or an illicit, unacknowledged desire. As we have seen above, many critics think that memories of the Holocaust function this way, at least in places like the contemporary United States that are temporally and spatially far removed from the events of the Nazi period. What is odd about the case of Holocaust memory, however, is that such memory hardly seems innocent or comforting. And yet, as the concept of screen memory reveals, the content of a memory has no intrinsic meaning but takes on meaning precisely in relationship to other memories in a network of associations. My interest in multidirectional memory takes off from this insight to complicate assumptions about what in memory is “innocent” and what is “disturbing,” about what serves as a necessary screen for the projection of memories and what as a barrier to remembrance. Looking at particular cases leads me to conclude (in the spirit of Freud, but sometimes with opposite results) that one cannot know in advance how the articulation of a memory will function; nor can one even be sure that it will function only in one way. The concept of multidirectional memory holds memory open to these different possibilities, but does not subscribe to a simple pluralism, either. While a given memory rarely functions in a single way or means only one thing, all articulations of memory are not equal; powerful social, political, and psychic forces articulate themselves in every act of remembrance.

On Comparison and Justice

Because of the complex psychic demands that Freud identified, individual memory emerges and recedes in fits and starts—especially when

the memory of traumatic events is at stake. The same holds true for collective memory. When we look at collective memory historically, one thing we notice is how unevenly—and sometimes unexpectedly—it develops. Memories of particular events come and go and sometimes take on a surprising importance long after the materiality of the events remembered has faded from view. An important epistemological gain in considering memory as multidirectional instead of as competitive is the insight, developed here through historical case studies, that the emergence of memories into the public often takes place through triggers that may at first seem irrelevant or even unseemly. Thus, to give a concrete example that will prove significant for this book, the practice of torture seems like an unlikely trigger for Holocaust memory—for how could a practice as widespread, if repellant, as torture conjure up the extremity of genocide? But in France during the Algerian War of Independence many observers understood the French state’s widespread use of extrajudicial violence as just such a reawakening of the past. As I discuss in Chapters 6 and 7, some survivors of the Nazi camps, such as the Austrian/Belgian writer Jean Améry, even cite the discussion of torture as one of the impetuses for their own public articulation of Holocaust memory. But this is not the end of the story. For a practice that triggered memory of Nazism at one moment could later serve as a trigger in France for memory of the Algerian War itself—a war that had for almost four decades seemed to be blocked from view even as, in its wake, Holocaust consciousness experienced an incredible growth. Thus, the turn of the millennium in France (and elsewhere) has seen renewed debates about torture, renewed interest in the connections between the Holocaust and the Algerian War, and a sense—expressed in Michael Haneke’s film *Caché*, among other places—that post-9/11 policies in the United States echo older histories of imperial and fascist violence.³² It is precisely that convoluted, sometimes historically unjustified, back-and-forth movement of seemingly distant collective memories in and out of public consciousness that I qualify as memory’s multidirectionality. As these examples, which will be pursued at much greater length later in this book, begin to suggest, thinking of memory as multidirectional instead of competitive does not entail dispensing with a notion of the urgency of memory, with its life-and-death stakes. Rather, these examples alert us to the need for a form of comparative thinking that, like memory itself, is not afraid to traverse sacrosanct borders of ethnicity and era.

The shift in the conceptualization of memory from competition to multidirectionality that this book advocates has methodological implications for comparative thinking and study. A central methodological problem and opportunity concerns the constitution of the archive for comparative work. Far from being situated—either physically or discursively—in any single institution or site, the archive of multidirectional memory is irreducibly transversal; it cuts across genres, national contexts, periods, and cultural traditions. Because dominant ways of thinking (such as competitive memory) have refused to acknowledge the multidirectional flows of influence and articulation that collective memory activates, the comparative critic must first constitute the archive by forging links between dispersed documents. As this book demonstrates, there is no shortage of cross-referencing between the legacies of the Holocaust and colonialism, but many of those moments of contact occur in marginalized texts or in marginal moments of well-known texts. The evidence is there, but the archive must be constructed with the help of the change in vision made possible by a new kind of comparative thinking. The greatest threat to the visibility of this marginalized archive of Holocaust memory in the age of decolonization is the kind of zero-sum thinking that underwrites the logic of competitive memory. The greatest hope for a new comparatism lies in opening up the separate containers of memory and identity that buttress competitive thinking and becoming aware of the mutual constitution and ongoing transformation of the objects of comparison.³³ Too often comparison is understood as “equation”—the Holocaust cannot be compared to any other history, the story goes, because it is unlike them all. This project takes dissimilarity for granted, since no two events are ever alike, and then focuses its intellectual energy on investigating what it means to invoke connections nonetheless.³⁴ The logic of comparison explored here does not stand or fall on connections that can be empirically validated for historical accuracy; nor can we ensure that all such connections will be politically palatable to all concerned parties. Rather, a certain bracketing of empirical history and an openness to the possibility of strange political bedfellows are necessary in order for the imaginative links between different histories and social groups to come into view; these imaginative links are the substance of multidirectional memory. Comparison, like memory, should be thought of as productive—as producing new objects and new

lines of sight—and not simply as reproducing already given entities that either are or are not “like” other already given entities.

Emphasizing the dimension of imagination involved in acts of remembrance should not lead to assumptions of memory’s insubstantiality. Remembrance and imagination are material forces as well as fundamentally human ones. They cannot be wished away, nor, I believe, should they be. Despite the plentiful evidence of violence and willed oblivion that can accompany hegemonic (and sometimes even subaltern) acts of remembrance—and despite this book’s predominantly dark subject matter—*Multidirectional Memory* has been written under the sign of optimism. Because the structures of individual and collective memory are multidirectional, they prove difficult to contain in the molds of exclusivist identities. If memory is as susceptible as any other human faculty to abuse—and here again Muhammad’s speech serves as a convenient example, although only one of many—this study seeks to emphasize how memory is at least as often a spur to unexpected acts of empathy and solidarity; indeed multidirectional memory is often the very grounds on which people construct and act upon visions of justice.

A theory of multidirectional memory can help us in the task of “reframing justice in a globalizing world,” to cite the title of a relevant essay by political philosopher Nancy Fraser.³⁵ Fraser argues that today’s debates about justice—which she defines as “parity of participation” (73)—need to move beyond the “Keynesian-Westphalian frame” that has defined them for most of the post-World War II era. By this she means that the acceleration of globalization creates injustices that a previously taken-for-granted nation-state framework based on a national citizenry can no longer solve (if it ever could). For Fraser, drawing attention to the way capitalism, migrations, and other transnational forces break the nation-state frame also brings into view a third dimension of justice beyond economic redistribution and cultural recognition that theorists need to account for, a dimension she associates with questions of political representation: “Whether the issue is distribution or recognition, disputes that used to focus exclusively on the question of *what* is owed as a matter of justice to community members now turn quickly into disputes about *who* should count as a member and *which* is the relevant community. Not just the ‘what’ but also the ‘who’ is up for grabs” (72). Additionally, addressing the issue of the

subjects or “who” of justice entails, Fraser argues, thinking about the procedures or “how” of justice (84). The matters of “who” and “how” point toward what she calls “meta-political” issues concerning the “framing” of disputes over justice. Framing entails decisions about who is permitted to claim the right to speak about issues of injustice affecting them. In a globalizing world, in which transnational factors (such as flows of capital and ecological degradation) coexist with or even predominate over national factors, debates about framing become unavoidable elements of a quest for justice. As Fraser sums up the political force of her argument, “Struggles for justice in a globalizing world cannot succeed unless they go hand in hand with struggles for *meta-political democracy*. . . . [N]o redistribution or recognition without representation” (85–86).

As my opening example of Michaels and Muhammad illustrates, debates about collective memory and group identity are primarily struggles over injustices of recognition, over whose history and culture will be recognized. Such injustices are real, but the rethinking of the relation between memory and identity can contribute to a rethinking of cultural recognition beyond zero-sum logic.³⁶ Fraser helps us see that part of the problem may lie in the assumed nation-state framing of the problem of recognition, although she also recognizes, as I do, that the nation remains a significant player in questions of recognition, redistribution, and political representation. Despite Michaels’s and Muhammad’s desire to fix the memory wats to the landscape of the Mall in Washington, the articulations of cultural recognition and collective memory I consider in this book do not remain tied to the fetishized sites of the state—which doesn’t mean that they ignore the salience of state spaces either. Such articulations also allow us to supplement Fraser’s account.³⁷

In *Multidirectional Memory* I reveal how memory of the Nazi genocide and struggles for decolonization have persistently broken the frame of the nation-state during the entire period of Keynesian-Westphalian dominance. Fraser admits that there have been exceptions in the post-war period to the framing of justice on the terrain of the nation-state, but she doesn’t consider in a substantive way what such exceptions might contribute to reframing justice: “Occasionally, famines and genocides galvanized public opinion across borders. And some cosmopolitans and anti-imperialists sought to promulgate globalist views. But these were

exceptions that proved the rule” (69–70). *Multidirectional Memory* focuses on just such exceptional views and makes visible a countertradition that not only foregrounds unexpected resonance between the Holocaust and colonialism but also can provide resources for the rethinking of justice. In addition to moving the logic of recognition beyond identitarian competition, the theory of multidirectional memory and the countertradition it helps expose can contribute to what Fraser calls “the politics of framing”: “Focused on the issues of who counts as a subject of justice, and what is the appropriate frame, the politics of framing comprises efforts to establish and consolidate, to contest and revise, the authoritative division of political space” (80). A work of scholarship does not intervene directly in the materiality of political space, although many of the intellectuals I address were actively involved in political struggle. Rather, I undertake an archaeology of the comparative imagination in the hopes that documenting these earlier attempts to reconceptualize the subjects of justice can inspire our present and future projects to remake political space.

Argument and Outline of the Book

In *Multidirectional Memory*, I put forward arguments that are theoretical, historical, and—in a world not yet free from colonialism or genocide—inevitably political. Let me reprise them while also outlining the scope and trajectory of the book. At the level of theory, I rethink the conceptualization of collective memory in multicultural and transnational contexts. Fully cognizant of the differentials of access and power that mark the public sphere, I nevertheless provide a framework that draws attention to the inevitable dialogical exchange between memory traditions and keeps open the possibility of a more just future of memory. I identify the misrecognition of collective memory as a zero-sum game—instead of an open-ended field of articulation and struggle—as one of the stumbling blocks for a more inclusive renarration of the history of memory and a harnessing of the legacies of violence in the interests of a more egalitarian future. Several of the chapters of *Multidirectional Memory* also suggest the need to think outside the universal/particular opposition that marks much discussion of the politics of identity and cultural difference. Many of the writers, intellectuals, and activists considered here point us instead

toward a multidirectional ethics that combines the capacious open-endedness of the universal with the concrete, situational demands of the particular. An ethics of multidirectional memory involves creating fidelity (in the sense given that term by Alain Badiou's *Ethics*) with the multiple events and historical legacies that define any situation.³⁸ A politics built on that ethical foundation will require a notion of transnational, comparative justice that can negotiate conflicting and sometimes mutually exclusive demands made on unstable and shifting terrain.

At the historical level, *Multidirectional Memory* uncovers a marginalized tradition that has implications both for Holocaust studies and postcolonial studies—and can serve to stimulate the kinds of ethical and political thinking I call for here. Drawing on this tradition of Jewish and non-Jewish writers, artists, and political figures, I renarrate the received history of Holocaust memory. I demonstrate, first, that the early postwar period is richer and more complex than earlier studies, with their stress on a period of silence and repression that lasts until around the time of the Eichmann trial in 1961, have allowed. Shifting attention to unexpected texts, such as the writings of Du Bois on the Holocaust, or underexplored contexts, such as André Schwarz-Bart's engagement with the Caribbean diaspora, reveals both more Holocaust remembrance than we've been led to expect in this era and markedly more comparative forms of memory than would come to predominate in later decades. My renarration of this early postwar period reveals, additionally, that the emergence of collective memory of the Nazi genocide in the 1950s and 1960s takes place in a punctual dialogue with ongoing processes of decolonization and civil rights struggle and their modes of coming to terms with colonialism, slavery, and racism. Tracing events and reading texts from the late 1940s to the beginning of the twenty-first century, I make the case for a long-term minoritarian tradition of "decolonized" Holocaust memory.

This new approach to Holocaust memory has implications, in turn, for those concerned primarily with the varied experience of decolonization and the aftermaths of colonialism. Postcolonial studies can learn from the history of Jews and anti-Semitism in Europe in a number of ways. In particular, the experience of Jewish difference within modern Europe—and the frequently violent reaction Jews confronted—foreshadows many of the debates and problems faced by postcolonial societies and by postcolonial

migrants in contemporary Europe.³⁹ Even if the histories of Jews and formerly colonized peoples diverge significantly, Europe's ambivalent memory of the Nazi genocide has left traces that inflect policies and discussions concerning race, religion, nationalism, and citizenship today. Attention to the history of Jews on the continent can serve as a timely warning not to homogenize conceptions of Europe on ethnic, racial, or religious grounds—a tendency that has understandably played an important role in postcolonial critique but is now more frequently associated with conservative (and increasingly liberal!) perspectives within Europe. While minority and postcolonial critique has had a tendency sharply to distinguish Jews from postcolonial subjects on the grounds of Jews' presumed "whiteness"—a tradition that harks back to founding texts by Césaire and Fanon and is based on a somewhat ahistorical understanding—the tradition uncovered here draws attention to possibilities for solidarity as well as distinction. Shared histories of racism, spatial segregation, genocide, diasporic displacement, cultural destruction, and—perhaps most important—savvy and creative resistance to hegemonic demands provide the grounds for new forms of collectivity that would not ignore equally powerful histories of division and difference.

Multidirectional Memory consists of four sections of two chapters each and addresses more than a half-century of cultural history in Europe, North America, the Caribbean, and North Africa. It begins with the observation that some of the earliest responses to the Nazi genocide placed it on a conceptual continuum with colonialism and antiblack racism. Part I, "Boomerang Effects: Bare Life, Trauma, and the Colonial Turn in Holocaust Studies," considers the figures through which such connections were made in two influential works from the beginning of the 1950s: Hannah Arendt's attempt to read the history of Nazi terror back through imperialism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Chapter 2) and Aimé Césaire's understanding of Nazism as the return of the colonial repressed in his polemical pamphlet *Discourse on Colonialism* (Chapter 3). Arendt's notion of the "boomerang effect" and Césaire's "choc en retour" (translated as "boomerang effect," but more literally a backlash or reverse shock) both describe the unexpected debt of totalitarianism to colonialism, although the two writers approach these links from different directions and with significantly different political assumptions. Despite

presciently drawing detailed connections between two now seemingly separate histories, Arendt proves unable to elude discourses of the human, the progressive, and the universal that remain complicit with the violence she is trying to explain. While Arendt remains at the limits of Eurocentrism, Césaire aims his polemic specifically against European self-understanding. Drawing on multiple intellectual and cultural traditions, Césaire uses the *choc en retour* to expose the multidirectional ripple effects of extreme violence. While focused especially on European disavowal of colonial atrocities, Césaire also exposes how an inability to come to terms with Nazism inflects late colonial discourse. Césaire's *Discourse*, along with his student Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, helps us to forge a multidirectional trauma theory that accounts for the experience of colonialism and genocide, although investment in a certain version of Marxist theory and the exigencies of anticolonial struggle sometimes impair his attention to the specificity of the Nazi genocide.

Part II, "Migrations of Memory: Ruins, Ghettos, Diasporas," continues the consideration of the early postwar period and adds attention to the spaces and places of memory's movements. Two writers who successfully negotiate the multidirectional perspective opened up by Arendt and Césaire bookend this section: W. E. B. Du Bois and Caryl Phillips. In between, I discuss the more ambivalent case of André Schwarz-Bart. In Chapter 4, Du Bois's visit to the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1949, which he reflected on in a 1952 article, becomes the occasion for modeling multidirectional memory. Placing "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto" within the larger context of Du Bois's thinking about Jews, Nazism, race, and resistance, I demonstrate how, against the backdrop of the cold war and continued segregation in the United States, Du Bois rearticulates his concept of "double consciousness" to incorporate the experiences of other minority groups. In particular, his powerful response to the ruins of the ghetto and to Nathan Rapoport's much-maligned Ghetto Monument demonstrates the workings of a multidirectional memory able to hold together the disparate histories of blacks and Jews while simultaneously allowing for the rearticulation of their specificities. In Chapter 5, I continue the discussion of blacks and Jews through attention to two writers who also foreground ghettos, ruins, and other diasporic spaces as sites of multidirectional exchange. Here I pursue the anachronistic aesthetic

projects of Schwarz-Bart and Phillips, which bring together that which is supposed to be kept apart. Although forms of anachronism constitute different types of "error" when perceived from a historicist perspective, they can also be powerfully subversive and demystifying in the ways that they expose the ideological assumptions of historicist categorization, as novels such as Schwarz-Bart's *A Woman Named Solitude* and Phillips's *Higher Ground* and *The Nature of Blood* demonstrate. While Schwarz-Bart struggles—and might ultimately be seen to fail—to find a literary form for the anachronistic juxtaposition of black and Jewish histories, Phillips employs fragmentation and intertextuality in order to develop an aesthetic premised on nonappropriative hospitality to histories of the other. Both writers, however, continue the attempt by Du Bois to think through colonialism's and genocide's disruptions of space and time, and, in different manners, they reflect on possibilities for resistance to the legacies of those disruptions.

The historical resistance to Nazi occupation and European colonialism lies at the heart of Part III, "Truth, Torture, Testimony: Holocaust Memory During the Algerian War," and Part IV, "October 17, 1961: A Site of Holocaust Memory?" Here I focus intensely on metropolitan anticolonial resistance during the late stages of the Algerian War of Independence. Part III explores how the resonance between the violence of decolonization and that of the Nazi genocide created a multidirectional network of memory that facilitated the emergence of survivor testimony as a powerful genre for exposing both forms of violence. At the very moment when the Israeli state was staging survivor testimony in the Eichmann trial, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin set out to experiment with documentary form by producing what they called "cinéma vérité." Their documentary, *Chronicle of Summer*, the topic of Chapter 6, turns out to feature testimony by a Holocaust survivor at its center and juxtaposes that testimony with discussions of race, decolonization, and colonial war. Turning to contemporaneous discourses of the anticolonial movement in France, I demonstrate how the notion of "truth" that is central to cinéma vérité circulates in attempts to expose the violence of the late colonial state. In particular, controversies about torture, censorship, and the use of concentration camps in the fight against the Algerian independence movement lead to the importance of testimony as a mode of articulating the suppressed truth of colonialism.

In the same year that the Eichmann trial and *Chronicle of a Summer* staged Holocaust testimony in public, Auschwitz survivor and memoirist Charlotte Delbo published her first book—a collection of open letters, surrounded by Delbo’s editorial comments, on the Algerian War. Chapter 7 demonstrates how the same context of torture, censorship, and camps that elicits Rouch and Morin’s film also prompts Delbo to reflect on the form of testimony and the shape of the public sphere. Much more explicitly than *Chronicle*, *Les belles lettres* is a political text; it takes part, materially and discursively, in a network of anticolonial activity. Harnessing memory of the Nazi occupation and genocide, Delbo’s text offers possibilities for a critical, leftist politics of Holocaust memory that also possesses implications for a moment defined by “war on terror.”

By the time *Les belles lettres* was published and *Chronicle of a Summer* opened in Paris in the fall of 1961, the country was facing another crisis pertaining to the war in Algeria. At the very moment when the war seemed headed for a certain end with the coming independence of Algeria, violence intensified in the metropole as well as in the colony. Ongoing violent confrontations between the French state, the Algerian independence group the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), and the extreme right-wing Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS) culminated in a police massacre of dozens of unarmed, peacefully demonstrating Algerians in the streets of Paris during the evening of October 17. Part IV continues to explore the echoes that the Algerian War has cast around the globe and uncovers a multinational archive of texts that respond to the October 17, 1961 massacre and roundup by Maurice Papon’s Paris police. Long absent from the dominant collective memory of France, October 17 has in recent decades become a significant site of mobilization for antiracist and migrant groups. Drawing on research into contemporaneous responses among the cohort of anticolonial activists discussed in the previous chapters as well as works produced long after the events, this section of the book argues that the October events constitute a significant turning point in French Holocaust memory and that a lasting multidirectional network connects the Nazi past to this episode of the Algerian War.

In Chapter 8, I focus in particular on contemporaneous responses in order to mount an argument about race, gender, and universalism. Considering both a little-known journalistic text by the French writer

Marguerite Duras and a recently rediscovered novel by the African American writer William Gardner Smith, I demonstrate how the French state’s late colonial racialization of the war led to intensified connections with the experiences of Jews under Nazi occupation. I also show how these texts can help us rethink discussions of the universalization of the Holocaust by foregrounding complicity and revealing a multidirectional alternative beyond the universal/particular opposition—an opposition that nevertheless sneaks back into Smith’s novel through a simplified gendering of memory. Chapter 9 tracks the return of attention to October 17 since the 1980s in order to argue for an ethics of multidirectional memory subtended by a fidelity to historical comparison. Here the key texts are a novel by the French detective fiction writer Didier Daeninckx, the Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke’s 2005 feature film *Caché*, and a novel for young adults by French-Algerian writer Leïla Sebbar. I also read the latter two works in relation to the 1997–98 trial of Papon for crimes against humanity during the Holocaust, which offers fascinating evidence of the current status of multidirectional memory and testimony and of the transformations under way due to generational shifts. As both the trial and the works of Sebbar and Haneke suggest, the figure of the child has taken center stage as a site of uneasy, multidirectional memory. This chapter reflects on the possible ethical and political significance of the child as a bearer of memory and postmemory in a moment of violent global transformation.⁴⁰

As the scope and scale of *Multidirectional Memory* suggest, the book cannot possibly offer a comprehensive survey of all texts, films, or political movements that engage with both the Holocaust and European colonialism. But it does provide both in-depth analysis of many key texts from this not-yet-recognized, six-decade-old tradition and close consideration of moments of epochal change—such as the transitional early postwar years and the 1961 turning point when Holocaust memory increasingly entered the public sphere and many formerly colonized nations attained independence. I hope that other scholars will find it worthwhile to apply, adapt, or correct the approach undertaken here. Certainly, the methodology of the book could be directly applied to other obviously “multidirectional” works such as Michelle Cliff’s *Abeng* (1984; Anne Frank and the Caribbean), Anita Desai’s *Baumgartner’s Bombay* (1989; the Holocaust

and the colonization of India), Nancy Huston's *The Mark of the Angel* (1999; the Algerian War and the Holocaust), or W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001; the Holocaust and Belgian colonialism). In addition, the writings of French–Jewish–North African scholars Hélène Cixous, Jacques Derrida, and Albert Memmi constitute a fertile terrain for further investigation. Perhaps more crucially, the concept of multidirectional memory might help scholars working on other historical and cultural traditions—histories and traditions that sometimes overlap explicitly with those discussed here and sometimes do not. Multidirectional legacies of violence haunt the histories of indigenous peoples on a global scale and cut across the former Yugoslavia and other parts of the former Soviet Bloc as well as Afghanistan, South Africa, Argentina, and other formerly colonized nations. Meanwhile, labor migrants and their descendants in Europe often find themselves confronted with the ghosts of the past at the same time that they experience the prejudices of the present.⁴¹ Finally, there are the prospective multidirectional legacies of the American war in Iraq, a country scarred by colonialism, dictatorship, and genocide, and now by neoimperialism and civil war.

That unhappy current conjuncture shadows this book, but the book also directly confronts those shadows at a couple of key moments. Indeed, the Algerian War, which figures so prominently in these pages, has increasingly become a charged and highly politicized reference point at the turn of the new millennium, as Haneke's film *Caché* also attests. The Bush administration frequently references Algeria as an analogy for Iraq, and the Pentagon even hosted a screening of Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*, apparently in order to "benefit" from its insights into counterinsurgency.⁴² Having considered the Algerian question throughout the second half of this book, I briefly turn to another multidirectional political hotspot in conclusion. Along with the Iraq War and the "war on terror," which, with their liberal use of torture and indefinite detention, have produced uncomfortable echoes of the Holocaust and colonial adventures past, the other dominant political site of multidirectional memory today is the ongoing Palestinian–Israeli crisis. In the Epilogue, "Multidirectional Memory in an Age of Occupations," I briefly consider the implications of my theory of collective memory for that intractable struggle as well as for the claims of indigenous peoples.

I use this short epilogue to make a few concluding points relevant to the book's exploration of multidirectional memories of genocide and colonialism. Through the example of the Israeli historian Benny Morris, I argue that invocations of the Holocaust in the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict are part of a larger multidirectional network that includes apocalyptic colonial fantasies of the dissolution of the "Western" self—fantasies that in Morris's case reference France's "loss" of Algeria and call upon the Conradian vision of savagery that plays a disruptive role in Arendt's account of imperialism and that Césaire acutely critiques. I further argue that despite the obvious ugliness of many of the invocations of the Holocaust in the context of contemporary Middle Eastern politics (and elsewhere!) and the temptation to declare a moratorium on such references, the theory and history of multidirectional memory suggests the need to confront a different possibility. While all intercultural memory does not foster cross-cultural understanding—as the case of Morris illustrates here—comparisons, analogies, and other multidirectional invocations are an inevitable part of the struggle for justice. Against the alternatives to comparison—an intense investment in the particularity of every case or the promulgation of absolutely neutral and universal principles—I offer the multidirectional option: an ethical vision based on commitment to uncovering historical relatedness and working through the partial overlaps and conflicting claims that constitute the archives of memory and the terrain of politics.

Notes

CHAPTER I

1. Walter Benn Michaels, "Plots Against America: Neoliberalism and Antiracism," *American Literary History* (summer 2006): 288–302; here 289–90. See also my response in "Against Zero-Sum Logic: A Response to Walter Benn Michaels," *American Literary History* (summer 2006): 303–11. Michaels's passage can be found in almost identical form in *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality* (New York: Metropolitan, 2006), 55–56. Michaels makes some related points about the Holocaust, memory, and identity in his previous book *The Shape of the Signifier: 1967 to the End of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

2. For a critical account of the memory boom, see Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of *Memory* in Historical Discourse," *Representations* 69 (2000): 127–50. An earlier version of a related argument can be found in Charles Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory?" *History and Memory* 5, no. 2 (1993): 136–51. For sophisticated theoretical and cultural-historical discussion of the emergence of memory on a global scale and in relation to temporal, technological, and political change, see Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003). An excellent survey of recent work on memory, with an emphasis on sociology, can be found in Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 105–40. With the exception of Huyssen, none of these writings considers the kinds of intersecting, cross-ethnic, and transnational memories at stake in my study. Marita Sturken has explored the entanglement and negotiation of different memories, albeit within a national frame, in *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Memory is itself a historical category and does not remain stable over time. This book seeks to contribute to the theorization and historicization of memory in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and thus engages primarily with work on modern memory practices. Important work on earlier periods includes Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and

Kegan Paul, 1966); and Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

3. See Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993). In understanding memory as a form of working through, I am indebted especially to Dominick LaCapra's writings on trauma and Holocaust memory. Among other works, see his *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998). On remembrance as a form of social practice in the equally relevant contexts of Jewish studies and colonial/postcolonial studies, see, respectively, Jonathan Boyarin, *Storm from Paradise: The Politics of Jewish Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); and Jennifer Cole, *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

4. Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche, "Introduction: Noises of the Past," in *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture*, ed. A. Confino and P. Fritzsche (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 5. Relatedly, Olick and Robbins clarify that collective memory is not a "thing," but rather comprises "distinct sets of mnemonic practices in various social sites" (112). Taking advantage of the semantic resources of the French language, Philippe Mesnard refers, in a work too little known in the English-speaking world, to "consciences de la Shoah." He thus suggests replacing the concept of memory with a phrase that combines the notions of "consciousness" and "conscience." See Philippe Mesnard, *Consciences de la Shoah: Critique des discours et des représentations* (Paris: Kimé, 2000).

5. For an exemplary and nuanced study that also knits together history, biography, and representation, see Susan Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

6. For the belated emergence of Holocaust memory in different national contexts, see Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); and Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006). For the presence of Holocaust consciousness in the "third world," see William Miles, "Third World View of the Holocaust," *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 3 (2004): 371–93.

7. On the globalization of Holocaust memory, see Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, especially his comments on the "globalization paradox" (13–14); and Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005). I return to Levy and Sznajder, as well as to the important work of Jeffrey Alexander on cultural trauma—*The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)—in Chapter 8.

8. In considering this era and this conjunction of histories, the work of scholars in postcolonial and African diaspora studies is essential. Both of these (already quite heterogeneous) fields have enormous literatures, and I mention only a few key texts here. Paul Gilroy's writings have been a particular inspiration. See especially his *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); and his *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2002). Brent Hayes Edwards has continued and refined scholarship on diaspora. See *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). For an excellent overview of colonial and postcolonial discourses, see Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005). Robert Young's *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, Eng.: Blackwell, 2001) provides a useful historical account of anticolonial writings and movements.

9. Elie Wiesel, *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel*, ed. Irving Abrahamson (New York: Holocaust Library, 1985), 158. Claude Lanzmann, "The Obscurity of Understanding: An Evening with Claude Lanzmann," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), 206.

10. Steven T. Katz, "The Uniqueness of the Holocaust: The Historical Dimension," in *Is the Holocaust Unique?: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, 2d ed., ed. Alan S. Rosenbaum (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 49–50.

11. The debate about uniqueness has generated an enormous amount of scholarly and polemical literature. On the side of uniqueness, some of the key figures are Yehuda Bauer, Katz, and Wiesel. Those who have challenged the claims of uniqueness include Ward Churchill, Ian Hancock, and David Stannard. For some representative contributions to this debate, see Rosenbaum, *Is the Holocaust Unique?*

12. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Plume, 1994), 215.

13. Richard Golsan, *Vichy's Afterlife: History and Counterhistory in Postwar France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 20–21.

14. Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995), 267. Linenthal, who certainly recognizes the specificity of the Nazi genocide, does not, like some, argue that Holocaust memory functions only as a "screen memory," but rather provides a useful typology of different modes of memory.

15. David E. Stannard, "Uniqueness as Denial: The Politics of Genocide Scholarship," in *Is the Holocaust Unique?* ed. Alan S. Rosenbaum, 2d ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 250.

16. Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Perennial, 2003), 503. As Dirk Moses points out, Power's study is also symptomatic of the phenomenon it describes, insofar as it refuses to recognize the possibility of the United States as a perpetrator of genocide and not simply a bystander. See A. Dirk Moses, "Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the 'Racial Century': Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust," *Paterns of Prejudice* 36, no. 4 (2002): 7–35.

17. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), xii–xiii.

18. For a succinct articulation of the relations between memory, narrative, and representation, see Mieke Bal's introduction to M. Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, eds., *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 1998).

19. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), 12.

20. In a useful discussion of uniqueness discourse and questions of historical comparison, Moses makes a similar point; his focus, however, is not explicitly on questions of memory. See Moses, "Conceptual Blockages." See also Dan Stone, "The Historiography of Genocide: Beyond 'Uniqueness and Ethnic Competition,'" *History, Memory, and Mass Atrocity: Essays on the Holocaust and Genocide* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), 236–51.

21. James Young develops this point about the metaphorical charge of the Holocaust in his still extremely useful *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*. See James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). See also his excellent study of Holocaust memorialization, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

22. Miriam Hansen, "Schindler's List Is Not Shoah: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (1996):

13. Andreas Huyssen has made a similar claim: "The universalized 'never again' command and with it the instrumentalization of memory for political purposes have become a veil covering ongoing atrocities in our present world. The Holocaust is a screen memory." See Huyssen, "Trauma and Memory: A New Imaginary of Temporality," in *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*, ed. Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 19. My interest in thinking about competitive memory in relation to screen memory was first spurred by Gary Weissman. See his essential work on the contemporary American fascination with the Holocaust, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004). For an excellent discussion of why screen memory is an inadequate frame for thinking about the Holocaust in relationship to aboriginal history in Australia, see Neil

Levi, "'No Sensible Comparison?': The Place of the Holocaust in Australia's History Wars," *History and Memory* 19, no. 1 (2007): 124–56.

23. In the opening chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud attempts to find a metaphor for the preservative capacities of the mind. He evokes the famous image of Rome, with its layers of history preserved in ruins, but then goes on to remark that "destructive influences" analogous to trauma render the city a place of forgetting as much as a site of memory. Even barring such individual or collective traumas, we may not be as optimistic as Freud that in social life, as in mental life, "nothing which has once been formed can perish—that everything is somehow preserved and that in suitable circumstances . . . it can once more be brought to light." Yet, *Multidirectional Memory* takes inspiration from Freud in arguing that much more can be—and always is being—brought back to light than competitive models of memory suppose. See Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), 17–19.

24. For an extensive account of Freud's theories of memory that has influenced my own, see Terdiman's *Present Past*.

25. Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories," *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (New York: Penguin, 2003), 5–6.

26. R. Clifton Spargo makes this point eloquently in describing the approach to history of the contemporary trauma theory associated with Cathy Caruth and inspired by Freud: "What trauma theory proposes as a new mode of historiography is a forgetfulness full of memory, finding in our most basic structures of avoiding knowledge residues of history as trauma and in that sense also the implicit imperatives for subsequent acts of remembrance." See R. Clifton Spargo, *Vigilant Memory: Emmanuel Levinas, the Holocaust, and the Unjust Death* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 257. Spargo's rich and challenging book also engages critically but appreciatively with Walter Benn Michaels and puts forward a concept of the "memory of injustice" that complements my concept of multidirectional memory.

27. Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Penguin, 2003), 45–46.

28. Hugh Haughton, "Introduction," in Freud, *Uncanny*, xix.

29. In an important study of West German Holocaust historiography, Nicolas Berg describes how discussion of the Holocaust in Germany (and elsewhere) has fluctuated between fears of "too much" and "too little" memory. Berg's decoding of these fears and his argument that there can be no perfect balance or just amount of Holocaust memory accord well with this study of multidirectional memory. Although I am more concerned with the "qualities" of memory than its "quantities," my understanding of memory as an associative process not easily contained by identity politics, instrumentalization, or zero-sum logics parallels Berg's account of memory's fluctuation, although I explore significantly different terrain. See Ni-

colas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker: Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003).

30. See, for example, Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

31. Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 51–52.

32. It is important to note that from the very moment that the postwar era began, World War II and Algerian struggles for independence have been linked. On May 8, 1945, a demonstration in the Algerian city of Sétif took place to mark the end of the war and call for decolonization. After several dozen *piéd noirs* were killed in ensuing violence, the French army took part in reprisals that included the massacre of thousands (if not tens of thousands) of Algerians. At least in the formerly colonized world, the massacre has forever soldered together the liberation of Europe from fascism and the reluctance of that liberated Europe to let go of its own forms of extreme violence. On the Sétif massacre, see Yves Benot, *Massacres coloniaux: 1944–1950: La IVe République et la mise au pas des colonies françaises* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001 [1994]).

The recent historical echoes that have reawakened interest in Algeria and the Algerian War have also stirred the interest of other critics. For two different approaches that track Algeria's resonance for critical theory today, especially with respect to violence, justice, and torture, see David Carroll, *Albert Camus the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and Ranjana Khanna, *Algeria Cuts: Women and Representation, 1830 to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

33. Of course, comparison can—and often does—take competitive forms. Such forms show up with especially great frequency when questions of colonialism and “civilization” are at stake. A classic critique of such colonial comparisons can be found in Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). More recently, see Natalie Melas, *All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). Harry Harootunian, who draws on Fabian, details other pitfalls of comparison, especially during the cold war and in relation to capitalist imperialism, in “Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem,” *boundary 2* 32, no. 2 (2005): 23–52. Harootunian argues that many contemporary approaches to comparison end up reifying time as space and proposes the importance of thinking the relationality of space-time along the lines of Bakhtin's chronotope, Henri Lefebvre's critique of everyday life, and Ernst Bloch's concept of nonsynchronicity. My concept of multidirectionality is also meant to draw attention to the inseparability of space and time in acts of remembrance—indeed to the interaction of multiple, nonsynchronous spaces and times. While my account

of multidirectionality acknowledges the potential for competitive comparisons, it seeks to unlock such competitive moments when they arise.

34. For a related view of comparison, with an emphasis on incommensurability, see Melas, *All the Difference in the World*. Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006) also offers a stimulating rethinking of comparative method. My interest in intraminority exchange overlaps with that of the contributors to Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds., *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005). This book's methodology should also make clear my sympathy with Wai Chee Dimock's argument that national literatures need to be read “through other continents” and in relation to nonlinear temporalities, although I'm even less inclined than she is to hold onto adjectives such as “American.” See *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

35. Nancy Fraser, “Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World,” *New Left Review* 36 (November–December 2005): 69–88.

36. The question of economic redistribution exceeds the “frame” of this book (which in no way should be taken as a judgment about the crucial nature of such a question). While matters of economic distribution may well involve zero-sum logics, questions of culture and politics work differently. More work needs to be done in coordinating the claims of these different realms.

37. Other accounts of justice I have found useful include Wai Chee Dimock, *Residues of Justice: Literature, Law, Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

38. I return to Badiou and ethics in Chapter 9. See Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (New York: Verso, 2002). See also my review of this book in *Critique* 43, no. 4 (2001): 478–84.

39. For a fascinating and timely discussion of how debates about Jewishness in Enlightenment Europe echo in the dilemmas of postcolonial societies such as India, see Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

40. Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory—a structure of generational memory that primarily describes the experiences of children of survivors of traumatic events—plays an important role in this final chapter. See her book *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), as well as the many essays on postmemory she has written since then.

I describe the figure of the child as an uneasy site of memory because I am aware of the dangers in the investment in such a figure. Queer theorists, including especially Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, have convincingly drawn atten-

tion to the potential of the figure of the child to reinstall sentimental normativity. While this risk remains significant, I would argue that the texts considered here emerge out of familial and cultural disruptions that they refuse to “normativize” through fetishistic disavowal. In these texts, in other words, the child marks a site of failed transmission and resistance to normativity. See Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); and Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

41. On the “touching tales” that connect Turkish migrants in Germany to Jewish and other histories, see Leslie A. Adelson’s rigorously argued book, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

42. It is often mentioned that Bush and other administration and military personnel have been reading Alistair Horne’s history of the Algerian War, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954–1962* (New York: Viking, 1977). See, for instance, the extended discussion of analogies between Iraq and Algeria in Thomas Ricks’s review of the reissuing of Horne’s book: “Aftershocks: A Classic on France’s Losing Fight with Arab Rebels Contains Troubling Echoes of Iraq Today,” *Washington Post Book World*, November 19, 2006, T5. See also Ricks’s surreal account of a seminar on the Algerian War at the Marine Corps’ School of Advanced Warfighting: “SAW 7202–06: ‘The French Army at War in Algeria, 1954–1962,’” *Washington Post*, April 28, 2006, A17.

CHAPTER 2

1. See the informative obituary by the English art historian Sarah Wilson in *The Independent*, September 18, 1998.

2. Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

3. Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

4. See the excellent standard biography: Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2d ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). See also the helpful chronology in Dana Villa, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

5. In the last thirty years, the reception of Arendt’s work has taken a number of interesting turns that make her oeuvre ever-more relevant to the project of decolonizing Holocaust memory. Starting with Ron H. Feldman’s 1978 collection of Arendt’s Jewish essays, *The Jew as Pariah*, and Elizabeth Young-Bruehl’s 1982 biography, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, a new appreciation of the importance of Jewish history and politics entered into studies of Arendt’s work. This work cul-

minated in the 1990s with critical studies by Dagmar Barnouw, Seyla Benhabib, and Richard J. Bernstein. At the same time, and from a slightly different angle, Margaret Canovan’s illuminating 1992 study, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, produced a new vision of the centrality of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to Arendt’s political vision and significantly advanced understanding of Arendt’s concept of totalitarianism, which had been buried for too long under cold war misunderstandings. See Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, 1978); Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces: Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996); Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Steven Ascheim, ed., *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

6. See Enrique Dussel, “Beyond Eurocentrism: The World-System and the Limits of Modernity,” in *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed. Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 3–31; and Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

7. From Dussel’s world-systems perspective, Europe is not simply any part of the system, but “in fact, its center” (4). Some postcolonial critics might question this recentering of Europe, but Dussel’s useful point is that the world-system is structured by hierarchies of wealth and power.

8. I derive the notion of cultural memory from Jan and Aleida Assmann, who use it to indicate the memory stored in canonical texts of culture. See, for instance, Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999).

9. Recently, numerous scholars, such as Isabel Hull, Dirk Moses, Dan Stone, Enzo Traverso, and Jürgen Zimmerer, have taken inspiration from *Origins* to pursue with conceptual sophistication and in greater empirical detail the links between colonialism and genocide—a trend I return to in the conclusion of the next chapter. While drawing on the insights of such historians, my reading of Arendt eschews the empirical question of colonialism’s relationship to the Holocaust in order to focus instead on the contributions and limits of her work to the conceptualization of multidirectionality and comparison. Such a consideration of Arendt’s work necessitates interrogation of her very particular use of categories such as comprehension and the human. For a sense of the state of the rapidly changing field linking colonialism and genocide, see the interesting forum of leading historians and critics, “The German Colonial Imagination,” *German History* 26, no. 2 (2008): 251–72; and A. Dirk Moses, ed., *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Oc-*