



PROSTHETIC MEMORY

THE TRANSFORMATION OF
AMERICAN REMEMBRANCE
IN THE AGE OF MASS CULTURE

ALISON LANDSBERG

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FOR ELI AND LEAH

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PROSTHETIC MEMORY



Like those birds that lay their eggs only in other species' nests,
memory produces in a place that does not belong to it.

—Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*

INTRODUCTION

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MEMORY, MODERNITY, MASS CULTURE

THE SPECTACULAR TRAIN WRECK in Cecil B. DeMille's 1925 film *The Road to Yesterday* initiates an extraordinary occurrence: Bess Walsington Tyrell, one of the film's protagonists, is "whirled back along the Road to Yesterday—into the life that was hers three centuries before." In a reversal of the journey undertaken by many immigrants at the time the film was made, Bess is blown back across the Atlantic. Interestingly, she lands not in present-day Europe but in the seventeenth century. Through the mechanism of the train wreck, Bess gains access to memories of events through which she did not live but which she will take on as her own and which will inform her identity in the film's present. The film thus poses a series of questions about the shape and purpose of memory in an age of mass culture: In the face of the dislocations of modernity and postmodernity, how does memory's role change? To what extent do modern technologies of mass culture, such as film, with their ability to transport individuals through time and space, function as technologies of memory? In what ways do these technologies of mass culture challenge the distinction between individual and collective memory? How do these technologies introduce the "experiential" as an important mode of knowledge acquisition? And finally, how might individuals be affected by memories of events through which they did not live?

Released in 1925, *The Road to Yesterday* betrays the influence of two developments that were then paving the way for a new form of public memory: on the one hand, the unprecedented movement of peoples brought about by modernity and industrialization and, on the other, the emergence of mass

culture.¹ Not only did the United States experience its largest waves of immigration from Europe in the first decades of this century,² but it also witnessed the beginning of a mass migration of African Americans to the industrial centers of the North. These movements of peoples ruptured generational ties, rendering the traditional modes for transmitting cultural, ethnic, and racial memory—both memories passed from parent to child and those disseminated through community life—increasingly inadequate. At the same moment, new technologies like the cinema, along with the emergence of a commodified mass culture, transformed memory by making possible an unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past. Just as the train wreck enables Bess to “remember” a distant past, DeMille’s film makes it possible for the audience to acquire new memories.

This book argues that modernity makes possible and necessary a new form of public cultural memory. This new form of memory, which I call *prosthetic memory*, emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history, just as Bess does with her “memories” of seventeenth-century England. In the process that I am describing, the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person’s subjectivity and politics.

This book explores the formation of prosthetic memories in three cases in which memory transmission, for historical reasons, became enormously problematic: the case of U.S. immigrants in the 1910s and 1920s, who were separated from their European communities and for whom memory of the “homeland” was never uncomplicated; the case of African Americans after slavery, for whom the legacy of what Orlando Patterson calls “natal alienation” had specific implications for memory and genealogy; and the case of the Holocaust, in which the eradication of witnesses and the death of survivors have complicated both remembering and testifying.³ In each of these cases, the links between parents and children and, perhaps more significantly, the links between individual persons and community—kinship ties—were broken, and alternative methods for the transmission and dissemination of memories were required. As this book explains, the memories forged in response to modernity’s ruptures do not belong exclusively to a particular group; that is, memories of the Holocaust do not belong only to Jews, nor do memories of slavery belong solely to African Americans. Through the technologies of mass culture, it becomes possible for these memories to be acquired by anyone, regardless of skin color, ethnic background, or biology.

Prosthetic memories are transportable and therefore challenge more traditional forms of memory that are premised on claims of authenticity, “heritage,” and ownership. This new form of memory is neither inherently progressive nor inherently reactionary, but it is powerful. This book contends that rather than disdain the new memory-making technologies, we must instead recognize their power and political potential. Taking on prosthetic memories of traumatic events and the disenfranchisement and loss of privilege that such an experience often necessitates can have a profound effect on our politics.

To clarify the ways in which prosthetic memory differs from earlier forms of memory, I first explore some important precursors from earlier historical moments. Next I discuss modernity and mass culture, the developments that have made prosthetic memory possible. I then examine the ways in which early theorists both feared and anticipated the radical transformation of memory caused by the new mass cultural technologies of reproduction. Finally, I define the concept of prosthetic memory and, in so doing, situate this work within the contemporary debate on memory. The unreliability of memory in the modern age, combined with the ruthlessness of the present, compels people to engage in memory projects—projects of narration and genealogy—that make the past “recognizable” and potentially interpellative. The mass cultural technologies that enable these memory projects also create a new possibility: the construction of prosthetic memories might serve as the grounds for unexpected alliances across chasms of difference.

OTHER TIMES, OTHER MEMORIES

Taking on memories of events through which one did not live is not in itself a new phenomenon. Like Bess, people at other historical moments—albeit through different means and mechanisms—have been able to “remember,” and thereby be interpellated by, events of the distant past. Rather than offer a catalog of previous forms of public or cultural memory, I instead point to two specific historical moments in which memory or memorial practices assumed broad social significance. In part, I hope to underscore the idea that “memory” is not a transhistorical phenomenon, a single definable practice that has remained the same over time. Rather, like all other modalities, memory is historically and culturally specific; it has meant different things to people and cultures at different times and has been instrumentalized in the service of diverse cultural practices. At times, these shifts in the meanings of memory and in the shape of memorial practices have been catalyzed by technological innovation. But despite these shifts, certain common threads are

detectable in both the social conditions that called for memory and the role that memory was asked to play. In the broadest possible sense, memory in its various forms has always been about negotiating a relationship to the past. More specifically, in the two moments that I discuss here, Europe in the Middle Ages and the United States and Europe in the nineteenth century, memory was invoked as a strategy for consolidating important new group identities. Furthermore, certain elements that enable identity formation through memory appeared in both these periods, such as a reliance on affect and experiential practices in fostering memory. A brief examination of these earlier forms of memory facilitates both an appreciation of these recurring features and a more precise understanding of the novelty of prosthetic memory in the twentieth century.

As Mary Carruthers observes, “medieval culture was fundamentally memorial.”⁴ In the Middle Ages, memory served as a technique for enhancing the ethical development of people and, more dramatically, a strategy for consolidating a new sense of religious kinship and fraternity. Carruthers argues that medieval poets and scholars believed that ethical thinking could be enhanced by memory practices. Memorizing a text, she asserts, was seen as a creative and intellectual activity. In the process, a person was to digest, ruminate on, and ultimately incorporate the text’s meanings into his or her own archive of experience.⁵ Petrarch, for example, was known to devour the words and ideas of the authors he read, which helped shape his moral character. In one of his three dialogues with St. Augustine, he offers an interpretation of a passage from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in which he demonstrates the importance of being able to control anger. As Carruthers points out, Virgil’s words and the ideas they communicate actually reshape Petrarch’s subjectivity. Furthermore, internalizing those ideas affects how Petrarch will act in the world: “The recreated reading becomes useful precisely because in the heat of passion Petrarch’s emotions replay the process of change, for he can remember what the right action *feels* like.”⁶ Even when written material became more prevalent from the eleventh century on, memory remained an important technique because an important “identification of memory with the formation of moral virtues” had taken place.⁷

The process of reading described by Carruthers was not explicitly religious, even though scriptural study, too, could take this form. In fact, according to some scholars, memory was instrumental in both producing devout Christians and fostering the spread of Christianity.⁸ Religious remembrance during the Middle Ages was supported by the development of church art and architecture and the elaboration of religious rituals. Encouraging these religious memories served imperial purposes in addition to more sacred ones. The spread of Christianity to a culturally diverse population throughout Europe

“required assiduous evangelism, and constant administrative, spiritual, and sometimes military support.”⁹ In the face of vast cultural and linguistic differences, church art and architecture became powerful devices for establishing a common religion across Europe.

St. Gregory the Great famously asserted in the sixth century that “pictures were the books of the unlettered.” As many art historians have noted, this claim was rehearsed again and again throughout the Middle Ages to justify church art.¹⁰ Pictures served to teach parishioners the stories of the biblical past. According to art historian Emile Mâle, church art and architecture comprised all the history that a Christian was believed to need. Through them, a Christian learned the biblical stories from creation to revelation and about the lives of the saints and biblical personages.¹¹ Indeed, the awe-inspiring Gothic cathedrals with their soaring verticality were meant to “remind” people of the power of God. When entering a church, these people were prodded to learn or “remember” certain biblical stories. Early Christians were meant to feel a connection with the images they saw depicted and thereby to take on memories of the remote biblical past.

As Benedict Anderson, among others, notes, European sacred art of the Middle Ages depicted religious or biblical personages in contemporary dress rather than in the historically and culturally appropriate attire and seldom as Semitic: “The shepherds who have followed the star to the manger where Christ is born bear the features of Burgundian peasants. The Virgin Mary is figured as a Tuscan merchant’s daughter.”¹² This strategy, of course, encouraged the worshiper’s identification with the biblical stories represented. But it also had the effect of collapsing the past into the present, of flattening time. Indeed, this particular mode of address suggested to Anderson that medieval Christians had a different sense of history and time:¹³ “The mediaeval Christian mind had no conception of history as an endless chain of cause and effect or of radical separations between past and present.”¹⁴ Reducing the worshiper’s sense of temporal distance from the past facilitated his or her identification with biblical characters and events. But it also made such a relationship seem less like memory.

Religious ritual also served to create “memories” of the Bible and its teachings, but it, too, had the effect of flattening time. Religious rituals such as Communion resemble mnemonic devices in part because they are, by nature, repetitive. Repetition gives recognizable form to a practice or an idea, and through repetition one might eventually apprehend or come to own or feel connected to some aspect of the biblical past. For medieval parishioners, ritual played a key pedagogical role.¹⁵ But ritual was powerful for another reason as well: it opened up the possibility that one might have an experiential relationship—or at least come to empathize—with a biblical personage or a biblical teaching. This was

certainly the case with flagellation. As John Bossy discovered, flagellation began to replace pilgrimage as a mode of penance in the mid-fourteenth century because it offered “a more realistic and dramatic identification with the sufferings of Christ.”¹⁶ Such an identification with biblical figures, though, might ultimately have had the same effect as depicting biblical characters in contemporary dress. In other words, it too collapsed the past into the present, thereby erasing the difference between the worshiper and Christ.

During the nineteenth century, memory and memorial practices once again assumed broad social significance.¹⁷ In particular, scholars argue that the establishment of nationalism in the West in the nineteenth century relied on a new form of public memory. Pierre Nora’s epic work *Les Lieux de mémoire*, for example, takes as its premise that one can study national feeling by examining the principal places or sites in which collective memory was rooted.¹⁸ And as Anderson observes, nationalism and national memory were dependent on certain technological advances in the eighteenth century. The establishment of print capitalism and, with it, the wide dissemination of newspapers was crucial to constructing the “imagined communities” on which nations were based.¹⁹ Furthermore, the fast pace of social change during the nineteenth century, brought about in part by the Industrial Revolution, led many people to seek security in the past. In England, visiting ruins became a national pastime. Because of the large-scale social, economic, and political changes, which eroded the religious and metaphysical beliefs of the previous centuries, people began seeking origins and the sense of stability that origins promised.²⁰ Andreas Huyssen contends that monumentality as we know it is itself a nineteenth-century phenomenon.²¹ What distinguished monuments in this period was the way they were instrumentalized, “tied as they were to the political needs of the bourgeoisie.”²² In the nineteenth century, Huyssen notes, the monumental was at first embodied in Greek and Roman monuments, since they were effective in enabling European nations to anchor themselves in a particular cultural past.²³ It was later that these newly formed nations strove to create deep national pasts by emphasizing distinctly national monuments that would “guarantee origin and stability as well as depth of time and of space in a rapidly changing world that was experienced as transitory, uprooting and unstable.”²⁴ Monuments were intended to serve as guarantors of national memory; they both created the illusion of a stable, recognizable past and promised to serve as a bulwark against further social upheaval. These monuments were overwhelming and led people to recognize the power and “always already” quality of the nation-state. Ironically, the very monumentality of monuments might have undercut the monument’s memorial effect, standing in for memory rather than provoking it. As Robert Musil declared, there is nothing so invisible as a monument.²⁵

In the case of the United States, the erection of monuments to establish a recognizable and coherent past was most apparent in the late nineteenth century. According to Michael Kammen, after 1870, the United States witnessed the “use of monuments, architecture, and other works of art as a means of demonstrating a sense of continuity or allegiance to the past.”²⁶ This particular use of monuments, Kammen argues, began in the late eighteenth century when nationalism and political ideologies began to usurp the role that religion had played earlier in American culture. This engagement with monumentality marked a new relationship to the past. Not only did history become “the core of civil religion during the spiritual crisis of the Gilded Age,” but national history also was called on to serve pressing ideological needs stemming from the massive immigration: “National history became the means used to transform un-American identities into those of compliant citizens with shared values.”²⁷

Memory served the needs of nation building in other ways as well. As Laura Otis describes, the period from 1870 to 1918 saw the emergence and diffusion of the theory of “organic memory.” Building on the Lamarckian paradigm, this theory “proposed that memory and heredity were essentially the same and that one inherited memories from ancestors along with their physical features.”²⁸ While a cultural form of memory was being articulated, it nevertheless relied on the body as both the receptacle for and the transmitter of memory. As Otis observes, this theory was meant to operate on both the individual and collective level: “A culture, like an individual, absorbed new characteristics and passed them on to subsequent generations.”²⁹ More than just a scientific theory, though, organic memory was a “way of thinking” that captured the attention and interest of philosophers, nationalists, and creative writers, in addition to physiologists and neurologists. Betraying a fascination with origins, this theory was motivated by some of the same forces driving nationalism.³⁰ Even after it lost scientific legitimacy, this organic model of memory—which I later refer to as a “biological” or “hereditary” model of memory—has had a great deal of staying power. Indeed, many forms of identity politics in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century continue to rely on this logic.

Whether in the form of “organic memory” or national history, memory in the nineteenth century was commonly imagined as collective, handed down from one generation to the next. Early in the twentieth century, Maurice Halbwachs offered perhaps the most influential account of collective memory.³¹ In his account, memories are a social phenomenon; individuals acquire their memories in society. Halbwachs thus contends that memory is wholly dependent on what he calls “the frameworks of social memory,”³² in particular, family, religion, and social class. These existing social frameworks not

only enable groups to reconstruct their past,³³ but without them even individual recollection would be impossible.³⁴ In other words, for Halbwachs, all of one's memories, even those that feel private, are actually collective.

Halbwachs is careful to point out that social frameworks are not created after the fact but are “precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society.”³⁵ One implication of this claim is that the present affects the way in which societies remember the past. According to this theory, collective memory is culturally specific, responding to the needs of a particular society at a particular time. The social frameworks of memory often serve the purpose of social cohesion and thus are tied to a culturally and historically specific group of people. This explains why “a moderately cultivated Frenchman finds it hard to understand the array of political ideas of countries like England or America, so that a simple description of their constitutions at best leaves in his mind only verbal recollections.”³⁶ Because Halbwachs emphasizes the collective frameworks by which a culture might share and order its recollections of the past, his account implies a geographically bounded community with a shared set of beliefs and a sense of “natural” connection among its members. In this sense, Halbwachs's model seems to work as an account of public memory in the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. In both cases collective memories were invoked to reinforce the identity of a particular group: in the Middle Ages, collective religious memories were created in sacred art and ritual in order to consolidate Christianity and interpellate “Christians,” while in the nineteenth century, national memories were promoted by monuments, with the aim of establishing and maintaining a national identity among the local inhabitants.

Nevertheless, the forces of modernity and the changes wrought by modern mass culture have made Halbwachs's notion of collective memory inadequate. As I will illustrate, the cinema and other mass cultural technologies have the capacity to create shared social frameworks for people who inhabit, literally and figuratively, different social spaces, practices, and beliefs. As a result, these technologies can structure “imagined communities” that are not necessarily geographically or nationally bounded³⁷ and that do not presume any kind of affinity among community members. Of course, this modern form of memory—prosthetic memory—shares certain characteristics with memory in earlier historical periods. With prosthetic memory, as with earlier forms of remembrance, people are invited to take on memories of a past through which they did not live. Some of the strategies and techniques for acquiring memories are similar, too. Memory remains a sensuous phenomenon experienced by the body, and it continues to derive much of its power through affect. But unlike its precursors, prosthetic memory has the ability to

challenge the essentialist logic of many group identities. Mass culture makes particular memories more widely available, so that people who have no “natural” claim to them might nevertheless incorporate them into their own archive of experience.

As this book argues, a commodified mass culture opens up the possibility that people who share little in the way of cultural or ethnic background might come to share certain memories. Mass-mediated memories are not premised on any claim of authenticity or “natural” ownership. One’s engagement with them begins from a position of difference, with the recognition that these images and narratives concerning the past are not one’s “heritage” in any simple sense. Nineteenth-century monuments produced memories that unified people across differences of class, ethnicity, gender, and region. But they did so by constructing a common national identity that was supposed to supersede these differences. By contrast, prosthetic memories do not erase differences or construct common origins. People who acquire these memories are led to feel a connection to the past but, all the while, to remember their position in the contemporary moment, an experience quite different from that of medieval Christians, who were invited to experience the biblical past as if it were part of the present.

As this book will demonstrate, prosthetic memory creates the conditions for ethical thinking precisely by encouraging people to feel connected to, while recognizing the alterity of, the “other.” In this way, prosthetic memory shares some of the ethical dimension of medieval book memorizing. Prosthetic memory, though, is not available only to scholars and poets, but to a much larger segment of society. In DeMille’s *The Road to Yesterday*, Bess engages with and becomes immersed in the seventeenth century, but she knows all the while who she is in the present. Ultimately, her engagement with the past helps her rethink and reshape her contemporary self.

MODERNITY, MIGRATION, MEMORY

It is not incidental that the characters in DeMille’s film are transported both across the ocean and back in time by the railroad, the technological wonder of the industrial age. For the latter half of the nineteenth century, the steam-driven locomotive, as Alan Trachtenberg notes, symbolized the economic and political changes associated with modernity.³⁸ These changes were themselves catalysts for radical social dislocations and ruptures. In Marshall Berman’s words, the “ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market” produced “immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them half way across the world

into new lives.”³⁹ Not only were Africans uprooted from home and family as white slave traders sought to capitalize on African “resources,” but later, in the United States, slavery further broke apart African American families as mothers, fathers, and children were sold for economic profit. Even after Emancipation, economic pressures forced African Americans to go north in search of work in urban and industrial centers.⁴⁰ Likewise, at the start of the twentieth century, immigrants fleeing poverty or persecution in Europe flocked to America, severing their ties with the Old World. Finally, the near destruction of European Jewry during the Holocaust epitomized the traumatic dislocations of the modern era. Part of the experience of modernity, then, was the disruption of family, kinship, and community ties.

In the contemporary world, large-scale migrations, prompted by economic necessity, continue. Recent scholarship on postmodernity, globalization, and transnationalism has brought important insights into the ramifications of migration for the dissemination of cultural memory.⁴¹ Some scholars have used the concept of diaspora to theorize and explore the relationships and forms of kinship that develop when people are geographically separated from their homelands. In these conditions, places, like generations, can no longer be counted on to provide an experience of continuity. Contemporary theorists of diaspora recognize that memory often is no longer transmitted in a straightforward, hereditary fashion. In an essay on Mexican migration, Roger Rouse considers the parental role of preparing children “to operate within a dichotomized setting spanning national borders” because migration is no longer simply a one-way journey.⁴² In a diaspora, cultural memories, identities, and practices do not flow simply or predictably from one generation to the next or from the homeland to the diasporic people, but paradoxically in both directions. That is, certain memories and traditions and rituals flourish in the diaspora in ways they never did in the homeland. In the work of Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, the structural logic of diaspora emerges as a progressive model for maintaining cultural identity across geographical ruptures.⁴³ Similarly, Arjun Appadurai finds that the global cultural economy has opened up new possibilities for individual agency. From the complicated global flow of capital, media, ideology, and so forth, people glean the materials and ideas from which they actively script their lives and their worlds.⁴⁴ In a global cultural economy, the theory of collective memory as articulated by Halbwachs seems inadequate, for the very notion of global flows challenges the idea of stable shared frameworks.

These insights into the effects of diaspora on culture in postmodernity are equally useful for interrogating the beginning of the twentieth century. While the reach of global capitalism is more extensive now, the system itself emerged in the nineteenth century and was fully in place by World War I.⁴⁵ Appadurai wishes to distinguish the present historical moment from earlier

ones on the basis that global flows of capital, information, ideology, and media have reached unprecedented velocities. But even if true, this claim obscures the relevance of his insights to the unprecedented emigrations and migrations at the turn of the nineteenth century. Those ruptures of family and community might be productively theorized as diaspora is today in terms of complicated multiple cultural affiliations and unexpected modes—many mass cultural—for the dissemination of cultural memory. In other words, I regard modernity and postmodernity not as radically different periods but as a continuum.⁴⁶ Both conditions complicate the process of memory transmission in similar ways.

In response to the urgency of twentieth-century memory projects, technologies of mass culture have been called on to play a new and important role in circulating images and narratives about the past. Interestingly, the role of mass culture in these memory projects has had unintended consequences. Like those of earlier eras, these projects have been largely undertaken with the aim of preserving group memory in the face of historical dislocations. Yet the turn to mass culture—to movies, experiential museums, television shows, and so forth—has made what was once considered a group's private memory available to a much broader public. In this process, memories have ceased to belong exclusively to a particular group and instead have become part of a common public domain. Moreover, this opening up of once private or exclusive group memories might not be negative or damaging, for the act of publicizing a group's memory increases its chances of attaining social and political recognition. Mass culture has had the unexpected effect of making group-specific cultural memories available to a diverse and varied populace. In other words, this new form of memory does not, like many forms of memory that preceded it, simply reinforce a particular group's identity by sharing memories. Instead, it opens up those memories and identities to persons from radically different backgrounds.

CINEMA AND THE BIRTH OF MODERN MASS CULTURE

While aboard the train in DeMille's film *The Road to Yesterday*, Bess is taken back into a remote past that she comes to understand as her own and that she will "remember" when she returns to the present. To achieve this effect, DeMille employs the flashback, a cinematic device that creates the illusion of time travel. Film scholars like Maureen Turim emphasize the flashback's utility as a device for revealing "a character's motivations or traits as determined by formative past experience."⁴⁷ Indeed, flashbacks most often do serve such

ends. However, the cinematic flashback also functions as a device for providing continuity between disparate spaces and temporalities. In several of DeMille's films this is the case. Unlike the standard flashback that returns a character to an earlier moment in his or her *current* life, DeMille's flashback returns the character to an earlier moment in his or her *past* life. DeMille referred to this device as the "historical flashback." His "formula" was "to tell an absorbing personal story against a background of great historical events."⁴⁸ In DeMille's historical films, flashbacks perform an analogy for the effect of the cinema on the spectator. Like the historical flashback, the cinema transports people into lives that they have not lived in the traditional sense but that they are nevertheless invited to experience and even inhabit, albeit briefly.

From its inception, the cinema sought to make visible what, for economic or social reasons, remained beyond an individual person's reach. In part its project was revelation, in both senses of the word, but it was also transportation, the capacity to carry viewers to faraway places and alternative temporalities. Tom Gunning emphasizes the revelatory powers of the early cinema in his groundbreaking analysis of the "cinema of attraction." Early cinema's project was in large part the "harnessing of visibility, this act of showing and exhibition."⁴⁹ In the early days of film, Gunning notes, the attraction was as much the cinematic apparatus as the films screened; people went to be dazzled by the new technology, to "see machines demonstrated."⁵⁰ But Gunning also intends that the word *attraction* speak to the content of early films: they were not dominated by the narrative impulse that would later characterize classical Hollywood cinema. The "cinema of attraction" was first and foremost an exhibitionist cinema, a cinema celebrating its unique ability to show the viewer something new, something he or she might never have seen before.

This was particularly true of the "travel film," a popular genre in cinema's earliest days and one that arguably had its origins in Daguerre's diorama.⁵¹ The travel film was part of a larger category referred to as "actualities." Depicting news stories and popular amusements, in the style of a newspaper, actuality films outnumbered fictional films in the years between 1896 and 1906.⁵² The "travel genre" was enormously popular in the pre-nickelodeon era, offering viewers actual footage from such distant and inaccessible places as India, Arabia, Japan, and Africa.⁵³ These films brought foreign worlds and experiences into the lives of everyday people. As economic pressure gradually forced film companies to move away from actualities to story films, travel elements were increasingly incorporated into story lines.⁵⁴ In August 1903, for example, the Edison catalog advertised its film *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* as "interesting not only for its humorous features, but also for its excellent views of Coney Island and Luna Park."⁵⁵ Even as story and narrative began to take precedence over travel, the impulse to transport

viewers to distant lands continued. Here I point to the “cinema of attraction” and the travel film to underscore cinema’s original project of moving people across time and space. This project remains very much alive today. The recent success of historical films like *Gangs of New York* (Martin Scorsese, 2002), *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002), *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), *Amistad* (Steven Spielberg, 1997), and *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998) suggests that geographical and chronological “transport” continues to be a crucial element of the cinema’s appeal.⁵⁶ Like *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island*, these films weave elements from the travel genre into the fabric of the narrative. An even more direct descendant of the travel film is the I-Max or Omni-Max film that promises to carry its viewer to Antarctica, Mount Everest, and other remote locales.

If the cinema has always been concerned with “transportation,” it bears an intimate connection, as some film theorists have observed, with the railroad, another modern technology designed to transport people. The Lumière brothers inaugurated the cinematic era on December 28, 1895, at the Grand Café in Paris, with the projection of *Arrivée d’un train*, a film depicting a train rushing toward the camera. Many other early films were shot from the side window of a moving train, and shortly thereafter cameras placed at the front of moving trains conveyed the thrill of movement.⁵⁷ The plethora of train films underscores the similarities between the two technologies.⁵⁸ In particular, both the railroad and the cinema had a physical effect on the bodies of their patrons. Lynne Kirby examined this connection between early cinematic spectatorship and railroad travel, arguing that “shock” is part of both experiences.⁵⁹ Noting that passengers in the late nineteenth century were afflicted by physical reactions and conditions that derived from the jostling of the train, Kirby posited that the railroad condition, “traumatic neurosis,” might have an analogy in cinematic spectatorship. The physical sensation of one’s body being moved was a fundamental aspect of cinema from its very earliest days and is apparent in cinema’s myth of origin, what Tom Gunning described as the “primal scene” at the cinema.⁶⁰ According to legend, when the Lumière brothers screened *Arrivée d’un train*, “spectators reared back in their seats, or screamed, or got up and ran from the auditorium.”⁶¹ Whether or not those early spectators were actually fooled, they were by all accounts *moved* by the larger-than-life cinematic images in front of them. From its origin, the act of film spectatorship has engaged viewers’ bodies and transported them. Indeed, this ability to move spectators, to engage them in a visceral way, bears some resemblance to the grand medieval cathedrals, even though the size and shape of the audience are quite different. Film spoke to people across boundaries of geography, nation, and belief and was able to address more of them than even the largest of the grand cathedrals.

Many critics have argued that when the novelty of cinematic experience wore off, so too did its capacity to shock viewers. Certainly, by the second decade of the twentieth century, viewers were sophisticated enough to recognize the cinematic illusion as such. In the Edison film *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (1902), a country rube watches three short films, and in each one he confuses the cinematic images with reality. In the first, a train races toward the screen, causing him to leap out of the way; in the second, he jumps out of his seat to dance with dancing girls, and in the third, he tries to intervene when he sees two people in an embrace, and in so doing he pulls down the screen, revealing the cinematic apparatus. This comic film invites the spectator to find humor in Uncle Josh's naïveté and to take pleasure in his or her own sophistication. However, the fact that viewers were able to distinguish between cinematic images and "reality," between a train rushing toward them on screen and a train rushing toward them on a platform at a station, does not refute the power of the cinematic image. In the space of the cinema, spectators experience a mimetic relationship to the images before them.

This encounter among spectator, cinematic image, and apparatus has generated a great deal of scholarship. In fact, a predominant mode of film analysis pertains to spectatorship: how the spectator is articulated and positioned either ideologically or physically by the film.⁶² What I find interesting in this work on spectatorship is that film is imagined as an instrument with the power to "suture" viewers into pasts they have not lived.⁶³ The cinema offers spectators from diverse backgrounds and ancestries a shared archive of experience. As Miriam Hansen contends, theaters in the beginning of the classical period were neither ethnically segregated nor segregated by class but were a place for crossing over.⁶⁴ From its beginning, then, the cinema has authorized and enabled people to inhabit subject positions and pasts through which they might not themselves have lived and to which they have no "natural" connection. The cinema, then, might be imagined as a site in which people experience a bodily, mimetic encounter with a past that was not actually theirs. In this sense, the cinema is the archetype of the new technologies of memory created in the twentieth century. Like cinema, television and experiential museums also provide the occasion for individual spectators to suture themselves into history, to develop prosthetic memories. This, of course, brings us back to Bess in *The Road to Yesterday*, who is taken back in time to a "life that was hers three centuries ago." If mass cultural technologies make it possible for large numbers of people from a wide range of ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds to create memories of events through which they did not live—as Bess and the other characters in *The Road to Yesterday* do—they create the conditions for a new, prosthetic form of memory.

MEMORY IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGICAL REPRODUCIBILITY

In DeMille's film, it is not the train itself but the train wreck that transports the characters back into their previous lives in the seventeenth century, suggesting a connection among cinematic technology, the past, and a great social disaster. The image of the train wreck points to both the brute power of the technologies of modernization and their potential danger. The train wreck thus betrays an anxiety about what a burgeoning, technologized, American mass media might mean for "authentic" memory. These new technologies of reproduction threatened to dissolve the difference—or an individual's ability to discern the difference—between "authentic" and mass-mediated memories, between individual and collective memories. The enormity of this threat was not lost on the first modern theorists of memory, who wrote against the backdrop of vast social changes. Their writings, some consciously and others not, began to grapple with the implications of the new technologies of reproduction for memory. Even so, these theorists underestimated the effect that mass culture would have on public memory, given its power to disseminate visions of the past on an unprecedented scale.

Of all the modern theorists of memory, none was more influential than Sigmund Freud. In theorizing the unconscious as the site of repressed memories and desires, Freud explored the crucial role of memory in the structure of the individual psyche. An individual's personality, according to Freud, is quite literally the product of specific memories from childhood, both those consciously remembered by the ego and those buried in the unconscious. However, despite Freud's fundamental premise that specific memories from childhood play a formative role in the adult psyche, he nevertheless understood memory as a modality operating at the interface of history and fantasy.

Freud developed this insight most explicitly in his work on the "screen memory" (*Deckerinnerung*). In his 1899 essay of the same name, he describes a "screen memory" as a composite memory in which an early memory acts as a screen for a later event that has been repressed.⁶⁵ That is, a screen memory is a compromise between two forces: one that recognizes the importance of the event and one that, as resistance, tries to protect the subject from it. Freud notes that in the synthesis of an earlier memory and a later event, the earlier memory might very well change.⁶⁶ He thus acknowledges the difficulty in locating something like "authentic" or genuine memory. Moreover, Freud seemed to recognize that this problem arises from the fact that memories are mediated through representations. The malleability of childhood memories, as he describes it, is intimately connected to their visual character: "In my own case the earliest childhood memories are the only ones of a visual character:

they are regular scenes worked out in plastic form comparable only to representations on the stage.⁶⁷ Clearly, Freud is not referring to mass culture, and yet by emphasizing the “plastic” and visual component of early childhood memories and by problematizing the quest for authenticity, his account of screen memory suggests the role that mass cultural technologies might play in mediating an individual’s memory.

Writing a year later, Henri Bergson described memory not as stored visual images but as stored bodily actions, a physical trace of how the body acted under past stimulations. This form of memory, which he outlines in *Matter and Memory* (1908), is different from both perception and what he calls “pure memory.”⁶⁸ “Pure,” or nonphysical, memory does not exist in the present, and for Bergson, anything that does not exist in the present, like action, is powerless. Moreover, he objects to the abstractness of “pure memory” because it “interests no part of my body.”⁶⁹ His rejection of “pure memory” in favor of a bodily, experiential form of memory that is triggered by sensation might very well be a reaction to the new technologies of mass culture that worked to engage the body. If the thrill and “attraction” of cinema in its earliest days were its capacity to move spectators, it might have served as a catalyst for the kind of memory Bergson described.

The Frankfurt school theorists Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin explored the technologies of mass culture more explicitly. On the surface, Kracauer seems distrustful of the photographic medium. He begins his 1927 essay “Photography” by comparing a photograph of a contemporary diva with one of a grandmother when she was the diva’s age. Whereas the diva is immediately recognizable by both her contemporary style and her location at the Lido, the grandmother threatens to fade into obscurity. “Were it not for the oral tradition,” Kracauer writes, “the image alone would not have sufficed to reconstruct the grandmother.”⁷⁰ With this comparison, Kracauer demonstrates the way that photography relies for its legibility on an indexical link to the world. “Once a photograph ages,” he writes, “the immediate reference to the original is no longer possible.”⁷¹ By the end of the essay, however, Kracauer finds that the alienating quality of the photograph is precisely what gives it the ability to “stir up the elements of nature.”⁷² In other words, what began as a critique metamorphoses into a utopian vision of photography that, with its ability to reconfigure nature, opens up new possibilities for social change. Photography emerges as a tool for retraining vision, for enabling the individual to see through—and recognize the contingency of—the reified, “naturalized” structures of society. But the ramifications of photography for memory are grim. “Memory-images are at odds with photographic representation,” since memories organize details in a meaningful way according to their significance, whereas photographs depict and record a spa-

tial continuum.⁷³ Despite the radicality of photography's ability to cause a change in consciousness, "in a photograph, a person's history is buried as if under a layer of snow."⁷⁴

Like Kracauer, Walter Benjamin is interested in the social and cultural implications of technologies of reproduction. Benjamin was keenly aware of the relationship between a period's visual technologies and its structures of understanding and perception. In particular, as Benjamin suggests, technological advances play a key role in ushering in new forms of vision. Drawing on Freud's work on the unconscious, Benjamin proposes the "optical unconscious" as a way of describing film's ability to "reveal entirely new structural formations of the subject."⁷⁵ The camera, he explains, "by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by explaining commonplace milieus . . . extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives."⁷⁶ For Benjamin, the camera enables one to see what might be otherwise wholly impossible: "Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously permeated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man."⁷⁷ Benjamin sees the camera as a privileged device for making visible what, through repression, remains invisible to the naked eye.

Like Kracauer, Benjamin is less sanguine about the implications of technologies of reproduction for memory. Reflecting on the stakes of photography (and film) for memory, Benjamin takes up Marcel Proust's distinction between *mémoire involontaire* and *mémoire volontaire*. As the realm of unwilled, unmediated, involuntary recollection, the *mémoire involontaire* is defined in opposition to the accessible realm of the *mémoire volontaire*, a conscious, willed, artificial archive operating "in the service of the intellect."⁷⁸ Like Proust, Benjamin tends to privilege *mémoire involontaire* as richer and more authentic while relegating photography and film to the less "authentic" realm of *mémoire volontaire*. Though optimistic about the ability of photography and film to disintegrate the aura emanating from traditional works of art, Benjamin remains pessimistic about the implications of mechanical reproduction for memory, arguing that volitional memory, "encouraged by the technique of mechanical reproduction, reduces the scope of the play of the imagination."⁷⁹ However, as Benjamin himself began to realize toward the end of his life, while working on the epic Arcades project, the opposition between *mémoire volontaire* and *mémoire involontaire* no longer obtained in an age of mass media and mass culture.⁸⁰ With these new technologies it becomes possible to have a mediated memory that one nevertheless experiences as real or genuine. Benjamin's desire to privilege *mémoire involontaire* as "authentic" might be a compensatory measure reflecting his anxiety about the potential consequences of mass-mediated memory.

Insofar as they address the implications of mass culture, the writings of Kracauer and Benjamin focus largely on the social ramifications of technologies. These theorists recognized the cinema's ability to represent the masses to themselves as a collective, but at the same time they underemphasized the significance of another aspect of mass culture: the unprecedented availability of images of and narratives about the past. These new technologies emerged in a capitalist economic system in which virtually everything could be commodified. Commodification makes ideas and images available to people who reside in different places and have different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and classes. Mass cultural commodities—including memories—are disseminated across divisions of region, class, race, and ethnicity. As historians, art historians, literary critics, anthropologists, and folklorists are quick to point out, there always have been social strategies for passing on memories. What separates prosthetic memory from those other experiences and makes it a phenomenon unique in the early twentieth century is its reliance on commodification. Commodification enables memories and images of the past to circulate on a grand scale; it makes these memories available to all who are able to pay. Prosthetic memory, therefore, unlike its medieval and nineteenth-century precursors, is not simply a means for consolidating a particular group's identity and passing on its memories; it also enables the transmission of memories to people who have no "natural" or biological claims to them.

To say that prosthetic memory is literally made possible by the advanced state of capitalism and its ensuing commodity culture is not to blindly embrace either capitalism or prosthetic memory. Nevertheless, prosthetic memory merits serious examination. It is incumbent on cultural critics to recognize that the capitalist world we inhabit brings with it new modalities of subjectivity, new structures of feeling. *Prosthetic Memory* argues that the technologies of mass culture and the capitalist economy of which they are a part open up a world of images outside a person's lived experience, creating a portable, fluid, and nonessentialist form of memory. This book begins with the premise that cultural memories no longer have exclusive owners; they do not "naturally" belong to anyone. The technologies of memory developed during the twentieth century therefore made it increasingly possible for people to take on memories of events not "naturally" their own.

MEMORY AT THE TURN OF THE NEW CENTURY

It should come as no surprise that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, memory has once again emerged as an urgent topic of debate for schol-

ars in a wide variety of disciplines. As in the past, this interest in memory might be attributable to ontological insecurity at the start of the new century or anxiety about the shape of the “new world order.”⁸¹ In any case, the last few years have seen a profusion of important works on memory. While indebted to this literature, this book articulates a fundamentally different understanding of memory. By emphasizing the prosthetic nature of memory in America’s technologized and commodified mass culture, I hope to move beyond the familiar opposition between social construction and essentialism. Prosthetic memories originate outside a person’s lived experience and yet are taken on and worn by that person through mass cultural technologies of memory. The idea of prosthetic memory, then, rejects the notion that all memories—and, by extension, the identities that those memories sustain—are necessarily and substantively shaped by lived social context. Prosthetic memories are not “socially constructed” in that they do not emerge as the result of living and being raised in particular social frameworks. At the same time, prosthetic memories are transportable and hence not susceptible to biological or ethnic claims of ownership. These memories are thus neither essentialist nor socially constructed in any straightforward way: they derive from a person’s mass-mediated experience of a traumatic event of the past.

As memories that “speak” to the individual in a personal way *as if* they were actually memories of lived events, they are different from the collective memories that Michael Schudson described, which are located entirely in social structures such as laws or records or statues or souvenirs.⁸² Prosthetic memories are neither purely individual nor entirely collective but emerge at the interface of individual and collective experience. They are privately felt public memories⁸³ that develop after an encounter with a mass cultural representation of the past, when new images and ideas come into contact with a person’s own archive of experience. Just as prosthetic memories blur the boundary between individual and collective memory, they also complicate the distinction between memory and history. Both Pierre Nora and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi contend that memory and history stand in an adversarial relationship to each other.⁸⁴ In the case of prosthetic memory, as Marita Sturken explained for what she calls “cultural memory,” history and memory are more accurately described as “*entangled* rather than oppositional.”⁸⁵ But even as two interarticulating and mutually constructed modalities, memory and history do have different modes of address. Memory always implies a subjective, affective relationship to the past, while history strives to maintain a sense of distance from the past. Indeed, many of prosthetic memory’s precursors from earlier historical moments were predicated on a sense of intimacy and identification with the past. Furthermore, by definition, history comprises the broad spectrum of world events outside a person’s own archive of experience.

And yet as this book illustrates, the complicated relationship between memory and history as they are constellated by prosthetic memory seriously undermines categories of public and private memory even as they are being put into play.

In his classic work *Time Passages*, George Lipsitz explores the “relationship between historical memory and commercial culture,”⁸⁶ arguing that popular culture is a medium “for the expression of loss and the projection of hopes for reconnection to the past.”⁸⁷ Ultimately, he identifies a form of counter-memory as “a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, the personal,” which he sets in opposition to historical narratives that start with the “totality of human existence.”⁸⁸ These counter-memories are important to Lipsitz because by introducing new perspectives, they force revisions of the larger historical narratives. The concept of prosthetic memory is also based on the idea that modernity has challenged some of the traditional forms of memory that I described and that mass culture is the arena in which this new form of memory emerges. In his recent work, Andreas Huyssen has explored in sophisticated ways the contemporary memory boom and particularly the ramifications of the high-tech world of mass media for the dialectic of remembering and forgetting in contemporary culture.⁸⁹ *Prosthetic Memory*, by contrast, is less interested in large-scale social implications and dialectics than in the experiential quality of prosthetic memory and in the ramifications of these memories for individual subjectivity and political consciousness.

Prosthetic Memory theorizes the production and dissemination of memories that have no direct connection to a person’s lived past and yet are essential to the production and articulation of subjectivity. I call these memories *prosthetic memories* for four reasons. First, they are not natural, not the product of lived experience—or “organic” in the hereditary nineteenth-century sense—but are derived from engagement with a mediated representation (seeing a film, visiting a museum, watching a television miniseries). Second, as I describe in chapter 1, these memories, like an artificial limb, are actually worn on the body; these are sensuous memories produced by an *experience* of mass-mediated representations. Whereas the experiential has been a component of many earlier forms of memory, the experiential has achieved a new virtuosity—and newfound popularity—as a result of new mass cultural technologies. Also, prosthetic memories, like an artificial limb, often mark a trauma. Third, calling them “prosthetic” signals their interchangeability and exchangeability and underscores their commodified form. The commodification of mass culture highlights perhaps the most dramatic difference between prosthetic memory and earlier forms of memory. Part of the work of this book is to argue against those critics who see the commodification of mass culture in purely negative terms, those who regard mass culture as a site of domination, deception, and brain-

washing of the masses. Against the “culture industry” model, I contend that commodification, which is at the heart of mass cultural representations, makes images and narratives widely available to people who live in different places and come from different backgrounds, races, and classes. Furthermore, I argue that reception is more complicated than such critics allow, that commodities and commodified images are not capsules of meaning that spectators swallow wholesale but are the grounds on which social meanings are negotiated, contested, and sometimes constructed. Two people watching a film may each develop a prosthetic memory, but their prosthetic memories may not be identical. For each, the memories are inflected by the specificities of his or her other experiences and place in the world. Thus these memories are not exactly “collective” in Halbwachs’s sense. Finally, I call these memories prosthetic to underscore their usefulness. Because they feel real, they help condition how a person thinks about the world and might be instrumental in articulating an ethical relation to the other. One goal of this book is to explore the ability of prosthetic memories to produce empathy and social responsibility as well as political alliances that transcend race, class, and gender. A sensuous engagement with the past, this book contends, is the foundation for more than individual subjectivity; it becomes the basis for mediated collective identification and the production of potentially counterhegemonic public spheres.

This book is not meant as a celebration of prosthetic memory. As the chapters demonstrate, prosthetic memory appears more radical in some cases than in others. Therein lies the pedagogical component of my project: *Prosthetic Memory* asks scholars and intellectuals to take seriously the popularity of new cultural surfaces, such as experiential museums, and demands their recognition of the power of these media to affect people and shape their politics. The book posits that these new media reflect a change in both what counts as knowledge and the structures for producing knowledge. Those scholars involved in knowledge projects who disparage mass culture for its tendency to “dumb down” history should instead direct their energies toward finding ways to use the power of these new media to raise the level of public and popular discourse about history, memory, politics, and identity.

The characters in the texts I read and the people who watch films and visit what I call experiential museums do not confront the events of their own lived pasts but, rather, the events and traumas of cultural and collective pasts. Through such powerful but unlived events, these people come to understand their own personhood, their own subjectivity. In this way, prosthetic memory might be a powerful corrective to identity politics. In an attempt to locate the origins of “our new memory discourse,” Kerwin Lee Klein points to the cultural context of the post-1960s United States. He sees an intimate connection between the birth of identity politics and the

explosion of scholarship on memory.⁹⁰ While memory certainly has been called to serve the agenda of identity politics, prosthetic memory's power derives in part from its challenge to the idea that a particular set of memories belongs exclusively to a particular group. With the aid of mass cultural technologies, it becomes possible for a person to acquire memories that are not his or her "natural" or biological inheritance and thus to feel a sense of kinship with people who might otherwise seem very different.⁹¹ This form of memory thus differs from the memory prompted by medieval church paintings. By flattening time, these paintings attempted to obliterate any sense of difference between the past and the present. Prosthetic memory, by contrast, enables people to take on memories of the past, even to identify with people from the past, but it works also to emphasize their position in the present even as they take on the past, as chapter 4 makes clear. This form of memory thus challenges, or works against, the naturalizing, essentialist tendencies of identity politics.

In chapter 1, I use the scenario of "implanted" memories in *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, director's cut, 1993) and *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990) to chart the theoretical terrain of prosthetic memory. This chapter is thus qualitatively different from the three more historically oriented case studies that follow. An examination of science fiction films, as the chapter reveals, is not a departure from history: these films provide a window onto the collective anxieties and fantasies of American society at the end of the twentieth century even as they explore the ethical and political ramifications of implanted memory. In both these films, characters identify with memories that are not "naturally" or "properly" their own. While both films recognize that memories are central to a person's identity, they emphasize the difficulty of determining whether such memories derive from lived experience. In both films, these memories become the building blocks from which the characters construct narratives of the present and visions for the future. Most important, in both cases, the characters use their implanted memories for socially responsible ends. In other words, I argue against the claim that the mass mediation of memory is inevitably harmful. If people can take on memories of traumatic events through an act of prosthesis, then the particular histories or pasts attached to those events may be available across existing stratifications of race, class, and gender.

As the second chapter reveals, prosthetic memory does not always produce utopian results. The massive immigration to the United States in the 1910s and 1920s made narrating the past difficult for immigrants and the nation alike: how could immigrants remember a past that would enable them to be Americans, and how could the nation incorporate these foreigners into the American national body politic? On both sides, the problem was articulated

as a problem of memory. The immigrant authors whose narratives are analyzed in this chapter take on memories of a past that they did not live but that nevertheless enables them to imagine themselves as Americans. To take on the clothes and the flag—to wear the signs and markers of America—reflected a desire for a form of cultural amnesia, enabled by “remembering” not a European but an *American* past. The chapter begins by recovering the popular rhetoric surrounding immigration in the first part of this century, rhetoric that circulated widely in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Then, by looking at the accounts of immigrant experience in *The Promised Land* (Mary Antin, 1911), *The Road to Yesterday* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1925), and *Call It Sleep* (Henry Roth, 1934), the chapter makes visible the kinds of creative editing—acts of individual and national suture—that were constantly and simultaneously transacted to make imaginable both a unified American nation and an inhabitable present for its newest members. But these transactions came at a cost: while assimilation might have been a site of desire for immigrants, prosthetic memories in this case appear coercive, aimed at homogenizing a diverse populace.

In the third chapter, I consider the way that the institution of slavery radically disrupted the very concept of the nuclear family, rendering impossible a transgenerational or “organic” transmission of memory. If memories, cultural and otherwise, cannot be passed unproblematically from parent to child, then the historical conditions of slavery make necessary some alternative mode of memory transmission. The chapter is organized around late-twentieth-century accounts of the slave experience—*Kindred* (Octavia Butler, 1979), *Song of Solomon* (Toni Morrison, 1987), *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, 1992), *Roots* (Alex Haley, 1976), *Rosewood* (John Singleton, 1996), and Detroit’s Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (1997)—most of which are narrated by or organized around a child. With the parent-child bond severed, the production and transmission of memory fall to the children whose task it becomes to produce genealogies that they, too, might be able to inhabit. The “memories” they produce are always prosthetic in that they have not been lived at first hand. These genealogical endeavors, this chapter argues, become the mechanism for constructing landscapes in which an alienated person can experience a sense of belonging.

The fourth chapter, devoted primarily to *Maus* (Art Spiegelman, 1986), *Schindler’s List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002), and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (1993), tracks the ways in which the Holocaust circulates in American mass culture. Now, as Holocaust survivors are dying, the pressing question is how other bodies—bodies that did not live through the original trauma—might testify to what happened. I believe that it has been primarily the work of the mass media to construct arenas—what I describe as *transferential spaces* in the Freudian sense—

in which people might have an experience of events through which they did not live. In these transferential spaces people might gain access to processual, sensuously immersed knowledge. They might take on “prosthetic memories” as bodily symptoms which, on the one hand, afford anamnestic solidarity with the dead and, on the other, make available strategies of political engagement for the present and future.

The epilogue explores the ethical dimension of prosthetic memories. As individually felt cultural memories, prosthetic memories have the ability to alter a person’s political outlook and affiliation as well as to motivate political action. How, though, can we be sure that the “politics” inspired by prosthetic memories are progressive and ethical? The epilogue borrows insights from philosophers and social theorists to come to some provisional conclusions about the possibilities and limitations of a politics of memory. Prosthetic memories, the chapter argues, have a unique ability to generate empathy. Unlike sympathy, empathy does not depend on a “natural” affinity, on some kind of essential underlying connection between the two subjects. Empathy recognizes the alterity of identification and the necessity of negotiating distances and is therefore essential to any ethical relation to the other. A practice of empathy is an essential part of taking on prosthetic memories, of finding ways to inhabit other people’s memories *as* other people’s memories and thereby respecting and recognizing difference.



PROSTHETIC MEMORY

IN THE 1908 VITAGRAPH FILM *The Thieving Hand*, a wealthy passerby takes pity on an armless beggar and buys him a prosthetic arm. As the beggar soon discovers, his new arm has its own memories. Remembering its criminal past, the arm snatches the possessions of unsuspecting passersby. Dismayed by the actions of the arm, the beggar sells the prosthesis at a pawnshop. But the arm sidles out of the shop, finds the beggar out on the street, and attaches itself to his body. The beggar's victims, meanwhile, have contacted a police officer who finds the beggar and drags him off to jail. In the jail cell the arm recognizes its rightful owner, a one-armed criminal—the “authentic” thieving body—and reattaches itself to him.

This moment in early cinema dramatizes both the problems and the possibilities that film and other forms of mass culture pose for memory. Through the prosthetic arm, the beggar's body manifests memories of actions that he never actually committed. The arm's memories, though divorced from the beggar's lived experience, motivate his actions: they make the beggar into a thief. To say that memories shape the beggar's subjectivity might not seem surprising. Just as people rely on their memories to validate their experiences, they draw on memories to structure their subjectivity. What is surprising about the circumstances of the beggar in this film is that subjectivity—the beggar's subject position as thief—is predicated on memories of experiences through which he did not live, that is, prosthetic memories.

As I have begun to describe, prosthetic memories are those not strictly derived from a person's lived experience. Prosthetic memories circulate publicly,

and although they are not organically based, they are nevertheless experienced with a person's body as a result of an engagement with a wide range of cultural technologies. Prosthetic memories thus become part of one's personal archive of experience, informing one's subjectivity as well as one's relationship to the present and future tenses. Made possible by advanced capitalism and an emergent commodified mass culture capable of widely disseminating images and narratives about the past, these memories are not "natural" or "authentic" and yet they organize and energize the bodies and subjectivities that take them on.

Of course, as I suggested in the introduction, there always have been mnemotechnics, techniques by which societies, cultures, and even individual persons systematically attempt to remember, as well as cultural strategies for passing on memories to future generations.¹ The Jewish Passover seder is a clear example of just such a "technology of memory." At the seder, a highly ritualized celebration, Jews reflect on and celebrate the exodus of the ancient Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Not only is the story of the exodus recited at the seder in narrative form, but there are accompanying props—a roasted egg, a shank bone, bitter herbs, *charoset* (chopped apple, cinnamon, and wine), parsley, and salt water—all of which symbolize and help instill in the participants sensuous memories of events they did not live through. For example, when "remembering" how bitter life was for slaves in the land of Egypt, each person tastes the bitter herbs. The oral narrative is thus complemented by a sensuous experience that serves to turn the cultural memory into an experiential event. The oral recitation reinforces these events as history and also as personal memory. The *Haggadah*, the text from which the participants read, asserts that "in every generation, each of us should feel as though we ourselves had gone forth from Egypt, as it is written: 'And you shall explain to your children on that day, it is because of what the Eternal did for me, when I myself went forth from Egypt'" (Exod. 13:8).² Such cultural technologies of memory are widespread and ancient.

What makes the film *The Thieving Hand* so provocative and different from the Passover seder is that it stages the possibility of taking on memories that are not naturally—ethnically, racially, or biologically—one's intended inheritance. The Passover seder reinforces a particular cultural and religious tradition and heritage. As such, it presumes that certain memories belong to certain people and thus serves to reinforce a group identity. The seder enables these people to have memories of events they did not experience, but these memories are intended specifically for Jews.

In his essay "Race into Culture," Walter Benn Michaels concludes that simply taking on the practices or rituals of an earlier people before you, the mere fact that they "did some things that you do," does not "make what they

did part of your past.” For their actions to belong to your past requires “some prior assumption of identity between you and them, and this assumption is racial.”³ The Passover seder, a ritual designed to preserve an ethnic identity, supports Michaels’s argument here. The memories generated and disseminated through the Passover seder are limited ethnically. But the mechanism for the dissemination of memory in the case of *The Thieving Hand* is different. Unlike the seder, *The Thieving Hand* introduces the possibility that certain memories may be more portable and transportable than those disseminated during the seder. The prosthetic arm is a commodity that can be purchased by anyone with the means, and it is therefore more accessible than, say, a “real” arm.⁴ Thus what makes these memories portable is the commodification produced by capitalism. That it is possible for the beggar to take on memories of events through which he did not live complicates the assumption that memory is in any way essential or organically grounded or the private property of specific ethnic or racial groups.

There is an important historical context here as well. The *Thieving Hand* might be read as an allegory for both the possibility and the fear that was engendered by the cinema in its early days. Even before Benjamin and Kracauer explored the ramifications of photography and film for memory, Progressive reformers had raised a different set of concerns about the new mass culture: they feared that movies would lead to the dissolution of social values, particularly among middle- and working-class viewers. Much anxiety was generated by the proliferation of racy films in the tradition of vaudeville and the burlesque and by the penetration of this form of entertainment into bourgeois and middle-class culture. Progressive forces began to fear that film had the capacity to touch the viewer’s subconscious mind and corrupt it. The “fervor” over the movies, Lary May observed, became part of the larger crusades against vice led by Progressive reformers.⁵ Concern over the movies culminated in 1908, the very year in which *The Thieving Hand* was released, with the closing on Christmas Day of New York City’s 550 theaters by order of Mayor George B. McClellan.⁶ Because of the cinema’s ability to speak in pictures and because of its novel mode of reception, it had, many feared, the capacity to affect people, to shape how they thought and acted in the world. *The Thieving Hand* dramatically stages both the potential for people to take on “prosthetic memories,” as the beggar does through his prosthetic arm, and the subsequent fear that doing so might alter a person’s actions and reconfigure his or her subjectivity.

Even though this film flirts with the idea that memories might be completely transportable, equally available to all, that possibility is foreclosed when the thieving hand reattaches itself to the one-armed criminal, whom we are meant to recognize as the real or authentic thieving body. Ultimately, the

hand itself chooses to be with its proper, “natural” owner. The film unmoors experience, subjectivity, and memory only to reanchor them at the end. In fact, this reaffirmation of biological essentialism parallels the reaffirmation of ethnic essentialism achieved by the Passover seder. At the beginning of the century, the power of biological logic and of “organic memory” and its claims to authenticity were too firmly entrenched to be challenged in any substantial way. The “science” of eugenics, after all, had a powerful hold over the popular imagination.⁷

While *The Thieving Hand* eventually insists that bodily memories have rightful owners, science fiction films later in the twentieth century, such as *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*, began to imagine otherwise. Now, with the pull of biology and essentialism significantly weakened, the possibility that memories do not have rightful owners and that memories might be taken on by people who are not their “rightful heirs” is far more thinkable. This chapter explores prosthetic memory in the arena in which it has had its clearest articulation, in science fiction novels and films. In some important ways, science fiction cannot simply be dismissed as escapism; rather, it reveals the very real collective fantasies and anxieties of a culture at a specific historical moment. Moreover, these films about implanted memory can productively be read as attempts to theorize the political and philosophical ramifications of memory in an age of mass culture. To situate the analysis of these films, I begin by exploring the role of the individual body and bodily experience as the conduit for prosthetic memory.

CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE AND THE BODY

Prosthetic memories are adopted as the result of a person’s experience with a mass cultural technology of memory that dramatizes or recreates a history he or she did not live. To study this process, then, we must investigate both the ways in which these technologies work on a person’s body and the ultimate effect of this experience on his or her subjectivity. The birth of the cinema made it increasingly possible to experience in a bodily way something that one was not actually living through. With the proliferation of nickelodeons and then movie houses, this new form of experience became available to a mass audience. Film historians argue more specifically that the evolving conventions of Hollywood cinema over the first two decades of the century were largely responsible for making cinematic spectatorship into an experience.⁸ Although all aesthetic experience has an affective component,⁹ the sensuous in the cinema—the experiential nature of the spectator’s engagement with the image—is different from other aesthetic experiences such

as reading.¹⁰ The inordinate concern with movie content emphasizes this point. The Hays Code of 1930, which rigidly defined what was morally acceptable subject matter for film, and the subsequent rating system, as well as the uproar provoked by particularly violent filmic images underscore the long-standing and pervasive sense that cinematic images have the power to affect the viewers' thoughts, actions, and subjectivities.

Concern about cinema's ability to produce memories in its spectators has a lengthy history of its own. As early as 1916, discussion about the power of the "silent photoplay" was opened by Hugo Münsterberg's psychological study of film:

The intensity with which the plays take hold of the audience cannot remain without strong social effects. It has even been reported that sensory hallucinations and illusions have crept in; neurasthenic persons are especially inclined to experience touch or temperature or smell or sound impressions from what they see on the screen. The associations become as vivid as realities, because the mind is so completely given up to the moving pictures.¹¹

For Münsterberg, film's power to shape consciousness derives from its sensuous and tactile mode of address; the sense experiences it generates in its spectators "become as vivid as realities." Film addresses people intellectually as well as sensuously, through their bodies.

In 1928, William H. Short, the executive director of the Motion Picture Research Council, asked a group of researchers, mostly university psychologists and sociologists, to discuss the possibility of assessing the effects of motion pictures on children. The investigations he initiated, known as the Payne Studies, are significant not so much for their immediate findings as for the popular concern they reflect about the capacity of motion pictures to affect the individual bodies and subjectivities of their spectators. In a set of studies conducted by Herbert Blumer, college-age people were asked "to relate or write as carefully as possible their experiences with motion pictures."¹² Blumer found that "imaginative identification" was quite common, meaning that "while witnessing a picture one not infrequently projects oneself into the role of hero or heroine."¹³ Superficially, this account seems to rehearse, or anticipate, arguments made in contemporary film theory about spectatorship and the power of the filmic apparatus and narrative to position the spectator.¹⁴ But Blumer's claim is actually different. His term for identification, "emotional possession," implies that "the individual identifies himself so thoroughly with the plot or loses himself so much in the picture that he is carried away from the usual trend of conduct."¹⁵ And there is no telling just how

long this possession will last, for “in certain individuals it may become fixed and last for a long time.”¹⁶ Emotional possession, in other words, can last well beyond the duration of the film. Blumer’s study suggested that the experience of the film might be as formative and powerful as other life experiences. What people see might affect them so significantly that the images would actually become part of their own archive of experience.

According to this study, the cinema dethrones lived experience as the only type of experience powerful enough to shape or construct identity. For Blumer, emotional possession had implications for both the future and the past of the person under its sway. While in cinema’s grip, a person “is transported out of his normal conduct and is completely subjugated by his impulses.”¹⁷ In fact,

in a state of emotional possession impulses, motives and thoughts are likely to lose their fixed form and become malleable instead. There may emerge from this “molten state” a new stable organization directed towards a different line of conduct. The individual, as a result of witnessing a particularly emotional picture, may come to a decision to have certain kinds of experience and to live a kind of life different from his prior career.¹⁸

A nineteen-year-old woman writes,

After having seen a movie of pioneer days I am very unreconciled to the fact that I live to-day instead of the romantic days of fifty years ago. But to offset this poignant and useless longing I have dreamed of going to war. I stated previously that through the movies I have become aware of the awfulness, the futility of it, etc. But as this side has been impressed upon me, there has been awakened in me at the same time the desire to go to the “front” during the next war. The excitement—shall I say glamour?—of the war has always appealed to me from the screen. Often I have pictured myself as a truck driver, nurse, HEROINE.¹⁹

While the content of this young woman’s fantasy is troubling, her response suggests that her experience inside the movie theater might be as significant a force in constructing, or deconstructing, her subjectivity as any experience she has had outside the theater.

Many of the Payne Studies tests were designed to measure quantitatively the extent to which film affected the physical bodies of its spectators. As such, they addressed a popular anxiety concerning both the experiential nature of the cinema and the extent to which those “experiences” might be retained somatically, as memories. The investigators used a galvanometer that, like a lie

detector, measures galvanic responses in the skin, as well as a pneumocardiograph, which measures changes in respiratory pulse and blood pressure.²⁰ These studies presumed that the body might display evidence of physiological disturbances caused by the cinematic experience, by a technological intervention into subjectivity. The call for a technology of detection registered a fear that people might no longer be able to distinguish cinematic memories from lived ones, the “prosthetic” from the “real.” It seems not at all surprising that this concern about the effect of films on individual subjectivities came at the moment that the classical Hollywood style, with its ideological positioning of the spectator, achieved dominance.

Like social scientists, cultural critics in the early twentieth century were acutely aware of the power of cinema to affect people in a bodily way. In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer began to theorize the experiential nature of the cinema. For Kracauer, film “seizes the ‘human being with skin and hair’” as “the material elements that present themselves in film directly stimulate the *material layers* of the human being: his nerves, his senses, his entire *physiological substance*.”²¹ The cinematic experience has an individual bodily component even while its mode of reception is collective. For Benjamin, it is precisely the interplay of individual bodily experience with the publicity of the cinema that makes possible new forms of collectivity, political and otherwise.

With the development of classical film theory, however, as Vivian Sobchack has argued, the body disappeared as a coordinate of spectatorship. Attempting to theorize the phenomenology of the cinematic experience and to return the body to film theory, Sobchack writes, “More than any other medium of human communication, the moving picture makes itself sensuously and sensibly manifest as the expression of experience by experience.”²² In its address to the individual body,

cinema uses *modes of embodied existence* (seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement) as the vehicle, the stuff, the substance of its language. It also uses the *structures of direct experience* (the “centering”; and bodily situating of existence in relation to the world of objects and others) as the basis for the structures of its language. Thus, as a symbolic form of human communication, the cinema is like no other.²³

Along with Sobchack, scholars such as Linda Williams and Steven Shaviro also acknowledge the bodily, experiential component of film spectatorship.²⁴ As Shaviro points out, the portability of cinematic images—the way people are invited to wear them prosthetically, to experience them in a bodily fashion—is both the threat and the allure of film. To emphasize this experiential,

bodily aspect of spectatorship, Shaviro sets forth as his guiding principle that “cinematic images are not representations, but *events*.”²⁵ This new form of experience, enabled in part by the cinema, is crucial to the acquisition of prosthetic memories.

“INAUTHENTIC” EXPERIENCE

By the twenty-first century the cinematic image had achieved an unprecedented virtuosity. Whereas simulation in early cinema was imperfect, contemporary cinema is virtually seamless. As many critics have argued, early cinema did not operate on a principle of absorption but one of distraction; the deep identification that became part of spectatorship in the classical period and beyond was not yet part of the cinematic experience. The improvement of cinematic technology has made identification with filmic images increasingly possible, thereby facilitating the acquisition of prosthetic memories. Some science fiction films, like *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*, explore the effects of technology on memory, literalizing prosthetic memory. In so doing, these films disrupt some basic postmodern assumptions about experience.

In theorizing the postmodern, Jean Baudrillard claims that the proliferation of different media and mediations—“simulations”—has dissolved the dichotomy between the real and the simulacrum, between the authentic and the inauthentic, between the natural and the artificial.²⁶ With these new forms of media in the twentieth century, he declares, people’s actual relationship to events—“authentic experience”—has become so mediated that it is no longer possible to distinguish between the real, something mappable, and the hyperreal, “the generation by models of a real without origin.”²⁷ According to Baudrillard, in the contemporary world people are hopelessly detached from the “real.” To put it another way, postmodern society is characterized by an absence of “real” experience. And yet to make this claim, Baudrillard presupposes what he denies: the existence of the “real.” That is, his argument requires a “real” against which to recognize a land of simulation.

With postmodernity, Fredric Jameson asserts, comes “the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way.”²⁸ In other words, he is claiming that in postmodernity, experience is dead. “Nostalgia films,” he suggests, invoke a sense of “pastness” instead of engaging with “real history.” He therefore finds a fundamental “incompatibility of a postmodernist nostalgia and language with genuine historicity.”²⁹ But this account participates in a nostalgia of its own, nostalgia for that prelapsarian moment when people actually experienced history in some unmediated way. Furthermore, it offers a rather narrow version of experience.

Jameson's argument does not consider that the technologies of the "post-modern" moment might themselves change what counts as experience.³⁰

Both assumptions unwittingly betray a longing for some earlier moment when, for Baudrillard, there was a "real" or, for Jameson, people experienced history in an authentic way. But the "real" and the "authentic" are and have always been a limit case, an ideal state. People's relations to both the world and the past have always been mediated through representation and narrative.³¹ Even in the historical moment that these theorists label "the post-modern," one *experiences* one's life as real. Perhaps there is an important difference between "experiencing the real" and "having a real experience." In other words, Baudrillard and Jameson may be conflating "the authentic" and "the experiential," erroneously rendering them both obsolete in what they call postmodernity. Furthermore, such arguments insist on the novelty of the postmodern and presuppose a radical break from the modern. In emphasizing such a dichotomy, these arguments neglect the points of continuity between the modern and the postmodern. More nuanced accounts of modernity describe the relationship between the two as a continuum instead of a break.³²

In fact, the theoretical assertion of the death of the real—particularly the death of real experience—is at odds with the veritable explosion of, or popular obsession with, real experience. From the widely popular Civil War reenactments and the hugely attended D-Day reenactments of 1994 to what I call "experiential museums" like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Detroit's Museum of African American History, and even blockbuster historical fiction films, it seems that the experiential "real" is anything but dead. The popularity of these experiential sites and events bespeaks a popular longing to experience history in a personal and even bodily way.³³ They offer strategies for making history into personal memories. They provide people with the collective opportunity of having an experiential relationship to a collective or cultural past they did not experience. They evince a popular desire to experience and live history. While these experiences are not "authentic"—not an "actual" experience of the remembered event—they are nevertheless acutely felt. This book shows that the experiential has become an increasingly important mode in the acquisition of knowledge and that particular types of knowledge are simply not available on a purely cognitive register. At the start of the twenty-first century, in a period dubbed the postmodern, at a moment when the mass cultural technologies of simulation—film, television, the Internet—are sophisticated enough to become the sites of experience, the time has come to direct our energy away from simply condemning this state of affairs and toward using these technologies in a progressive and socially responsible way. As Benjamin noted early in the last century, new technologies

have the capacity to alter radically a culture's way of seeing, its modes of perception, and its structures of feeling.

Furthermore, if these new encounters with the experiential can be imagined as an act of prosthesis, of prosthetically appropriating memories of a cultural or collective past, then they may make particular histories or pasts available for consumption across existing stratifications of race, class, and gender. Prosthetic memories, then, may become the grounds for political alliances and the production of new, potentially counterhegemonic public spheres.³⁴ Because they are not essential, not the exclusive property of certain people—because everyone is equally alienated from them—they are available to all and therefore have a democratizing potential. As Donna Haraway argues in her articulation of cyborg identity, the goal ought to be to construct political alliances that are not based on natural or essential affinities.³⁵ Cyborg identity recognizes the complicated process of identity formation, that people are multiply hailed subjects and that identity need not be totalizing. The pasts that people claim and “use” are part of this identity-forming process. Perhaps even more important, when cultural memories are taken on individually and have an affective, individual component, they are more likely to motivate action.



The rest of this chapter is concerned mainly with two films set in the future, which foreground the implantation of memories: Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (director's cut, 1993) and Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall* (1990). As science fiction, these films have license to explore in creative ways the ethical ramifications of prosthetic memory. In *Blade Runner*, Deckard (Harrison Ford) is a member of a special police squad—a blade runner unit—who has been called in to try to capture and “retire” a group of Replicants who recently landed on Earth. Replicants, advanced robots created by the Tyrell Corporation as slave labor for off-world colonies, are “being[s] virtually identical to human[s].” The most advanced Replicants, like Rachel (Sean Young), an employee at the Tyrell Corporation who eventually falls for Deckard, are designed not to know that they are Replicants. As Mr. Tyrell explains to Deckard, “If we give them a past we create a cushion for their emotions and consequently we can control them better.” “Memories,” Deckard responds incredulously, “you're talking about memories.”

In *Total Recall* (1990), Douglas Quade (Arnold Schwarzenegger) buys a set of implanted memories of a trip to Mars. Not only can he buy the memories of a trip he has never taken, but he can even choose to go on the trip as someone other than himself. Quade has an urge to go to Mars as a secret agent—or rather, to remember having gone as a secret agent. But the implant proce-

dure goes awry. While strapped in his implantation seat, memories begin to break through, memories that had been layered over by “the Agency.” As it turns out, Quade is not an “authentic identity” but one based on memories implanted by the intelligence agency on Mars. Both these films offer provocative examples of people who identify with memories that are neither natural nor authentic.

A “UNIQUELY HUMAN TRAIT”?

In *The Thieving Hand*, the beggar is a cripple. Unlike the wealthy passerby who offers to buy him a prosthetic arm and the pawnshop merchant who sells it to him, the beggar’s body is not whole, nor is it “normal”; instead it is visibly marked as other.³⁶ The beggar’s class position is signaled as a somatic or biological difference. By allowing the beggar to accept a prosthetic arm with memories of its own, the film entertains the possibility that memory might be able to overcome biological logic. The arm makes his body complete, and its memories help change the beggar’s subjectivity. In other words, the film begins to imagine a world in which memory might be a useful tool in overcoming the then-dominant notion of identity as “organic” or biologically determined. But because the film ultimately returns the arm to its proper, authentic, biological owner, it eliminates the possibility that memory might help transcend biological logic. Moreover, the prosthetic arm does not enable a class transformation. Armed or not, beggar or thief, the protagonist remains at the bottom of the social ladder.

By the twenty-first century, many long-standing cultural assumptions about the essential and innate quality of identity had been shaken.³⁷ The films *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* participate in this challenge to essential identity. In each film, memory or, more specifically, implanted memories have the capacity to alter identity and to challenge the privileging of biology. *Blade Runner*, for example, depicts a world in which the very distinction between cyborg and human is in question, with artificial memories being implanted to make the Replicants more human. As my reading of the film demonstrates, the contours of identity change in a world in which prosthetic memories are capable of producing feeling and ultimately responsible beings. By describing a Replicant as “a being virtually identical to a human,” a being designed to “copy human beings in every way except their emotions,” the film invokes the Baudrillardian notion of “simulation.” But rather than simply confirming Baudrillard’s view of postmodernism as a landscape of surfaces lacking in depth and divorced from the “real,” *Blade Runner* imagines a world in which simulation does not preclude depth.

Interestingly, the Tyrell Corporation intends not just to construct a Replicant that copies the human; rather, its goal is to construct a Replicant that outdoes the human. As Tyrell freely admits, “More human than human is our motto.” Tyrell intends the Replicant to be *more real* than the real itself. In other words, its difference from the human cannot always be detected.³⁸ In *Blade Runner*, Rachel, an employee at the Tyrell Corporation, appears as the film’s first instance of a Replicant who does not know that she is one. Deckard meets Rachel at the Tyrell headquarters, where he is sent to discover why the Replicants might want to return to Earth. In this first encounter, Rachel has no idea that she is a Replicant or that her memories are implanted. As Tyrell admits to Deckard, “She doesn’t know, but she’s beginning to suspect.” Deckard is astounded by her condition: “How can it not know what it is?” She is not, therefore, modeling herself after humans, which would, in effect, reinscribe their position as superior.

This point marks a fundamental departure from the 1968 novel by Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*,³⁹ on which the film is based. While the plots of the filmic text and the literary text are quite similar—in both cases, Deckard is a bounty hunter seeking androids who have escaped to Earth from off-world—their different emphases are instructive. Dick’s novel maintains the strict delineation between real and simulated beings, between the authentic and the inauthentic. For example, in the novel people are obsessed with “real” animals. But because the radioactive debris from World War III annihilated most of the “real” animals, only those people with means can afford to buy them. Deckard and his wife Iran can afford only artificial pets, so they have an electric sheep. In the world of the novel, the distinction between real and electrical animals is barely noticeable and considered inappropriate for discussion: “To say is your sheep genuine would be a worse breach of manners than to inquire whether a citizen’s teeth, hair, or internal organs would test out authentic” (5). And yet the distinction still exists. In fact, Deckard so wants a real animal that he uses his bounty money to purchase a “black Nubian goat” (147). Later, in the novel’s final scene, Deckard comes upon a toad in the wilderness:

The bulge in the ground, among the stones. An animal, he said to himself. And his heart lugged under the excessive load, the shock of recognition. I know what it is, he realized; I’ve never seen one before but I know it from the old nature films they show on Government TV. (209)

He manages to trap it and take it home for Iran. She turns it over, exposing a control panel on its belly; it is a “false animal” (213). The novel’s final assessment—that “the electric things have their lives, too. Petty as those lives

are” (214)—concedes “life” to the electric objects but continues to insist that such a life is qualitatively worse than “real” life. In other words, the novel insists on the superiority of the “real.”

This logic also is essential to understanding the “Andys” (the novel’s name for Replicants). Deckard’s first Andy target, named Luba Luft, is an opera singer. “Surprised at the quality of her voice” (86), Deckard is provoked into questioning the morality of bounty hunting: “I’ve had enough. She was a wonderful singer. The planet could have used her. This is insane. . . . She was a really superb singer. . . . I don’t get it; how can a talent like that be a liability to our society” (119–20). He wishes the distinction did not matter, but alas it does. In fact, even though Deckard briefly equivocates, Luba Luft does not. For her, the distinction between Andys and humans will always exist. She admits to Deckard, “I really don’t like androids. Ever since I got here from Mars my life has consisted of imitating its humans, doing what she [a human] would do, acting as if I had the thoughts and impulses a human would have. Imitating, as far as I’m concerned, [is] a superior form of life” (117). Even as Deckard begins to doubt the presence of a meaningful distinction between an android and a human, Luba Luft reinscribes it. Because she is constantly copying humans, she reaffirms their position of superiority.

In the world of the novel, ontological security relies on an always detectable distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic, the real and the simulacrum. The novel therefore presumes—and requires—the existence of a fundamental difference between androids and humans: the capacity to experience empathy. Empathy—or a lack of it—enables Deckard to identify Luba Luft. When he sees her, he notes that “her tone held cold reserve—and that other cold, which he had encountered in so many androids. Always the same: great intellect, ability to accomplish much, but also this. He deplored it. And yet without it, he could not track them down” (88). Accordingly, in the novel, the test that the bounty hunters use to determine whether a suspect is an Andy or a human is a “Voight *Empathy* Test” (25, italics added). Empathy is imagined to be the supremely and uniquely human trait: Deckard had “wondered . . . precisely why an android bounced helplessly about when confronted by an empathy measuring test. Empathy, evidently, existed only within the human community, whereas intelligence to some degree could be found throughout every phylum” (26).

But the novel has even more to say about empathy and its political utility. Empathy, it turns out, has the ability to unite people across existing stratifications of race and class. In the aftermath of World War III, the earth is a desolate place, with most of its inhabitants having emigrated to off-world. As in the *Thieving Hand*, class difference in this novel is marked by mutation and infirmity of the body. Certain persons, like the prematurely aging “chicken-

head,” John Isidore, were not allowed to emigrate to off-world after World War III. For these invalids left behind in an otherwise sparsely populated landscape, empathy offers a form of intersubjectivity and communal experience. The “empathic gift” blurs the physical and class boundaries between people. Empathy is imagined as a method for uniting people, for breaking down individual subjectivities and constructing in their stead intersubjective relations. A religion of empathy called Mercerism exists to forge connections between people, to construct solidarity among humans all over the universe, since the conditions of the novel’s present foreclose the possibility of a “real” geographical community. One enters the empathic community of Mercerism through an intersubjective experience called *merging*, achieved by grasping the handles of a “black empathy box.” When John Isidore begins his merge, his living room begins to fade away, and he enters a new landscape. Ahead of him, he sees Wilbur Mercer:

He had crossed over in the usual perplexing fashion; physical merging—accompanied by mental and spiritual identification—with Wilbur Mercer had reoccurred. As it did for everyone who at this moment clutched the handles, either here on earth or on one of the colony planets. He experienced them, the others, incorporated the babble of their thoughts, heard in his own brain the noise of their many individual existences. They—and he—cared about one thing; this fusion of their mentalities oriented their attention on the hill, the climb, the need to ascend.

A rock, hurled at him, struck his arm. He felt the pain. He half turned and another rock sailed past him, missing him; it collided with the earth and the sound startled him. . . . You felt it too, he thought. Yes the voices answered. We got hit on the left arm: it hurts like hell. . . . Releasing the handles he examined his arm, then made his way unsteadily to the bathroom of his apartment to wash the cut off. This was not the first wound he had received while in fusion with Mercer and it probably would not be the last. (18–21)

We might read Mercerism as an analogy for the cinematic or mass cultural mode of experience. The measly John Isidore—because of both technology and empathy—is able to transcend his own bodily boundaries. It is important that the experience of empathy is predicated on a particular technology: the black empathy box. Like other mass cultural technologies, the empathy box offers a way of inserting oneself into history or into the public. Mercerism seems to anticipate spectatorship in the age of cable television, the VCR, and the Internet, and in so doing it challenges the notion that home viewing or Web surfing produces atomized subjects. Despite the pri-

vated nature of its consumption, Mercerism gives people access to a collective archive of knowledge and experience. As Mercerism metaphorically demonstrates, whether they are consumed privately or publicly, mass cultural technologies provide people with a common or collective archive of knowledge that ultimately might make possible new or otherwise unimaginable alliances. This mediated intersubjectivity is imagined as a sensuous bodily phenomenon. The fact that people often receive cuts from rocks that hit them during the merge demonstrates that communal experience leaves a trace, a scar, on the body, altering that body in a physical way. Mercerism thus emphasizes that mass culturally induced experiences have the power to mark identities.

While the novel imagines for empathy the role of forging connections between people who inhabit different universes, it saves that experience exclusively for humans. In the novel, the capacity to experience empathy becomes the litmus test for humanity. The potential of empathy in the film version is much more radical. In *Blade Runner*, empathy does not mark the difference between human and android but, rather, eradicates it. What exposes Replicants in the film is not a lack of empathy so much as the lack of a past: the lack of memories. Ridley Scott foregrounds this point in the film's opening sequence. The film begins with a Voight-Kampff test (no longer called the Voight Empathy test), which was designed to identify a Replicant by measuring physical, bodily, responses to a series of questions intended to provoke an emotional response. Technological instruments are used to measure pupil dilation, and the blush reflex, to determine the effect the questions have on the subject. In this opening scene, with an apparatus not dissimilar to the one used in the Payne Studies, Mr. Holden, a "blade runner," questions Leon, his subject. Although as Mr. Holden explains, "reaction time is important," Leon slows down the test by interrupting with questions. When Mr. Holden says, "You're in a desert walking along the sand. You see a tortoise," Leon asks, "What's a tortoise?" Aware that his line of inquiry is going nowhere, Mr. Holden says, "Describe in single words the good things about your mother." Leon stands up, pulls out a gun, says "Let me tell you about my mother," and then shoots Holden. In this "primal scene," what "catches" the Replicant is not the absence of empathy but the absence of a past, of origins, of a mother: the absence of memories. Without a past, without memories, Leon cannot describe a mother or produce a genealogy.

This scene, then, attempts to establish memory as the locus of humanity. Many who have written about *Blade Runner* have emphasized the fact that Replicants lack a past in order to underscore the lack of "real history" in postmodernity. David Harvey, for example, argued that "history for everyone has become reduced to the evidence of a photograph."⁴⁰ The Replicants' lack

of a past, in other words, illustrates the lack of depth and the emphasis on surface that characterize postmodernity. Giuliana Bruno claimed that the photograph “represents the trace of an origin and thus a personal identity, the proof of having existed and therefore having the right to exist.”⁴¹ Certainly the relationship between photography and memory is central to the film. However, both Bruno and Harvey presume that photography has the ability to anchor a referent, that a photograph maintains its indexical link to a particular “reality.” *Blade Runner*, I would argue, claims just the opposite. After Deckard has determined that Rachel is a Replicant, she shows up at his apartment with photographs and, in particular, a photograph depicting her with her mother. “You think I’m a Replicant, don’t you?” she asks. “Look, it’s me with my mother.” The photograph, she hopes, will validate her memory and authenticate her past. But rather than reasserting the referent, the photograph further confounds it. Instead of reading Rachel’s photograph as truth, Deckard begins to recall for her one of her memories: “You remember the spider that lived in the bush outside your window . . . watched her work, building a web all summer. Then one day there was a big egg in it.” Rachel continues, “The egg hatched and too baby spiders came out and they ate her.” Deckard looks at her. “Implants,” he says. “Those aren’t your memories, they’re someone else’s. They’re Tyrell’s niece’s.” The photograph in *Blade Runner*, like the photograph of the grandmother in Kracauer’s 1927 essay “Photography,” has lost its indexical link to the world and is therefore “reduced to the sum of its details.”⁴² With the passage of time the image “necessarily disintegrates into its particulars.”⁴³ The photograph, it seems, has *proved* nothing. Similarly, the yellowed photographs on Deckard’s piano, photographs too old to depict people he ever knew, fail to confirm his own identity and genealogy.

But the fact remains that Rachel’s photograph *does* correspond to the memories she has. And those memories are what allow her to go forward and exist as she does. We could say that even though the photograph has no relationship to her “real” past, it does help her produce her own narrative, construct the contours of her existence.⁴⁴ While it fails to authenticate her past, it does authenticate her present. In Kracauer’s account, the power of photography lies in its ability to “disclose this previously unexamined foundation of nature”⁴⁵ and derives not from its ability to fix but from its ability to reconfigure. For Kracauer, precisely *because* it loses its indexical link to the world, photography has “the capacity to stir up the elements of nature.”⁴⁶ For Rachel, the photograph does not correspond to a lived experience, and yet it gives her a referent for her “own” memories. In a particularly powerful scene, Rachel sits down at the piano in Deckard’s apartment, lets down her hair, and begins to play.

Deckard joins her at the piano. “I remember lessons,” she says. “I don’t know if it’s me or Tyrell’s niece.” Instead of addressing that ambiguity, Deckard says, “You play beautifully.” At this point, Deckard, in effect, rejects the distinction between “real” and prosthetic memories. Rachel’s *memory* of lessons allows her to play beautifully, so it matters little whether or not she lived through the lessons.

Because the director’s cut, released in 1993, raises the possibility that Deckard himself might be a Replicant, it takes a giant step toward erasing the intelligibility of the distinction between the real and the simulated, the human and the Replicant. Early in the film Deckard sits down at his piano and glances at the old and yellowed photographs that he has displayed upon it. Then the film cuts to a unicorn racing through a field, which we are to assume is a daydream—or a memory. But because unicorns do not really exist, the image cannot be a “real” memory, a memory of a lived experience. Later, at the very end of the film, when Deckard is about to flee with Rachel, he sees an origami unicorn lying on the floor outside his door. He picks up the unicorn, which we recognize as the work of the plainclothes cop who has been making origami figures throughout the film, and hears an echo of the cop’s earlier statement to Deckard about Rachel: “It’s too bad she won’t live, but then again who does.” The ending suggests that the cop knows about Deckard’s memory of a unicorn, in the same way that Deckard knows about Rachel’s memory of the spider. It suggests that his memories, too, are implants, that they are prosthetic. At this final moment we do not know whether or not Deckard is a Replicant. Unlike the novel and unlike the initially released version of the film, the director’s cut refuses to distinguish definitively between Replicant and human, between real and prosthetic memory. There is no safe position, like the one Baudrillard implicitly supposes, from which we might find such a distinction. The ending of *Blade Runner*, then, registers the pleasure and the crisis of transportable memories: in the final analysis we may not be able to distinguish between “real” and prosthetic memories. Deckard is an empathetic being capable of experiencing compassion for a Replicant. And he is a character “real enough” to engage spectatorial identification. Ultimately the film urges its spectators to question their own relationship to memory, demystifying the assumption that their memories are “authentic.” Memories are central to a person’s identity—to one’s sense of who one is and who one might become—but as this film suggests, it might not always be possible to determine whether those memories come from lived experience or are prosthetic. Either way, they become the building blocks from which to construct narratives of the present and visions for the future.

“INAUTHENTIC” MEMORY

Total Recall begins in the middle of Douglas Quade’s (Arnold Schwarzenegger) nightmare of a world without oxygen. Deprived of oxygen, he and his female companion shrivel up, victims of a desolate, uninhabitable landscape. He wakes from this recurring nightmare beside his wife (Sharon Stone), telling her again that he feels compelled to go to Mars. Even in the first moments of this film, representations and simulations do not bear traces of their “inauthenticity”; we as spectators, for instance, do not recognize the opening sequence as a dream until Quade awakens.

Douglas Quade lives in a society in which one can buy prosthetic memories much as one once bought a vacation package. Because of his obsession with Mars, an ad on a video monitor on the subway catches Quade’s eye. An advertisement for Rekal, Incorporated, offers to provide its clients with “the memories of a lifetime.” It offers a world in which people seek the *experience* of memory rather than the experience of experience. Rekal, in other words, sells packaged memories. It is precisely because these memories are commodities—and circulate as such—that they are transportable. In *Total Recall*, as in *Blade Runner*, authenticity is no longer considered a necessary element of memory. Where memories come from matters less than how they enable a person to live in the present.

Quade’s experience at Rekal further blurs the distinction between real and implanted memories by challenging the idea that one can draw a meaningful distinction between a “real” memory and an inauthentic or “prosthetic” one. During the implant procedure Quade begins to writhe in his seat, yelling, “You blew my cover. . . . They’ll be here in a minute.” In the throes of a “schizoid embolism,” which resembles a seizure, he blurts out, “My name is not Quade.” It suddenly occurs to the technicians that Quade has already been to Mars and that some person or organization has tried to erase those memories. Realizing that they are in danger for tampering with the work of some higher agency, the panicked staff decides to “forget” what just happened. Watching this scene, we cannot avoid the nagging questions: How real is Quade’s memory of Mars? Is it a product of the botched implant procedure or something more sinister? And finally, what are the ramifications of these layered memories for his identity?

Even before it is clear that memory images might be implanted in a person, *Total Recall* dramatically stages the way that mass-mediated images intervene in the production of subjectivity. First of all, the film’s obsessive rendering of mediated images constantly undermines the notion of authenticity and the bourgeois desire to privilege it. In many instances, the film simultaneously depicts a person and his or her mediated representation on a video

screen. During Quade's first visit to Rekal, the sales representative appears both through a window over his secretary's shoulder and as an image on her video phone as she calls him to let him know that Quade has arrived. In *Total Recall* the proliferation of mediated images—and of video screens—forces us to question the very notion of an authentic or an originary presence. In other words, unlike *Blade Runner*, in which the question of simulation, of human or Replicant, never disappears, *Total Recall* systematically undermines any attempt to privilege, or even locate, the authentic. In *Total Recall*, video monitors appear on subway cars with advertisements (like the one for Rekal), and all telephones are video phones; even the walls of Quade's house are enormous television screens. Quade's identity, too, as we will see, is mediated by video images. When he learns from his wife that she is not his wife, that their "marriage is just a memory implant," that the agency on Mars "erased his identity and implanted a new one," any sense he has of a unified self, of a stable subjectivity, is shattered. That memories might be separable from lived experience challenges the notion of a stable or fixed identity.

The question of how Quade's identity is predicated on a particular set of memories that may or may not be properly his own surfaces most dramatically when he confronts his own face in a video monitor (see figure 1). That he sees his face on a portable video screen, a screen he has been carrying around in a suitcase that was handed to him by a "buddy from the Agency," literalizes the film's account of the portability of memory and identity. Quade confronts his own face in a video screen but finds on it a different person. The face on the screen says, "Howdy stranger, this is Hauser. . . . Get ready for the big surprise. . . . You are not you. You are me." We might be tempted to read this scene as an instance of Freud's notion of the "uncanny." The sensation of the "uncanny" is produced by an encounter with something simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar and derives from the "return of the repressed." The experience of seeing one's double as the image of a stranger is, for Freud, the height of uncanny.⁴⁷ But Quade's experience is not like that at all. The face he sees is not his face; it does not correspond to his identity. Since the film rejects the idea that there is an authentic self beneath the many layers of identity, there is no place for the uncanny. For Quade, the memories of Hauser seem never to have existed. In fact, he encounters Hauser with a kind of disinterest, not as someone he once knew or was, but as a total stranger.

It is instructive to read this scene, in which Quade faces a screen, as a model moment of spectatorship. Read in this way, the scene complicates accounts of film spectatorship as a purely passive experience. In Shaviro's theory of spectatorship, for instance, the powerful image absorbs the spectator. But this does not describe what happens here: Quade restores a form of critical agency to the act of spectating. Even though Hauser "hails" him, Quade maintains

an engaged distance from the image. He is interested but not absorbed. His attention seems to move back and forth between Hauser, who addresses him from the screen, and the rats who have joined him in the room. Quade is not a blank slate to be inscribed but an active spectator, a person who speaks back to the images. When Hauser says to him, "You are not you, you are me," Quade responds incredulously, "No shit"; and when Hauser tells Quade that "now it's all up to you," Quade says sarcastically, "Great." Quade is simultaneously engaged with the image of Hauser and aware of his own self as Quade. That Quade maintains a critical posture toward the image on the screen does not mean that the screen image of Hauser fails to affect him and prescribe for him a course of action. Quade understands that he must go to Mars, but he does not accept wholesale what Hauser tells him. Quade decides to go to Mars to fight against the tyrannical ruler, Cohagen, but he refuses to go back to being Hauser, Cohagen's henchman.⁴⁸ In other words, Quade does not confront the image on the screen and its narrative about the past as familiar, or even his, but as the other, as something different from him.

Quade's encounter with his image on the screen also seems to disrupt the notion of the "mirror stage." According to Jacques Lacan, the mirror stage is initiated when a child first sees himself reflected as an autonomous individual, as a unified and bounded subject. As Lacan described it, the "jubilant assumption of his specular image"⁴⁹ gives the child an illusion of wholeness, which is vastly different from the child's own sense of himself as a fragmentary bundle of undifferentiated drives. For Quade, the experience is exactly the opposite. In fact, we might say that the encounter with the face in the monitor, which looks like his face but is not the one he owns, disrupts any sense of a unified, stable, and bounded subjectivity. Instead of consolidating his identity, the video screen further fragments it. This encounter also dispels the assumption that like the prosthetic arm in *The Thieving Hand*, every memory has a rightful owner, a proper body to adhere to.

This encounter with Hauser, who claims to be the real possessor of the body, is a microcosm for the film's larger critique of the tendency to privilege the "authentic." The spectator meets Quade first and identifies with him, thus challenging the claim that Hauser is the true self, or the more worthy identity for the body. At the film's climax, Quade claims his own identity instead of "going back" to being Hauser. It is important that Quade, not the culture industry or the powers that be, decides which identity he prefers. In the final encounter between Quade and Cohagen, the evil tyrant says, "I wanted Hauser back. You had to be Quade." "I am Quade," he responds. Although Quade is an identity based on implanted memories, it proves no less viable than Hauser and arguably more so. Quade remains the primary object of spectatorial investment and engagement throughout the film. Not only is his

simulated identity “real” to him, but it is more responsible, compassionate, and productive than the one that claims, objectively, to be “real.” And this is crucial: the fact that Quade experiences himself as “real,” just as Deckard experiences himself as human and empathetic, underscores the problematic slippage in both Jameson’s and Baudrillard’s theories between “the authentic” or “the real” and real experience. Neither Quade nor Deckard are authentic identities, and yet they feel real and are used productively by the people who wear them.

By claiming the Quade identity as his own, the protagonist commits himself to saving the underclass on Mars from oxygen deprivation. Like the societies depicted in *The Thieving Hand* and *Blade Runner*, the one on Mars is highly stratified. Members of the underclass on Mars are referred to as Mutants, which also describes their physical state, their deformities being the result of oxygen deprivation. Their mutated bodies signal their class position visually. These Mutants are the socioeconomic group on Mars most oppressed by the tyrannical Cohagen, who regulates their access to oxygen through a system of vents and fans. Quade refuses to go back to being Hauser because he empathizes with the plight of the Mutants. His sense of moral responsibility outweighs any claims on his actions exerted by the pull of an “authentic” identity. By choosing to start the reactor at the pyramid mines and thereby produce enough oxygen to make the atmosphere on Mars habitable, Quade is able to liberate the Mutants from Cohagen’s grip.

In an important scene leading up to this decision, Quade meets with Quato, the Mutants’ resistance leader. Quato tells Quade that “a man is defined by his actions, not his memories.” We might revise his statement to say that a man is defined by his actions, but whether those actions are made possible by prosthetic memories or memories based on lived experience makes little difference. Any distinction between “real” memories and prosthetic memories—memories that might be technologically disseminated as commodities by the mass media and worn by their consumers—might ultimately be unimportant. *Total Recall* reinforces the transportability of memory in an age of mass culture and mass mediated images. It dramatizes the way in which memories always circulate and interpellate people but can never return to an authentic owner, to a proper body, or, as in the case in *Blade Runner*, to a proper photograph. Even though memories and identities are layered on top of one another, something like a drive to remember nevertheless persists—a drive that renders impossible Rekal’s promise of packaged “memories of a lifetime.” Memories, the film insists, are never finished business but a life force, categorically resisting closure. In the modern era, the urgency of memory projects and remembering is an attempt less to authenticate the past than to generate possible courses of action in the present.

Like *Total Recall*, *The Thieving Hand*, made nearly one hundred years earlier, naturalizes class difference by representing it as a physical deformity. In the earlier film, however, the ability of memory to overcome these biological constraints is much more limited. While it seems that the one-armed beggar might, through the prosthetic arm, acquire new memories, a new identity, and thus transcend his infirmity and his class position, such an outcome does not transpire. The “thieving hand” ultimately reattaches itself to its original owner in jail and, in so doing, connects the hand’s memories to the body that actually experienced them. The possibility of taking on someone else’s memories is much more imaginable in *Total Recall*, largely because the society that the film depicts is so thoroughly commodified. *Total Recall* reveals a universe in which the consumption of simulated images and of mass-produced commodities are naturalized processes; people are as comfortable with video images as they are with face-to-face communication. Some theorists of consumer culture and commodification have shown that material objects are necessary for the construction of identity, that “who we are, our perceptions of self, and the valuation of our self-esteem would all appear to be influenced by what we own and possess.”⁵⁰ Nuanced accounts recognize that consumption is neither purely functional nor merely symbolic. As Martin Lee asserts, the allure of cultural products “may stem originally from a profound feeling that they succeed in materializing a particular experience of the contemporary social world.”⁵¹ An engagement with commodities and commodified images is not, then, a retreat from the social world but a new way of participating in it. Not only do Quade’s “commodified memories” compel him to liberate the Mutants from Cohagen’s grip and ultimately free them of their mutant status, but the oxygen-filled air from the reactors restores their bodies to wholeness.

These science fiction films are themselves cultural artifacts, revealing the fears and fantasies of their moments of creation. For example, both *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* betray an anxiety about how to ground identity, an issue raised again and again in the debates surrounding identity politics in the last decades of the twentieth century. How, they seem to ask, can identity be anchored when memories cannot be counted on to provide continuity with the past? And yet both also gesture toward the liberating and potentially progressive possibility opened up by freeing identity from the essentialist logic that has long chained it down. If identity is largely a product of memory and if authenticity is no longer an essential component of memory, new possibilities are available for individual and group identity. *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* challenge the value of the distinction between “reality” and simulation, between authentic and prosthetic memory, and, in the former, between human and Replicant. In *Blade Runner*, even empathy ultimately fails as a litmus test for humanity. In fact, the Replicants—Rachel and Roy (Rutger

Hauer), not to mention Deckard—become increasingly empathetic over the course of the film. In the final confrontation, Roy reaches out his hand to save Deckard's life as Deckard dangles from the roof of a building. Empathy, the film concludes, is not an inherently human trait, and it comes naturally to no one. Empathy is learned and acquired through work and knowledge.

As I discuss at greater length in the epilogue, technologies of mass culture are a preeminent site for the production of empathy. The wide circulation of mass-mediated images brings people into contact with other people, other cultures, and other histories divorced from their own lived experience. Through mass culture, people have the opportunity to enter into a relationship with the “foreign.” Gradually, they learn to feel emotionally connected to what is intellectually at a great remove. What occurs, then, is not simple identification but a more complicated form of engagement, like Quade's before the video monitor. By the end of *Total Recall*, Quade understands that his is not an authentic identity, but he decides to live as Quade because that identity, unlike that of Hauser, is the one that permits him to have empathy for the Mutants. As the film demonstrates, the acquisition of prosthetic memories is a crucial step toward learning how to experience empathy. Quade's empathy for the Mutants is what ultimately compels him to take the necessary action to bring about social change.

Both *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* are about characters who understand themselves through a variety of alienated experiences and memories that they accept as their own and subsequently make their own through use. Their stories thus counter the argument of the “consciousness industry,” or “culture industry.”⁵² It would be a mistake to dismiss as *merely* prosthetic those memories that define personhood and identity. At the same time, however, memories cannot be counted on to provide narratives of self-continuity, as *Total Recall* clearly demonstrates. Nevertheless, the particular desire to place oneself in history through a narrative of memories is a desire to be a social, historical being. We might say that it is precisely such an engagement with history that gives people personhood and brings them into the public. What the drive to remember expresses, then, is a desire to experience or reexperience history, not to validate the past without question, but to put into play the vital, indigestible material of history, reminding us of the uninevitability of the present tense.

The mass cultural technologies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries make possible a new relationship to the past. That technologies of mass culture often produce simulations, or the “hyperreal,” does not mean, as Baudrillard would have it, that “history has stopped meaning, referring to anything—whether you call it social space or the real.”⁵³ “History” has never had privileged access to the “real”; like all knowledge, historical knowledge

is and has always been mediated through narratives and interpretation. The new technologies have made it increasingly possible to *experience* an event or a past without having actually lived through it. With these new technologies, what counts as “real” experience has changed. As I show in chapter 4, the experiential is emerging as a powerful and important mode in the acquisition of knowledge.

This chapter is firmly situated in the future, in the realm of science fiction. These films literalize the technological implantation of memory in a way that is, of course, not possible. Nevertheless, I argue here that prosthetic memories do indeed exist in our world. Through watching films and television, by visiting experiential museums, and perhaps by entering virtual worlds on the Internet, people can and do take on prosthetic memories. This is particularly true when memory transmission has been made difficult by historical circumstance. Each of the next three chapters examines such a case, exploring the ways in which people take on and inhabit memories of traumatic historical events that they did not live through. Such memories have the ability to alter a person’s sense of cultural belonging and genealogy. In the best cases, prosthetic memories can produce empathy and thereby enable a person to establish a political connection with someone from a different class, race, or ethnic position.



THE PROSTHETIC IMAGINATION

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IMMIGRATION NARRATIVES AND THE “MELTING DOWN” OF DIFFERENCE

IN ITS SIMPLEST FORM, the American “melting pot” fantasy was that as immigrants entered the nation, the visible signs of their ethnic and racial difference would be bleached out. In a stunning literalization of this fantasy, Henry Ford organized for his foreign-born employees the “Ford Motor Company English School Melting Pot Rituals of 1916” (see figure 2).¹ The following description appeared in the *Ford Times*:

The feature of the graduation exercises was a unique pageant, for which the big stage of the Light Guard Armory, at Detroit, in which the event was held, had been set. Across the back of the stage was shown the hull and deck of an ocean steamship docked at Ellis Island. In the center of the stage and taking up about half of the entire area was an immense cauldron across which was painted the sign “Ford English School Melting Pot.” From the deck of the steamship the gangway led down into the “Melting Pot.” First came the preliminaries of docking the ship and then suddenly a picturesque figure appeared at the top of the gangway. Dressed in foreign costume and carrying his cherished possessions wrapped in a bundle suspended from a cane, he gazed about with a look of bewilderment and then slowly descended the ladder into the “Melting Pot,” holding aloft a sign indicating the country from which he had come.

Another figure followed, and then another—“Syria,” “Greece,” “Italy,” “Austria,” “India,” read the cards, as the representatives of each of the different countries included in the class filed down the gangway into the “Melting Pot.” From it they emerged dressed in American clothes, faces

eager with the stimulus of the new opportunities and responsibilities opening out before them. Every man carried a small American flag in his hand.²

Adapting the logic of the assembly line, Henry Ford constructed a ritual for his immigrant employees designed to transform their visible “otherness” into generic, legible, American sameness. In these rituals, staged as dramatic performances, immigrants in peasant clothing entered an enormous pot while identical, mass-produced, flag-carrying Americans emerged from the other side. But producing “typical” Americans—the goal of these melting pot rituals—was simply an extension of what Frederick Winslow Taylor conceived of as the “principles of scientific management.”³ This “efficiency movement,” as Cecelia Tichi calls it, permeated all aspects of society:

When Taylor recognized that the input-output ratio of machine efficiency could be applied to workers and their activities, he enlarged the concept of machine technology to include human action and its organization. From there he was just a step away from the “Taylorization” which is to say the machine-based, systematic design of virtually all human activity, personal and social, private and institutional.⁴

Henry Ford adapted these principles to the automobile industry, inaugurating the system of production called Fordism.⁵ The melting pot rituals then extended the logic of Fordism to production in a different realm: the mass production of good workers and “typical” Americans.

These melting pot rituals might be read as a prototype of the mass cultural technologies that generate prosthetic memories for nationalistic purposes. When the immigrants emerged from Ford’s melting pot, they were not only “American in looks” but also American in self-representation: “Ask any one of them what nationality he is, and the reply will come quickly, ‘American!’ ‘Polish-American?’ you might ask. ‘No, American,’ would be the answer. For they are taught in the Ford school that the hyphen is a minus sign.”⁶ Rather than simply discard Ford’s fantasy of bleaching out difference and creating uniformity as politically reactionary, this chapter uses this complicated scene of assimilation to highlight a point of potential convergence between the dominant, anti-immigrant discourse of the 1920s and what I theorize as an immigrant fantasy of becoming a “typical American,” a fantasy that was not just about changing the visible markers of one’s identity but about actually taking on prosthetically the memories that would enable one to inhabit an American body. The immigrant authors whose narratives are analyzed in this chapter adopted memories of a past through which they did not live but that nevertheless enabled them to imagine themselves as Americans.

To adopt the clothes and the flag—to wear the signs and markers of America—reflected a desire for a form of cultural amnesia enabled by “remembering” an American rather than a European past. This chapter does not suggest that all immigrants at the beginning of the century were ready to throw away their birthright, nor does it deny the existence of vibrant immigrant communities.⁷ In exploring how immigrants used the melting pot fantasy, this chapter uncovers the fantasy’s promise of escape from stigmatized “otherness,” exposing the ways that being a “typical American” might itself be a prosthetic condition. In the immigrant texts that I examine, becoming a “typical American” requires negotiations—at once painful and liberating—with one’s individual and cultural past, with one’s memories. Therefore I argue that constructing national identity is not exclusively the work of the state, or even of intellectuals who force-feed to “the masses” a specific version of the past; it is equally the work of individual immigrants, who accept prosthetic memories in order to craft American identities for themselves.⁸ At the same time, this chapter reveals the limits on the types of remembering available to immigrants in the first decades of the twentieth century.

I begin by recovering the rhetoric of the congressional debates on immigration in the first part of the twentieth century, a rhetoric that was echoed and widely circulated in the popular press, particularly in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The cinema was another popular medium that depicted, and even attempted, assimilation. The cinema’s ideological goal at the beginning of what has been called by film scholars the classical period (1917) was in large part to homogenize diverse audiences. Cecil B. DeMille’s 1925 film *The Road to Yesterday* dramatizes the homogenizing impulse of the newly evolving “classical Hollywood cinema.”⁹ By looking at immigrant accounts like Mary Antin’s *The Promised Land* and Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep*, this chapter demonstrates the kinds of creative editing—the individual acts of suture—that were continually used to imagine oneself as an American and to make the future tense inhabitable. But as this chapter reveals, these negotiations came at a cost: while many immigrants might have longed to assimilate, the prosthetic memories they took on during that process were coercive and homogenizing. Instead of producing difference and thereby enabling empathy and perhaps even counterhegemonic politics, in this case prosthetic memories produced only sameness: the typical American.

“NATIONAL INDIGESTION”

In the 1920s America faced perhaps its most serious immigration crisis. In the early decades of that century, a virulent form of “racial nativism” erupted

in direct response to “new immigration.”¹⁰ “New immigration” referred to the darker-skinned, more visibly ethnic immigrants from southern and eastern Europe—primarily Jews and Italians—who were contrasted unfavorably to the Anglo-Saxon, “old immigrants” from northern Europe. The enormous influx of new immigrants caused deep concern about maintaining racial purity and led to unprecedented anti-immigration legislation that was intended to restrict dramatically the numbers of immigrants allowed into the country. The immigration law of 1921, for instance, imposed numerical limits on immigration by establishing a “nationality quota system” based on the complexion of the American population as it had been recorded by the 1910 census.¹¹ For extreme racial purists this measure was insufficient, as the 1910 census reflected a population that had already been contaminated by new immigrants. The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 addressed their concern by proposing that the quotas be derived not from the 1910 census but from the earlier census of 1890.¹² According to the 1890 census, the “typical” American was white and of Anglo-Saxon descent. In other words, the Johnson-Reed Act tried to limit the influx of dark, undesirable new immigrants.

The alarm prompted by the immigration crisis reflected a growing national anxiety about the very possibility of assimilating the “new immigrants” into the American nation. Hiram Wesley Evans, the leader of the Ku Klux Klan and professing to speak for “Nordic” Americans, declared “that the melting pot was a ghastly failure, and remembered that the very name was coined by a member of one of the races—the Jews—which most determinedly refuses to melt.”¹³ The terms of the congressional debates were much the same. In a panicked speech to the House of Representatives on April 20, 1921, the Texas Democrat Lucian Walton Parrish warned: “The endless tide of immigration will have filled our country with a foreign and unsympathetic element . . . the true spirit of Americanism left us by our fathers will gradually become *poisoned* by this uncertain element.”¹⁴ In his speech, immigrants appear as contaminants: “There can be nothing so dangerous as for us to allow the undesirable foreign element to *poison* our civilization and thereby threaten the safety of the institutions that our forefathers have established for us.”¹⁵ For Parrish and his peers, national purity—racial as much as cultural—was at stake. Moreover, unchecked immigration jeopardized the dominant narrative of the American national past, a narrative predicated on the fantasy that those living on American soil were always already Americans, neither descending from nor having themselves been immigrants. Nativist anxiety about losing a common heritage, a specific set of cultural memories, was palpable at a moment in American history when California Democrat John E. Raker argued before the House of Representatives on December 10, 1921, that there were in the United States “something like 15,000,000 people who are not American

citizens.”¹⁶ If the immigrant population surpassed that of “native” Americans,¹⁷ what, then, would constitute distinctly American memories or a common American past? And how would those “American” memories so important to the preservation of the nation survive from one generation to the next?

Congress was not the only site for airing inflammatory words about immigration. Articles about the danger of immigration proliferated in the popular press. Between 1922 and 1924, more than 160 articles were published on the topic.¹⁸ At least one-tenth of them were published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, which was arguably the preeminent forum for popular debate about immigration.¹⁹ The prevailing sentiment was indeed “that the melting pot was a ghastly failure.” Once imagined as the mechanism by which “all dross would be purged away,”²⁰ the melting pot was perceived more and more as ineffectual: “America melted down her immigrants very successfully prior to 1880; but since that time the melting pot has been negligible.”²¹ “The melting pot,” this article goes on to say, “is so crammed with them [immigrants] that it will be slipping over and dirtying the floor for an indefinite period.”²² According to such articles, the failure of the melting pot was jeopardizing both the integrity and complexion of the nation. With multitudes of foreigners speaking other languages and remembering other pasts and places, it might no longer be possible to preserve distinctly American memories or a common American past.

According to nativists, the melting pot was not powerful enough to contend with racial difference. In the words of Lothrop Stoddard, an outspoken proponent of the eugenics movement,

The events of the past decade have revealed with disconcerting forcefulness what few persons had previously realized—the fact that a considerable proportion of the most recent immigrant arrivals on our shores are not being harmoniously welded into our national life. The shibboleth of the melting pot is today pretty well discredited. That theory could hold water only as long as most of the immigrants were north Europeans, people of the same racial stocks as the old colonial population, with the same temperaments, the same inborn impulses and much the same traditional and cultural backgrounds. Such people could, and did, understand our ideas and institutions; could, and did, rapidly fuse with us and become genuinely part and parcel of ourselves.²³

Labeling immigration an issue of race and heredity, Stoddard believed that it posed a biological and evolutionary threat. In an attempt to explain the failures of the melting pot, nativists turned to biology—and the body—in order to locate the differences. An article entitled “Lest We Forget,” was the *Post*’s

cover story on April 28, 1923, and it marked the start of the journal's veritable obsession with the "immigration crisis." What begins simply as an article about the problem of immigration—that "the United States is getting too many immigrants who are very bad for the country"²⁴—ends on the topic of eugenics and "the science of race," with the research findings of Dr. Harry H. Laughlin, the expert eugenics agent of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. In Laughlin's words, "Immigration is essentially a racial and biological problem . . . from the standpoint of the future, immigration is primarily a long-term national investment in human family stocks. It will influence greatly the character, the natural abilities and weaknesses of the Americans of the future."²⁵

The threat that "new immigration" posed to the "national body" was vividly conveyed in the frequently used metaphor of digestion. Describing the problem he called "national indigestion," Stoddard explained that "unable to absorb these aliens, America began to show symptoms of indigestion, painfully evident in many ways, from politics to social realities."²⁶ In this way, the immigration crisis was imagined as a crisis in national consumption. This idea—that the nation "is what it eats"—came at a moment when many Americans were moving into the new role of consumers.²⁷ In his article "Slow Poison," Kenneth L. Roberts refers to the "millions of *undigested* aliens."²⁸ The Oshkosh, Wisconsin, newspaper, the *Northwestern*, referring to the bill that would restrict immigration, claimed that "the *nation's foreign diet* would be restricted and balanced." Such restrictions were crucial when "the national life has been weakened by *overfeeding*. It is to be stimulated by improved *digestion*."²⁹ S. J. Holmes began his article, "Immigration and the Future American," with the assertion that "the last few years have witnessed a striking change in the prevailing sentiment of the American people on the subject of immigration. It has only recently come home to us that we are suffering from an attack of *acute indigestion*."³⁰ This rhetoric suggests that the national body is ailing, unwell from the presence of indigestible, unassimilable foreign bodies.

Underlying this rhetoric was the fantasy that America was composed of a single national body or even the sum total of many identical bodies. Unlike the Hobbesian image, in which the people who make up the body of the state are different, performing different functions for the good of the whole, this American national body was based on the fantasy that its individual parts were identical and that it would therefore suffer from an influx of "aliens." Nativists worried that the southern and eastern European immigrants who refused to melt could not be digested or incorporated into the national body; as alien entities, they would poison the larger whole. This rhetoric in effect made the immigration issue into a racial problem for the United States, as the

bodies of the new immigrants were visibly different, visibly other.³¹ Like the return of the repressed, the new immigrants also challenged the nativist fantasy that all Americans have always been only Americans.

EDITING THE PAST

Anxieties about immigration, race, and national identity found expression in yet another mass cultural arena: the cinema. After being targeted by the vice crusades as a dangerous and degraded medium, film was given a second chance provided it would serve an agenda of moral uplift. Essential to this rehabilitation of the filmic medium was David Wark Griffith, considered by many the father of American cinema. Griffith was instrumental in popularizing the conventions (close-ups, point-of-view shots, and the like) that came to dominate film's form and narrative structure to the present day, and he consciously used these techniques to advance a particular social mission. Griffith deployed a range of these new narrative devices in his film *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which sought to reproduce visually the history of the American Civil War and the subsequent period of Reconstruction. Of course, the film was far from a neutral depiction, as it celebrated the South and demonized African Americans.³²

One of the most innovative features of *Birth of a Nation* (though it was not, strictly speaking, the first film to do this) was its ideological positioning of the spectator. Such ideological positioning by the narrative was an intentional result of the evolving filmic conventions and practices that were coming into existence and are now referred to as "classical Hollywood cinema." In her work on spectatorship in early American film, Miriam Hansen explains that the new "spectator" was not an actual viewer but an ideological construct:

With the elaboration of a type of narration that seems to anticipate—or strategically frustrate—the viewer's desire with every shot, the spectator became part of the film as product. . . . As reception was thus increasingly standardized, the moviegoer was effectively invited to assume the position of this ideal spectator created by the film, leaving behind . . . an awareness of his or her physical self in the theater space, of an everyday existence troubled by social, sexual, and economic discrepancies.³³

The ideological construction of the spectator was part of cinema's larger goal: to homogenize diverse audiences—people with different pasts and different memories—for the sake of mass consumption. Hansen dispels the nostalgic myth that at the beginning of the classical period, audiences were

ethnically segregated. That a particular cinema would have a clientele of only Jewish immigrants is a myth that draws on memories of the nickelodeon, which might have more closely conformed to that description.³⁴ Rather, Hansen argues, the cinema was a place for crossing over; audiences were composed of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds as well as diverse classes. The ideological task of the cinema was to integrate them. Hansen uses the “ghetto film” as an example, for it often used the trope of intermarriage, thereby addressing³⁵ an immigrant audience while espousing an assimilationist message.³⁶ This rhetoric of assimilation, Hansen found, was part of a larger discourse about film as “a new universal language,” and Griffith’s belief in the medium gave rise to “the myth of a visual language overcoming divisions of nationality, culture and class.”³⁷ In an interview in 1914, Griffith proclaimed, “We’ve gone beyond babel, beyond words. We’ve found a universal language—a power that can make men brothers and end wars forever.”³⁸ To Griffith and others, the cinema seemed to be a powerful and effective tool for Americanizing foreign immigrants.

Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* attempted to narrate a national history by depicting the story of the American past. In another epic, made ten years later, Cecil B. DeMille’s film *The Road to Yesterday* (1925) dramatizes an American story of a very different sort: it depicts American characters with *European* pasts and memories and, as such, might be read as a film about immigration. In a stunning reincarnation plot, in which all the American characters led previous lives in seventeenth-century Europe, DeMille describes the immigrant experience as sequentially lived lives. Connecting the present to particular pasts by means of flashbacks, DeMille illustrates the creative editing and narration that emerged as necessary to articulating American personhood during this period. In fact, the filmic medium itself, with its ability to represent the past visually and to suture characters in the present to lives previously led, becomes a metaphor for a kind of prosthetic imagining, a way of remembering or forgetting the past, which ultimately allowed one to imagine oneself in the present as a typical American.

Set one year in the future, in 1926, at a resort “on the edge of the Grand Canyon, in the shadow of infinity,” *The Road to Yesterday* opens with five characters who have odd intuitions about one another that are manifested as repulsions and attractions. On their honeymoon Ken Paulton (Joseph Schildkraut) senses that his new wife, Malena (Jetta Gould), is afraid of him, and so he becomes irritated, thinking that his inexplicably crippled arm repulses her. Also at the resort, Elizabeth (Bess) Walsington Tyrell (Vera Reynolds), “a very modern young lady,” entertains the idea of marrying Rady Tompkins (Junior Coughlan), who is “not a bit less modern than Miss Tyrell.” But all bets are off when she meets Jack Moreland (William Boyd) in

the woods and falls in love with him. But Bess refuses to marry him out of embarrassment on learning that he is a minister. Reluctantly and by default, Bess agrees to marry Rady. By a strange coincidence, all five characters find themselves on “the night express to San Francisco”—Malena and Ken Paulton in search of surgery for Ken’s arm, Bess and Rady racing to get married before dawn, and Jack Moreland to stop the wedding. After the train wreck, which sends Bess “back—whirled back along the Road to Yesterday—into the life that was hers three centuries before,” she finds herself in seventeenth-century Europe, where she encounters the other four, all in their previous lives. Ken, who was the seventeenth-century Lord Strangevon, wants to marry the young heiress Bess, but in order to do so he must first do away with both his Gypsy wife Malena and Bess’s lover Jack.

As if to underscore the significance of “Americanness,” the film begins at a distinctly American site: the Grand Canyon. Moreover, the site itself is particularly evocative. The canyon is a chasm, suggesting that the story itself is situated at a historical, geographical, and temporal rupture. Throughout the opening sequence, a shot of the canyon continually reappears, punctuating each introductory scene. The canyon is meant to operate metaphorically, signaling at different moments the rupture between America and Europe and between the present and the past. Even the Grand Canyon itself testifies to the ancientness of the land, to the “always already” quality of America that underpinned the nativist rhetoric of the 1920s.

DeMille uses the “historical flashback” as a strategy for negotiating the canyon, the geographical and temporal chasm opened up by immigration.³⁹ We could even say that the cinematic editing, which enables the present to be spliced to a particular past, stages the self-fashioning and editing needed to imagine oneself as an American. For the most part, the “immigrants” that this film imagines are not the dark, swarthy, southern and eastern European “new immigrants” who dominated immigration at the time. Rather, these “immigrants” from seventeenth-century England are of the same stock as the Anglo-Saxon, Mayflower pilgrims. With the important exception of Malena, the Americans in this film are reconnected to their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, tapping into the nativist fantasy that all true Americans are descended from a Nordic or Aryan past. The film itself thus serves as a mechanism for reconnecting America’s immigrants to an Anglo-Saxon past.

But even the cinematic medium appears incapable of connecting Malena to an Anglo-Saxon past. In the opening sequences at the canyon when she is afraid of Ken, the *mise-en-scène* works to depict Malena as darker, more exotic, and more foreign than the other characters. On the night of their wedding, Malena explains by way of intertitle, “I know I love you Ken! But today—during the marriage service—*something* seemed to reach out of the Past

that made me—afraid.” She continues, “It’s as if we’d lived before Ken—and in that old life you’d hurt me—terribly—and I’m afraid of you.” Her intuition turns out to be grounded in events from their past lives. As the flashback reveals, in her seventeenth-century life Malena is a disdained Gypsy who falls in love with the powerful Lord Strangevon (Ken) one day in the woods. She stumbles on him and his injured arm and says, “Thou knowest my face—even as I have dreamed of thine, my lord. Wilt suffer me dress thy wound?” Of course, his injured arm in the seventeenth century accounts for his crippled arm in the present. He extends his hurt arm toward her, she caresses it, they kiss, and she says, “Tis written in the stars that love between us shall be bitter as hemlock.” Lord Strangevon removes a gold chain from around his neck and places it around hers, saying, “Our love shall be like this circle which knows no beginning and no end.” This ceremony in the woods constitutes their wedding (see figure 3). She replies, “Through lives before and lives to come thou knowest I am thine own right love.” Shortly, however, he receives word that Bess, the wealthy lass whom he has been chasing, has been tracked down, and he abandons his Gypsy bride. Desperate to hold onto her Gypsy-law husband, Malena finds Bess and warns her, “I am his wife by Gypsy rites and he shall have no other.” But as Lord Strangevon explains to Malena, “I must wed her or be beggared.” He finds Bess and drags her by force to the castle where the wedding feast is to be held. Malena follows them, lovelorn and yet spiteful, only to be scorned by the crowds at the wedding. “Tis the Gypsy come hither to bewitch us all,” Rady yells when he sees her, and she is met with public cries of “Burn her! Burn her!” And so Lord Strangevon does.

The public outcry against Malena and her foreign clothing and rituals would have had particular resonance for Americans in 1925 as a filmic incarnation of the unassimilable “new immigrant.” In the flashback, Malena is a despised Gypsy, and because of her ethnicity, Lord Strangevon has her burned at the stake as a witch. As a Gypsy she is “other,” living outside society, outside the juridical codes by which Anglo-Saxons are bound. According to Anglo-Saxon codes, her Gypsy marriage to Lord Strangevon is illegitimate. Like the “new immigrants,” David Mayall writes, Gypsies are popularly imagined to have a “*foreign origin* . . . living an idle, natural, *al fresco* life, camped in secluded woods and forests.”⁴⁰

In physique as well, the popular image of the Gypsies resembled the swarthy, “new immigrants.”⁴¹ More specifically, Malena appears as a proxy for the Jew. Like the Jews, the most disdained of the “new immigrants,” Malena is nomadic, a wanderer. The persecution of Jews in central and eastern Europe, John Higham explains, brought 119,000 Jews to the United States in 1921/22. Albert Johnson, chairman of the House Committee on Immigration, was particularly vehement in his attacks on the “unassimilable”

Jews, and his report left many people believing that the immigration law of 1921 was designed specifically to keep out the Jews.⁴² Jews and Gypsies have historically shared a kind of itinerancy. Jews have long been perceived as international figures, resisting allegiance to a single nation.⁴³ Similarly, when the Gypsies arrived in Europe as “a scattered nation of people united by language, culture and origin,” there was no geographical territory with which they could identify.⁴⁴

DeMille’s autobiography enables a reading of this film as more than a straightforward hegemonic critique of the new immigrant. Despite his self-presentation, DeMille was not completely Anglo-Saxon, as his mother, Matilda Beatrice Samuel, was Jewish. She had an enormous influence on his life, and yet about her side of the family his autobiography says only that “a hundred and fifty years ago, one of my great-great-grandfathers was a small merchant in Liverpool, England.”⁴⁵ In sharp contrast, he devotes nearly ten pages to the DeMilles, whom he traces back to Flanders in 1280. It is difficult not to hear the irony in his claim that

some who know me well have accused me of being positively Chinese in what they call my ancestor worship. It is not worship. It is, I think, a decent respect for those who begat me; and I think there is something to be learned from them, even from the few relics and mementos that come down from them.⁴⁶

By “worshiping” one past—one set of memories—he elides another. In both instances, personal and filmic, DeMille tries to repress his own “alien” status by expelling the figure of the Jew. By privileging his Anglo-Saxon ancestry, DeMille chooses to remember the past that most easily enables him to experience himself as an American.⁴⁷ I do not mean to suggest that DeMille was actually able to choose an identity from an infinite array of possibilities;⁴⁸ rather, I am attempting to expose the logic of his and many other immigrants’ repression of a marginalized past in favor of another that enables them to imagine themselves as white Americans.

Like DeMille, Malena must find a way to overcome her past. As a Gypsy in the seventeenth century, she states defiantly, “You canst not cast me away.” As the flames and smoke consume her, she cries, “Through lives and lives—through hells and hells—till the will that made has unmade—thou shalt pay—and pay—and pay.” Given the stakes of being racialized and thereby marked as “other”—she is quite literally burned at the stake—it hardly seems surprising that Malena might wish to “pass” as American. Although the film insists that the repressed will return in the form of intuitions in the present, it leaves open the possibility that desire, as an exercise of will or consent manifested in

the choice of a love object, might be a way to overcome seemingly insurmountable differences. In the DeMille film, romantic love is the glue that links one century to the next. Werner Sollors argues that “American identity is often imagined as volitional consent, as love and marriage.”⁴⁹ As a volitional act, falling in love transcends the “secular boundaries” or ethnic identities dictated by descent; falling in love thus emerges as a powerful mechanism by which to imagine the consensual aspect of becoming American. According to Sollors, to become an American is to fall in love with an American. Likewise, for Malena to overcome her descent, to render herself American, she must marry an American. In other words, in order to overcome her Gypsy past—her foreign life lived elsewhere—Malena must *choose* Americanness by marrying Ken, despite his previous actions toward her.

The contract here, however, is more complicated. Although Malena agrees to marry Ken in the present, on their wedding night she remains haunted by the past. Afraid of him, she refuses to consummate their marriage. She will become his wife only when, he too, will overcome the past. Not only must she love him, but he also must, in turn, recognize her. The flashback is brought to a close with Malena burning at the stake and Ken’s alter ego, Lord Strangevon, remorseful for what he has done. Cinematically, the characters are returned to the present as the smoke and flames of Malena at the stake fade into the smoke and flames engulfing the train wreck. Trapped under the engine, Malena calls, “Ken—Ken—save me—from the Fire.” For them to be married and overcome the past, he must do right in the present what he did wrong in the past. It is only when they choose not to be crippled by memories, when he “forgets” her Gypsy origins, that they can be joined together in the present. Although DeMille stages it as a religious conversion—Ken prays to God to return strength to his arm so that he can save Malena—we could read this act of faith as an act of will. Either way, his crippled arm becomes functional, enabling both him and Malena to shake off the past. Malena declares, “I’ll love you Ken to the end of the road—and Beyond!”

Like DeMille himself, who in order to be an American had to “forget” or edit out his Jewish past, Malena and Ken, in order to be together in America, must forsake one past in favor of another. Malena must reject the cultural specificities of her Gypsy past, and Ken must reject his intolerant, nativist past. By connecting American immigrants to Anglo-Saxon, European pasts immediately following the heyday of new immigration, this film promotes an overtly assimilationist agenda: Malena, the new immigrant, must choose to abandon her past to become an American, and Ken, the white American, must accept her deliberate attempt to “melt.” In this film, as in many others, Hollywood is intentionally selling assimilation to both immigrants and “native Americans.” But this is a hegemonic process. Reading the film through

the lens of DeMille's own personal history, *The Road to Yesterday* offers a solution for immigrants: they may choose, as both Malena and DeMille did, to embrace a set of memories that will enable them to become white Americans.



The remainder of this chapter looks at the kinds of prosthetic imagining—the acts of remembering and forgetting—that fostered immigrant fantasies of “passing” as American, of becoming American not just in clothing but in body as well. Because the dominant discourse labeled the immigrant body a degraded, racialized other,⁵⁰ the desire to “pass” as American, which itself was a version of the melting pot fantasy, must have had significant allure to the nation as well as individual immigrants.

In her reading of Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Lauren Berlant proposes that Irene's fascination with Clare is “a desire to occupy, to experience the privileges of Clare's body, not to love or make love to her, but rather to wear her way of wearing her body, like a prosthesis, or a fetish.”⁵¹ What she wants, in other words, “is relief from the body she has.”⁵² Like Irene, whose body betrays her difference, the new immigrants wore their alien status on their person. Irene's desire to “wear [Clare's] way of wearing her body, like a prosthesis,” represents a desire of many immigrants: to wear an American's way of wearing his or her body. The attraction of the melting pot fantasy for the immigrant, in other words, might in part have been its promise that he or she might ultimately inhabit a privileged, unmarked American body. As is clear in the case of David Schearl in *Call It Sleep*, to wear someone else's way of wearing his or her body might be more than mere escape; it is actually a means of inhabiting a more acceptable identity. This is what we see in the following accounts of displaced persons who engage in a kind of creative amnesia, who attempt to root themselves in America by repressing their “previous lives” in other places. In different ways, Mary Antin's autobiography *The Promised Land* (1912) and Henry Roth's novel *Call It Sleep* (1934) reveal the strategies by which “new immigrants” fashioned themselves as “typical Americans.”

“THE HYPHEN IS A MINUS SIGN”

I have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and in other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of “foreign” cultures; gathering at the frontiers . . . gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of

other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. . . .

If I began with the scattering of the people across countries, I want to end with their gathering in the city. The return of the diasporic, the postcolonial. . . . If I have suggested that the people emerge in the finitude of the nation, marking the liminality of cultural identity, producing the double-edged discourse of social territories and temporalities, then in the West, and increasingly elsewhere, it is the city which provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out. It is there that, in our time, the perplexity of the living is most acutely experienced.

—Homi Bhabha, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” 1990

But hark to the clamor of the city all about! This is my latest home, and it invites me to a glad new life. The endless ages have indeed throbbled through my blood, but a new rhythm dances in my veins. My spirit is not tied to the monumental past, any more than my feet were bound to my grandfather’s house below the hill. The past was only my cradle, and now it cannot hold me, because I am grown too big; just as the little house in Polotzk, once my home, has now become a toy of memory, as I move about at will in the wide spaces of this splendid palace, whose shadow covers acres. No! it is not I that belong to the past, but the past that belongs to me. America is the youngest of the nations, and inherits all that went before in history. And I am the youngest of America’s children, and into my hands is given all her priceless heritage, to the last white star espied through the telescope, to the last great thought of the philosopher. Mine is the whole majestic past, and mine is the shining future.

—Mary Antin, *The Promised Land*, 1911

Both Homi Bhabha, in his essay “DissemiNation,” written near the end of the twentieth century, and Mary Antin, in her autobiography *The Promised Land*, written near the beginning of that century, describe themselves as people from elsewhere who ultimately arrive in the city. For both, as the passages suggest, the city holds the promise of new identities, communities, and collectivities. Nonetheless, these accounts betray strikingly different engagements with, and commitments to, the past, present, and future tenses. Antin, a Russian immigrant to Boston, embraces amnesia. Unlike Bhabha and many other contemporary theorists of the Diaspora—for whom assimilation constitutes colonization and violation—Antin longs for a new beginning in America. In fact, it is at the site of a radical rupture that she sees her new life emerging. The “in-betweenness” of migrant culture celebrated by Bhabha requires a form of hybridity that holds no attraction for Antin. Rather than own

a dual citizenship, a hyphenated identity that acknowledges a racial or ethnic past, Antin imagines for herself an identity that exists almost exclusively in the future: “The past was only my cradle, and now it cannot hold me, because I am grown too big.”⁵³ In contrast to Bhabha, who finds in the city a temporal bricolage, a “gathering [of] the past in a ritual of revival,”⁵⁴ Antin finds something like a ritual of exorcism, an obliteration of the past.

Mary Antin quite literally imagines herself as one who has led multiple lives. In the opening lines of her introduction she declares, “I was born, I have lived, and I have been made over. . . . I am just as much out of the way as if I were dead, for I am absolutely other than the person whose story I have to tell” (xi). To exist in the present, in other words, requires the *death* of her previous self. For Antin, becoming an American requires more than just accepting a new national tag or sign, more than simply changing clothes. It requires inhabiting a new American body. She experiences the exorcism of her past, a high price to pay to pass as an American, as liberating:

Physical continuity with my earlier self is no disadvantage. I could speak in the third person and not feel that I was masquerading. I can analyze my subject, I can reveal everything; for *she*, and not *I*, is my real heroine. My life I still have to live; her life ended when mine began. (xi, italics in original)

In practice, this exorcism entails the forsaking—or forgetting—of one past in favor of another. Of herself as a child in Boston, Antin writes, “No native citizen of Chelsea took such pride and delight in its institutions as I did. It required no fife and drum corps, no Fourth of July procession, to set me tingling with patriotism” (197). Rather than remember her Russian past, Antin embraces the symbols and memories of the American past. Assimilation, she suggests, is a hegemonic process: “Naturalization, with us Russian Jews, may mean more than the adoption of the immigrant by America. It may mean the adoption of America by the immigrant” (228). In other words, becoming an American here requires a willful remembering of a distinctly American past, the price of which is one’s ethnic or cultural heritage.

There is a connection here to DeMille’s historical flashbacks that literalize lives sequentially lived. His flashbacks to “past lives” share the logic of Antin’s account of the immigrant experience. But while DeMille’s flashbacks engage in what we might call a ritual of reconnection, Antin engages in a “ritual of exorcism,” dissociating herself from her past life by imagining the “death” of her old self. The American past she chooses to remember, filled with patriots and “fife and drum corps,” is more desirable because it sanctions an American present. One might even say that Mary Antin lends a historical component to William James’s turn-of-the-century philosophy of the

self. James famously asked, “And our bodies themselves, are they simply ours or are they *us*?”⁵⁵ Here and elsewhere, he problematized the notion of a unitary self. Although James does not specifically explore the effects of modernity on the individual, his work reflects the social upheavals of his time. By staging multiple selves,⁵⁶ Mary Antin’s autobiography actually radicalizes James’s theory. For James, memory is the self’s locus of continuity;⁵⁷ “common memories” become the “common ingredient retained” by all the selves. While he concedes that there might be small, day-to-day disjunctures between the selves (hungry yesterday, full today), in more substantial ways there is continuity: “My name and profession and relation to the world are identical, my face, my faculties and *store of memories*, are practically indistinguishable now and then. Moreover the Me of now and the Me of then are *continuous*.”⁵⁸ Antin, by contrast, experiences a much greater break from her previous self and its memories, proclaiming, “I am absolutely other from the person whose story I have to tell.” For Antin, as in *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*, memories cannot be counted on to provide narratives of self-continuity. Memories of the past do indeed structure identity, but no single “real” memory determines identity. Which in a range of memories determines identity is at least partly the result of the agency of the rememberer.

Antin chooses the American past, as it is the one enabling her to imagine her rebirth as a “typical” American. George Santayana’s notion of the “symbolic American” participates in a similar logic: “I speak of the American in the singular, as if there were not millions of them, north and south, east and west, of both sexes, of all ages and of various races, professions, and religions. Of course the one American I speak of is mythical.”⁵⁹ All Americans are the products of disjuncture and difference, Santayana wrote in 1912, so it is precisely this mythical thing called Americanness that unites them:

As it happens, the symbolic American can be made largely adequate to the facts; because, if there are immense differences between individual Americans—for some Americans are black—yet there is a great uniformity in their environment, customs, temper and thoughts. They have all been uprooted from several souls and ancestries and plunged together into one vortex, whirling irresistibly in a space otherwise quite empty. To be an American is itself almost a moral condition, an education, and a career. Hence an ideal figment can cover over a large part of what each American is in his character.⁶⁰

Following Santayana, one might say that being a typical American is itself a prosthetic condition. To become American, Santayana’s “ideal figment,” requires adopting particular prosthetic memories, memories that all Americans

share and none actually own. In Santayana's account, the typical American has the advantage of being abstract, of choosing uniformity over difference. The typical becomes the grounds for equality, the constitutional premise for formal rights.

In her autobiography Mary Antin longs to trade in her stigmatized, racialized immigrant body for a "typical" American one. That Antin claims for herself a kind of typicality—"It is because I understand my history in its larger outlines to be typical of many, that I consider it worth recording" (xiii)—and that such typicality is not simply an extension of the Fordist, nativist logic of standardization forces us to consider more closely the valences of her fantasy. We could say that her narrative participates in the logic of typology. Fascination with the "type" is a characteristically late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century phenomenon. Susan Mizruchi, for example, contends that "typological" thinking developed in response to the late-nineteenth-century "landscape of social change" that included "unprecedented immigration rates, especially from Southern and Eastern Europe; escalating capital-labor conflict; challenges to traditional women's roles that brought increasing numbers of women into an embattled labor force; rapid urbanization and industrialization; the rise of trusts; and the ever-intensifying problem of race relations."⁶¹ It was precisely this desire to "reinscribe a conflicted and potentially explosive social reality as a terrain of consensus and integration"⁶² that led to the birth of American sociology. Type categories were so compelling, Mizruchi suggests, because they offered the illusion of "predictability and control."⁶³

Similarly, Mark Seltzer analyzed late-nineteenth-century efforts to create "statistical persons." He argues that Francis Galton's "composite photographs, or pictorial statistics . . . provided the necessary visual analog of a social typology and of deviations from the type, merging looking and measuring in a standard, and standardizing, schema."⁶⁴ In declaring, "My life is a concrete illustration of a multitude of statistical facts" (xiii), Mary Antin imagines herself as just this sort of "statistical person." Both the act of looking and the experience of being the object of the gaze are crucial to her fantasy. A central element of this social typology that Antin herself invokes is the study and surveillance of the body. Her compiling her own statistics might be read as an attempt to locate herself as an American type and thereby lay claim to an American identity.

But Mary Antin sees herself as a type not merely in its statistical sense but in its philosophical-religious sense as well. When she asserts that "I began life in the Middle Ages, as I shall prove and here am I still, your contemporary in the twentieth century" (xiii), she is invoking the model of typology derived from Protestant theology. In this sense, typology regards history as an echo of the Old Testament. Sacvan Bercovitch explains quite convincingly that

typology was a fundamental part of Puritan thinking and that it has continued to permeate America's notion of itself and its past.⁶⁵ The Puritans, he suggests, were different from other colonists in that "they conceived of the American paradise as a fulfillment of scripture prophecy."⁶⁶ Antin entitled her autobiography *The Promised Land*, which suggests that she understood her migration to America in typological terms. She emphasizes the cyclical, typological model of history:

We are not born all at once, but by bits. . . . Our souls are scarred with the struggles of successive births, and the process is recorded also by the wrinkles in our brains, by the lines in our faces. Look at me, and you will see that I have been born many times. (87)

Like the medieval church art that flattened time, this sort of typology—which imagines links to the past that are not linear or evolutionary—relies heavily on a kind of iconicity, on a link to a particular historical body, like Christ or Moses.⁶⁷

The workings of typology also prove capable of editing out differences. Sollors emphasizes the flexibility and portability of typology:

Once the New England Puritans had so deeply ingrained the connections between the Bible and process toward a prophesied American destiny by consent, later newcomers and other groups could find typology similarly resonant with their own experiences, interests and hopes—or phrase their divergent interests and aspirations, including their fire-and-brimstone assaults on Puritanism, in the available rhetorical forms. Puritanism had created cultural mechanisms to transmit even discontinuity.⁶⁸

Typology, in Sollors's account, thus appears as a major ideological mechanism for American assimilation. We could even say that typology has allowed a distinctly American form of self-imagining, a kind of prosthetic imagination, a type of creative editing in which the past that one claims and the trajectory that such a past enables have very little to do with heredity or even with normal, generational, parent-child links. In a typological universe every moment of the present tense becomes an allegory of history. Typology offers access to a public body, access that does not presuppose a particular birthright or biology. For Antin, typology offers the possibility of "passing":

In after years, when I passed as an American among Americans, if I was suddenly made aware of the past that lay forgotten,—if a letter from Russia, or a paragraph in the newspaper, or a conversation overheard in the

street-car, suddenly reminded me of what I might have been,—I thought it miracle enough that I, Mashke, the granddaughter of Raphael the Russian, born to a humble destiny, should be at home in an American metropolis, be free to fashion my own life, and should dream my dreams in English phrases. (197)

Typology offers Mary Antin the possibility of translating herself. Proclaiming “I am only one of many whose fate it has been to live a page in modern history” (xiii), she sees herself as both one of many and one who is exalted. In the typological model, because a mere person stands symbolically for a world historical figure or for a figure from modern history, such a model gives Antin a kind of publicity, an access to something like what Lauren Berlant termed the “politics of public personhood.”⁶⁹ In Antin’s case, to be “typical” is not a threat but a wish. To be a statistical person means to be counted, to be one of many, to be part of something, and perhaps even to stand for something.⁷⁰

But as Seltzer suggests, such typological thinking poses ontological problems, as it is at odds with the tradition of American individualism.⁷¹ There is a tension here between two competing impulses: to be one of many, and to be *the* one of many. This tension is in some measure reconciled by the fact that two different discourses of typology are being invoked here: the social scientific and the theological. While the former evacuates particularity and individuality, the latter serves as a mechanism for producing a public person. In other words, whereas the social scientific form of typology robs a person of uniqueness, theological typology enhances the person by affording a sense of connection to a known historical personage.

Mary Antin gains access to “typical Americanness” through the act of writing. About her first encounter with her own prose in print, when her essay “Snow” was published in her school paper, she writes,

My whole consciousness was suddenly transformed. I suppose that was the moment when I became a writer. . . . But now, as I read my own words, in a delicious confusion, the idea was born. I stared at my name: MARY ANTIN. Was that really I? The printed characters composing it seemed strange to me all of a sudden. If that was my name, and those were the words out of my own head, what relation did it all have to *me*. (212–13, italics in original)

This experience marks the birth of her desire to be a writer. But even more, it reveals how her writing abstracts her from her immigrant body. The concept of citizenship, with which she is fascinated, operates in a similar way. Granted citizenship along with her father, Antin has occasion to reflect on the

power of the concept and, in particular, its ability to unite all Americans and to smooth over individual differences. Through the mechanism of citizenship, the memories of the American past belong to her. When learning about George Washington in school, Antin tries to articulate her connection to him on the basis of citizenship:

But this George Washington, who died long before I was born, was like a king in greatness, and he and I were Fellow Citizens. There was a great deal about Fellow Citizens in the patriotic literature we read at this time; and I knew from my father how he was a Citizen, through the process of naturalization, and how I also was a citizen by virtue of my relation to him. Undoubtedly I was a Fellow Citizen, and George Washington was another. It thrilled me. (224)

Similarly, studying the Revolution, she comes to understand “what was meant by *my country*. . . . For the Country was for all Citizens, and *I was a Citizen*” (225, italics in original). Through the concept of citizenship Antin prosthetically imagines herself as an American. So moved by this connection, through citizenship, to both George Washington and her country, Antin composes a poem about Washington, which she takes to the office of a local newspaper for publication:

When the paper with my poem in it arrived, the whole house pounced upon it at once . . . it looked wonderful, just like real poetry, not at all as if somebody we knew had written it. It occupied a gratifying amount of space, and was introduced by a flattering biographical sketch of the author—the *author*—the material for which the friendly editor had artfully drawn from me during that happy interview. And my name, as I had prophesied, was at the bottom! (237)

Antin is thrilled by both the publicity and the public stature the publication affords her and, equally with her own alienation from it, the abstraction it offers her from her own immigrant body and status.

Michael Warner has theorized the complicated issue of subjectivity in the mass public sphere, which Antin confronts when faced with her own printed poetry. Tracing the history of publicity, Warner notes that in the eighteenth century the “public” was constructed through print and the language of Republicanism was extended to print contexts. An identification with a disembodied “public subject” gave a person a “prophylaxis” against the particularities of his own self through a kind of self-abstraction. In this context, the “public” becomes an “authoritative mediation,” and in the case of the bour-

geois public sphere, what a person says carries force not because of who he is but despite who he is. As Warner explains, this utopian principle allowed people to transcend the given realities of their bodies or social status. But in the case of the bourgeois public sphere, those permitted to enter were white, literate, and male, so paradoxically, it required a denial of the very bodies that had access to it. In Warner's words,

Public discourse from the beginning offered a utopian self abstraction, but in ways that left a residue of unrecuperated particularity, both for its privileged subjects [white heterosexual men] and for those it minoritized. Its privileged subjects, abstracted from the very body features that gave them the privilege of that abstraction, found themselves in a relation of bad faith to their own positivity. To acknowledge their positivity would be to surrender their privilege, as for example to acknowledge the objectivity of the male body would be feminizing.⁷²

The appeal of “mass subjectivity” comes from the contradiction of embodiment and negativity in the public sphere. The mass public sphere requires a visibility of public figures, people with whose iconicity others can identify. Through such identifications, individuals become a mass public subject. The hitch is that in so doing, they put themselves in an adversarial relation to categories that define their identity and therefore into a condition of self-alienation. Warner's reading of mass subjectivity in an age of publicity sheds light on Mary Antin's position. Antin wants very much to be a public person, to have her name in print, and yet part of the joy she feels from such an experience has to do with her sense of self-alienation: in print, her own words are divorced from her.

This “double movement” of the public sphere—identification and alienation—is painfully clear in the Graduation Day scene of Antin's narrative. Widely regarded as the “smartest' girl in the class” (279), Antin was asked to read aloud a composition she wrote. Despite her general sense of confidence, when she steps up to the podium she “was seized with stage fright” (280). She describes this stage fright as an acute consciousness of her body:

I was so conscious of my gloves, my shoes, my flowing sash. My wonderful dress, in which I had taken so much satisfaction, gave me the most trouble. I was suddenly paralyzed by a conviction that it was too short, and it seemed to me I stood on absurdly long legs. (280)

Here, when her writing remains attached to her, it cannot provide prophylaxis against her immigrant body. Unlike her jubilation at seeing her own

disembodied writing—and name—in the paper, here she experiences shame. This is even more dramatically the case later in the ceremony when a member of the school board addresses the audience. This man

went on to tell the story of a particular schoolgirl, a pupil in a Boston school, whose phenomenal career might serve as an illustration of what the American system of free education and the European immigrant could make of each other. He had not got very far when I realized, to my great surprise and no small delight, that he was telling my story. (281)

There were murmurs in the audience, people looking at Antin as they all assume it to be she. Antin is in a reverie, musing that her “history made the theme of an eloquent discourse” (282). People seated near her nudge her, prompting her to get up and thank him. Caught up in the drama of the moment, Antin stands up and says, “I want to thank you—” (282), but before she can finish, Mr. Swan, the principal, silences her by waving her down with his hand. Humiliated and ashamed at her own immodesty, for “calling attention to [her]self when there was no need” (282), Antin is shattered: “All my roses had turned to ashes, and all through my own brazen conduct” (283). This Graduation Day scene dramatically depicts the promise that assimilation holds out to Mary Antin but also its great cost. The publicity that her writing gives her—a joyfully disembodied place in the public sphere which, like her sense of “fellow citizenship” with George Washington, relieves her of her immigrant status and enables her to imagine herself as a true American—does not give her an identity that she can fully inhabit. The American girl that she has fashioned herself to be by taking on the American past as her own is not, it turns out, an identity that is always permitted to her.

GENEALOGIZING THE PRESENT

The purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit ourselves to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us.

—Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 1977

Genealogy, like typology, works in opposition to the evolutionary, linear logic of history. As we have seen, for some immigrants the experience of traveling over space and time, of traveling across worlds and centuries, cannot be narrated as the experience of a single life. The ruptures and discontinuities of

migration preclude such a possibility and thus underscore the necessity of genealogy. For the immigrant child, such ruptures and discontinuities are particularly pronounced. Mary Antin, for example, has no binding national ties that predate her American life: “Where had been my country until now? What flag had I loved? What heroes had I worshipped? The very names of these things had been unknown to me. Well, I knew that Polotzk was not my country. It was *goluth*—exile” (226). Irving Howe observed that immigrants focused their assimilationist dreams on their children. For the journeyers, the “transitional generation . . . the pleasures of the new world come either too late or not at all.”⁷³ Not only did immigrant children regard America as a place where they could come into their own, but the parents of child immigrants had great expectations that they turned to their children to fulfill. In the words of Alfred Kazin,

It was not for myself that I was expected to shine, but for them—to redeem the constant anxiety of their existence. I was the first American child, their offspring to the strange new God; I was to be the monument of their liberation from the shame of being—what they were.⁷⁴

But in order to achieve this liberation or to be, like Antin, “the youngest of America’s children . . . into [whose] hands is given all her priceless heritage” (364), the child immigrant must necessarily engage in a creative form of amnesia, constantly editing and negotiating the past, creating and taking on prosthetic memories in order to imagine himself or herself as one of “America’s children.”

Henry Roth’s 1934 novel *Call It Sleep* is the story of a family’s immigrant experience in New York, told mostly through the eyes and mind of its seven-year-old protagonist David Shearl. Over the course of this bildungsroman, David weaves together a genealogy, a “memory” of his past. The novel begins in the year of the Immigration Act of 1907, on Ellis Island, where Genya and her son David are reunited with Albert, who “had evidently spent some time in America and was now bringing his wife and child over from the other side.”⁷⁵ But their reunion scene is different from the others: “The truth was there was something quite untypical about their behavior” (11). While Italians “often danced for joy,” Jews “wept, jabbered,” and Poles “roared and gripped each other” (11), Albert and Genya had an altogether different encounter:

These two stood silent, apart; the man staring with aloof, offended eyes grimly down at the water—or if he turned his face toward his wife at all, it was only to glare in harsh contempt at the blue straw hat worn by the child in her arms, and then his hostile eyes would sweep about the deck to see if

anybody else were observing them. And his wife beside him regarding him uneasily, appealingly. . . . Altogether it was a very curious meeting. (11)

He is angry at her, we discover, because she failed to recognize him; she attempts to excuse herself by explaining that he had lost weight and shaved, to which he replies, "It's no excuse for not recognizing me. Who else would call for you? Do you know anyone else in this land?" (12). Their first encounter, therefore, is a scene of failed recognition. Albert does not match Genya's memory. America, it seems, has altered him beyond recognition.

Genya fails to recognize Albert, but more significantly, Albert refuses to recognize David as his son. From the novel's start, David's birth certificate is missing, and its absence comes to symbolize his uncertain parentage. The prologue foregrounds the fact that Albert wanted Genya to lie about David's age to secure cheaper passage. During their exchange he asks, "Did you bring his birth certificate?" (13). Flustered, she responds, "It may be in the trunk—there on the ship. I don't know. Perhaps I left it behind. . . . I don't know. Is it important? I never thought of it" (13).

When the novel begins, David, like Malena, is depicted as "other." He stands out in ways that makes his father reluctant to accept him: "The small child in her [Genya's] arms wore a distinctly foreign costume, an impression one got chiefly from the odd, outlandish, blue straw hat on his head with its polka dot ribbons of the same color dangling over each shoulder" (10). David is doubly a foreigner; too young to remember his homeland, he is a foreigner to Austria just as he is foreigner to America, the strange land where he has arrived.

That David is a foreigner twice over is emphasized by the fact that his native language is neither Polish (spoken in his mother's native Austria) nor English but Yiddish, which is not anchored to a nation or a homeland. Because David does not speak or understand Polish, he lacks the tools required to understand his parent's past lives in, and memories of, Austria. Since the story is narrated through David's eyes, the Austrian past remains unspoken and unspeakable until Genya's sister Bertha arrives and urges her to talk. "I've told you everything," Bertha cries, "and what have you told me? Nothing! I'm no longer a child. . . . Can't you trust me? Won't I understand?" (192). Genya is at first unwilling to uncork the past: "It's too long ago. It's too painful. And further I haven't time" (192). However, it is not Bertha who will not understand but David, who listens attentively from across the room: "And what was it about, he wondered. What did those Polish words mean that made his mother straighten out so" (193). The story that promises to unfold is foreign, out of his reach, recalled in his mother's native Polish. But David listens anyway. His eavesdropping functions in the novel as a primal scene, because it gives him knowledge of where he came from and in the way he misunder-

stands what he hears. Frozen in fascination, David is both attracted to and repelled by what he is about to learn:

Now perhaps he might learn what it was about, but if he did, something might change again, be the something else that had been lurking all the time beneath the thing that was. He didn't want that to happen. Perhaps he had better avoid it, better go down. . . . His breath quickened before a danger that was also a fascination. What was it? Why wouldn't she speak[?] (193)

In this primal scene, despite the language barrier, David gleans bits and pieces of his mother's secret past, bits that will ultimately become building blocks in the construction of his American subjectivity. Frustrated, "resentful almost to tears" by her incomprehensible story, David perks up when suddenly he catches several phrases in Yiddish: "After the old organist, dead. . . . Handsome. . . . And seized my hand" (196). Bertha, too, slips into Yiddish, saying, "And even if he was an organist, he was a goy! And right then and there you should have sent him looking for his teeth" (196). They quickly return to Polish, and David is once again alone, a foreigner in a strange land: "With the same suddenness as before, meaning scaled the *horizon* to another idiom, leaving David stranded on a sounding but *empty shore*. Words here and there, phrases shimmering like *distant sails* tantalized him, but never drew near" (197, italics added). He is alone on a remote shore. His origin is obscured and he cannot see beyond the horizon to Europe. Stranded, David dwells on the fragments he has learned: "He felt as if nothing he had ever known were as important as knowing this. Who was Ludwig? Was that he, the goy!" (197). He manages to pick up a few more snatches of Yiddish, but the fragments resist a single narrative.

By contrast, we are given privileged access to the story as the Polish is rendered into English; we are able to ascertain that Genya had a gentile lover before she married Albert. Genya was prepared to abandon her family for him when he left her for a richer girl. Genya's family was mortified, afraid that they would never be able to marry her off in her "fallen" state. She remembers her father, in a fit of rage, yelling, "I tell you she'll bring me a 'Benkart' yet. . . . How do you know there isn't one in that lewd belly already—That's a father for you" (202). David picks up on "Benkart" as an immensely significant word, even without understanding its meaning:

But now he knew. What? Had anything changed? No. Everything was the same. Sure. Didn't have to get scared. What happened? She liked somebody. Who? Lud—Ludwig, she said. A goy. An organeest. Father didn't like him, her father. And his too, maybe. Didn't want him to know. Gee! He knew more than his father. So she married a Jew. What did she say

before? Benkart, yes, benkart in belly, her father said. What did that mean? He almost knew. (205)

David courageously attempts to string together what he has just learned, but he has yet to own any of it.

Following this primal scene, David's sense of identity is pulled in two conflicting directions. First of all, he begins his Hebrew training at the Cheder. Immediately the rabbi is impressed with David, offering him rare praise and rewards: "This one I call my child. This is memory. This is intellect. You might be a great rabbi yet—who knows!" (233). To reward David he reaches into his purse, gives him a penny, and exclaims, "Because you have a true Yiddish head" (234). David himself seems to have a portentous relationship to the Cheder and Hebrew, believing that they will unlock the key to his subjectivity:

Spring had come and with the milder weather a sense of wary contentment, a curious pause in himself as though he were waiting for some sign, some seal that would forever insure his well-being. Sometimes he thought he had already beheld the sign—he went to Cheder. . . . Perhaps the sign would be revealed when he fully learned to translate Hebrew. (221)

He waits for the clue that will give him a key to the past, to a narrative that will make intelligible the fragments of his mother's memory.

But as it turns out, even more compelling than his Hebrew training is his encounter and subsequent friendship with Leo Dugovka, a gentile boy. Playing up on the roof David hears something:

On the high lean-to that covered the stairway of the next roof but one, stood a boy, kite-string in hand. . . . His blond hair, only a shade less fair than his brow, hung over his brow like a gold claw. He was snub-nosed; his cheeks had a faint flush and his eyes were blue. (300).

Unlike virtually everyone else David has known, this boy was not a Jew. What might strike David as difference, however, strikes him as connection: "Watching him, David felt a bond of kinship growing up between them. They were both alone on the roof, both inhabitants of the same realm. That was a bond between them" (300). We could even say that David shared a very important geographical proximity to Leo that he lacked in his relationship to the past and to "his people." Unlike the cold and wary reaction David has to all the other children he has known, like Yussie, Maxie, and Izzie, his reaction to Leo is different: "He suddenly began wishing he could know this carefree, confident stranger. . . . Longingly, he watched him" (300). It is almost as if in this instant

David falls in love with Leo, the blond-haired, fair-skinned boy. When they finally introduce themselves to each other, Leo identifies himself with a joint national identity and labels David as nationless: “My name’s Leo Dugovka. I’m a Polish-American. You’re a Jew, ain’tcha?” (303). Despite the hyphen, Leo *is* American, but he is a gentile and therefore a less problematic immigrant. It is as if being a Jew, a Yiddish speaker without a national affiliation (an itinerant like the Gypsy Malena), forecloses the possibility of becoming American.

This episode with Leo crystallizes what we might call the “false son” (282) motif, because it is with Leo that David imagines himself to be “betraying all the Jews” (306). Like Malena, David falls in love with an American and, with that volitional act, takes the first step toward becoming an American. But again, the process requires more than simple consent. David, like Malena, must be recognized by the American *as* American, and the cost of consent is the disavowal of the past. Put differently, consent can be obtained only if the past has been edited accurately enough to make the present intelligible. In the editorial process, then, certain elements of the past are assembled in the form of memory, and others are forgotten. David’s kinship with Leo, which coincides with his betrayal of the Jews, reaches a climax when he asks Leo if he can have his rosary beads—“C-can you gibme—’ A slow finger rose and pointed. ‘G-gib me—one o’—one o’—” (324). Leo responds incredulously, “Me scappiler? Cheesis, yuh mus’ be nuts! W’at de hell d’ye wan’ ‘at for? . . . Well, yer a Jew, aintcha” (324). All that David can muster in response is “Yea, bud I—” (324). Even though Leo says, “Youse can’t wear ’em—dонтcha know dat? Dey’re fer Cat’licks” (324), ultimately he concedes and gives David an extra, broken, rosary that his mother had found. At this moment of reciprocity Leo recognizes David in a way that his father, at the beginning of the novel, could not.⁷⁶

Caught at the interface of these two disparate ways of imagining his identity—his ability at the Cheder and his kinship with the Americanized “goy”—David must construct his own narrative of origins. Such a narrative must enable him not only to make sense of the past but, more important, to create possibilities for the future. After a particularly distressing afternoon of mischief making with Leo, David runs to the Cheder to pray: “Only one thought in the screaming chaos of terror and revulsion his mind had fallen into remained unbroken: To reach the Cheder—to lose himself among the rest” (358). David prays with intensity, “as though he knew what he read” (367). Afterward the rabbi remarks, “Blessed is your mother, my son” (367), which makes David “burst into tears” (367).

Through his tears, David spins a narrative of origin, an account of his genealogy based on the fragments he has gathered from his mother’s story. The story he tells, however, is entirely his own and becomes the foundation of his first moment of interiority and subjectivity. He begins by telling the rabbi

that his mother is dead. Amid his sobs he manages to choke out the entire saga: that his father played an organ in a church, that the organist and his mother would meet in the cornfields, and that they had an affair. While the rabbi is visibly horrified, David is secretly elated: “A strange chaotic sensation was taking hold of him—a tumultuous giddy freedom, a cruel caprice that made him want to caper, to skip, to claw at his hands, to pinch himself until he screamed” (370). David’s American life begins at the site of this rupture, at a great canyon. In order to enact this transaction—whose prize will be an American subjectivity—David must kill off both his mother and his father. His genealogy dispenses with Genya and rejects Albert; his choosing Leo, and thereby choosing the genealogy of the gentile, is choosing to be a white American. The production of his own genealogy, it seems, relieves him of his alien status and gives him his first pleasurable moment of subjectivity.

David’s memory narrative runs on desire and longing. Unlike Ford’s version of the melting pot fantasy, this one is not about bleaching out superficial outward signs of difference but about forming affinities, likenesses, and connections that go beneath the surface. Distressed by David’s story, the rabbi goes to the Schearl house to speak to Genya, whom he now believes to be David’s aunt. With Genya, Albert, and David present the rabbi blurts out, “How could I help but believe him? A yarn so incredible had to be true. No? His father a goy, an organ-grinder—an organ player in a church! His mother dead! She met him among the corn” (387). Albert, sensing the potential truth of the account, is enraged: “All these years my blood told me,” Albert yells, “whispered to me whenever I looked at him, nudged me, told me he wasn’t mine! From the very moment I saw him in your arms out of the ship, I guessed. I guessed” (391). David’s missing birth certificate only corroborates the narrative. Albert shakes David, knocking him over, and in what seems like the crowning blow, the rosary beads spill out of his pocket. “What’s that?” Albert demands, “That! Look! Look at the floor! There! Who disbelieves me now? Look what’s lying there! A sign! A sign I tell you! Who doubts? A sign!” (402). Everyone stares at the beads on the floor, and Albert yells, “The truth! A goy’s! A cross!” (402). David’s constructed memory narrative offers a more compelling account of his own origins than the biological or generational one that names Albert Schearl his actual father.

The genealogy David produces is not simply a strategy for rejecting his father and his Jewish heritage but reflects a creative editing of the past that allows him to imagine himself as an American. This immigration novel illustrates the problem with assuming that cultural memories are hereditary in the biological, “organic” sense, and it also emphasizes the centrality of forgetting implicit in every act of memory. The end of the novel does not adjudicate between David’s story and the more conventional one. There is no need for closure because in this case memory is less about validating the past than about

making livable the present and future tenses. The present is never a “natural” product of the past. David’s sense of kinship with Leo is just as palpable as his “natural” ability to learn Hebrew, leaving no way to determine which is a more “authentic” piece of evidence: the rosary beads or his performance at the Cheder. His narrative, however, his choosing a gentile organist as his father, makes possible his kinship with Leo and allows him to imagine himself as an American.⁷⁷ Such a genealogy allows David to inhabit the present in a way that, without it, would have been virtually impossible. Like DeMille, David chooses an ancestry that enables him to become an American.

The novel does not end with David as a fully assimilated American. Instead, after this dramatic confrontation with his father, David runs out of the house into the street. While wandering, he comes across a “long, grey milk-dipper” (408), which he picks up and carries with him like a sword. Dipper in hand, he heads for the train tracks. From this point on, the details of his journey are written in italics and in verse, and they appear interspersed between street noises and overheard bits of conversation emanating from a nearby saloon. David is transfixed by the tracks:

For all / his peering, listening, starting, he / was blind as a sleep-walker, he was deaf. Only the steely glitter on the / tracks was in his eyes, fixed there like / a brand, drawing him with cables as / tough as steel. A few steps more and he was there, standing between the / tracks straddling the sunken rail . / He braced his legs to spring, held / his breath. And now the wavering point / of the dipper’s handle found the long, / dark, grinning lips, scraped, and / like a sword in a scabbard. (413)

One of the background voices is that of “a kindly faced American woman” describing the power of the Statue of Liberty: “Every American man, woman and child ought to go up inside her, it’s a thrilling experience” (415). The juxtaposition suggests an important connection between David’s mission on the tracks with the dipper and the particular American rite of passage that the woman is describing. David looks ahead into the distance, “*and there was the last crossing of / Tenth Street, the last cross—*” (418), and then he slides his foot into the dipper “*as into a stirrup*” (418). When his foot makes contact with the dipper, “*Power! Power like a paw, titanic power, / ripped through the earth and slammed / against his body and shackled him / where he stood. Power! Incredible, / barbaric power!*” (419). In David’s attempt to cross the railroad tracks, he is jolted by an enormous electrical charge. We could say that once again, David is trying to cross over, to leave behind the immigrant world of his parents and enter the exciting American world that Leo has opened up for him. But like his previous attempt to cross over, this one, too, is not completely successful.

After being taken to the hospital with a severely burned foot, David is returned to his parents. When he comes face to face with his father, “David felt a shrill, wild surge of triumph whip within him, triumph that his father stood slack-mouthed, finger-clawing, stooped” (434). Like the creation of his genealogy, this act, too, gives him a sense of “liberty” and independence from his father. When his mother asked him why he went to the tracks, he tells her he doesn’t know, “except that something had forced him, something that was clear then, and inevitable” (437). In the end, David returns home, unable to cross over as he had tried to do. We are left with the sense that the fantasy persists, that he will again attempt to “pass,” or cross over. In the novel’s final scene, as he drifts off to sleep, David feels “not pain, not terror, but strangest triumph” (441). Despite the great stakes and the sacrifices to be made for such a crossing over, we finish the novel with the sense that to be an American, to get inside the Statue of Liberty, to embody and be embodied by her, is worth the pain it entails.



For Malena and DeMille, Mary Antin, and David Schearl, the fantasy of the melting pot, of actually becoming American, is not without its costs. The disavowals of the past—Antin’s imagined death of her old self and, in the case of DeMille and David, the disavowal of Judaism—seem an awfully high price to pay. As a trade-off, each acquires a sense of belonging in the present: Antin becomes “the youngest of America’s children”; Malena is able to move forward into an American life without being haunted by the scars of her European past; and David experiences a very real kinship with Leo. In each case, imagining oneself as American, prosthetically taking on an unracialized American body, serves as a means of escape from a degraded body and from the sometimes overwhelming burden of the past.

Through elaborate strategies of narratological editing, Cecil B. DeMille, Malena, Mary Antin, and David Schearl construct for themselves subjectivities and identities that, while constrained by socioeconomic and historical factors,⁷⁸ are not biologically or ethnically determined. The antiessentializing force of their theorizations, which nevertheless recognize limitations on what a person might be, seems to foreshadow what Cornel West has labeled the “new cultural politics of difference”:⁷⁹ “The most significant theme of the new cultural politics of difference is the agency, capacity and ability of human beings who have been culturally degraded, politically oppressed and economically exploited by bourgeois liberal and communist illiberal status quos.”⁸⁰ David Schearl and Mary Antin, not unlike the black cultural workers that West envisions, are quite literally “New World *bricoleurs* with improvisation-

al and flexible sensibilities,”⁸¹ using narratological tools to carve out a place for themselves as Americans. As analysis makes clear, the prosthetic memories that these people acquire break down essentialized group identities.

Of course there is no real escape from one’s body, as Mary Antin’s case illustrates, especially if it has been marked as other by society. But this fact does not make any less palpable the fantasy of escape, the allure of forgetting, and the desire to mine from the past those experiences that enable one to narrate a livable present. In fact, it is precisely that difference that compels narrative and that, in West’s words, makes “representational strategies” legible as “creative responses to novel circumstances and conditions”⁸² and thereby more powerful than we might imagine. These immigrant tales demonstrate that the narratological work of making foreigners American is not simply the work of the state. In Mary Antin’s case we can clearly see the role of the public schools in instilling patriotism, but it would be an oversimplification to assume that she has been brainwashed by the melting pot ideology. By making herself into a statistical person, by authoring herself, Antin claims a kind of narrative agency. Her narrative and also David Schearl’s illustrate the overdetermination of the desire to become American. For David, becoming American also means overcoming his Oedipal conflict. For Antin, who writes herself into the public sphere, it means relief from the limitations of her ill-fitting adolescent body. On a more profound level, these stories give us insight into the creation of national identity. The narrative of the American national past, these stories tell us, is not just the work of a state that, through its various institutions, forces its ideologies down the throats of would-be citizens. Rather, these national narratives are constructed on an individual level, in part through the voices of immigrants themselves. I do not mean to suggest that this phenomenon is purely liberating for immigrants; at best, this is hegemony at work. However, it does complicate the existing paradigms for how national identity—and national pasts—are articulated and by whom.

This form of prosthetic imagining also has a darker side. To become American in the 1920s meant forgetting one past in favor of another, and it required taking on prosthetic memories that made a person whiter and less ethnic than his or her cultural heritage would predict. In this model of incorporation, inclusion in the American nation does not change or challenge the notion—or complexion—of America but instead reinforces it. In the cases examined in this chapter, the immigrant narratives reveal how limited the possibilities were for prosthetic memories. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was no place for hybridity, for dual citizenship. Rather than challenge and broaden the definition of American, these immigrants had little choice but to reinforce the standing one. In other words, these prosthetic memories, unlike the ones I discuss in the next chapters, create sameness and reinforce dominant

narratives by rejecting difference. In the case of these immigrants, prosthetic memories of Anglo-Saxon pasts work to construct typical white Americans. As the next chapters reveal, in its more radical form, prosthetic memory generates difference, teaches people about otherness, and makes possible a politics that challenges dominant, and often oppressive, ideologies.



REMEMBERING SLAVERY

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CHILDHOOD, DESIRE, AND THE INTERPELLATIVE POWER OF THE PAST

IN APRIL 1997, Detroit's Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History reopened in its new, state-of-the-art building.¹ Celebrated by the press as the largest of its kind, this museum reflects four years of work by designers, architects, historians, and local artists and has attracted significant national attention. At the heart of the museum, and the core of the permanent exhibit, is a slave ship (see figure 4). Following a walkway suspended over the hull of the ship, visitors are confronted with forty life-size figures of slaves in its hold. Notably, these slaves are children. The caption reads:

When they were sold into slavery, many of our African ancestors were teenagers or young adults. To pay homage to the memory of these individuals, students from Detroit volunteered to be cast as figures for the exhibit. The contribution of these young people is one of the many ways in which we, as a community, are remembering those of our ancestors who were enslaved, remembering the crimes that enslaved them, and remembering their countless acts of resistance.

As this caption suggests, the museum has granted the African American child a privileged position in remembering and reciting the story of slavery and racial oppression. By participating in this project, Detroit schoolchildren have quite literally lent their bodies to memorialize an event through which they did not live. The museum's radical—and controversial—decision to use the bodies of healthy Detroit schoolchildren to represent slaves raises some of the

central issues this chapter addresses. “Casting” the youth of Detroit dramatically suggests that children might play a particularly important role in remembering slavery. It also suggests that people might be able, through an act of prosthesis, to take on memories of events through which they never lived.

The opening of this particular kind of African American history museum, one that foregrounds slavery, is in some ways the culmination of a movement to remember publicly one of the most deplorable episodes in American history. As a dark and ugly period in the nation’s past, slavery was, for more than a century, a chapter to forget. In fact, the institution of slavery in the United States provoked amnesia not just in whites, for whom slavery was a source of guilt, but in blacks as well, many of whom chose to look to Africa for a heritage of which they could be proud. But in the last several decades, both literary and mass cultural texts, like the Detroit museum, have begun the challenging project of remembering the experience of slavery.

This chapter explores the issue of remembering slavery and considers the possibilities that prosthetic memories open up for both blacks and whites in remembering and understanding racial oppression. The chapter begins with William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* as a case in which collective memories of traumatic events are generated. Faulkner’s novel shows that distance—both temporal and geographic—from the event remembered is often necessary to transmit memory. More important, *Absalom, Absalom!* raises the possibility that there might be powerful nonfamilial modes for generating and passing on memory. The chapter then analyzes how the historical and economic conditions of slavery—in particular, the disregard for and delegitimization of the slave family—disrupted traditional means of passing on memory and genealogy. The tearing apart of families meant that alternative modes of memory transmission would be required to produce genealogies and communities. Like the Detroit museum, many recent works on slavery are organized around or narrated by a child. Furthermore, the genealogies that these children produced are not based on “biological” inheritance or “organic memory” but are constructed through a broad notion of kinship and community. Through an examination of Toni Morrison’s novels *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon* and Julie Dash’s film *Daughters of the Dust*, this chapter investigates the interpellative power of these genealogical endeavors and especially the way that memories of one’s “ancestors,” understood broadly, might mark or alter one’s subjectivity. Likewise, the chapter argues that as technologies of memory, these texts might also mark, alter, or scar the bodies of their readers.

When the mass media try to remember slavery and the history of racial oppression, as has been increasingly the case over the last several decades, such memories can reach wider audiences and affect those who come in contact with them. The final part of the chapter examines how prosthetic memories

were generated by the miniseries *Roots* (Alex Haley), and the film *Rosewood* (John Singleton). In the case of early-twentieth-century immigration, prosthetic memories of an American past facilitated the creation of new Americans. By contrast, acquiring prosthetic memories of slavery and racial oppression neither produces an entirely new identity nor changes one's race. An active engagement with such memories might, however, reconfigure a person's subjectivity. For white people, learning to see the world through black eyes might have a radical effect on both their worldview and their politics.

MEMORY'S HOMOEROTIC LOGICS: DISLOCATION AND DISSEMINATION

Family memory, the memory handed down from parent to child, has long been privileged as a reliable source of information about the past.² Indeed, the family is one of the three key frameworks that Halbwachs identifies in the dissemination of collective memory.³ In the case of slavery, however, the radical rupture of families and communities meant that group memories had to be generated and disseminated by alternative mechanisms. William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), a modernist novel about the South and slavery, illustrates a model of memory transmission that does not rely exclusively on familial or community networks. In the novel, Quentin Compson, a southerner, and his roommate, Shrevelevin McCannon, from the north, create a memory of Quentin's past out of the "rag-tag and bob-ends"⁴ of the past. The narrative they elaborate turns out to be as much about Shreve's past and America's slave past as it is about Quentin's. Furthermore, the very act of constructing it changes who the characters are in the present. Since the act of generating the narrative is depicted as an erotic experience, the novel suggests that memory generation is always in excess of, or at least inadequately represented by, the heterosexual, reproductive, "organic" logic of the nuclear family.

Quentin and Shreve's narrative is quite literally constructed before the reader in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the boys' Harvard dormitory room. The place of memory, then, is not Quentin's home, not the site of ancestral knowledge, but the university, the site of fraternal or intragenerational knowledge. A letter that Quentin has received from his father sets in motion their narrative process: "On the table before Quentin, lying on the open text book beneath the lamp, the white oblong of envelope, the familiar blurred mechanical *Jefferson Jan. 10 1910 Miss* and then, opened, the *My dear son* in his father's sloped fine hand out of that dead dusty summer" (173). The letter from his father, which has moved from South to North crossing a great spatial expanse, only underscores Quentin's remove—both metaphysical and

geographical—from his family in the South. The letter itself, which seems oddly out of place in Cambridge, emphasizes the disjuncture between the two sites: it pulls with it the “dead dusty summer where he had prepared for Harvard so that his father’s hand could lie on a strange lamp-lit table in Cambridge” (173). His father’s hand, read both as his distinctive handwriting and more eerily as an actual appendage, appears out of place in this dorm room. This juxtaposition stages the uneasy relationship between two models of memory transmission: the letter from Quentin’s father represents a model of transgenerational memory, of memory handed down from parent to child, while the dorm room represents a site of intragenerational memory, memory constructed or reconstructed by peers. But the incongruity of the letter and the dorm room raises questions about the very possibility of a smooth, transgenerational transmission of memory. The letter, itself a dismembered piece of story, indicates that even transgenerational memory transmission is characterized by disjuncture. Dislocation is an obstacle to both memory and its condition of possibility. *Absalom, Absalom!* suggests that Quentin must leave the South and his family—the social unit historically entrusted with transmitting memory—in order to produce this narrative.

This scene of collaborative narrative generation is also a scene of erotic possibility.⁵ Faulkner’s narration moves back and forth between an account of the story that Quentin and Shreve are weaving together and a description of their bodies in the dorm room. The erotics of the novel lie outside what Judith Butler has referred to as the “heterosexual matrix,”⁶ outside the parameters of desire prescribed by Freud’s “family romance.”⁷ Describing Quentin and Shreve, Faulkner writes:

There was something curious in the way they looked at one another, curious and quiet and profoundly intent, not at all as two young men might look at each other but almost as a youth and a very young girl might out of virginity itself—a sort of hushed and naked searching, each look burdened with youth’s immemorial obsession not with time’s dragging weight which the old live but with its fluidity: the bright heels of all the lost moments of fifteen and sixteen. (299)

Quentin and Shreve pick up on, and are then infused by, the homoerotic attraction between Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon, the two characters on whom Quentin and Shreve spend most of their narrative. Like Quentin and Shreve, Sutpen and Bon also met in college. In the act of narration, it is as if Shreve and Quentin inhabit the characters whose story they tell. Through a collaborative “remembering” they produce Sutpen and Bon, drawing them into their room: “While both their breathing vaporized faintly in the cold room where

there was not now two of them but four, the two who breathed not individuals now yet something more and less than twins, the heart and blood of youth" (294). Their production of the narrative also transforms their present: "They were both in Carolina and the time was forty-six years ago, and it was not even four now but compounded still further, since now both of them were Henry Sutpen and both of them were Bon, compounded each of both yet either neither" (351). With the phrase "yet either neither," Faulkner reminds us that both Quentin and Shreve are equally alienated from the memory they are producing. The memory is not one that either can claim to own but is one that they both inhabit. Assuming this narrative of the past, it turns out, alters or reconfigures their subjectivities in the present. As they take on these "memories," both erotic and racial possibilities open up for them, as Charles Bon turns out to be a mulatto. The memories, in other words, enable them to see the world through eyes that are profoundly different from their own.

Quentin and Shreve's narrative production is thus a dramatic account of a model of memory transmission that does not operate in the same way as does a biological, hereditary, familial model. Their memory narrative requires two male bodies. The erotics mobilized in this scene of memory generation are powerful precisely because they are not bound up in the "heterosexual matrix." Their generation of a collective memory is based on the logic of production, not the heterosexist logic of reproduction. There is nothing primordial or essential about the collective memory Quentin and Shreve produce. In fact, their narrative of the past is more intimately connected to their own location in the present moment, to their own needs and desires, than it is to any isolatable "true" past. This homoerotic model of generation, unlike heterosexual reproduction, is not about "naturally" reproducing the same. In *Absalom, Absalom!* the narrative process disseminates difference, with the racial difference between Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon being recoded as a regional difference between Quentin the southerner and Shreve the northerner. That the narrative is produced at college, outside the nuclear family, means that certain memories, memories that are too difficult, painful, or shameful, might be able to be expressed only from a point of rupture and therefore might not be transmittable from parent to child.⁸

Desire—like Quentin and Shreve's—that is untethered to the reproductive logics of the nuclear family becomes a powerful tool in the production and dissemination of traumatic memories. *Absalom, Absalom!* shows that a relationship to desire that is not grounded exclusively in the nuclear family frees up possibilities for alternative relationships to the past, alternative genealogies. These alternatives were crucial in the aftermath of slavery, when ruptures of the nuclear family made nearly impossible any simple transgenerational, "organic" transmission of the memories of racial oppression.

“NATAL ALIENATION” AND THE CHILD GENEALOGIST

Given the profound effect of slavery on African American families, it seems noteworthy that the majority of texts about slavery produced in the last decades of the twentieth century are either narrated by or organized around a child. Although child heroes in fiction are not particularly new, the historical specificity of the black child demands particular attention. In these slavery texts, children tend to occupy positions outside the normative nuclear family. We might argue that as slavery tore families apart, it produced a kind of orphaning whose effects lasted well beyond Emancipation.

Many historians have explored the way that slavery as an institution forced a radical, violent separation between slaves and their past. Stanley Elkins argued that for a slave,

much of his past had been annihilated; nearly every prior connection had been severed. Not that he had really “forgotten” all these things—his family and kinship arrangements, his language, the tribal religion, the taboos, the name he had once borne, and so on—but none of it any longer carried much meaning.⁹

In his provocative comparative study of slavery around the globe, Orlando Patterson takes up Elkins’s thesis, delineating the genealogical ramifications of slavery. Patterson contends that slavery produces “natal alienation,” which he describes as “alienation from all ‘rights’ or claims of birth,” such that a slave “ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate social order.”¹⁰ The term *natal alienation*, says Patterson, points to “the loss of ties of birth in both ascending and descending generations.”¹¹ Because slaves held the status of chattel—that is, they could be sold away from their families at any moment—they lost access to their cultural ancestors as well as to their nuclear families. As Patterson observes, “Not only was the slave denied all claims on, and obligations to, his parents and living blood relations but by extension, all such claims and obligations on his more remote ancestors: on his descendants.”¹² Because in Patterson’s vocabulary, a slave was “socially dead,” having “no socially recognized existence outside of his master,”¹³ his relationships were never recognized as legitimate. This was most tragically the case for the parent-child bond, which “had no social support.”¹⁴ Parents had “no custodial claims or power over their children,” and children “inherited no claims or obligations to their parents.”¹⁵ To articulate this condition in its most extreme form, then, would be to say that every slave child was juridically born an orphan. A slave, Patterson wrote, “was truly a *genealogical isolate*.”¹⁶

Patterson's argument is historically problematic. As many historians have demonstrated, African slaves in America coped with their plight by developing rich cultural practices and strong community ties.¹⁷ Through specific musical genres, the elaboration of spiritual and religious practices, and the telling of stories, African slaves in the United States articulated a powerful shared consciousness. Lawrence Levine, for example, points out that slave songs built communal solidarity and served as a medium through which slaves could express the injustice of their situation and, in subtle ways, "comment on the whites around them."¹⁸

To suggest that slaves were "socially dead" in a literal sense is to ignore the richly textured culture that slaves produced. Yet the idea of "natal alienation" does have a powerful resonance. The brutality of slavery was in part its assault on normal social life. In fact, the subversive creativity of slave culture was itself a response to these conditions. The experience of losing family connections, as was commonly the case when fathers, mothers, and children were sold away from one another, helped catalyze new, nontraditional forms of cultural production along with alternative community and kinship ties. As the texts I analyze reveal, it was precisely their sense of "natal alienation" that led slaves and their descendants to create forms of kinships based on shared experiences and memories rather than on biological or familial connection. This "orphaning" then, might well have been the motivation for the urgent genealogical endeavors undertaken by the children in the slavery texts this chapter explores.

More than a century before Patterson developed this concept, the breakup of slave families was the subject of much public concern. In fact, much of the rhetoric of nineteenth-century abolitionism dwelled on the horror of severing the parent-child bond. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), often touted as *the* American novel about slavery, aims its critique at slavery's power to separate children from their mothers.¹⁹ In the novel's opening scene, Mr. Shelby, a plantation owner, meets with Mr. Haley, a prospective buyer, to discuss selling his slave Tom. Mr. Haley wavers until little Harry, the slave son of Eliza and George, comes in to dance for the men. Mr. Haley is so taken by Harry that he says, "Fling in that chap, and I'll settle the business."²⁰ Although Mr. Shelby prides himself on his morality—"I'm a humane man, and I hate to take the boy from his mother" (46)—economic conditions prevail, and he decides to go ahead with the deal. Having overheard enough of their discussion to understand her son to be in grave danger, Eliza decides to run away to Canada; in other words, the impending sale of her son catalyzes the narrative action of the novel. As Eliza later explains to Mrs. Bird, the senator's wife who takes her in, "I never spent a night without him and he was all I had. He was my comfort and pride, day and night; and, ma'am, they

were going to take him away from me,—to *sell* him—sell him down south, ma'am, to go all alone—a baby that had never been away from his mother in his life! I couldn't stand it ma'am" (149). Moreover, the novel repeatedly dramatizes the horror of children being wrenched away from their mothers. Likewise, in her work *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin; Presenting the Original Facts and Documents upon Which the Story Is Founded* (1854) Stowe devotes an entire section to the "Separation of Families," providing as evidence for her claims newspaper ads offering children for sale.²¹

The disenfranchisement caused by natal alienation inevitably complicated the transmission of cultural memory, and this sort of disjuncture did not cease with Emancipation. Even after the Civil War, the vast African American migrations to the industrial centers of the North separated persons from family and community. In other words, African American family and community life was characterized by rupture in both the antebellum and the postbellum periods. In this historical context, the fact that many recent texts about slavery and racial oppression—in particular, *Beloved* (Toni Morrison), *Song of Solomon* (Toni Morrison), *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash), *Roots* (Alex Haley), and *Rosewood* (John Singleton)—are narrated by or organized around a child assumes greater significance. Just as the child is the site of trauma in abolitionist discourse, the child ultimately must be the agent of recovery, creatively producing his or her own genealogy or memory narrative. It takes an inquisitive child, these texts suggest, a member of a generation that has been cut off from the past and has no living relation to either slavery or Africa, to initiate the difficult process of remembering. As in *Absalom, Absalom!* it is the young people who must unearth the past and produce genealogies that they might, paradoxically, pass on to their kin.

Children might be particularly suited to the task of genealogy for other reasons as well. Sigmund Freud argued that childhood desire, unlike the socialized desire of the normative heterosexual adult, is "polymorphously perverse." Writing on infantile sexuality,²² Freud notes that infantile desire is not anchored to a specific object but that children "can be led into all possible kinds of sexual irregularities. This shows that an aptitude for them is innately present in their disposition."²³ The sexual organization of the child, in other words, is far from fixed.²⁴ Freud's image of the polymorphously perverse baby underscores the creative possibilities of this early form of desire. In particular, Freud discovered that the sexual investigations of these early years of childhood coincide with the child's first moment of epistemological inquiry, what Freud calls "the instinct for knowledge or research."²⁵ These investigations are carried out in solitude, apart from the family, "and imply a high degree of alienation of the child from the people in his environment who formerly enjoyed his complete confidence."²⁶ Not only is this early form of

desire intimately linked to knowledge acquisition, but the investigations the child carries out actually require a degree of remove from the nuclear family.

Following Freud, other social theorists have explored the potential of childhood desire. Deleuze and Guattari privilege infantile desire for the reason that it has not yet been colonized by the Oedipus complex or circumscribed by the confines of the nuclear family: "From his very earliest infancy the child has a wide-ranging life of desire—a whole set of nonfamilial relations with the objects and the machines of desire—that is not related to the parents from the point of view of immediate production."²⁷ In an attempt to politicize sexuality, Herbert Marcuse posits that a progressive use of the term *polymorphous sexuality* "would depend completely on the opportunity to activate repressed or *organic*, biological needs: to make the human body an instrument of pleasure rather than labor."²⁸ A natively alienated child, one cut off from her or his parents and thereby denied the privilege of the familial logic of reproduction, might have access to a more unruly, creative form of desire that exceeds the limits circumscribed by the normative nuclear family.

The revolutionary potential of childhood, as Walter Benjamin theorized, is closely tied to vision and perception. According to Susan Buck-Morss, what Benjamin found so fascinating in the child's consciousness was "the unsevered connection between perception and action."²⁹ Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari argue that a child's body at play becomes the site of spontaneous transformations: "He looks intently at an electrical outlet, he moves his body about like a machine, he uses one of his legs as though it were an oar."³⁰ The power of childhood perception, in other words, derives from its ability to forge new connections between things, to materialize and sometimes even embody perceptions. "Children's cognition," Buck-Morss writes, "had revolutionary power because it was tactile, and hence tied to action, and because rather than accepting the given meaning of things, children got to know objects by laying hold of them and using them creatively, releasing from them new possibilities of meaning."³¹ In Benjamin's account, children have the ability to see through and question the reified structures of society, to imagine new possibilities, new social constellations.

Utopian accounts of childhood, which have their roots in Romanticism, imagine the child as divorced from the logics of the adult world. Bill Brown challenges this position in his critique of turn-of-the-century anthropological discourse on the child.³² While theorists imagined a realm of childhood apart from the adult world of economy and politics, Brown shows that the literary texts of the time reveal otherwise. In the literature of Stephen Crane, for example, Brown finds that toys manifest the "materiality of labor."³³ I would like to posit a space somewhere between these two models for the African American child. To say that the natively alienated infant is outside the norma-

tive family is not to say that she or he is free from or outside the circuits of politics or the economy. In fact, the natively alienated child, in a more radical way than the “normative” child, is always already an object of exchange, circulating in the adult world of the economy. But to say that the child circulates in the adult world is not to say that the child’s vision, his or her ability to see utopian possibilities in the reified structures of society, to “move his body about like a machine,” is itself compromised by the economic and political logic of the adult world.

In her essay “The Theory of Infantile Citizenship,” Lauren Berlant describes how a child’s investment in the utopian promise of America, as experienced in the pilgrimage to Washington, is always juxtaposed against the “cynical reason” of the adult that arises from the frustrations of lived existence.³⁴ She argues that children have the ability to shake things up: “The infantile citizen’s insistent stupidity . . . gives her/him enormous power to unsettle, expose, and reframe the machinery of national life.”³⁵ Ultimately an “overidentification with national icons”³⁶ limits the possibility of critique. It becomes impossible, Berlant believes, for children to maintain a utopian identification with America and at the same time imagine any kind of viable political agency.

The natively alienated child, unlike the white-skinned American child, does not have the capacity—or luxury—to “overidentify” with national icons or the promise of America. This child’s position is always outside what Berlant calls the “national symbolic.” The infantile citizen—or noncitizen in the case of the slave—who is denied the possibility of overidentification, who can experience a relationship to America only as longing, might not experience such a split between utopian thinking and practical politics. This child’s critical distance from the reified structures of society gives him or her a privileged role in unmasking racist ideology. The child does this by producing memories and genealogies that make visible the naturalized structures of oppression to which adults have become blind. Because of the legacy of natal alienation, African American children are uniquely positioned to challenge and expand the national narrative. In other words, their genealogical endeavors are political; they are about constructing a livable present tense.

GENEALOGY AND THE DESIRE TO REMEMBER

For few writers has the project of remembering been as urgent as it is has been for Toni Morrison, whose work demonstrates the significance of generating prosthetic memories of slavery. *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon* dramatize not only the importance of genealogy (as opposed to a strict biological inheri-

tance) in the construction of kinship and community but also the role of desire in constructing genealogy. For Morrison, memories of a cultural past are not familiar, not inherited through the family; on the contrary, they always are alienated. In fact, the epigraph to *Song of Solomon* centers on the inevitable alienation of the past in slavery, which is what makes the issue of generational transmission so problematic: The fathers may soar / And the children may know their names.³⁷ In this passage, fathers and children are separated by a rupture, a line break. There is neither enjambment, pushing the first line into the next, nor a causal connector. The line does not, for example, read “the fathers may soar *so* that the children may know their names.” That the lines are connected only by *and* emphasizes the contingency of any such transmission. Furthermore, the second line reads “*the* children” rather than “*their* children.” *These* children might not be *their* children, at least in the traditional, biological, hereditary sense. While the epigraph points to the child as genealogist, it resists the idea that those genealogies will be biologically determined. At best, the epigraph suggests, the children might construct kinships, might create, as Pilate in *Song of Solomon* and Denver in *Beloved* do, livable landscapes and kinships for the present.

Song of Solomon is ostensibly the story of Milkman Dead, an African American child who, though long sheltered from his cultural past by his conservative father, ultimately undertakes a journey in search of his “inheritance.” The fact that he is a member of the “Dead” family is not without rhetorical significance, for the name Dead speaks to Milkman’s alienation from the past. We could even say that metaphorically, at the novel’s start, he is socially dead in Patterson’s terms, as he lacks all “claims and obligations on his more remote ancestors.” Milkman’s father, Macon, an upwardly mobile northern businessman, actively attempts to keep Milkman from investigating his cultural heritage. Toward this end, Macon tries to protect his son from his estranged sister Pilate. Milkman’s Aunt Pilate lives outside society both literally and symbolically, “in a narrow single-story house whose basement seemed to be rising from rather than settling into the ground,” with “no electricity because she would not pay for the service. Nor for gas” (27). She is considered a freak of sorts and is rumored to be “ugly, dirty, poor, and drunk” (37). Not only does she refuse to conform to the bourgeois values to which Macon aspires, but she also represents a threat to Macon’s worldview, which is tied to the logic of capitalism. Macon warns Milkman to stay away from her: “Pilate can’t teach you a thing you can use in this world. . . . Maybe the next, but not this one. Let me tell you right now the one important thing you’ll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own own other things” (55).

Despite his father’s warnings, or perhaps because of them, Milkman is curious about Pilate and her world. At school, Milkman meets Guitar, “the boy

who not only could liberate him, but could take him to the woman who had as much to do with his future as she had his past” (36). Because Guitar claims to have been to Pilate’s house before and because Milkman is, after all, her nephew, the two boys decide to investigate “the woman [that Milkman’s] father had forbidden him to go near” (36). As they near her house they find Pilate, clad in a long black dress, sitting outside on the steps. From her ear dangles a brass box. Intrigued by her appearance, Milkman knew that “not the wisdom of his father nor the caution of the world—could keep him from her” (36). Their visit culminates with Pilate singing:

O Sugarman don’t leave me here
 Cotton balls to choke me
 O Sugarman don’t leave me here
 Buckra’s arms to yoke me. . . .

Sugarman done fly away
 Sugarman done gone
 Sugarman cut across the sky
 Sugarman gone home. (49)

From this moment forward, Pilate represents a countertradition; it is she who opens the door to the journey Milkman decides to undertake.

Pilate is compelling to Milkman for reasons other than simple “defiance” (49) of his father’s wishes. Pilate is quite literally “naturally alienated.” As Pilate tells him, her mother died before she was born: “She died and the next minute I was born. But she was dead by the time I drew air” (141). As a result, Pilate has been severed from her biological ancestry and from the traditional mechanisms for the generation of knowledge and memory. Pilate’s autonomy, her lack of biological ties to her birth, is foregrounded by the fact that she lacks a navel. As if to literalize the absence of a biological tie to her mother, shortly after Pilate’s birth “the stump shriveled, fell off, and left no trace of having ever existed” (28). As we are told early on in this narrative,

After their mother died she had come struggling out of the womb without help from throbbing muscles or the pressure of swift womb water. As a result, for all the years he [Macon] knew her, her stomach was as smooth and sturdy as her back, at no place interrupted by a navel. It was the absence of a navel that convinced people that she had not come into this world through normal channels; had never lain, floated, or grown in some warm and liquid place connected by a tissue thin tube to a reliable source of human nourishment. (27–28)

Lacking a connection to her mother, Pilate had to deliver herself, and she was seen to have “inched [her] way head first out of a still, silent, and indifferent cave of flesh, dragging her own cord and her own afterbirth behind her” (28). When she was a little girl, her father was killed, and shortly thereafter she fled town. “I was cut off from people early on” (141), she remembers. Her primary connection to her past is her green sack, which she refers to as her “inheritance” (97) and which Macon believes to be their father’s gold, but which later turn out to be her father’s bones. She is a compelling model for Milkman precisely because she epitomizes the natal alienation that he also feels.

While Pilate’s world is not organized around a biological conception of family, it is by no means a solitary world. The fact that she is “naturally alienated” does not mean that she is “socially dead.” Hers is a world of self-creation, of willed connections and kinships, and of transformation. Toni Morrison describes her own kinship ties in similar terms: “I knew my mother as a church woman and a club woman—and there was something special about when she said, ‘Sister,’ and when all those women said ‘Sister.’ They meant that in a very, very fundamental way.”³⁸ Pilate makes up for what she lacks in parentage with what she reaps from geography. We could even say that in her case geography becomes a form of genealogy. To stress this link, the paragraph that describes the conditions of her birth then describes her childhood love of geography. She explains that as a schoolchild, “I loved the geography part. Learning about that made me want to read. And the teacher was tickled at how much I liked geography she let me have the book and I took it home with me to look at” (141). We might say that her primal experience with the geography book forms a road map for her life: “It was as if her geography book had marked her to roam the country, planting her feet in each pink, yellow, blue or green state” (148).

After becoming acquainted with the geographically obsessed Pilate, Milkman starts his own journey. While his trip begins as a search for what he thinks will be his monetary inheritance—the gold that belonged to his father and Pilate—he learns that his true inheritance is not capital but the genealogy that he unearths en route.³⁹ What began as a treasure hunt becomes a hermeneutical endeavor, the search for an interpretation of the song Pilate had sung to him and Guitar, a version of the song that all the children in Shalimar (pronounced Shallemon) sing about a man named Sugarman, who flies “home.” In the town of Shalimar, Milkman gradually realizes that the treasure he has been seeking, his true inheritance, resides inside the song.⁴⁰ Listening to the lyrics, he hears a reference to four of his ancestors: “These children were singing a song about his own people” (304). When he rushes back to Sweet, a woman he met on his quest, he sings the song for her. She

asks him where he learned it because she used to play it as a child. “Of course you did,” he replies. “Everybody did. Everybody but me. But I can play it now. It’s my game now” (327). This is, indeed, Milkman’s game now, a “gift for him” (304). Giddy, he explains to Guitar and Sweet that the Solomon in the song who “went back to Africa” (328) was his great-granddaddy. Milkman is exhilarated, eager to tell his family about what he has discovered. But the reception he receives when he reports back to Pilate and his father is not at all what he expects: when he tells Pilate what he discovered, that the bones she has been carrying around in the green sack—her inheritance—are really the bones of her father, she barely responds. His return home, too, seems anticlimactic, “not the triumph he’d hoped it would be” (334). The genealogy, in other words, is really for him and no one else.

At his epiphanic moment Milkman is interpellated, given an identity, by the past. Milkman’s journey and his interpretation of the Sugarman song give him new insight into the world that he inhabits. He sees for the first time the racial histories that lie buried under the official one, and he wonders, “How many dead lives and fading memories were buried in and beneath the names of the places in this country. Under recorded names” (329). Genealogy requires that one dig beneath the surface to unearth alternative histories. While Milkman does unearth a family genealogy, whether it is actually his genealogy—whether or not Solomon is really his great-grandfather—seems less significant than the fact that he believes that Solomon was. In fact, as someone in Shalimar points out to him, “He [Solomon] had a slew of children, all over the place. You may have noticed that everybody around here claims kin to him. Must be over forty families spread in these hills calling themselves Solomon something or other” (322). Laying claim to a past, attaching oneself to a public body that interpellates one in the present, the novel suggests, does not necessarily require a direct biological claim to ancestry.

While *Song of Solomon* is concerned with the way that remembering a person in the past, like Solomon, might alter one’s subjectivity in the present, *Beloved* explores the way that events of the past, particularly a traumatic past, mark persons in the present.⁴¹ *Beloved* tells the story of Sethe, an escaped slave, and her daughter Denver who live in an isolated world on the edge of an Ohio town. They are outcasts in part because their house is haunted and in part because many of the townspeople know Sethe’s secret: what slavery led her to do. The novel itself revolves around the appearance, at Sethe’s house, of a strange young woman who turns out to be Beloved, the daughter Sethe killed in order to prevent her from being returned to slavery at the plantation called “Sweet Home.”

Beloved is also a novel about the power of childhood desire. When Beloved returns to Sethe and Denver first as a ghost and then in the flesh, she is a crea-

ture of desire.⁴² She is overwhelmed with desire for Sethe, the mother who slit her throat so that she would not have to suffer the life of a slave and who was taken away from her too soon. With her symbolic birth into the present, Beloved “walk[s] out of the water” a “fully dressed woman,” with “new skin, lineless and smooth.”⁴³ From the outset, Sethe fascinates her; Beloved “could not take her eyes off Sethe. Stooping to shake the damper, or snapping sticks for kindling, Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved’s eyes” (71). For Sethe’s attention, Beloved is insatiable: she

rose early in the dark to be there, waiting, in the kitchen when Sethe came down to make fast bread before she left for work. . . . She was in the window at two when Sethe returned, or the doorway; then the porch, its steps, the path, the road, till finally, surrendering to the habit, Beloved began inching down Bluestone Road further and further each day to meet Sethe and walk her back to 124. (71)

Sethe begins to sense that Beloved’s intense desire is erotic: Sethe “was sliding into sleep when she felt Beloved touch her. A touch no heavier than a feather but loaded, nevertheless, with desire. Sethe stirred and looked around. First at Beloved’s soft new hand on her shoulder, then into her eyes. The longing she saw there was bottomless” (72).

But for Beloved, as for the child Freud describes, this moment of sexual desire coincides with other epistemological concerns, in this case, her desire to have the past narrativized. Instead of simply pursuing an erotic encounter with Sethe, Beloved begins a tireless investigation into Sethe’s past and, by extension, her own. This investigation begins when Beloved asks Sethe, “Where your diamonds?” (72). At first Sethe is confused, but as Beloved presses on with “Tell me your diamonds” (72), Sethe begins to recount the story of the “diamond” earrings that Mrs. Garner had given her. This exchange is fantastical for several reasons, not the least of which is that Beloved has memories of events that occurred before she was born. It is as if she has become a mobile archive, a storehouse for Sethe’s unmanageable memories. But even though she holds the kernel of each memory, she needs Sethe to put it into narrative for her.⁴⁴ As Sethe comes to realize, it was “a way to feed her. . . . Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling” (72).

It is precisely Beloved’s dislocation—that she has been dead—that enables her to catalyze Sethe’s memories, memories that Sethe finds intensely painful. Previously for Sethe, “every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost” (72). The memories that Beloved brings to the surface are memories that she had refused to share with Denver or Paul D., one of the slave men from “Sweet Home” who came to find her in Ohio. These memo-

ries were ones that she and her mother-in-law Baby Suggs agreed were “unspeakable.” In other words, like Quentin’s father’s “hand” in the Harvard dorm room, *Beloved* provides what de Certeau called the “occasion” for memory.⁴⁵ Sethe discovers that she actually derives pleasure from storytelling: “As she began telling about the earrings, she found herself wanting to, liking it. Perhaps it was *Beloved*’s distance from the events itself, or her thirst for hearing it—in any case it was an unexpected pleasure” (73). Indeed, if as we have seen in *Absalom, Absalom!* rupture and distance are the conditions of possibility for memory, then *Beloved*’s dislocation renders narratable horrors like her own: that a mother might choose to murder her child in order to protect her from the even worse horrors of slave life.

This scene functions as a microcosm for *Beloved*’s role in the text as a whole. *Beloved*’s privileged position as the possessor of memory, despite her dislocation from the family, ultimately enables the abominations of slavery to be aired. But these are not the only memories she has of events through which she did not live. Toward the end of the novel, *Beloved* herself explains:

I am *Beloved* and she is mine. . . . All of it is now . . . it is always now . . . there will never be a time when I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too. . . . I am always crouching . . . the man on my face is dead . . . I do not eat . . . the men without skin bring us their morning water to drink . . . those able to die are in a pile . . . the little hill of dead people . . . a hot thing . . . the men without skin push them through with poles . . . they fall into the sea which is the color of the bread. (259–60)

Her recollection of the white men, men without skin, and the cruelties they inflicted on African slaves indicates that she possesses memories of the Middle Passage, which cannot be her memory in any strict sense. Nonetheless, these memories are visceral, palpable, and sensuous and have no less power than the memories of events through which she did live.

Not only do these cases challenge the idea of memory as biological, familial inheritance, but the plot of Morrison’s novel actually contains an implicit critique of the nuclear family. Once Sethe realizes who *Beloved* is, that “she my daughter. She mine. See. She come back to me of her own free will” (246), Sethe is willing to shut out the rest of the world. But the private world of the family—of just Sethe, Denver, and *Beloved*—is more nightmare than utopia. *Beloved* becomes greedier and hungrier, and Sethe cannot satiate her desires; as *Beloved* grows larger and larger, Sethe loses weight and strength. Finally, Denver decides to take action, to leave the family, and to get help. When she tries to find work, she tells her story, which eventually finds its way to the other African American women in town. Once the neighborhood women know

that “Sethe’s dead daughter, the one whose throat she cut, had come back to fix her” (313), they decide that “a rescue was in order” (314). The women gather for the exorcism and begin singing when they reach Sethe’s house. Sethe is ultimately freed from *Beloved*’s strangling grasp not by her nuclear family but by the collective power of a large community of African American women. In another context, Morrison spoke about the importance of neighborhood to African American life:

And there was this life-giving, very very strong sustenance that people got from the neighborhood. One lives, really, not so much in your house as you do outside of it, within the “compounds,” within the village, or whatever it is. And legal responsibilities, all the responsibilities that agencies now have were the responsibility of the neighborhood. So that people were taken care of, or locked up, or whatever. . . . They also meddled in your lives a lot. They felt that you belonged to them. And every woman on the street could raise everybody’s child, and tell you exactly what to do and you felt that connection with those people and they felt it with you.⁴⁶

This privileging of community as kinship deemphasizes the importance of biology and the nuclear family.

Like *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon*, Julie Dash’s film *Daughters of the Dust* (1992) dramatically illustrates the case of a child coming to own and inhabit memories of events through which she did not live. Dash’s film tells the story of the Peazants, an extended African American family living on the Carolina sea islands, on the eve of their migration north. The impending migration, which is eagerly anticipated by most of the family, engenders anxiety in the matriarch, Nana Peazant. The migration raises questions for her about how memory—cultural and collective memory, memory of Africa, the Middle Passage, and slavery—will be passed on. The issue of memory is immediately foregrounded when we learn that the film’s story is being remembered—or “recounted,” as the script indicates—by an Unborn Child. She is not a part of their lived experience in the traditional sense, and yet her disjunctive position gives her the ability to recollect. Privileging her with narrative agency, this film is centered on the potential of the child. The Unborn Child explains: “My story begins on the eve of my family’s migration north. My story begins before I was born. My great great grandmother, Nana Peazant, saw her family coming apart. Her flowers to bloom in a distant frontier.”⁴⁷ Interestingly, she calls these events she did not actually live through “My story.” The Peazants endow her with enormous potential, for as Daddy Mac says to the family, “I’m especially proud today to bless the coming child of our Eli and Eula Peazant. Our first child that’s going to be born up North. Our child of

the future” (142). The Unborn Child is thus given both hope for the future and the role of recollecting her ancestral past.

Particularly worthy of note in *Daughters of the Dust* is the Unborn Child’s utopian potential in Walter Benjamin’s sense: throughout the film she is aligned with technological possibility. It is she who looks through a stereoscopic viewer at pictures of the northern cities. Even more significant is her relationship to photography. We learn in the opening scene of the film that Viola, one of the women in the Peazant family, has hired a photographer to document the family’s migration north. When looking through the viewfinder of his camera at the Peazants, the photographer *sees the Unborn Child* in the group with the others (see figures 5 and 6). She is visible, it seems, not to the naked eye but only to the camera lens. For Benjamin, photography, with its capacity to “reveal entirely new structural formations of the subject,” functions as an “optical unconscious,”⁴⁸ and the “optical unconscious” makes her visible. The camera in Benjamin’s account and in the case of *Daughters of the Dust* allows one to see things that would otherwise remain invisible. That the Unborn Child is visible as part of the Peazant family only through the camera lens implies that as a mechanism of memory, the camera does more than merely record. These technologies actually give birth to the child—and to the process of remembering.

The film also goes a long way toward separating memory from lived experience or from strict biological inheritance. In *Daughters of the Dust*, Nana Peazant understands the way in which the historical experience of slavery itself becomes a kind of bond and kinship, affecting one’s body and subjectivity: “We will always live this double life, you know, because we’re from the sea. We came here in chains, and we must survive. There’s salt water in our blood” (151).⁴⁹ As in *Beloved*, the “memory” of the Middle Passage, like the memory of slavery itself, can mark a body and feel real even for a person who did not live through the actual event. In fact, to convey that slavery is a *heritage* that can be *inherited*, the film depicts the Unborn Child’s hands—hands that were never slave hands—as blue from the indigo dye of the plantation days. A flashback to slave life reveals women working with large vats of indigo blue dye, making the slaves’ blue-stained hands a physical mark of their labor. The Unborn Child’s blue finger does not testify to a biological account of heredity but demonstrates how the past, even a past that she did not live through, can mark her body. Her blue hand indicates that how a body is marked by birth has fewer ramifications for one’s personhood than how it is marked by one’s cultural inheritance, by one’s cultural memory. The blue hand dramatizes the way that memories of one’s ancestors—prosthetic memories—might actually scar one’s body.

Similarly, Octavia Butler’s novel *Kindred* (1979) dramatizes the extent to which remembering can alter or disfigure the body. In the prologue Dana, the

twenty-six-year-old African American protagonist, announces, “I lost an arm on my last trip home. My left arm.”⁵⁰ Her dismemberment is not explained until the last page of the final chapter when it becomes clear that her arm was trapped in the wall of her house and that to free herself she had to pull it off:

Something . . . paint, plaster, wood—a wall. The wall of my living room. I was back at home—in my own house, in my own time. But I was still caught somehow, joined to the wall as though my arm were growing out of it—or growing into it. From the elbow to the ends of my fingers, my left arm had become a part of the wall. I looked at the spot where flesh joined with plaster, stared at it uncomprehending. It was the exact spot Rufus’s fingers had grasped.

I pulled my arm toward me, pulled hard.

And suddenly, there was an avalanche of pain, red impossible agony! And I screamed and screamed. (261)

What occurs between these two passages explains the dismemberment and stages the very real ramifications that “prosthetic memories”—memories of events one did not live through—have for one’s subjectivity. As the narrative unfolds we learn that Dana is pulled back into the past to save a little boy named Rufus, whom she discovers is her ancestor. As she moves back and forth between the present and the past, she realizes that her interventions in the past, on a slave plantation in 1815, are necessary for her existence in 1976, in the present. Rufus pulls Dana into the past whenever he is in danger, and she remains trapped there until he is safe. Each trip back in time is longer than the last, and she begins to fear that she may never get back to the present, that she may be forced to inhabit the past permanently.

This text, like Morrison’s novels, unmasks the ramifications of prosthetic memories for a person’s subjectivity. In Butler’s world, as in Morrison’s, remembering is neither a passive nor a contained endeavor but an issue of life or death. That Dana must lose an arm in the present as a direct result of her engagement with the past dramatizes the power of prosthetic memories to mold or disfigure the contours of a person’s subjectivity. That Dana should end up *dismembered* is not incidental but is metonymically related to the actual dismemberment, physical as well as psychical, that was part and parcel of slavery. Not only were slaves viciously brutalized by masters in ways that left permanent scars, but as Barbara Omolade pointed out, the bodies of female slaves were fragmented according to their various use values to the master.⁵¹ As Dana “remembers” the slave lives of her ancestors, her own body is subjected to a similar kind of violence as the bruises and injuries she receives at the hands of her slave owners travel with her across time.

Butler's project is therefore of a piece with Morrison's, which is to make her fictional reconstructions of slavery cause visceral responses in her readers. As Morrison explained, she tried to

put the reader into the position of being naked and quite vulnerable, nevertheless trusting, to rid him of all his literary experience and all his social experiences in order to engage him in the novel. Let him make up his mind about what he likes and what he thinks and what happened based on the very intimate acquaintance with the people in the book, without any prejudices, without any prefixed notions, but to have an intimacy that's so complete, it humanizes him.⁵²

In so doing, Morrison creates the context for an active, participatory reader: "What I really want is that intimacy in which the reader is under the impression that he isn't really reading this; that he is participating in it as he goes along."⁵³ She attempts to tap into a well of emotion or affect that already exists in the reader, so that the scenarios she creates will become powerful to each reader in a personal way. By engaging the reader's body, Morrison hopes to implant painful memories, to produce scars that might ultimately become part of her reader's archive of experience. So while the black characters in Morrison's novels acquire memories that might be considered their cultural inheritance, she intends white readers to take on those memories, too.

While the memories that *Milkman*, *Beloved*, *the Unborn Child*, and *Dana* acquire are clearly not from their own lived experience, they are their ancestral inheritance. These memories were memories of events that their slave ancestors experienced. In each of these cases the memories foster group identity, to enhance each person's sense of being a member of a specific community. How and under what circumstances do prosthetic memories become available to those people who have no cultural claim to a particular past?

MEMORY, MASS CULTURE, AND THE MARKINGS OF THE PAST

As the topics of slavery and racial oppression are represented in more public, popular, ways, filmmakers, museum designers, and others have tried to achieve the same visceral pedagogy that Morrison and Butler achieved in their fiction. With the technologies of mass culture, it becomes even more possible to take on prosthetic memories across color lines, in effect, to take on memories that are not part of a person's ancestral inheritance or "heritage." In fact, the mass media's power to change what and how people see make them uniquely quali-

fied to put the spectator in “the position of being quite naked and vulnerable.” That the cinema, and increasingly the museum, is a site of bodily experience means that it has the capacity to mark, or even scar, the subjectivities of its spectators. Of course a visit to a movie or a museum does not result in literal dismemberment; but the experience of feeling vulnerable or disempowered or of being put in the position of seeing through someone else’s eyes might change how one sees the world and one’s place in it.

Both the reach of mass culture and its modes of address and reception make it a powerful tool for changing the way people think about their world and, in this case, their race. I do not mean that mass cultural texts about slavery are more powerful than written ones; rather, I am pointing to the unique ability of visual and experiential texts to reach a wider audience and to speak with a more confrontational form of address. Through the use of point-of-view shots, for example, spectators are forced to look at the world through different eyes. As the Payne Studies of the late 1920s indicated, such an experience might force the spectator to reconsider his or her own vision, his or her own way of looking at the world, well after the film has ended. Toni Morrison explained in interviews that she wants both her black and white readers to inhabit memories of slavery,⁵⁴ that she wants her work to communicate across racial boundaries, and it certainly has. Mass culture makes this mission all the more likely. Because the prosthetic memories produced by films, television shows, and museums are addressed to a broad and diverse audience, they are not based on assumptions about “heritage,” and they are not the exclusive property of a particular racial or ethnic group. The final section of this chapter examines some mass cultural texts that explicitly attempt to elicit identification across lines of difference.

Alex Haley’s novel *Roots*, like the other novels I have described, tells the story of a child seeking to find or uncover a family genealogy. Like Morrison, Haley hoped to engage his audience in an affective, visceral way. The narrative structure of his novel is quite different from that of *Beloved*, in which the reader is gratified by the return of the lost object, by a Beloved that returns from the dead. Return is not a possibility in *Roots*. Both the novel and the television miniseries based on it⁵⁵ devote a disproportionately large amount of time to the story of Kunte Kinte, the African boy who was captured just outside his village, Juffure, in Gambia, and taken on a slave ship to America. For more than half the novel, the narrative focuses on the life of Kunte Kinte, with less than half the text covering the other six generations that lead, ultimately, to Alex Haley. The proportions are the same in the miniseries. By concentrating on Kunte Kinte’s story, Haley makes the character’s ultimate absence seem all the more traumatic. The rupture that thwarts the expectations of the narrative structurally repeats the experience of slavery: those sold away never returned. But because closure is a fundamental aspect of narrative structure, spectators

watching *Roots* nevertheless wish that Kunte Kinte might miraculously come back. On some level, the return of Kunte Kinte is figured at the end in the appearance of Alex Haley. One might therefore say that *Roots* reflects Haley's desire to attach himself to both a slave past and an African past from which he has in some measure been severed. For Haley there exist only fragments, a few words, and from those he chose to undertake a journey, not unlike Milkman's, in order to construct a genealogical narrative for his family. Haley described the experience of researching the book as forging the tie that links the child to its origin: "I spent half of my life," he notes, "dragging manuscripts around. It was *umbilical* like Linus' blanket."⁵⁶ His undertaking, in other words, might easily be read as a response to a symbolic natal alienation.

In his review of the novel, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt cited Haley's experience of being called Mr. Kinte in Africa: "'*Meester Kinte! Meester Kinte!* . . . ' A sob hit me somewhere around my ankles; it came surging upward, and flinging my hands over my face I was just bawling, as I hadn't since I was a baby."⁵⁷ The power of the endeavor for Haley derives from his engagement not simply with history and but with genealogy as well. Furthermore, the effect of Haley's discovery on his subjectivity is no less dramatic than the way that Dana's ancestry, in *Kindred*, affects her present with the loss of an arm.

It hardly seems coincidental that *Roots* was published in 1976, the year of America's bicentennial celebration. At the height of the bicentennial fervor—a moment when an official American history was being asserted—it was inevitable that there would be a countermove, an assertion of the unofficial histories (sanctioned, nevertheless, by the media) that complicated the larger narrative. Following on the heels of the publication of *Roots*, the *New York Times* reported that a growing number of blacks were engaged in a genealogical quest to discover their ancestors.⁵⁸ In some ways, *Roots* marked the turning point in blacks' relationship to Africa. As George Sims, Haley's research assistant, noted, "I can remember . . . when blacks didn't want to have anything to do with Africa."⁵⁹ Maya Angelou made a similar point: "For centuries, we (all Americans) were led to believe that Africa was a country belonging to wild animals, where naked, primitive human beings spent their time either climbing trees, leading safaris, or eating each other."⁶⁰ In fact, *Roots* was partially responsible for the phenomenon of the hyphenated American, marking the moment when people of color began to change their self-understanding from black to African American. According to Manthia Diawara, "Africentricity could not have existed without *Roots*."⁶¹ *Roots* spurred "increases in interest in travel to Africa," and as the officials at American Forum for International Study noted, "Africa has become a real place in the minds of many Americans."⁶²

The broadcasting of *Roots* on eight consecutive evenings in January 1977 was nothing less than a national event. The miniseries, which was touted as a

“novel for television,” was twelve hours long, and its airing was a virtually unprecedented gamble for ABC.⁶³ As it turned out, it was a staggering success: 61 percent of all households watching prime-time television were watching *Roots*.⁶⁴ In fact, the ratings for the Tuesday night episode were the “third highest in television history”: “approximately 80 million people watched some part of the episode and it was seen in 31, 900,000 homes.”⁶⁵ The collective nature of the experience, a diverse audience viewing the same story simultaneously, made a new public sphere possible. As Sy Amlen, the vice-president of program planning for ABC, noted, “It’s like millions of people reading the same book simultaneously, instead of privately, making it a shared experience.”⁶⁶ This public and communal reception meant that people—whether or not their reactions were different—could engage in a discussion on a kind of equal footing. Even in the south, in the cities where the most vicious civil rights violence had occurred, “‘Roots’ dominated conversations, radio call-in shows, classroom discussions and religious sermons.”⁶⁷ What was new about *Roots* was its attempt to use the mass media to create images of slavery and, even more important, to portray a sympathetic black character with whom a white audience might identify. By granting Kunte Kinte point-of-view shots,⁶⁸ the miniseries enabled white viewers to see through a black man’s eyes.

Not only did *Roots* provoke discussion about a subject that had long remained taboo, but it also had an impact on the daily lives of many Americans: Kunte Kinte became an honorific black body to which people could connect themselves or their peers. Charlayne Hunter-Gault cited incidents that now seem shocking: “A black man carrying an attaché case stepped into the elevator of the predominantly white company where he worked” and was greeted by a “white colleague, cheerfully” with the following address—“Good morning, Kunte Kinte.”⁶⁹ In another instance, the mother of a four-year-old related, “I was having a hard time getting my 4-year-old up . . . but, at one point I said, ‘Okay, Mandinka warrior. Time to go hunting in the forest.’ He smiled, opened his eyes and rolled out.”⁷⁰ Kunte Kinte became more than a role model. He became, in effect, a body that could be worn, a black identity that could be inhabited with pride instead of shame. This was particularly clear in the explosion of babies named Kunte Kinte and Kizzy: twenty babies in New York City alone were given those names in February 1977. The mother of Kunte Kinte Reid explained that “like Kunte Kinte, he should be free, and he should be somebody and know that he is somebody.”⁷¹ Mr. Reid added, “It’s a name with some pride to it.”⁷² Mr. and Mrs. Reid, neither of whom finished high school, were determined that their child’s life would be different: “He’s going to have an education . . . and get out and do things. He’s not going to hang out there on those streets—there’s nothing out there on those streets.”⁷³

Part of *Roots's* power lay in its large-scale mobilization of affect.⁷⁴ Although Haley's style is quite different from Morrison's, *Roots* also strives to add an emotional component to an underrepresented history. In the aftermath of *Roots*, sociologists found that "the actual effects were the same for both blacks and whites. . . . The predominant emotional response being sadness."⁷⁵ But was there any purpose to all this emotion? Did this public and collective experience of affect have some political utility? Such a possibility was best articulated by some high-school students who were asked about their response to the miniseries. As Elliot Caldwell, a seventeen-year-old black junior at a Houston high school, explained, "In history classes we don't really read much about how slaves were treated. . . . Through watching the series I learned how hard it was on them."⁷⁶ But *Roots* also offered a lens through which to see the present. For Cicil McGee, a nineteen-year-old high-school senior in the Watts district of Los Angeles, it was the contemporary parallel that was so disturbing: "I can't worry about what happened back then. . . . And besides . . . whites still hold us down. All I worry about is getting up in the world. I have to live for me now."⁷⁷ *Roots* was valuable to her only insofar as it became a critical lens through which she could more accurately read the present and which might help her devise strategies for her future.

If a miniseries like *Roots* could make possible affective bonds that transcended race, bonds that might become the grounds for political alliances, then the affect produced will not simply dissolve into emotionalism. On the contrary, as Roger Wilkins observed, *Roots* may have marked the first time that many whites had been able to identify with blacks as people: "When I came in last Saturday night and found my 12-year-old son and a white classmate in front of the set and rooting together for Chicken George to prevail over his mean master-father, I knew something very good was happening in my country."⁷⁸ *Roots* had the ability to direct affect toward progressive ends.

Inevitably, though, the political mission of the miniseries came up against its historical one. Following on the heels of the *Roots* fanfare came challenges to its historical accuracy.⁷⁹ An article in the *Sunday Times* of London claimed that the account of Kunte Kinte came from "a man of notorious unreliability," a person who manipulated the story to please Haley.⁸⁰ Rather than defend his book on the grounds of historical accuracy, Haley claimed that he had tried to write a "symbolic history of a people."⁸¹ Many historians jumped into the fray, battling over whether or not the book was a fraud.⁸² In his forceful editorial, Wilkins emphasized the fact that

"Roots" has been criticized for some historical inaccuracies, but they are nothing when compared with the egregious misinformation about slavery, and about the blacks and whites who participated, that all generations have

taken as knowledge. “Roots” is substantially closer to historical and psychological truth and provided a common pool of information to all young Americans to carry forward.⁸³

The controversy only amplifies Morrison’s belief in the intimate relationship between fiction and memory, that “the act of invention is bound up with memory.”⁸⁴ Both she and Haley tried to create an “emotional memory—what the nerves and skin remember as well as how it appeared.”⁸⁵ This controversy pointedly raises the question of why people are fascinated with the past: is it in order to know what “really happened” or to be interpellated? In the case of genealogy, at least, the answer seems to be the latter. Genealogy is for the living, not the dead. Constructing genealogies of this kind is a way of claiming connection to experiences one did not have and, in the process, racializing oneself. Kunte Kinte is meaningful to Americans because he possesses an honorific body imprinted by history. He represents a black body that Americans can inhabit to remember prosthetically a past that has for too long been the site of a shameful silence.

But if *Roots* enabled black viewers to embrace their African American heritage, the effect of the miniseries on white viewers was not so clear-cut. While white Americans surely sympathized with the plight of Kunte Kinte, they were equally taken with the project of exploring their own roots. In other words, Haley’s engagement with genealogy—more than the specifics of his African ancestry—emerged as an important modality for all Americans. It is noteworthy, too, that Alex Haley’s interest in his “roots” derived not from a fascination with Africa per se but was inspired by his visit to the Rosetta stone. In London, when Haley saw the famous tablet, it became a catalyst for him. That is, his encounter with the key to the decoding of the Egyptian hieroglyphics led Haley to remember African words he had heard in his childhood. In other words, it was not his own relationship to his blackness that ignited Haley’s genealogical desires but this other window into the past. Furthermore, in the year of the U.S. bicentennial celebrations, the question of America’s—and Americans’—origins had a particular urgency. As Maya Angelou pointed out, “The discoveries in ‘Roots’ have inspired Americans, both black and white, to re-examine their origins,”⁸⁶ an observation that was supported by a Gallup poll.⁸⁷ Haley himself called *Roots* a “universal story,” and what was striking about the miniseries was in fact its portability. While it enabled many whites to see through black eyes for the first time, what emerged from the experience of *Roots* was not so much a critique of white oppression as an appreciation of the importance and power of genealogy.

The power of *Roots* lay in its mass circulation and its ability to generate large-scale public discussion about a long-taboo subject. Nevertheless, this achieve-

ment only underscored the unrealized political potential of the mass media. Rather than forcing white Americans to take a hard look at their own attitudes toward race, rather than forcing them to own up to the crimes of slavery, the mass media stimulated instead a fascination with the project of genealogy. Perhaps the message of *Roots* was too much about the pleasure of healing and not enough about the pain of remembering. It might be that for memories to catalyze action, to become the grounds for a politics, they need to be visceral, painful, and scarring. To make one think, to question one's long-held assumptions and beliefs, memories must be raw and vital. Like Dana's dismemberment, they must transform a person's identity in the present. The potential of prosthetic memories lies in their power to unsettle, to produce ruptures, to disfigure, and to defamiliarize the very conditions of existence in the present.

In many ways, John Singleton's 1996 film *Rosewood* picks up where *Roots* left off, raising the question of whether white children—and, by extension, a white audience—can be marked by memories of slavery. This film dramatizes the five-day-long “war” that erupted on Thursday December 31, 1922, between two neighboring Florida towns, Rosewood (primarily black) and Sumner (mainly white). Despite the prevailing racism, the two towns managed to coexist until a white woman in Sumner, after being beaten up by her white lover, cried rape and blamed it on an unknown black man. Her allegation ignited the town of Sumner, and violent lynch mobs decimated Rosewood. By documenting these “real-life” events, Singleton was first and foremost attempting to put into history what had been left out. Singleton's film “remembers” cinematically the lynch mobs that continued to exist for almost a century after the abolition of institutional slavery, making visible a history of racial oppression that had been vastly underrepresented. Like *Roots*, then, *Rosewood* tries to expand the dominant national narrative, to counter and contest national memory.

But Singleton is doing more than making oppression visible. He constructs a radiant image of Rosewood and its citizens. In an inversion of stereotypes, Rosewood, not Sumner, is the thriving town. In Rosewood, black families own most of the land and all but one of the businesses. Tranquil scenes of family and community life in Rosewood are juxtaposed against scenes of the coarser, more chaotic, and unkempt life in Sumner. The hardworking African Americans that Singleton depicts in Rosewood are living the American dream. In this film, as in *Roots*, African American characters are privileged with point-of-view shots. To watch *Rosewood*, the spectator therefore must, in effect, look at the world through black eyes. Singleton is thus attempting to defamiliarize whiteness, to make it and not blackness seem “other.”

As in the other texts I considered in this chapter, children are crucial to the film's “vision.” Scenes of young Arnett's birthday party, in Rosewood, are

crosscut with scenes of the approaching lynch mob. Narratologically, not the storming lynch mobs but the quest to save the black children of Rosewood moves the story forward; the mob scenes and lynchings are actually obstacles to narrative movement. The importance of saving the children is stressed at the end by a textual epilogue informing us that the sworn testimony of the children of Rosewood made the film possible. It is their words that made visible an unwritten and underrepresented history.

But this film, unlike the other texts I have described, also foregrounds a white child. In one of its first scenes, a white man in Sumner, one who subsequently is revealed as the most virulently and violently racist of the bunch, teaches his son Emmett to hunt. This scene initiates what becomes a veritable obsession of the film: the teaching of children. When Emmett and Arnett, an African American boy from Rosewood, are playing together at the beginning of the film, Emmett's father warns, "I don't want you around that nigger boy—You'll be a man soon. I'll getya there." Racial prejudice, the film suggests, is not natural but learned. Emmett is brought along with the lynch mob and lives through a series of pedagogical events. In one instance his father teaches him how to make a noose (see figure 7). Later his father forces him to look into a mass grave (see figure 8). Emmett shakes his head and walks away with tears in his eyes. When his father asks him why he is crying, he says, "There's babies in there." "Nigger is nigger, boy," his father responds. The lesson here, and the fundamental premise of racial prejudice, is that blacks are black before they are human.

As the film draws to a close, many of the children of Rosewood do escape, but at great cost: the once thriving town is now smoldering ash, destroyed by racial hatred. But the film does not end there. In the final scene, in the white town of Sumner, Emmett is standing outside his father's cabin with all his worldly possessions tied to a stick. "Where you going boy?" his father asks. "I hate you," Emmett responds, "You ain't no man." And then he walks away. Ultimately, the film's vision is intimately tied to children's "vision": that of both the children of Rosewood who have testified to this past and Emmett, the white child, who has the capacity to see differently. By looking as if through black eyes, he is able to see through the reified, naturalized structures of societal and institutional racism. The price of this vision, though, is high for it requires him to disinherit himself; it is as if he, too, must be natally alienated in order to see the structures of oppression. In some ways, then, Emmett becomes the model for the white spectator who must learn to see as if through black eyes. This kind of vision, Singleton suggests, is the only way to prevent the structures of oppression from reproducing themselves. *Rosewood*, then, points the way out of the dilemma first posed by *Roots*. Through the character of Emmett, Singleton's film stages a process whereby white viewers

can recognize and reject racism. But unlike *Roots*, which enabled white viewers to apply the notion of genealogy to their own lives, *Rosewood*, which focused on the specific events of those four days in Florida, is not as transportable: seeing through black eyes in *Rosewood* means seeing “through” the reified ideologies of white supremacy.

Singleton uses cinematic identification to create the conditions under which audience members can acquire prosthetic memories. The film deploys specific cinematic techniques intended to elicit identification with both the African American characters and also, at the end, the little white boy Emmett. This kind of cinematic identification has pedagogical value because it forces identification across racial lines; it positions white people to look at the world through black eyes. The point is not that white moviegoers forget their whiteness but that they are forced to look at the world from a perspective that is not naturally their own and that such an experience enables them to acquire prosthetic memories. Emmett’s ability to leave his home, to turn away from his father, and to reject his father’s white supremacist beliefs is enabled by his memories: his memory of his father calling his friend Arnett a nigger, his memory of being forced to make a noose, and his memory of seeing the mass grave filled with black bodies—and babies. In identifying with Emmett, we too acquire those memories. They are not memories of events we lived through, as they are for Emmett, yet through an act of prosthesis enabled by cinematic identification, they become part of our archive of memory. They enable us to “remember” the specific event, the Rosewood massacre, but also the broader historical terrain—the organized racism that persisted well into the twentieth century. In other words, the past that the film makes visible is one that has social relevance in the present and might be instrumental in enabling a white person to experience empathy for African Americans, as Emmett does for the residents of Rosewood.

As I have argued, learning to see differently, to challenge his father’s racism, comes at a high cost for Emmett: he must run away, severing ties with his family. In this way, *Rosewood’s* pedagogical message is quite different from the assimilationism of the immigration texts I examined in the last chapter. The immigration texts require nothing of “native” white Americans, insisting instead that immigrants transform themselves, forget their foreign pasts, and construct new American memories. The film *The Road to Yesterday*, for example, holds out the promise of a harmonious union between Americans and immigrants by finally uniting the characters of Ken and Malena. But to achieve that union requires that Malena, the film’s “other,” the stand-in for the nation’s “new immigrants,” forget her Gypsy past and remake herself. By contrast, Singleton’s film puts the onus for national reconciliation squarely on white shoulders. By asking white audiences to see

historical racism as if through black eyes and by insisting that such a process must be painful, even scarring, *Rosewood* deploys prosthetic memory to much more progressive ends.

To return to where this chapter began: the issue of vision seems crucial to Detroit's Museum of African American History, too. The museum attempts to teach people—white and black—to see differently. Like *Rosewood*, in which Singleton constructs a radiant image of Rosewood and its citizens, the Detroit museum represents racial oppression and also black triumph. Through experiences at museums and in movie theaters, mass culture enables the production of prosthetic memories, memories that give people access to events that are not their “natural” or biological inheritance. If a form of mass cultural pedagogy is possible, then the issue of audience and address is of the utmost importance. *Rosewood* ends in the white town of Sumner because Singleton is as much concerned with the white viewer as with the African American viewer. It seems important for many reasons that Detroit have a large-scale African American history museum, for it is a city where the large majority of the population is black. But the power of mass cultural sites also lies in their ability to engage spectators across racial lines, to create prosthetic memories even in those to whom the memories do not “properly” belong. If mass cultural sites do in fact have this pedagogical potential, should not such a museum be located in Washington D.C., the nation's political and symbolic capital?⁸⁸ Situated among the major “national museums,” an African American history museum might make it possible for visitors of all backgrounds to take on the painful memories of racial oppression and, in so doing, challenge their own assumptions and ideologies. Such prosthetic memories might in turn help them see differently, see, as Benjamin imagined of the child, with an “unsevered connection between perception and action,” with vision that translates into politics.



AMERICA, THE HOLOCAUST, AND THE MASS CULTURE OF MEMORY

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THE “OBJECT” OF REMEMBERING

IN THE FINAL SCENE OF *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), a line of actors marching away from a liberated concentration camp dissolves into a line of the “real-life” Schindler Jews approaching Schindler's grave in Israel. In this dissolve, the black-and-white film changes to color, signaling a generic and a temporal shift from the classical Hollywood mode and the past to “real life” and the present. The real Schindler Jews walk with the actors and actresses who portrayed them to Schindler's grave, on which they together place a memorial rock. This scene both ruptures the diegetic world of the film and acts as a guarantee of the movie's “authenticity.” The movement that I would like to emphasize here is not the one from the past to the present, but the one from the authentic survivor to the actor. This moment stages what I take to be the agenda of the film: the transference of memory from the body of a survivor to a person who has no “authentic” link to this particular historical past. At this final moment of *Schindler's List*, when the authentic comes into contact with the inauthentic, when the survivor touches the actor, the possibility emerges for memory to be transferred across temporal and geographic chasms. And this is imagined to take place in the context of a Hollywood film. *Schindler's List* ultimately stages—and acts as an instantiation of—the possibility of a responsible mass cultural transmission of memory.

Ever since Elie Wiesel asked, “How does one remember?”¹ the Holocaust has been articulated as an issue of memory. Wiesel's challenge suggests that to preserve the Holocaust in history, it must first be preserved in memory. But now, as the last survivors are dying, the possibility of transmitting something

like “living memory” becomes more and more precarious and ultimately impossible. The explosion of discourse about the Holocaust therefore seems connected to the survivors’ life span, to what one might call “living memory.” When there no longer are any survivors left to testify, when memories are no longer guaranteed and anchored by a body that lived through the original event, memory transmission becomes more complicated. The difficulties associated with transgenerational memory are as long-standing as the concept of memory itself, but the obstacles to memory posed by the Holocaust are somewhat different. We are facing the absence of survivors as well the absence of specific memory practices, traditions, and rituals that might work to ground the event.

Remembering and bearing witness to the Holocaust pose other problems as well. As Jean-François Lyotard observed, the Holocaust represents a limit to the possibility of representation and testimony:

To “have really seen with his own eyes” a gas chamber would be the condition which gives one the authority to say that it exists and to persuade the unbeliever. Yet it is still necessary to prove that the gas chamber was killing at the moment it was seen. The only acceptable proof that it was killing is that one died from it. But if one died from it one cannot testify that it is because of the gas chamber.²

The dilemma of the Holocaust is the epitome of what Lyotard calls the *différend*, a case “wherein the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes on that account a victim,” a case in which “the ‘regulation’ of the conflict which opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the injustice suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom.”³ Lyotard’s formulation comes as a political intervention against willful attempts to erase the Holocaust from memory and history. Attempts at historical revisionism themselves share the logic of the “final solution”: not just to annihilate all the Jews but even to annihilate all the traces of the annihilation.

In this chapter I explore the way that several mass cultural texts and institutions have begun to imagine strategies to transmit memories and to create the rituals and practices necessary for transmitting memory in the face of such obstacles. One attempt to extend the life span of “living memory” has been to assemble video archives of survivors’ testimonies.⁴ But once the testimonies exist only in the recorded, mediated, form, the claims of such testimonies and the authority of the first person become more problematic.⁵ If memory is a bodily, sensuous phenomenon, as Nietzsche and others believed it was, and if it operates on the principle of a mnemotechnics such that “if something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in,”⁶ then the question becomes, Is it possible for the Holocaust to become a bodily memory for those who did not

live through it? And if so, how do particular mass cultural events, institutions, and practices participate in the process of "burning in" such memories? Mass cultural technologies, some of which function as technologies of memory, enable the production of prosthetic memories in those people who did not live through the event.

In Lyotard's account, the *différend* "is signaled by what one commonly calls a feeling."⁷ By looking at mass cultural representations of the Holocaust—at the sites of the production of "feeling"—I claim that affect might usefully complement cognition in the acquisition of knowledge about traumatic events of the past. In this chapter I argue that the mass media have begun to construct sites—what I term *transferential spaces*—in which people are invited to enter into experiential relationships to events through which they themselves did not live. Through such spaces people may gain access to a range of processual, sensually immersed knowledge that would be difficult to acquire by purely cognitive means.

In emphasizing the potential of prosthetic memory, I do not mean to dismiss the danger of modern, mass-mediated forms of memory. I take quite seriously the danger arising from the fact that such memories are subject to revisionism. Historical revisionism has been a powerful enemy of Holocaust memory. We should look skeptically at the mass media's engagement with history because of the vast possibilities for historical revision and because the media tend to simplify and streamline complicated ideas and events. Nevertheless, the texts that I examine represent a best-case scenario because they concentrate on mass culture's ability to engage productively and in a more complicated fashion with the past. Although I am presenting here a utopian vision of a radical practice of memory, it is a vision that grows out of the possibilities I perceive in several American Holocaust "texts": *Maus* (Art Spiegelman), *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg), *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski), and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Because I am interested in the mass cultural representations of the Holocaust and its emergence into discourse through the popular media, this chapter is necessarily less concerned with the discourse about the Holocaust as it circulates in intellectual or academic circles. And because this book is about American memory, my analysis also is limited to Holocaust texts produced and circulated in the American context.

THE POPULAR EMERGENCE OF "THE HOLOCAUST" IN AMERICA

The cover of the January 16, 1995, issue of *Newsweek* reads, "The Last Days of AUSCHWITZ: 50 Years Later: Untold Stories from the Death Camp."

There is nothing particularly unusual about a periodical commemorating the anniversary of an event. What is surprising is that *Newsweek's* graphic coverage of the liberation of Auschwitz fifty years after the fact, its fourteen-page article with twelve photographs of the camps, exceeded in magnitude any previous story in *Newsweek* about Auschwitz or the concentration camps or even the Holocaust in general.⁸ In other words, this article commemorated the anniversary of an event that continues to achieve its status only in retrospect.⁹ *Newsweek's* extensive coverage emphasizes the way that the Holocaust seems, for the first time, to have become representable on a mass scale. The Holocaust's "popularity"—whether a product or the cause of its mass mediation—signals that it has gained an unprecedented significance in America for Jew and non-Jew alike.¹⁰

In 1945, there was neither a *Newsweek* article on the liberation of the camps nor a single entry on Auschwitz or the Holocaust in the entire *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*.¹¹ As an American event—even as an event in its own right—the Holocaust had yet to be articulated. Only one article, published in 1947 in the *New Republic*, broached the subject of Auschwitz. Aptly titled "Back-Page Story," the opening caption declared, "Today it takes a careful search of the news to find this chapter of Nazi Germany."¹² As the author Myron Emanuel explained in a prologue to the article, his inspiration was a small news item "in the back pages of a newspaper" on the capture of Mengele, the "chief physician of the Auschwitz concentration camp" who "sent hundreds of thousands of Jews to gas chambers."¹³ "Most U.S. readers, if they noticed the item at all, passed it quickly by. But one, at least, paused with good reason to remember. The *NR* herewith prints her vivid recollections, which, like so many others, are gradually being buried with the overgrowth of time."¹⁴

The following recollections belong to gynecologist Gisella Perl, a survivor of Auschwitz, who while imprisoned there served as a camp doctor. This article is striking from the vantage point of the present because time has proved Emanuel wrong. His prophecy that what happened to the Jews in Nazi Germany would be forgotten could hardly be further from the truth. Time has, in fact, set the wheels of memory in motion. While the *fear* of forgetting still dominates the discourse, the passage of time has made the Holocaust more visible, more representable, and, fortunately, less forgotten than Emanuel could have imagined. But as Emanuel's erroneous prophecy suggests, the emergence of the Holocaust as a significant American memory was by no means inevitable but has a complex and contingent history of its own.

After 1974, articles on the "the Holocaust" as an independent event began to appear with increasing frequency.¹⁵ In May 1975—thirty years after Germany's surrender—*Newsweek* published its first story on the Holocaust. Unlike the fifty-year anniversary issue that "featured" the Holocaust, the 1975 is-

sue treated the Holocaust as what Myron Emanuel might have called a "back-page story." A brief essay, entitled "Facing up to the Holocaust," in the Ideas section, appeared toward the back of the magazine. Despite its marginal position, this short essay touched on the themes that continue to dominate popular discourse on the Holocaust. The essay proclaimed, "A full generation has passed since the Nazis systematically starved, tortured and murdered six million Jews. Yet only now is the world—Jew and non-Jew alike—beginning to come to terms with that event."¹⁶ In other words, this essay recognized the Holocaust not just as a Jewish issue but as one with significance for the world at large. Perhaps most important, the article rehearsed Wiesel's famous question: "How does one remember?"¹⁷ And with that question the floodgates of memory all but burst open.

Perhaps surprisingly, the imperative to remember the Holocaust has been especially powerful in America. In *The Holocaust in American Life*, Peter Novick tries to explain why the Holocaust emerged so forcefully in American culture during the 1970s. He argues that a series of events, in particular the Yom Kippur War of 1973, made American Jews fear for the survival of Israel. At the same time, a commitment to ethnic identity was gaining prominence in mainstream American culture, replacing the integrationist ethos of the postwar years. In this context, American Jewish leaders began to emphasize the Holocaust as a means of both rallying support for Israel and anchoring a distinctive Jewish identity. Novick is extremely critical of this discourse for its univocal depiction of Jews as victims. Furthermore, he contends that the explosion of Holocaust memory enabled America to shirk "those responsibilities that *do* belong to Americans as they confront their past, their present, and their future."¹⁸ By dwelling on the Holocaust, America has been able to evade its real historical responsibility to "blacks, Native Americans, and Vietnamese." Novick's claim that the Holocaust in some measure stands in for unspeakable traumas closer to home is compelling. However, I disagree with the valence of his critique. The Holocaust may very well have functioned in American life as a screen memory. But it has also allowed the nation to develop a vocabulary with which to engage in discussion about collective trauma. In this chapter I contend that developing a popular discourse about prejudice and dispossession does not constitute an evasion of but, rather, a first step toward being able to redress the historical crimes for which America is directly responsible.

TEARS FROM A GLASS EYE

Art Spiegelman's comic book *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1973), subtitled *My Father Bleeds History*, tells both the story of Artie's current relationship with

his father, Vladek, in Queens, New York, and the story of his parents' experiences during the Nazi occupation, in Poland. The text is haunted by the question of how Artie—or any person of the second generation—can come to own the experiences of their parents, experiences through which they themselves did not live. Early on, while visiting his father, Artie brings up the idea of writing a book about Vladek's experiences during the Holocaust. In a particularly suggestive cell, Artie is quite literally encircled, or trapped, by his father's body (see figure 9). Artie's head is framed on the top by his father's arm bearing his Auschwitz tattoo and, on the bottom, by his father's body, which is pedaling furiously on his stationary exercise bicycle, underscoring the fact that Artie's life is dramatically circumscribed by the bodily experiences and scars of his father.

Toward the end of the first volume Artie and Vladek are taking a walk when Vladek bends down beside a trash can and picks up an old piece of wire. "What did you pick up?" Artie asks. "Telephone wire. This is very hard to find," Vladek responds. "Inside it's **little** wires. It's good for tying things." Exasperated, Artie says "You **always** pick up trash! Can't you just **buy** wire?" Vladek responds, "Pssh. Why always you want to buy when you can **find**!?" Anyway, this wire they don't **have** it in any stores. I'll give to you some wire. You'll see how useful it is."¹⁹ This scene functions as an allegory for what the text itself performs. The recirculation of the wire becomes a metaphor for the recirculation of the Holocaust through a different medium—the comic book—indicating that when one puts the story into a different medium new insights, new possibilities, emerge. More broadly, the recirculation of the wire allegorizes the potential usefulness of the Holocaust in America as a way of thinking about the recirculation of "waste" for productive ends. In other words, that the Holocaust might be a grounds for politics—or even for the production of subjectivity—presumes the potential usefulness of even the darkest and seemingly most irredeemable memories of the past.

The recirculation of the Holocaust in comic book form also raises questions about the "appropriateness" or adequacy of the various media through which its stories are currently being told.²⁰ While Spiegelman himself is more of an avant-gardist than a popularist and while *Maus* would certainly appear at the high end of the high culture / low culture spectrum, the fact remains that Spiegelman chose to tell the story as a comic book, a quintessentially mass cultural form. In a discussion of Holocaust representations, Geoffrey Hartman argues that "most of the time, . . . transmissibility and truth move in opposite directions."²¹ Although he is willing to concede that *Maus* complicates his equation, in his paradigm realism tends to fall on the side of transmissibility, and more abstract, elusive modes of representation fall on the side of truth. By telling a Holocaust story in a popular and not high-art medium,

Spiegelman challenges Hartman's claim. Not only does Hartman's dichotomy tend to rearticulate a kind of high/low distinction in which mass culture—precisely because of its power to transmit—is relegated to the "low" end, but it also takes the Holocaust outside the realm of representability. An exceptionalist posture brackets the Holocaust, holding it outside the context of daily life. A sophisticated account of the mass media would recognize its ability to bring events like the Holocaust into the fabric of a person's life, into an affective and thinkable context.

Early on in *Maus*, Vladek describes how some of his friends were arrested by the Nazis for conducting business on the black market and how "the Germans intended to make an example of them" (83) by hanging them publicly: "They hanged there one full week" (83). This memory is still so powerful for Vladek that it makes his glass eye cry: "**Ach**. When I think now of them it still makes me cry. . . . Look—even from my **dead** eye tears are coming out!" (84). This moment of public spectacle—and public emotion—makes visible the power of a mass cultural production of affect. Vladek is moved to tears. His glass eye—a prosthetic eye—is as capable of tears as his real eye is. But more important, his glass eye functions as a metaphor for Artie's eyes—for the eyes of those who did not see at first hand what happened during the Holocaust. The story is real and palpable enough to move to tears even an eye that did not witness what happened.

I do not mean to downplay the importance of Vladek's firsthand account of his experiences during the Holocaust. After all, the transmission of Vladek's story is the impetus for the comic book. But *Maus* problematizes the illusion of immediacy that surrounds testimony. *Maus* is rigorously self-reflexive about its own createdness; Artie is ambivalent about the task he has undertaken, admitting to his wife Françoise, at the beginning of *Maus II*, "I feel so inadequate trying to reconstruct a reality that was worse than my darkest dreams."²² Part of his concern has to do with the medium he has selected: "And trying to do it as a **comic strip!** I guess I bit off more than I can chew. Maybe I ought to forget this whole thing" (2: 16, boldface in original). His concerns about mediation appear throughout the narrative. In what seems to be an inauthentic or antirealist gesture, Artie has chosen to represent himself and his father not merely as cartoon figures but as cartoons of *animal* figures. Miles Orvell argues that "the reader comes to forget that these are cats, mice, pigs and soon begins to view them instead as human types."²³ I would make a somewhat different claim: Artificial parameters do not make the affective experiences less real. Even Vladek's glass eye is capable of tears.²⁴

At the end of *Maus*, Vladek confesses to Artie that he destroyed his wife Anja's diaries, her firsthand account of the war. Enraged, Artie cries, "God **damn** you! You—you MURDERER!" (1: 158–59). By calling his father a

murderer, Artie makes an analogy—or constructs a metonymy—between Anja’s memory and her body. This scene points up the vulnerability and contingency of even firsthand accounts, as Anja’s diaries were no less able to escape the flames than she was. The contingency of “living memory” makes necessary new technologies of memory, technologies that, despite their artificiality and manipulability, interface with a person’s subjectivity and that still can, like the glass eye, produce real tears. In my admittedly optimistic scenario I would argue that precisely because of its scope and broad appeal, mass culture might be a particularly effective arena in which to stage these encounters between the authentic and the inauthentic and ultimately to undermine the distinction.

Paradoxically, the ways in which the Holocaust has disfigured Vladek become most obvious in the narrative present, in Rego Park, New York, where his relationship to even the most mundane objects of daily life has been greatly altered. At the beginning of the second chapter of *Maus*, Artie goes to his father’s house to hear more of his father’s story and finds Vladek counting his pills. Artie begins questioning, “About mom . . . uh . . . what are you doing, pop?” Vladek counts, “Eleven . . . twelve . . . thirteen . . . I’m making into daily portions my pills . . . fourteen . . . fifteen.” Spiegelman devotes three frames to Vladek’s counting, leaving himself out of the drawings. “So many?” Artie asks from outside the frame. “Sixteen . . . seventeen . . . eighteen. . . . It’s six pills for the heart, one for diabetes . . . and maybe twenty-five or thirty vitamins” (26). Several pages later Vladek becomes carried away in the narration and knocks over the pills: “Look now what you made me do!” From off the frame Artie says, “Me? Okay, I’ll re-count them later.” “No!” Vladek says. “You don’t KNOW counting pills. I’ll do it after . . . I’m an **expert** for this” (30) (see figure 10). This scene testifies to the way in which the Holocaust has fundamentally altered Vladek’s relationship to objects. The pun implied in counting is instructive. Vladek cannot, of his own accord “recount” what happened to him; at his home in Rego Park, he is able only to *count*.

Certainly in the concentration camps, the most basic objects, like a spoon or a belt, became immeasurably valuable. But that is not exactly what I have in mind here. Rather, the relationship to objects that the Holocaust forced on Vladek is part of a mimetics of absence²⁵ that bespeaks the loss of people, of bodies, of familial connections. We might say that for the second generation, and even more for the third, the only access to the Holocaust is through objects, through the piles of objects left behind. Piles, not people, are the legacy of the Holocaust. As I argue more explicitly with regard to the Holocaust Museum, the piles are central to what I have labeled an emerging iconography of the Holocaust. In this iconography, piles stand in for the absent bodies. Perhaps Vladek’s piles of pills point to a death world in which only ob-

jects remain. Perhaps his very attachment to things is meant to say something about the plight of the Holocaust survivor, about the way he or she verifies existence. If the experience of the Holocaust is precisely the experience of the loss or absence of people, then the objects stand in for this absence. What this pill-counting scene implies, however, is that like the reader's, Vladek's relationship to the Holocaust—his ability literally to "re-count"—is mediated through the objects remaining here in the present.

A practice of memory then, relies—metaphorically and metonymically—on the objects that remain. If the objects and Vladek's relationship to them signify metonymically the incompleteness of survival, then Vladek's counting and saving become visible symptoms he wears on his body. While the objects over which Vladek obsesses are not "authentic" Holocaust objects, they evoke the horror and violence of the event. These scenes from the narrative present tense are in some ways more disturbing than the recollections from Auschwitz. As objects that he obsessively counts and then spills and then re-counts, the pills become inflected with recognizable significance. In this context, the pills and pill counting become part of the Holocaust scene. While they, like the glass eye are not authentic, did not "see" the Holocaust in a literal way and are even at a great temporal and spatial remove from the event, they become nevertheless embedded in the logic and signification of the Holocaust.

But this pill-counting—and -spilling—scene is instructive in other ways as well. When Vladek's pills spill, they literally burst through the comic cell's frame. As they fly into the air they spill into our space, eliminating the distinction between the contained world of the story and our own reading space. This formal rupture is indeed part of Spiegelman's project, for it stages the way that Vladek's story might come to affect us in our world. Just as Vladek's Holocaust experiences and memories leak into the present in the form of pill counting, so too do this and other broken frames allow Vladek's story to leak beyond the comic book's walls.

Indeed, *Maus* is largely concerned with just such transmissions of memory. This concern is elaborated most dramatically in the relationship between Artie and Vladek. On the back cover of *Maus* is a color map of World War II Poland with its surrounding countries, and onto this map, in the southeast corner of Poland, Spiegelman has superimposed a rectangular inset of a map of Rego Park, New York. Visually, these two maps are at odds with each other, representing the uncomfortable relationship of present and past in Vladek's world. The detail I consider here is the black-and-white image of Vladek in an armchair talking to Artie, who is lying on the floor beside him. Even though their image is superimposed on Germany, Slovakia, and Hungary, the figures do not appear to be in any of these places, nor are they in Rego Park. Because Vladek's chair is foreshortened—a three-dimensional ob-

ject against a two-dimensional map—it appears to pop out of the picture frame. Vladek and Artie seem to be floating, hovering somewhere between Poland and New York. In other words, the memory transmission—the way that Artie comes to inhabit his father’s story—takes place outside either locale, in a space between them that I call a *transferential space*. This space is much like the space opened up between reader and text by the spilling of the pills.

In the Freudian sense, transference is the therapeutic terrain in which neurotic symptoms are played out in a relationship with the analyst and then undone through the “talking cure.” According to Freud,

the transference thus creates an intermediate region between illness and real life, through which the transition from the one to the other is made. The new condition has taken over all the features of the illness, but it represents an artificial illness which is at every point accessible to our intervention.

And here is the important part: “It is a piece of real experience, but one which has been made possible by especially favorable conditions and it is of a provisional nature.”²⁶ While the parameters in which the experience takes place are artificial, the experience itself is quite real. Like the artificial glass eye that nevertheless sheds real tears, this kind of transferential space of telling, this artificially constructed space between Vladek and Artie, allows Artie to take on his father’s memories. It is neither “therapy” nor “cure” that occurs in a transferential space but the transfer of memory and affect from one person, or situation, to another.

A transferential space becomes crucial to the transmission of memory in the case of the Holocaust, in which the very possibility of something like “organic memory” has been destroyed. The kinds of ruptures that the Holocaust literalizes are thus particularly well addressed by the Foucault’s notion of genealogy. Invoking Nietzsche, Foucault states that the task of genealogy is “to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body.”²⁷ There is no doubt that Vladek’s body is marked by the Holocaust; his tattoo is only the most literal of his scars. Everything he touches and all the objects he “uses” become, metonymically, a piece of the Holocaust. Foucault concludes that “the purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is . . . to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us.”²⁸

For the Holocaust survivors, the ruptures of family life and the tears in the fabric of existence necessitate a form of genealogy that uses discontinuity as its premise. For Artie and for those who have no direct link to the Holocaust, memories of the Holocaust are always at least once removed. But how can this descent mark Artie’s body? How can those memories so crucial to preserve become grounded in *his* body, in his person? Artie says, “I know this is insane,

but I somehow wish I had been in Auschwitz **with** my parents so I could really know what they lived through" (2: 16, boldface in original). Perhaps in this liminal transferential space he can wear this experience on his body; he can begin to feel what Vladek felt. In the scene with his psychiatrist, Artie complains, "Some part of me doesn't want to draw or think about Auschwitz. I can't **visualize** it clearly and I can't **begin** to imagine what it felt like" (2: 6, boldface in original). His psychiatrist, also a survivor, emphasizes the necessity of bodily engagement in remembering the Holocaust, saying, "What Auschwitz felt like? Hmm. . . . How can I explain it? **BOO!**" (2: 46). Artie, surprised, jumps back and lets out a "Yiiiiii" (2: 46). His psychiatrist thus suggests that Auschwitz cannot be conveyed purely as a narrative but must be transmitted or conveyed affectively, viscerally; that is, the telling *does* need to mark the body in the way Nietzsche imagines. As the psychiatrist explains, "It felt like that. But always! From the moment you got to the gate until the very end" (2: 46). Being in a transferential space with his psychiatrist, and more broadly with Vladek, permits Artie to come as close as possible to acquiring the symptoms—the memories—of the Holocaust through which he did not live. While these memories are indeed his heritage, the transferential space created by the comic book makes possible this transmission of memory even to those who lay no direct claim to a Holocaust past.

MEMORY'S PUBLIC SPHERES

The release of Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* in 1993, which coincided with the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C., reinforced the prominence of the Holocaust in American cultural memory. With the release of *Schindler's List* and its overwhelming success at the box office and in winning Academy Awards in 1994, the Holocaust had indisputably become a highly visible public issue. The popular press churned out more than one hundred articles about *Schindler's List* between January 1993 and November 1994, among which were reviews of the film, interviews with or assessments of Spielberg, and international responses. Its enormous fanfare attests to its status not just as a film, but as a public, historical event as well.

The film's impact was due to both its publicity—a public sphere developed around it—and its visual power, its ability to elicit deep identification on the part of its spectators. The notion of the public sphere set forth by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, as Miriam Hansen claims, accounts for the ways in which social experience "is articulated and becomes relevant—in other words, by which mechanisms and media, in whose interest, and to

what effect a ‘social horizon of experience’ is constituted.”²⁹ Negt and Kluge take the mass media seriously because of their capacity to generate, or participate in, the construction of, a “social horizon of experience,” a shared archive or landscape linking people who might have nothing else in common. Mass culture, in other words, has the ability to construct what Maurice Halbwachs calls the “topographies,” or “collective frameworks,”³⁰ that people who inhabit different geographical spaces, practices, and beliefs might share. Unlike those that Halbwachs imagines, these frameworks were not constrained by locales or by any “essential” or presumed connection among their constituents. Such public spheres and counterpublic spheres—unlike Habermas’s “bourgeois public sphere”³¹—“challenge the very possibility of defining the ‘public’ (and attendant divisions of public and private) in any singular, foundational and ahistorical manner.”³² These public spheres generated by the mass media also make ideas and images widely available.

The very premise that mass cultural forms are worthy of serious consideration—that they might possess a utopian political potential—has long been scorned by cultural critics, beginning with Theodor W. Adorno, and understandably so. For those who lived through World War II, mass politics was indistinguishable from fascism. But we need to look beyond the Adornian critique of the “culture industry”³³ to grasp the potential of the Negt and Kluge public sphere to produce new solidarities and collectivities.³⁴ Furthermore, the explosion of the electronic media makes imperative a rethinking of the spaces and parameters that define the public sphere and the frameworks of collective memory. As Eric L. Santer points out in regard to German memory, a public sphere is essential to collective mourning: “Mourning, if it is not to become entrapped in the desperate inertia of a double bind, if it is to become integrated into a history, must be witnessed.”³⁵ For mourning as a large-scale cultural act to take place, a forum, or public sphere, becomes necessary. When a film like *Schindler’s List* saturates a variety of media, it becomes more than a mere movie. It becomes part of a collective cultural archive, part of a “social horizon of experience.” It generates a public sphere that exists within, and yet extends beyond, the movie theater.³⁶

The power of the mass media to construct public spheres by disseminating the same images to people who share nothing of their lived experience underlies its promise of open access to all. In Art Spiegelman’s venomous critique of *Schindler’s List* in the *Village Voice*, he denounces the film as a reductive, oversimplified version of the Holocaust,³⁷ which in some ways it is. But Spiegelman’s critical posture blocks his potential alliance with Spielberg and obscures the important ways that their projects do overlap: they both attempt to integrate the Holocaust into the context of lived daily experience. According to Elinor J. Brecher’s book *Schindler’s Legacy*, about the “true sto-

ries" of the Schindler Jews, not only do the majority think that *Schindler* is an acceptable portrayal of their experience, but for many of them, the film broke their silence. As Brecher said,

Alex Rosner never had any interest in speaking out about the Holocaust. He says he turned his back on it in 1946, a year after he was liberated at the age of ten. He wouldn't be talking now but that *Schindler's List* thrust the role upon him, compelling him to spend more time on discussing life in the death camps with high-school students than on business with his clients.³⁸

Before the movie nobody knew about Rosner's past. Not only did the film become an incitement to speech, but it also became the mechanism for his interpellation. As Rosner admitted, "Now comes this movie, and it evidently touches some kind of nerve in people, and it's in my face, so I react to it."³⁹ The film thus opened up new discursive possibilities. Instead of becoming *the* definitive film on the Holocaust, as it had initially been touted by some critics, it spawned much more discourse about the Holocaust, giving birth to more films and more books.

Schindler's ability to generate a public sphere must be contextualized against the backdrop of the television miniseries *Holocaust*, which was aired in Germany in January 1979. The miniseries dramatized the story of the Weisses, a Jewish family, during World War II. Like *Schindler's List*, *Holocaust* drew voluminous press coverage both before and after it was broadcast.⁴⁰ According to Siegfried Zielinski, "Long before the telecast, the *Holocaust* week had become a social event which no institution having any interest in the workings of West German minds could afford to ignore."⁴¹ He went on to say that "almost a quarter of all West German TV sets were turned into the first installment of the miniseries."⁴² In fact, "virtually nothing else was talked about at places of socialization in our society: in schools, universities, factories, offices and living rooms."⁴³ His point was that the *Holocaust* miniseries, like *Roots* in the United States, became the springboard for dialogue about a taboo subject: "School students who had never heard anything about the Nazi genocide, pressed their teachers to deal with the subject in class."⁴⁴ Furthermore, "Not only what had been seen on TV was discussed but also issues of social and historical relevance which had greater ramifications."⁴⁵ As with the miniseries *Roots* in America, the "*Holocaust* airing" quite literally "became an event in West Germany."⁴⁶

Not only did its visibility generate a public sphere in which memorializing in West Germany could take place, but like *Roots* and *Schindler's List*, it provoked discussion about the pedagogical value of affect and identification in teaching about the Holocaust. Those like Andreas Huyssen who were

sanguine about the power of affective identification read the ensuing “emotional explosion” as an indication of “how desperately the Germans needed identification in order to break down the mechanism of denial and suppression.”⁴⁷ Huyssen argues that identification with the Weiss family as Jews came only after identification with them as a family and that “identification with the Weiss family was further enhanced by the medium and its reception context”⁴⁸ in the domestic sphere. And it was precisely such identification, according to Huyssen, that enabled for the first time a kind of collective mourning.

Even so, *Schindler's List* has been criticized explicitly for its realism, for the very strategies that make identification possible. Such attacks derive both from Adorno's proclamation that there could be no poetry after Auschwitz and from the Bilderverbot, the taboo against representation, which is a fundamental tenet of Judaism. The fact remains that Spielberg's “realist” film, which, as Miriam Hansen observes, draws heavily on the conventions of the “Classical Hollywood Cinema”⁴⁹ and is quite different from the majority of Holocaust texts that attempt to keep the spectator at a critical distance. *Schindler's List* aims to draw in its spectators, offering a point of entry into the Holocaust. For its effect, it relies on proximity and the possibility of identification.

Many Holocaust films, particularly documentaries, have opted for distance and objectivity in order to strengthen their claims about the images they depict. But such intellectual and cognitive distance inevitably makes the story an impersonal one. Even an extraordinary and powerful film like *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1965) ultimately distances viewers from the events of the Holocaust and the bodies of its victims. Because Resnais's film relies on archival footage of the victims, because it represents the Jews as emaciated, inhuman creatures, the possibility that the spectator might develop an affective identification with them is drastically reduced. Although a Jew watching *Night and Fog* might identify with the victims, the film is less able to elicit identification across ethnic lines.

In *Schindler's List*, however, the opposite is true. The film offers its viewers Jewish bodies with which they might actually have a mimetic relationship, bodies that are not always already starved and deformed but that are recognizable, even familiar. Having identified with the Jews first as members of the middle class before the dehumanization begins, the spectator finds the torture and cruelty of the Nazis all the more traumatic. Because identification comes before the dehumanization, audiences are led to experience the disenfranchisement and to understand the dispossession more viscerally. To experience a kind of bodily vulnerability, to experience the fear of irrational violence, might have ramifications for one's personhood that extend well beyond the movie theater. Critics have no difficulty attributing to violent films the power

to incite violence, so would the experience of compassion for the victim be an equally powerful motivator? If the film gives an individual spectator a way of inhabiting, even temporarily, a body that lacks the privilege or agency of her own body, then it might ultimately affect how she will act and the kinds of decisions she will make in the future. The process of cinematic identification, in other words, might have more to do with the spectators' physical relationship to the image than with a kind of essentialism of identification. As I argued in the case of *Rosewood*, cinematic identification might be crucial to challenging the spectator's fundamental assumptions.

Spiegelman's other complaint about *Schindler's List*—that "there weren't any Jews in the picture"⁵⁰—presumes that spectators identify more strongly and consistently with the main character. He argues that "*Schindler's List* refracts the Holocaust through the central image of a righteous gentile in a world of Jewish bit players and extras."⁵¹ But the fact that the story is organized around a German does not make the scenes in which Jews are brutally mistreated any less affecting. The scene with a Jewish hinge-maker is a powerful counterexample. In this scene, inside the metalworks factory at the Plaszow forced labor camp, Commandant Ammon Goeth (Ralph Fiennes) monitors the workers' efficiency. He approaches the hinge-maker, says "Make me a hinge," and times the worker as he does it. Goeth is impressed by the worker's efficiency, saying, "Oh that's very good." The camera frames the worker, watching his face change as Goeth continues to speak: "But I'm a bit confused and perhaps you can help me. What I don't understand is that you've been working since I think what about six this morning yet such a small pile of hinges." The camera remains fixed on the metal worker, watching as his eyes close in pain. As Goeth speaks we are confronted by the worker's face in close-up, and we sense his fear as he and we realize what is about to happen. He is led outside and pushed onto the ground. Goeth pulls out a gun and attempts to shoot him, but we do not see him from Goeth's point of view. Instead of looking down at him from high angle, we see him at his level. The tension increases when Goeth's gun malfunctions; Goeth continues to fire and nothing happens. In the midst of this, the metalworker attempts to explain himself: "Herr Commandant. . . . I beg to report that my heap of hinges was so unsatisfactory because the machines were being recalibrated this morning. I was put on to shoveling coal." Goeth does not listen. The hinge-maker's inability to defend himself demonstrates for us the absolute unfairness of his position. It is precisely our proximity to him—what Steven Shaviro would call his "overpresence"—that forces us to register his fear and the irrationality with which he is treated. Our closeness to him, our mimetically induced relationship to him—makes us feel vulnerable in bodily ways, which make us cringe and wriggle in our seats. Our discomfort derives from the power of the image

to move us and to make intelligible and visceral what we cannot comprehend in a purely cognitive way.⁵²

My point is that the physical, affective experience of *Schindler's List* is not elation or triumph.⁵³ In fact, the moviegoers endure emotions and violence in a context quite different from that of the typical adventure film. This film forces a nexus of knowledge and affect that makes it completely different from a pure action film or thriller. As many critics have observed, visual representation is crucial to rendering an event thinkable.⁵⁴ Like the earlier cultural critics Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer, Steven Shaviro imagines the cinema as itself experiential, arguing that it “produces real effects in the viewer.”⁵⁵ We could say that insofar as the cinema attempts to seize, in Kracauer’s words, “human being with skin and hair,”⁵⁶ it participates in the logic of mimesis. For Shaviro, the filmic image “is not a symptom of lack, but an uncanny, excessive residue of being that subsists when all *should* be lacking. It is not the index of something that is missing, but the insistence of something that refuses to disappear.”⁵⁷ In other words, it is the presence itself of these images that permits a kind of affective identification with them. *Schindler's List's* ability to engage and enthrall audiences depends on the power of images and the visual.

Spiegelman’s complaint that *Schindler's List* focuses on a gentile rather than a Jew is misguided for another reason as well. Centering the narrative on a gentile allows Spielberg to stage the pedagogical project of the film, a project this film shares with *Rosewood*. Like the white boy Emmett who learns to reject racial prejudice, Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), the gentile, learns to reject anti-Semitism. With the help of his Jewish accountant and financier, Itzhak Stern (Ben Kingsley), Schindler learns to see as if through Jewish eyes. The film thus portrays thematically the identification and transformation in vision that it intends its viewers to experience as well. Like *Rosewood*, *Schindler's List* strives to make identification possible across racial and ethnic lines.

While identification is a powerful device for eliciting emotion and empathy, the historical circumstances of the Holocaust limit the possibility of identification. That is, relying on images and presence is complicated in the case of the Holocaust, because the Final Solution eradicated “presence” in the form of actual bodies and records of events. The closing scene of *Schindler's List*, with which I began this chapter, in which the film actors dissolve into the real Schindler Jews in Israel, introduces the possibility of transmitting memory from real survivor to both actor and spectator. This transmission is not predicated on an essential connection between Schindler Jew and actor, or Schindler Jew and spectator; the transmission is meant to take place across ethnic lines, across chasms of difference. Still, in this final gesture, the film re-

mains tied to a logic of presence, signaled by the need for the real body of the survivor to guarantee or anchor the memory that the film has constructed.

Ultimately, identification in this film is predicated on the presence of a body. Furthermore, because spectators are granted the opportunity to identify with bodies, the experience is one of plenitude, and they are more likely to sympathize with the characters on an emotional level than to engage intellectually with their plight. In the case of the Holocaust the luxury of an "authentic" body with which to identify is not always an option. Moreover, while visual plenitude and presence are crucial to the production of a public sphere—and for public representation in general—the deep identification they make possible is not necessarily the most effective way to convey an "experience" of the Holocaust. By bridging the distance between viewer and historical victim, *Schindler's List* permits a powerful emotional identification, but such an identification might also limit the possibilities for a more cognitive engagement with the specific circumstances of the "other."

While the more recent film, *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002), also tries to elicit spectatorial identification with the Jews, it recognizes that absence, not presence, characterizes the Holocaust experience. Instead of simply identifying with present bodies, the spectator also identifies with, or has an experience of, absence. Before discussing *The Pianist's* departure from *Schindler's List*, I should note that both films are based on "true stories" and both begin with scenes of assimilated bourgeois Jews living in their comfortable homes—in this case, in Warsaw, Poland. Indeed, among these films' most important contributions is their depiction of the dehumanization of the Jews. Polanski's film introduces us to the protagonist, Wladyslaw Szpilman (Adrien Brody), a pianist and one of four children in the Szpilman family. Painstakingly, Polanski details the gradual degradation and dispossession of this family. In the first instance, the family learns of the new requirement that all Jews must wear armbands emblazoned with the Star of David. We see first the family's horror at such an idea, followed in subsequent scenes by their acceptance of this shameful marker. Their dispossession occurs in stages: first their displacement to a smaller apartment within the confines of the ghetto, then the erection of the ghetto walls, and finally the liquidation of the ghetto. At this point, the Szpilmans, along with the other Jews, report to a central square to await the trains that will carry them to "work camps." By a stroke of luck, Wladyslaw escapes this fate and remains behind in Warsaw.

This degradation and dispossession is accompanied by an unflinching and unrelenting look at the extreme violence of the Nazi regime. As spectators, we are brought face to face with a young woman shot in the head for asking a question, an older man in a wheelchair pushed out of his window, and instances of people being called out of line and shot for no reason at all. This

violence never, however, becomes available for sadistic or voyeuristic purposes, as we are positioned so strongly by the film to identify with the Jews. This positioning is particularly vivid later in the film, when the building Wladyslaw is hiding in is bombed. Following the explosion, all sound on the soundtrack becomes muffled, except for a persistent ringing, as if we ourselves were present at a deafening explosion. This intimate look at, and immersion in, the irrational and excessive violence inflicted on Jews is obviously meant to give us an experience of the horror and unfairness of the Holocaust.

After Wladyslaw's family is deported, the film's strategy and focus shift. Instead of being confronted viscerally with violence, we watch as Wladyslaw struggles for survival. The second part of this film is more about absence and loss than it is about brutality. After hiding out for several days Wladyslaw reemerges in the empty ghetto. In an image that might serve as a microcosm for the plight of the survivor, Wladyslaw comes to the square where the Jews awaited their deportation. Once alive with Jews huddled together, the square is now empty—or at least empty of people. All that remains are the suitcases and belongings of the Jews who were taken away. These piles of possessions, now without owners, reinforce the absence created by the Holocaust. Like the piles of objects that Wladek collected—nails, pills, wires—these piles of suitcases and possessions mark an absence. That this absence is being registered symbolically by the presence of ownerless objects suggests the complicated nature of the identification solicited here. Viewers must recognize intellectually that people are absent. Because we understand absence through signification—the presence of things that stand in for the absence of bodies—there is a layer of mediation between us and the story. The distance opened up by mediation is more likely to produce empathy, an intellectual and emotional negotiation with the plight of the “other.”

Once Wladyslaw escapes the ghetto, it is as if he is the lone remaining Jew, and the rest of the film stages this absence by focusing on his solitary struggle. The starving Wladyslaw is emaciated, too weak to eat or act except in the most pressing of circumstances, and he is so alone that there is rarely occasion for him to speak. Although he is the only real object for spectatorial investment, he has been deprived of the most basic human requirements for personhood. So even as we continue to identify with him, it is a tenuous identification that insists on a profound difference between him and us. We recognize all the while the precariousness of his existence and, by extension, the limits of our identification with him. Even though our identification still relies on the presence of a body, it permits a more nuanced and intellectual engagement with the Jewish victim because our sense of connection to him is based on a condition of distance and difference. While both *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist* deploy realist strategies to represent the

Holocaust, *The Pianist* elicits a more nuanced form of identification that is at once emotional and cognitive.

Unlike *Schindler's List*, *The Pianist* does not focus on a gentile who discovers his righteousness. Nevertheless, this film, too, insists on the importance of learning to see differently. When Wladyslaw is hiding in the attic of an abandoned house in bombed-out Warsaw, he is discovered by a German officer (Thomas Kretschmann). Upon learning that Wladyslaw is a Jew, the officer asks him what he used to do. When Wladyslaw confesses to having been a pianist, the officer leads him to a piano and motions for him to play. Despite his emaciated, starved state, he plays passionately, and the German officer appears moved. Like Deckard watching Rachel at the piano in *Blade Runner*, the German soldier begins to see Wladyslaw as human. Not only does the officer refuse to turn him in, but he returns periodically with food for the starving pianist. The point here is that this film, too, stages a transformation in consciousness, revealing the message that one *can* learn to see differently. *The Pianist* thus explores the possibilities for bodily, experiential memory in the face of absence while encouraging viewers to accept memories of the past that might transform them in the present.

EXPERIENTIAL MUSEUM AS TRANSFERENTIAL SITE

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, like the liminal space that Vladek and Artie inhabit and the space of the cinema for viewers of *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist*, has become an actual site of sensuous, as well as cognitive, knowledge production. The museum, like the comic book, raises questions about what it means to own or inhabit a memory of an event through which one did not live. It also provides a terrain on which to begin to imagine the political utility of "prosthetic memories." The museum, proposed by President Jimmy Carter's Commission on the Holocaust in 1979, opened its doors in March 1993 after years of planning and negotiating.⁵⁸ The permanent exhibit covers three floors: The Nazi Assault, 1933–39, The Final Solution, 1940–45, and The Last Chapter. A large elevator transports visitors to the top floor, from which they work their way down. While its layout may not sound radically different from that of other such museums, some structural differences are noteworthy. First, visitors are at the mercy of the museum and must submit themselves to its pace and its logic as there is no way out short of traversing the entire exhibit; they must wind their way down all three floors. The architecture and exhibition design conspire to force visitors to confront images and objects that in other museums they might ignore. Second, there are only five places in the entire exhibit where visitors may sit

down. The museum is physically and emotionally exhausting and yet insists that one persevere in the face of discomfort.

The Holocaust Museum, in other words, is what I would call an experiential museum and is part of a larger trend in American mass culture toward the experiential as a mode of knowledge. The American public seems increasingly drawn to experiential mass cultural forms, many of which turn history into personal memory and thus advance the production of “prosthetic memories.” In my call to take seriously this popular desire to “experience” history, I do not mean to undervalue the importance of academic historiography in the traditional medium of the printed word. Rigorous, researched-based histories of the Holocaust and the Third Reich will always be a bulwark against the tides of historical revisionism.⁵⁹ Nor do I mean to blindly embrace historical reenactments as a particularly desirable mode of historiography. And I am certainly not advocating that such an experiential mode of knowledge replace the cognitive. The Holocaust Museum itself is deeply invested in the rigorousness of its history. According to Leon Wieseltier, the museum is predicated on the assumption that history must accompany memory, “that feeling must be annotated by fact.”⁶⁰

What I am urging is that we take seriously Americans’ widespread desire to live history and that we recognize the importance of this experiential mode to the acquisition of particular kinds of knowledge. Current mass cultural forms may allow a version of experience that relies less on categories like the real, the authentic, and sympathy than on categories like knowledge, responsibility, and empathy. The mass media increasingly can create or make available frameworks in which people can experience a sensual, processual form of knowledge, and these are the kinds of experiences on which prosthetic memories might be based. That is, that the mass media make available the conditions under which people might be able to attach themselves to pasts they did not live or to identities by which they are not “biologically” defined.

If the experiential mode does have such an ability, it also can generate a great deal of intellectual anxiety. The most vehement critiques of the Holocaust Museum—aside from those questioning its very existence—seem to circulate around its experiential character. In his attack on the museum as “one more American theme park,” Philip Gourevitch explained,

It was not exactly depression or fear or revulsion that overcame me as I stood before this exhibit, though I experienced all those reactions at one moment or another in the museum. Nor was it that I had seen it all before. The problem was simply that I could not make out the value of going through this.⁶¹

Of his experience walking through a German freight car, he said, "It was small and dark inside. I felt like a trespasser, someone engaged in an unwholesome experience, the way I might feel if I were asked to lie in someone else's coffin."⁶² What was so disconcerting and unsettling to him is the experiential involvement the museum demands. Any event or institution or cultural practice that attempts to decenter the cognitive falls prey to such attacks. And it has become all too easy—perhaps even a cliché—to label any such experiential museum a "Disneyland" or a theme park. But a person's experience at the museum is not meant to "thrill" or to recreate the experience of victims of the Holocaust. Instead, its purpose is to teach visitors about the kinds of dispossessions that were central to the Holocaust experience.

Perhaps the hostility toward the experiential mode—hostility mostly on the part of academics and middle-brow journalists—reflects an anxiety about the threat posed to the hegemony of the cognitive by an experiential mode of knowledge. The experiential mode complements the cognitive with affect, sensuousness, and tactility. In the case of the Holocaust Museum—in the case of the Holocaust in general—the cognitive mode is woefully inadequate.⁶³ Could there be a linear narrative, a logical formulation that would make the experience of the Holocaust comprehensible?⁶⁴ The power of the Holocaust Museum derives from the constellation of different narratives that it assembles: newspaper articles, survivors' testimonies, and historical analyses. In other words, even at those moments that one's body is actively engaged by the architecture and the strategies of display, that engagement is anchored by historical narratives. It would be reductive to presume that simply by trying to engage spectators physically as well as cognitively, a museum or a movie irresponsibly conflates history and entertainment. In fact, the popularity of this new genre of "experiential museums" reflects a change in what counts as knowledge. Their popularity also illuminates the ways in which different "technologies of memory" have altered the mechanisms by which people acquire knowledge.

The museum visit is designed to be an experience for the visitor. This is not to say that visitors somehow experience the Holocaust. Rather, they have an experience that positions their bodies to be better able to understand an otherwise unthinkable event. Before stepping into the elevator, each visitor takes an identification card that tells a brief story of a person's experiences during the Holocaust. As Martin Smith, director of the permanent exhibit, explains, "Six million deaths can become a statistic, but one person's death is a personal tragedy, a keenly felt tragedy."⁶⁵ Many of the lives described on these cards are those of non-Jews. The museum has tried to strike a balance between portraying the Holocaust as a uniquely Jewish event and as a portable tragedy that drains the events of their historical specificities. The

museum's inclusion of non-Jewish victims is essential to its mode of address: to speak across ethnic lines to a non-Jewish population.⁶⁶

Card in hand, you, the visitor, enter the ominous black elevator; the guards lead you in but leave before the doors close. Unlike most elevators, this one has no buttons and no controls. A video monitor in the elevator plays footage of Americans discovering the camps at liberation. The elevator doors open onto a dark room. The fourth floor, entitled "Nazi Assault, 1933–39" documents the Nazis' rise to power. Although several of the exhibits and showcases are optional—which means that they are not in the path you must follow to move through the exhibit—your mobility is largely directed. The display cases on this top floor are arranged thematically, each documenting the circumstances and events surrounding the Nazi rise: a long corridor of display cases covers topics such as the "Takeover of Power, 1933," "The Terror Begins," "The Burning of Books," and "The Nuremberg Laws" (see figure 11). Each display case contains newspaper articles, Nazi artifacts, and video monitors showing news footage covering the events described.

On the next floor, entitled "The Final Solution," which is the one I discuss here in the greatest detail, the traditional museum space is disconcertingly ruptured. On this floor your freedom of movement is much more restricted. You find yourself on a boardwalk-like walkway. The ground under your feet is uneven. You are walking on cobblestones—cobblestones, you learn, which came from the Warsaw ghetto. As was the case with Vladek's spilled pills, on this floor there is no longer a clear distinction between your space and the exhibit, your body and the history of the objects all around you. Gone are the display cases. To your right are video monitors showing newsreels from the ghettos—Theresienstadt, Warsaw, Lodz, and Kovno—and to your left are objects from these places—tools from the ghetto workshops, stained-glass windows from the Cracow synagogue, the Lodz hospital door. Even though you are not invited to touch these objects, their very materiality, I would argue, their seductive tangibility, draws you into a lived relationship with them.

From the initial conception of the museum, objects were considered fundamental to the exhibiting strategy. They are meant to testify as evidence to the atrocities, and they are imagined to be locally comprehensible. The November 1988 museum newsletter issued a worldwide call for Holocaust artifacts because "the 'object survivors' would help depict the Holocaust period for visitors to the museum."⁶⁷ You and the objects are inhabiting the same space. You have moved, as it were, from the realm of what we might call the cognitive logic of the fourth floor, the realm of photographs and texts, to the logic of the corporeal experiential. Because these objects offer the illusion of unmediated proximity and because they do not, like the printed word and the

photograph, operate on a principle of distance, your relationship to them becomes uncertain—so uncertain that at moments you might find yourself longing for the security of the display case, for the distance and mediation it both presupposes and constructs.

Perhaps the most radical eradication of the dichotomy between your space and museum or object space occurs when you pass *through* a boxcar that was used to transport Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka in 1942/43 (see figure 12). Inside it is dark and small and empty, and yet the thought that one hundred bodies filled that car haunts the space. Its emptiness produces a kind of cognitive dissonance as you attempt to reconcile its present emptiness with the fact that people were at one time crammed into its interior. The effect, I think, is an odd sense of spatial intimacy with those people who are at an unbridgeable distance, who are conspicuously absent. When you emerge from the freight car, you enter the world of the death camps signaled by piles of personal belongings confiscated at the camps like scissors, razors, hairbrushes, kitchen utensils, and bunks from Auschwitz. The piles, it seems, like the piles of belongings left behind in *The Pianist*, have a semiotic of their own. The pile has become the "aesthetic" of the Holocaust because it now evokes a death world.⁶⁸ It is through this semiotic, or iconography, of the pile, that the mute "object survivors" speak. We are struck by the painful, ironic fact that these *objects* made it to the United States, to safety, while their owners never did. Halfway through the permanent exhibit—in the middle of the second of three floors—a walkway leads you through the room of shoes. These shoes are not "displayed" in any strict sense, nor are they sorted into pairs. Rather, they are a chaotic, jumbled sea of shoes (see figures 13 and 14). The shoes, to your left and right, number in the thousands. What struck me as I stood in the middle of this room was that there was a smell; hanging in the air was the stale smell of old shoes.

These surviving shoes, perhaps more than any other Holocaust objects, have enormous symbolic power. Fredric Jameson begins his collection of essays on postmodernism by comparing Van Gogh's modernist portrayal of peasant shoes with Andy Warhol's postmodernist "Diamond Dust Shoes." He locates the fundamental difference between these two works: while Van Gogh's shoes speak, are "a clue or a symptom of some vaster reality which replaces it as its ultimate truth," Warhol's shoes do "not really speak to us at all."⁶⁹ Unlike Van Gogh's peasant shoes, which Jameson claims, drawing on Martin Heidegger's 1933 interpretation, "slowly re-create about themselves the whole missing object world which was once their lived context,"⁷⁰ Warhol's shoes appear as "a random collection of dead objects hanging together on the canvas like so many turnips, as shorn of their earlier life world as the pile of shoes left over from Auschwitz."⁷¹ For Jameson, this difference becomes a microcosm of the rupture

he finds between the modern and the postmodern. For him, the postmodern is ineluctably tied to the logic of capitalism; the seriality of the Warhol shoes embody the logic of the commodity.

Standing in the room of shoes at the Holocaust Museum, I was struck not by the commodity-like seriality of these shoes but by their worn, lived individuality: a sandal, a cracked leather work shoe, a boot. Each shoe bears the trace of the absent body that lived and marked it. For this reason, the shoes at the Holocaust Museum are more akin to Van Gogh's shoes. As Heidegger describes,

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind.⁷²

What the museum evokes is by no means a Heideggerian ontology of objects. While the Van Gogh shoes evoke the life world of the peasant woman, these shoes evoke the death world of the concentration camps. The crucial difference from Van Gogh's shoes, of course, has to do with the sheer number. If the peasant shoes evoke the woman's life in the fields, the shoes at the museum—all different, all unique, and yet piled chaotically, an unsorted mass—evoke the massness and magnitude of the killing at concentration camps.

These mute objects piled up at the museum, the objects that survived the Holocaust, stimulate our mimetic faculty. In his 1933 essay "On the Mimetic Faculty," Walter Benjamin posits that "the highest capacity for producing similarities is man's."⁷³ In Michael Taussig's words, mimesis means "to get hold of something by means of its likeness," which for him, implies both "a copying or imitation, and a palpable, sensuous, connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived."⁷⁴ Mimesis entails a "corporeal understanding" and therefore questions the traditionally privileged position of vision in constructing intelligibility. For Taussig, mimesis offers an alternative mode of knowledge: "the very concept of knowing something becomes displaced by a relating to."⁷⁵ While authorial intent is always dangerous terrain, it is worth noting that the Holocaust Museum's architect, James Inigo Freed, echoed Taussig's sentiment: "I felt intuitively that this was an emotional building, not an intellectual building, and I didn't know whether it was possible to do it."⁷⁶ In describing his intentions he says, "I want to leave it open as a resonator of emotions. Odd or quiet is not enough. It must be in-stental, visceral; it must take you in its grip."⁷⁷

The kind of mimesis we experience at the Holocaust Museum, however, is somewhat different from what Taussig describes. This mimesis with these

"object survivors" is not an experience of presence but an experience of profound absence. We experience the objects as the sensuous trace of an absence. A visitor's ability to have a prosthetic relationship to those objects, I would argue, is predicated on the object's indexicality—on its "realness" and materiality—but it is also predicated on each visitor's sense of who he or she is. There is a simultaneous negotiation with the object (and the other that it represents) and with a person's own archive of experiences. At the same moment that we experience the shoes as *their* shoes—which could very well be *our* shoes—we feel our own shoes on our feet. The disinvestment that the objects represent can be traumatic only if we feel all the while ourselves. Freud describes a similar sensation, the sensation of inhabiting disbelief, as "derealization" or "depersonalization," which produces a momentary split in the ego.⁷⁸ This condition is not unlike the kind of complicated identification we have with Wladyslaw in *The Pianist*. In both instances we feel mimetically connected to what we see but remain aware of the profound differences that separate them.

By engaging a person's mimetic faculty, the museum makes empathy possible. The word *empathy*, unlike *sympathy*, which has been in use since the sixteenth century, first appeared in English at the beginning of the twentieth century. Whereas sympathy presupposes an initial likeness between subjects,⁷⁹ empathy starts from the position of difference. Empathy is "the power of entering into the experience of or understanding objects or emotions outside ourselves."⁸⁰ We might say that empathy depends less on "natural" affinity than sympathy does, less on some kind of essential underlying connection between the two subjects. Whereas sympathy relies on an essentialism of identification, empathy recognizes the alterity of identification. Empathy, then, pertains to the lack of identity between subjects, to negotiating distances.⁸¹ Empathy, especially as it is constructed out of mimesis, is not an emotional self-pitying identification with victims but a way of both feeling for and feeling different from the subject of inquiry.

If the museum does in fact become an occasion for an empathetic relationship with the Holocaust victims, then we might imagine the museum as what I have called a *transferential space*. I suggest that what occurs in these public spaces that impose a corporeal, experiential logic might be exactly the inverse of the psychoanalytic process. That is, these spaces might actually instill in us "symptoms" or "prosthetic memories" through which we did not actually live but to which we now, after a museum or a filmic experience, have an experiential relationship. Freud described transference as "a piece of real experience, but one which has been made possible by especially favorable conditions and . . . is of a provisional nature."⁸² The transferential space of the Holocaust Museum is not a place where old memories, worn on the body as

symptoms, are revealed and dismantled through talk but a site where new symptoms, new memories, prosthetic memories, are incorporated into the body. As happens in analytic transference, although real experience takes place, the experience is not equivalent to or an exact repetition of the original event or relationship: the parameters are artificial. Nonetheless, the experience fosters an otherwise unattainable insight into the original event. In the case of the museum, as we take on prosthetic memories, as we incorporate these symptoms, we are simultaneously giving over our bodies to these mute objects. We take on their memories and become their prostheses.

What are the texture and contours of these new memories? For James Freed, the Holocaust Museum's architect, "memory is a charlatan." As he explains, "Everybody I talked to has reconstructed a different memory of the event. I as the architect reconstruct yet another memory that never was, but it can act as a resonator for the memories of others."⁸³ Rather than justifying or sanctioning revisionism, his polemical statement is pointing to the negotiation between one person's own repertoire of images and experiences and the archive presented at the museum. In reflecting on Holocaust representation, Dominick LaCapra turns to the Freudian stages of dealing with trauma—repetition, acting out, and working through—in order to reflect on different approaches to theory.⁸⁴ Following Freud, LaCapra favors working through, which "would engage a process of mourning that would attempt, however self-questioningly and haltingly, to specify its haunting objects and (even if only symbolically) to give them a 'proper' burial."⁸⁵ LaCapra does acknowledge the inevitability, and even the importance, of repetition and acting out in the aftermath of trauma.

What I see as important is the significance of the experiential aspect of repetition and acting out, as they can make historical or political events meaningful in a personal, local way. Repetition, as LaCapra himself observes, has a generative quality and does not simply reproduce the same. Furthermore, through repetition, images become recognizable: repetition enables a public iconography to develop, and events and issues need to be representable to become political. We could also argue that repetition actually produces difference. In his famous essay "Of the Gaze," Jacques Lacan describes "natural" repetition—mimicry—in just such a way: "The effect of mimicry is camouflage, in the strictly technical sense. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare."⁸⁶ Lacan's description of mimicry reinforces the way that repetition can generate difference.

Likewise, the mimetic engagement that we enter at the museum produces difference. Listening to testimonies, for example, we do not accept the speak-

er's memory wholesale. Instead, we construct a memory triggered by the testimony that also is closely connected to our own archive of experience. In a small glass room called "Voices from Auschwitz," visitors listen to an audiotape of voices describing daily life at the camp. Without any visual reinforcement, we find ourselves constructing in our head the scenes we hear described. Perhaps these mental images come from concentration camp photos we have seen, from *Schindler's List*, or from old family photographs. Listening, we match images to their memories, a context to their voices. In a room full of listeners, the same story produces many different memories. We, too, produce a memory that no one else ever had, and the act of taking on these prosthetic memories transfigures our own subjectivities. This example also demonstrates the difference between collective and prosthetic memory: although they are informed by the public memory of an event, prosthetic memories are personal, inflected by our other experiences and place in the world.

An experience I had while doing research at the museum illustrates the power of this experiential mode of historiography to produce prosthetic memories and new kinds of knowledge. On my last day there, I was moving rather quickly through the exhibit, taking some last-minute notes. I was in a cognitive mode, or at least I thought I was. As I came through the boxcar I saw a guard, visibly distraught, speaking into his walkie-talkie. I slowed down enough to hear him reporting that there was smoke emanating from a vent above us. I looked up and sure enough, smoke was wafting into the room. My immediate response was not—as it would have been in almost any other public building—that there was a fire. Instead I wondered whether we were being gassed. This experience shows rather dramatically how the museum's transgression of the traditional exhibiting strategies—its blurring of the boundary between the spectator and the exhibit—might actually make vulnerable the bodies of its spectators. In other words, the absolutely irrational—that visitors could be gassed in the Holocaust Museum—seemed, if only for an instant, possible. It was momentarily conceivable that something as sinister as systematic genocide could take place through normal government channels, that even a public institution might not be safe. Of course, that was what happened during the Holocaust. To be in a position in which something absolutely unthinkable becomes, if only for an instant, imaginable might be as close as one could come to understanding the logic of the Holocaust. Obviously, what I experienced was a rare occurrence, although perhaps less so after the events of September 11, 2001. However, it speaks to the power of the museum to place its visitors' bodies in a threatening context.

To disparage and dismiss objects and sites of cultural production that complement the cognitive with the mimetic or the affective, that participate in the logic of the corporeal experiential as mere theme parks is to overlook what

might well be a transformation in the present modalities of knowledge. To experience—if only for a flash—the way it feels to have one’s personhood or agency stripped away may be the grounds for understanding or having empathy for something totally other and cognitively unimaginable. Perhaps the experience of vulnerability is itself a form of knowledge about the Holocaust. Perhaps the museum functions as a frame within which we might experience a kind of sensually as well as intellectually immersed knowledge, a form of knowledge predicated on an experiential relationship to history. Certain aspects of the Holocaust are brought into relief by having our agency threatened. For the event to become meaningful enough to retain as part of our intellectual and emotional archive—the archive on which our future actions might be based—it must be significant on a cognitive level and palpable in an individual, affective way.

Gourevitch stated that he “could not make out the value of going through this.” His concern could be rephrased as “to what ends does this mimesis—this experientially produced knowledge—work?” Perhaps part of the museum’s value is its ability to teach ethical thinking. The museum, after all, attempts to speak to people of different religions, races, ethnicities, and nations: it is by no means a museum solely for Jews. Its extensive outreach programs underscore the museum’s mission of generating relationships with groups who might not seem naturally to be the “heirs” of the Holocaust. Since the inauguration of the Bringing the Lessons Home program in 1994, more than thirty thousand middle- and high-school students in the Washington, D.C., area, the majority of whom are African American, have visited the museum. More than three hundred of those students chose to enroll in twelve weeks of after-school classes on Holocaust history, after which they were invited to lead tours through the museum’s permanent exhibition.⁸⁷ There is now a cadre of African American students who serve the museum in this capacity and a handful of others who have been hired to help administer and teach in the outreach programs. After visiting the museum and studying Holocaust history, these students, who have no “natural” claim to a Holocaust past, clearly feel a connection to it. They come to see the ramifications of the Holocaust for their own, very different, lives. As this program demonstrates, the history of the Holocaust can teach ethical thinking, generate empathy, and thereby reconfigure a person’s worldview.

The museum’s progressive potential derives from the prosthetic memories that visitors acquire as result of their mimetic experience. As Susan Buck-Morss notes, for Benjamin the radical potential of mimesis is political; in mimesis “cognitive reception is no longer contemplative but *tied to action*.”⁸⁸ Aside from honoring the promise that the survivors made to their families and friends entering the gas chambers, there may be other reasons for inhabiting—

or being inhabited by—these memories: as Benjamin suggests, they may inspire action. Representing the Holocaust is about making the Holocaust concrete and thinkable. It is about finding ways to “burn in” memories so that they might become meaningful locally, so that they can become the grounds for political engagement in the present and the future. Maybe there is not a literal truth to the Holocaust in America—it is not, like slavery and the slaughter of the native Americans, atrocities that happened here—and yet there certainly is a larger truth, and the power of its imagery to attract such widespread national attention demonstrates that. If an iconography of the Holocaust is emerging, an iconography that is all about objects and the disembodied and the dispossessed, about things that have been deprived of their ability to speak, then it might help us find ways to address our local traumas, our national *differend*. If the mass media and mass cultural sites and events can become transferential arenas in which we learn to wear the memories of such traumas so that they become imaginable, thinkable, and speakable to us, then these mass cultural technologies of memory deserve our serious consideration.

EPILOGUE



TOWARD A RADICAL PRACTICE OF MEMORY

MEMORY IS NOT COMMONLY IMAGINED as a site of possibility for progressive politics. More often, memory, particularly in the form of nostalgia, is condemned for its solipsistic nature, for its tendency to draw people into the past instead of the present. This is the case, for example, in Kathryn Bigelow's 1995 film *Strange Days*, in which the use of memory—usually another person's memory—is figured as a form of addiction. The Los Angeles of the film is a chaotic, multi-cultural world of violence, epitomized by the assassination of Jeriko One, an important African American rapper and a vocal opponent of white oppression. Rather than confront this bleak reality, people buy “wire trips,” which are memories that can be played back again and again. As the “dealer” Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes) explains to a prospective buyer, a wire trip “is life. It is a piece of someone's life.” On a wire trip, “You are there—doing it, seeing it, hearing it, feeling it.” A wire trip is analogized to a drug trip, and as with drugs, these “playbacks” of memories are addictive, a form of escape from the present. Available on the black market, these memories circulate as commodities; consuming them threatens to prevent people from acting in the present, from being productive, politically engaged members of society. Indulging in memory “playback” has the antisocial, apolitical effect of atomizing people. This retreat from the “real world”—especially in the face of urban crisis—makes impossible any form of politics, any strategy for bringing about social change. To be a socially responsible person, Nero must “kick the habit,” turn away from the private prison world of memory in order to live productively in the public realm.

In an age of commodification, the fear that memory is often an obstacle to, rather than a catalyst for, politics and collective action is more than just the conceit of a science fiction film. In their important book *The Presence of the Past*, historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen analyze the role of the past in the lives of Americans. Through an ambitious survey project aimed at examining qualitatively and quantitatively¹ how contemporary Americans feel about history, they try to counter the critique, lodged by some in the cultural elite, that Americans are ignorant of history.² Beyond that they hope to discover how Americans make sense of and use the past. If Americans know nothing about history, Rosenzweig and Thelen ask, what accounts for the growing public interest in museums, festivals, historic reenactments, and other “practices” of history? Rosenzweig and Thelen discovered that the past does indeed play a powerful role in the lives of Americans: many respondents to their survey described turning to past personal or familial experiences to deal with problems in the present. Many people felt most engaged with history at museums and historical sites where they felt able to “experience history” in some kind of unmediated way. When faced with authentic objects from the past, many felt “transport[ed] . . . straight back to the times when history was being made.”³ Consequently, these Americans were more inspired by experiential modes of history than by rote school learning or even history books and tended to view history as an “active and collaborative venture.”⁴ School-based history, according to those surveyed, was dry, and the material was predigested and disconnected from the vital objects, documents, and events of the past.

In his final thoughts on the survey, Rosenzweig notes that for the Americans surveyed, “popular history-making” is alive and well. But while Americans’ active engagement with history is encouraging, Rosenzweig remains concerned that the particular ways in which many Americans remember the past has an atomizing effect. Because many of the Americans that Rosenzweig and Thelen surveyed emphasized firsthand experience and the familial, they tended to construct a more privatized version of the past, which as a negative consequence might “reinforce rather than break down barriers between people, resist rather than promote change.”⁵ For example, a seventy-one-year-old woman reflecting on World War II did not focus on the “patriotic narrative of the nation-state” but instead remembered that “she learned self reliance from the war: ‘My husband was in that. It was a lot of heart ache with both of us being young and him being away in his early twenties. I learned how to be independent and how to take care of myself.’”⁶ Of course Rosenzweig’s point is not that we should be swallowing patriotic narratives. Rather, it is that these more personal memories are less useful to forging alliances among different kinds of people, the kinds of alliances necessary to politics. In other

words, Rosenzweig echoes the concern of *Strange Days* that private memory can be an obstacle to collective politics.

This critique is legitimate, but not, I believe, insurmountable. This book has argued that it is possible to imagine a relationship to memory that forges, rather than impedes, the formation of progressive political alliances and solidarities. Rosenzweig and Thelen's findings underscore the point that many people have a desire to be part of history and to personalize the past. Prosthetic memories, memories made possible by commodification and the technologies of mass culture, enable people to feel just such an engaged and experiential relationship to the past.⁷ The kinds of memories to which we have "intimate," even experiential, access now, are no longer limited to memories of events though which we actually lived. Prosthetic memories are indeed "personal" memories because they derive from engaged and experientially oriented encounters with technologies of memory. But because prosthetic memories are not natural, not the possession of a particular family or ethnic group, they evoke a more public past, a past that is not at all privatized. On the contrary, the pasts that prosthetic memory open up are available to persons of all races and ethnicities. Rather than atomizing people, prosthetic memories open up collective horizons of experience and pave the way for unexpected political alliances. This epilogue shows the ways in which capitalist commodification and mass culture have created the potential for a progressive, even a radical, politics of memory. It explores the potential of prosthetic memory to change a person's consciousness, changes that ultimately might enable ethical thinking and the formation of previously unimagined political alliances.

MEMORIES AS COMMODITIES

As products of a capitalist system, the images and narratives of the past made available by mass culture are themselves commodities, and for that reason many intellectuals are quick to condemn them. Marx first led us down this path with his classic description of commodity fetishism.⁸ Not only are commodities alienating, abstracting human labor and obscuring the class relationship among workers, but they also are available for ideological manipulation. Critiques of commodification often argue that commodities are imbued with certain ideologies that are then consumed by the purchaser along with the product itself.⁹ But as many of Marx's followers have noted, commodities as agents of social meaning are much less predictable than once assumed. Developing this idea, Arjun Appadurai explores how commodities can diverge from specified paths and, in so doing, acquire new meanings. To understand this process, he points out, "means looking at consumption (and

the demand that makes it possible) as a focus not only for sending social messages . . . but for receiving them as well.”¹⁰ Furthermore, he argues that how a commodity is packaged in the process of production—including which ideologies it comes wrapped in—does not have a predictably determining effect on how that product is consumed.¹¹ Culture and politics mediate the act of consumption and are instrumental in the “reception” of the commodity.¹²

Scholars in a variety of fields have long challenged the notion of the passive consumer. According to Daniel Miller, the reception or use of a commodity

is the start of a long and complex process, by which the consumer works upon the object purchased and recontextualizes it, until it is often no longer recognizable as having any relation to the world of the abstract and becomes its very negation, something which could be neither bought nor given.¹³

Miller believes that the possibilities for social change are “immanent within the consumption activities of mass populations today”¹⁴ and that the radical changes that have taken place in society, many having to do with mass cultural technologies and enabled by commodification, are “providing the basis for new kinds of equality, knowledge and social development which were previously unimaginable.”¹⁵ To discuss agency in the capitalist system he explores the example of the “inedible” (according to adult tastes) candy marketed to children, such as blue gummy worms: “Here, a social group which is in a relation of inferiority to the dominant adult world is able to objectify a perspective which asserts clearly the potential opposition of its interests to that world. This suggests a degree of autonomy in cultural production on behalf of dominated groups.”¹⁶ We could easily view this example as an instance of the tentacle-like structure of capitalism, expanding and co-opting seemingly alternative styles and tastes. But at some basic level, politics has to be about the right to choose, and choice exists at two separate points in the trajectory of consumption: the first of course, is “voting with the pocketbook,” or choosing what to buy—like children who choose to eat blue gummy worms. While this particular choice sounds banal or, worse, prescribed, it nevertheless subverts aesthetic hierarchy by flying in the face of what adult taste dictates as acceptable or proper. The possibility for choice reappears at a second moment in the act of consumption as well, when the consumer chooses how to use the product.

While the kinds of commodities disseminated by the mass media are different in form from more traditional commodities, they require a similar kind of analysis. Moviegoers exercise agency at the same two moments of choice. They first decide what to see and then how to interpret that experience in the context

of their world. Stuart Hall, John Fiske, and others describe the acts of “meaning making” that occur during the reception of mass-mediated commodities. Hall, in particular, emphasizes that there are always several possible readings of a given cultural text; some reinforce the existing power structures and status quo while other, more oppositional ones, challenge it.¹⁷ Even in the complicated case of mass cultural commodities, reception is conditioned by and mediated through the cultural, political, and social worlds of the consumers.

We can detect the same two moments of choice, or meaning making, in memory acquisition. The first—analogue to the moment of choosing what to buy—is not altogether dissimilar to the one confronting the protagonist in *Total Recall*. In the film, Quade is indeed a consumer, buying memories of a trip to Mars. Later he learns that even before he opted for the “memory trip,” he already had implanted memories and that Quade, the identity constructed on the basis of those memories, is “inauthentic.” Quade, then, must choose which identity to inhabit. Like all choices made available by capitalism, his choice is not limitless. In his case, it is confined to two options: Quade or Hauser. However, the mere fact that both identities, both sets of memories, are in some ways made possible by capitalism does not mean that they are equally reactionary or equally progressive. One of the identities, the Quade identity, is motivated by a social conscience, for it is Quade who wants to save the oppressed underclass on Mars. My point here, like Miller’s point about the blue gummy worms, is that capitalism provides choices, some of which can challenge the status quo and subvert social norms and hierarchies. In this first moment of choice a person decides what movie to see or, more literally, what memories to buy. Of course, even this choice is not a completely free one: he must choose from the set of already existing films, a repertoire of narratives produced within the prevailing hegemony.

The second moment of choice, the moment of using or applying the commodity, occurs in memory acquisition as well. For instance, a visitor to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, sitting in the glass room and listening to people recount their experiences of daily life in Auschwitz, begins to call up images in her mind or to imagine herself in the narrator’s position. As she listens, aurally “consuming” the stories, she is engaging in the process of meaning making, which both connects the narrative to her world and transmits images from that world to the survivor’s narrative. Because the visitor is actively engaged in meaning making, as opposed to passively absorbing “information,” because the voice speaks to her personally, she leaves with a more intimate connection to, and perhaps a greater capacity to understand, the traumatic historical event through which she did not live and to which she might not otherwise feel connected. It is not that the visitor forgets who she is but that the experience alters her perceptions. Also, these memories might

prove useful in her own life, informing her own ethical and political thinking. Furthermore, a person's appropriation of a commodity might be partial and strategic, choosing some elements while rejecting others. An example of this "strategic remembering" would be the seventy-one-year-old woman who remembered learning self-reliance from World War II over and above the more hegemonic patriotic narratives.

It is important here to stress that commodities, and in particular those that come in narrativized form—as many mass cultural commodities do—are open to only a finite number of interpretations. However, as Hall suggests, there always are interpretations that reinforce the status quo and others that challenge it. While these commodities might be multivocal, they are not infinitely vocal; the commodity itself imposes certain constraints on its interpretation, as does the social world, or system of signs, in which it is decoded. The mass cultural texts in which I am most interested are those that try to make possible progressive or counterhegemonic readings. But because of the multivocality of commodities, even those cannot predetermine the meanings ultimately negotiated by people.

Nevertheless, Hall's argument has important consequences for those constructing a progressive politics in the present. Perhaps in a perfect world there would be some alternative to commodity culture, but for those living at the start of the new millennium, a commodity-saturated capitalism is indeed the prevailing system. And this system does create opportunities for progressive politics. Prosthetic memory, the historically specific form of memory that I have described in this book, is made possible by the advanced state of capitalism and its ensuing commodity culture. Therefore, instead of simply disparaging commodity culture, as many cultural critics have done, I believe that the only way to bring about social change and transformation is by working within the capitalist system.¹⁸ There is not some pristine world of politics apart from the world of consumption. Instead, we must use these commodified memories toward politically progressive ends.

Because these mass cultural commodities, these images and narratives about the past, are mediated through the cultural, political, and social worlds of people, they have the capacity to affect a person's subjectivity. The radical potential of prosthetic memory derives from the fact that the subjectivities they produce are not "natural," not based on some count of authenticity. Furthermore, prosthetic memories cannot be owned exclusively. In *Blade Runner*, when Rachel learns that she is a Replicant, that her memories have been implanted, she also learns that she shares her memories with Tyrell's niece, that those memories are no more "hers" than they are the niece's. What matters is not the source of the memories but how they are invoked and used.

Even though these memories are made possible by a commodity culture and circulate in the same way that commodities do, they can never be owned as private property, and as a result they occupy a unique position within and yet implicitly opposed to capitalism. In fact, we could even say that they function as what Etienne Balibar has called “universal property.” In reflecting on property, Balibar wonders “whether the principle of total possession brings with it intrinsic limits, that is, whether there are ‘objects’ that, by nature, cannot be appropriated, or more precisely that can be appropriated but not totally possessed.”¹⁹ I argue that mass cultural commodities, and in particular the prosthetic memories that I am describing, challenge the concept of private property. In the twenty-first century, this challenge is lodged even more strongly by the Internet, with its capacity to freely disseminate texts, information, music, and so forth.²⁰ As memories that no one person can own, that people can only share with others and whose meanings can never be completely stabilized, prosthetic memories themselves become a challenge to the “total possession” of private property, by subverting the capitalist logic that produced them.

ETHICS, EMPATHY, AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

In the introduction to his book *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, David Harvey begins with a compelling anecdote: While attending a conference on globalization at Duke University, a conference he describes as tense, fraught with antagonisms, and imbued with the cynicism of the left, he discovered another conference held at the same hotel. The other group was a gathering of preachers attending the Southeastern Regional Meeting of Evangelical Pentecostal Preachers. While his own group was rife with “angst and competitive tension,” the preachers were filled with “incredible enthusiasm, joy and vigor.”²¹ Of course, Harvey is no champion of the specific fundamentalist, “foundational beliefs” held by the Pentecostals. Rather, he was pointing to the very real challenges—perhaps even the impossibility—of developing a politics when consensus takes the form of skepticism, as it does in many current leftist intellectual circles. The constellation of events at the hotel in Durham led Harvey to the idea that “the task of critical analysis is not, surely, to prove the impossibility of foundational beliefs (or truths), but to find a more plausible and adequate basis for the foundational beliefs that make interpretation and political action meaningful, creative, possible.”²² He sets out to identify workable foundational beliefs for the left and thereby to locate the spaces of agency and social change.

In contrast to many contemporary theorists, Harvey opposes “the idea that ‘spaces on the margin’ are *the* sites of radical openness and revolutionary

possibility.”²³ Instead of focusing on the margin as the site for revolution, Harvey turns to the center, arguing that to achieve social transformation, the center needs to be reappropriated: “Revolutionary activity entails a re-mapping of social relations and agents who no longer acknowledge that place to which they were formerly assigned.”²⁴ For Harvey, social change is possible only within the prevailing socioeconomic system and needs to be achieved through the work of resignification, not through some loophole of escape. Furthermore, for political action to occur, there needs to be some position of sufficient permanence “between the vulgar essentialist view and the potentially infinite fluidity of multiple shifting identifications.”²⁵ Prosthetic memories are useful here in that they enable the formation of grounded identities, but ones that are nevertheless nonessentialist. By this I mean that as memories are taken on and experienced sensuously, they become grounded in a person’s body. Because these memories are not necessarily his “biological heritage”—consider, for example, the African American students “remembering” the Holocaust at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.—these memories feel real and might motivate action but are in no way natural or essentialist.

I share Harvey’s belief in the necessity of a ground for political action, as well as his sense of how oppositional positions might emerge. In the case of prosthetic memories, politics as well as identities become grounded in individual bodies. As he ponders strategies for forming alliances, he posits, “To discover the basis of similarity (rather than to presume sameness) is to uncover the basis for alliance formation between seemingly disparate groups.”²⁶ Because prosthetic memories permit people to have a personal connection to an event they did not live through, to see through another’s eyes, as in the case of *Rosewood*, they have the capacity to make possible just the sort of alliances that Harvey imagines. How, for example, might a white person come to understand the experience of racial oppression? As Balibar notes,

Racism is a genuine *mode of thought*, that is to say, a mode of connecting not only words with objects, but more profoundly words with images, in order to create concepts. Therefore, to overcome racism in one’s personal experience or in collective experience is not simply a matter of abandoning prejudices or opening one’s eyes to reality with the possible help of science; it has to do with changing one’s mode of thinking, something much more difficult.²⁷

The question then becomes how—through what strategies or rituals—can we “change one’s mode of thinking”? In the film *Rosewood*, the little white boy, Emmett, the son of a virulent racist, learns to see the world “as if”

through black eyes; the film itself positions the spectator to do the same. The experience for a white person of seeing the world through black eyes, even if the experience is as short as the length of the film, might be powerful enough to serve as the first step in the long hard process of “changing one’s mode of thinking.” The filmic technology is quite powerful here as it works with the narrative to insert the viewer into the story in a different place from where she might “naturally” choose to position herself. Such an experience might also be a prerequisite to the formation of political alliances across the “color line” in the contemporary United States.

Part of the political potential of prosthetic memory is its ability to enable ethical thinking. Thinking ethically means thinking beyond the immediacy of one’s own wants and desires. Prosthetic memory teaches ethical thinking by fostering empathy. As I described previously, the experience of empathy has more potential and is more politically useful and progressive than its cousin sympathy. Sympathy, a feeling that arises out of simple identification, often takes the form of wallowing in someone else’s pain. Although it presumes sameness between the sympathizer and her object, whether or not there is actually a “sameness” between them, an actual shared experience, matters little, for in the act of sympathizing, one projects one’s own feelings onto another. This act can be imperializing and colonizing, taking over, rather than making space for, the other person’s feelings.²⁸

In the act of sympathizing, one not only reinforces the victimhood of the other but also establishes hierarchies. Sympathy implies condescension, for the sympathizer looks down at her object and in the process reaffirms her superiority. The experience of empathy, by contrast, is not purely emotional but also contains a cognitive component. It therefore takes work and thought to achieve. It is characterized by feeling for, while feeling different from, the object; a visitor to the Holocaust Museum is positioned to learn about and experience the pain and brutality of the Holocaust but never to forget completely her difference from the victims. The connection one feels when one empathizes with another is more than a feeling of emotional connection; it is a feeling of cognitive, intellectual connection, an intellectual coming-to-terms with another person’s circumstances.

There is another difference between sympathy and empathy. *Empathy*, unlike *sympathy*, is a relatively recent word, first appearing in English in 1904, three centuries after *sympathy* entered the language.²⁹ Even in its first usages, empathy, unlike sympathy, had a cognitive component. But the date of empathy’s emergence seems significant in itself. Empathy emerged at the turn of the century, coinciding with the explosion of mass culture and the birth of the cinema. In 1904, the cinema was almost a decade old, and the nickelodeon was on the verge of taking New York by storm. Mass culture, and the technology

of the cinema in particular, brought people into contact with foreign places, peoples, ideals, and the like. It was a technology first and foremost for bringing people into physical proximity to all that was different, distant, and unknown. It was, at the start, a technology for making visible what was alien and other. But it also was a technology that could generate empathy.

Max Scheler's *The Nature of Sympathy*, which appeared less than a decade later, in 1913, explores the contours of sympathy, empathy, and, what he regards most highly of all, "fellow-feeling."³⁰ Fellow-feeling, a sense of collective responsibility, is to Scheler a position of high moral value, which he defines in opposition to "emotional infection" and "emotional reproduction." For example, when confronted with a drowning man, if one is stricken with fear for oneself, if one feels a twinge of pain, this is emotional infection and has a lower moral value than the "purer and truer" fellow-feeling.³¹ Scheler rejects the mere reproduction of feelings on the grounds that "it entails that our fellow-feeling must necessarily be confined to processes and incidents in other people's experience such as *we have already met with ourselves*."³² Scheler proposes instead that a person can easily participate in someone else's joy or sorrow without having lived through or "sampled that particular quality of experience before."³³ Fellow-feeling is possible, according to Scheler, because man has an "*innate* capacity for comprehending the feelings of others, even though he may never on any occasion have encountered such feelings (or their ingredients) in himself."³⁴

While Scheler's essentialist (and universalizing) argument today seems antiquated, his sense that one person can commiserate with another without having shared that person's particular experience opens up the possibility of bridging perceived differences in order to form political alliances. But in offering an instinctual basis for fellow-feeling, Scheler neglected to consider the new forms of mass culture emerging at the time he wrote, in particular the cinema. It is not, as he suggests, that humans are intrinsically able to comprehend "the feelings of others" but that through new technologies of memory—particularly those that are experiential and involve the senses—humans are increasingly able to experience empathy.³⁵ In other words, it is technology, not instinct, that has the ability to foster the understanding necessary to make connections across differences. Benjamin and Kracauer, of course, discussed the progressive potential of technologies of mass culture to bring changes in consciousness. Here I want to stress their capacity to generate empathy. Technologies like as the cinema enhance the experience of empathy, which in turn enables people to see and act differently.

In contrast to Scheler's belief that a fundamental sameness among all humans enables them to comprehend the feelings of others, the work of philosopher Emmanuel Levinas proposes an ethical relation to the "other" in the face

of enormous and insurmountable difference. Unlike many other Western philosophers, Levinas is not in search of totality or unity. In his 1979 preface to *Time and the Other*, Levinas begins to describe a complex and noncolonizing relationship to the other, one that is “neither an ecstasis, where the Same is absorbed in the other [*Autre*], nor a knowledge, where the other [*Autre*] belongs to the Same.”³⁶ As this initial description suggests, Levinas critiques knowledge as inherently imperialistic, arguing that “through knowledge, whether one wants it or not, the object is absorbed by the subject and duality disappears,” resulting in the “disappearance of the other.”³⁷ Levinas is instead working toward a “pluralism that does not merge into unity.”³⁸ This idea of a relationship with the other, that is all the time aware of insurmountable differences, is particularly useful in forming political alliances. In fact, in an extreme version of this point he theorizes the other in terms of death.³⁹ This metaphor allows him to emphasize the alterity and unknowability of the other: “The relation with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other’s place; we recognize the other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery.”⁴⁰

Levinas’s ethical call, which he grounds in the “face of the other,” needs to be read in its historical context. The text from which I am quoting was delivered as a series of lectures in 1946/47, in the immediate aftermath of the atrocities of World War II. The “‘phenomenology’ of sociality” that Levinas mentions, which arises out of proximity and yet is premised on alterity,⁴¹ might be read as the beginning of a post-Holocaust ethics of personhood. This phenomenology, he writes, “commands me not to remain indifferent to this death, to not let the Other die alone, that is, to answer for the life of the other person.”⁴² For Levinas, the face of the other demands a “responsibility with which one is never done.”⁴³ The power of this phenomenology derives from its simultaneous recognition of differences among people and its sense of commitment and responsibility toward them even in the face of such differences. According to such principles, alliances among people would not be premised on essential sameness but would start instead from an assumption of difference.

Levinas’s insistence on acknowledging rather than obscuring difference is important. David Harvey echoes this position by positing the need for similarity rather than sameness. So too does Art Spiegelman in *Maus*. In choosing to depict himself, his father, the Germans, and the Poles as animals, Spiegelman is doing more than simply commenting on the construction of stereotypes. By portraying his characters as animals, Spiegelman is insisting that on some level those characters and the story they are telling are totally other. Being moved by *Maus* is not solely the result of identification. That the characters speak to the

reader and yet remain on some level alien, unassimilable, is what makes his text so progressive. Even while drawing the reader in, *Maus* insists that there is a fundamental difference between reader and story. We can be moved by it and yet know all the while that it is alien. In its most progressive versions, prosthetic memory creates a feeling for, while feeling different from, the other, thereby permitting ethical thinking. Prosthetic memory makes possible a grounded, nonessentialist, nonidentity politics based on a recognition of difference and achieved through “strategic remembering.” The “remembering” of particularly traumatic events of the collective past inevitably affects both the identity of the individual person and his or her previously accepted worldview. The “strategic remembering” uniquely enabled by the technologies of mass culture has the power, then, to support a sense of collective social responsibility.

What I hope to have demonstrated here is that prosthetic memory, a new form of memory largely made possible by the commodification of mass culture, has the ability to bring about new vision and social change. As Rosenzweig and Thelen show, Americans are fascinated by, and in constant dialogue with, the past. However, for many of them, the past to which they refer and to which they are most committed is a privatized past, a past made meaningful to them because they, their family, or their ethnic group was in some measure part of it. Prosthetic memory, by contrast, can make people feel themselves a part of larger histories, of narratives that go beyond the confines of the nuclear family and that transcend the heretofore insurmountable barriers of race and ethnicity. By bringing people into experiential and meaningful contact with a past through which neither they nor their families actually lived, prosthetic memory opens the door for a new relation to the past, a strategic form of remembering that has ramifications for the politics of the present.

The memories that were implanted in Quade in *Total Recall* give him access to the political plight of the Mutants on Mars. Because he “remembers” the tyranny of the capitalist Cohagen, Quade feels that he has an ethical mission: he must remain Quade and turn on the mines that produce oxygen and, in so doing, free the Mutants from the deprivation and ghettoization that Cohagen inflicted on them. Memories, even those that circulate as commodities, have the capacity to inspire characters like Quade to act politically, to make progressive and socially responsible decisions. Furthermore, the film, which is very much about the culture industry and the commodification of all aspects of daily life, illustrates the way that commodified memories do not necessarily reproduce capitalist and exploitative practices. Just because these memories are themselves a product of capitalism does not mean that they will be used to further capital’s logic. In fact, as *Total Recall* demonstrates and as Appadurai, Hall, and Miller imply, commodified memories may be used in unexpected ways that actively challenge the exploitative drive of capitalism.

I began this epilogue with *Strange Days* because of its clear representation of the atomizing effect of technological memory sharing. The idea that mass cultural technologies are inherently atomizing and apolitical has reemerged in the debates surrounding the latest of such technologies, the Internet. As was the case with the cinema and television, the Internet has generated a great deal of discussion, both among academics and in the popular press, about its potential and dangers. In addition to celebrating its ability to grant easy access to vast amounts of information, champions of the Internet, such as Howard Rheingold, have tended to celebrate its capacity to create “virtual communities,” which he defines as “social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace.”⁴⁴ Critical of those claims, its detractors have challenged the idea that a virtual community looks anything like a “real” community.⁴⁵ Kevin Robins, for one, believes that cyberspace is often imagined as a utopia divorced from the social, material, and political landscapes of the “real world.”⁴⁶ For Robins, communities in cyberspace are fundamentally antipolitical,⁴⁷ and he is by no means alone in this position. Cyberspace, Michele Willson contends, sanctions “a withdrawal from the active political sphere of real space.”⁴⁸ But she is equally concerned with the ethical ramifications of “virtual communities,” claiming that such disembodied interactions, the immaterial and transient connections that people share in virtual communities, render an ethical or political concern for the Other “impotent and unrealizable.”⁴⁹

These critiques, like the one lodged by *Strange Days*, point to anxieties about the ways in which new technologies might atomize, rather than politicize, people. Like the memory playbacks to which Lenny Nero is addicted, cyberchats seem to limit a person’s ability to engage in meaningful politics. But while virtual communities may differ in quality and depth from the “real thing,” we should hesitate before embracing an unqualified celebration of real communities. At least in the United States, patterns of racial and economic segregation have meant that most communities that exist in real space are distressingly homogeneous and exclusive.

The Internet, like the cinema, has the capacity to speak to a wide range of people from radically different backgrounds and to support the formation of alliances across those differences. Cyberspace offers an arena in which large-scale strategic alliances can be mobilized quickly and efficiently for political activism. For example, the Internet has coordinated the wave of antiglobalization protests and public demonstrations that began with the disruption of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank meetings in Seattle in December 1999. Similarly, it was a central instrument for coordinating antiwar protests and activism before the second Gulf War in March 2003.⁵⁰

In both cases, a diverse public came together not to form a permanent community but to combine forces on the basis of shared political interests. In the case of the antiglobalization protests, by helping farmers, union workers, college students, and environmentalists, among others, to recognize in previously unimaginable ways their shared political concerns, the Internet enabled these disparate groups to take collective action. Similarly, the antiwar coalition formed by MoveOn.com is an international alliance of people from different economic and racial, ethnic and religious, backgrounds. In other words, by focusing on communities instead of networks as the grounds for politics in cyberspace, the critics might have overlooked other kinds of associations and alliances in cyberspace where people actively engage in real-world politics.

I am not an apologist for the Internet, particularly given its marriage to unbridled capitalism. But like capitalism itself, the Internet has made available texts and archives that once were accessible only to the privileged few. Many critics, for example, overlook the great strides that have been taken to make the Internet a legitimate tool in both the dissemination and archiving of history, and the work of some historians has shown the Internet to be educational as well as commercial.⁵¹ Furthermore, the Internet democratizes the production of prosthetic memories. Unlike the production of a film, which requires a great deal of capital as well as institutional support, Web sites can be created by a much larger segment of the population. Furthermore, as an increasingly experiential medium, the Internet can create prosthetic memories. Because of its fundamental interactivity, it engages the individual body. As its mode of address becomes more complex both visually and aurally, the Internet might be another mass cultural mechanism capable of generating empathy and ethical politics. While I share Willson's concern about the ethical ramifications of virtual communities, I am more sanguine about the possibilities of the Internet for disseminating prosthetic memories that might lead to grassroots political activism and consciousness raising.

I do not mean for even a moment to suggest that there is anything *inherently* positive or progressive about this new form of memory. Chapter 2 demonstrates as much by revealing how "new immigrants" in the early decades of the twentieth century often sacrificed their ethnic and national pasts by choosing memories and genealogies that allowed them to experience themselves as white Americans. What I am emphasizing instead is the unique power of prosthetic memory to affect people both intellectually and emotionally, in ways that might ultimately change the way they think and how they act in the world. My call, therefore, is for intellectuals and educators to take seriously both the desire of people to be part of history and the potential of prosthetic memory to bring about social justice.

The mass cultural technologies that enable the production and dissemination of prosthetic memories are powerful. So rather than disdain and turn their backs on these technologies, educators must recognize their power and political potential. As surfing the Internet reveals, hate groups and Holocaust deniers have chosen to embrace these powerful technologies, and so should progressively minded persons. In this book I have considered three cases in which prosthetic memories, with varying degrees of success, enabled people to take on traumatic memories of past events, memories that would eventually have significant ramifications for their identities and political positions. The acquisition of memories and the disenfranchisement and loss of privilege that such an experience often necessitates can affect one's politics and one's understanding of who one's allies might be.

I am describing here a utopian dream, a dream in which ethics and politics converge. My dream is the antithesis of the nightmare in *Strange Day*, and it is a dream that has not yet materialized. As we embark on this new century, we inevitably will find that capitalism continues to permeate all aspects of life and culture, but we must resist the temptation to throw up our arms in resignation. Commodification does not necessarily mean privatization. There will be new technologies and the further development of old ones—museums, the cinema, the Internet—and they will continue to disseminate stories and images about the past. The utopian dream that I have located in prosthetic memory is a call to take seriously the mass cultural technologies that foster the acquisition of prosthetic memories, as they might well serve as the ground on which to construct new political alliances, based not on blood, family or heredity but on collective social responsibility.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION: MEMORY, MODERNITY, MASS CULTURE

1. Lary May, *Screening out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 237. For a good cultural history of the development of the American cinema, see Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). See also Tino Balio, ed., *The American Film Industry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).
2. On U.S. immigration in the first decades of the twentieth century, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of America Nativism, 1860–1925* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992); and John Bodnar, *The Transplanted* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). For a more thorough consideration of this “immigration crisis,” see chapter 2.
3. I have chosen to limit this investigation to the United States in part because the mass culture “industry” developed here first. While the technology of film developed simultaneously in France and in the United States, the rapid development of the Hollywood studio system meant that Hollywood film quickly became the hegemonic model. We need only consider the fascination Disney inspired in European intellectuals like Walter Benjamin to get a sense of how pervasive and dominant *American* mass culture was. Furthermore, as many scholars have argued, America’s relatively short history has made explorations of the mechanisms of American collective memory both fruitful and important. See, for example, Michael Kammen’s encyclopedic account of American memory: *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

4. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8.
5. *Ibid.*, 164–66.
6. *Ibid.*, 169, italics in original.
7. *Ibid.*, 156.
8. Jacques Le Goff argued that as a religion, Christianity stresses memory. See Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 68.
9. Veronica Sekules, *Medieval Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.
10. *Ibid.*, 3.
11. Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 396.
12. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 22.
13. On this point, see also André Vauchez, “The Cathedral,” in *Realms of Memory (Les Lieux de mémoire)*, vol. 2, ed. Pierre Nora and trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 37–68. Vauchez points out that local church dignitaries were often incorporated into the artworks: “In Strasbourg and Bourges, for example, magnificent stained glass panels portray all the bishops of each city from the founder to the last prelate to die before the cycle was completed. Such representations created an air of invincible truth and concrete proximity” (43). The effect of these representations was to turn “the past into an eternal present. The cathedral was in every way an illustration of the Christian conception of time: time not as mere flux but as preparation, within each individual as well as in the world, for the coming reign of God. Accordingly, cathedral facades almost always depicted the creation of Adam and Eve together with the Last Judgment, the beginning and the end” (43).
14. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 23.
15. John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 67.
16. *Ibid.*, 53.
17. In their collection of essays, Matthew Campbell, Jacqueline M. Labbe, and Sally Shuttleworth contend that “memory itself can be seen as a defining sign of the period 1789–1914, bookended by war, revolution, change, and loss.” See Matthew Campbell, Jacqueline M. Labbe, and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., *Memory and Memorials, 1789–1914* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.
18. Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory (Les Lieux de mémoire)*, vol. 1, ed. Pierre Nora and trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xv. While many of *les lieux* considered in this work predate the national era, their importance resides in the ways they are remembered and “used” in the construction of the nation and national feeling.
19. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24–25.
20. Andreas Huyssen, “Monumental Seduction,” in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, N.H.:

- University Press of New England, 1999), 200. Huyssen in turn cites Denis Hollier on this point.
21. Huyssen, “Monumental Seduction,” 199.
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. *Ibid.*, 200.
 24. *Ibid.*
 25. *Ibid.*, 192.
 26. Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory*, 33. The World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 was a particularly clear case of this. Nominally intended to commemorate Columbus’s fateful voyage, the fair was more an opportunity to showcase American industrial power. To house the exhibits of American manufacturing, electricity, horticulture, and so forth, the fair’s designers commissioned enormous monumental buildings. However, instead of illustrating innovations in contemporary architecture, the fair’s designers opted for buildings in the European beaux arts style.
 27. Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory*, 12.
 28. Laura Otis, *Organic Memory: History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 2.
 29. *Ibid.*, 93.
 30. *Ibid.*, 4.
 31. See, for example, Eviatar Zerubavel, “Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past,” *Qualitative Sociology* 19, no. 3 (1996): 283–99; and Barry Schwartz, “Collective Memory and History: How Abraham Lincoln Became a Symbol of Racial Equality,” *Sociological Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1997): 908–27.
 32. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 182.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 38. According to Halbwachs, “individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory, since each impression and each fact, even if it apparently concerns a particular person exclusively, leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over—to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu. One cannot in fact think about the events of one’s past without discoursing upon them” (53).
 35. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.
 36. *Ibid.*, 176.
 37. While I am intentionally borrowing Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities,” the analogy goes only so far. The imagined communities that Anderson describes were made possible by print capitalism, an earlier form of mass culture. But the mass circulation of newspapers, as Anderson explains, had the effect of producing geographically bounded units—nations—in part because as printed matter, newspapers were available and accessible only to those who could read and shared the same language. But the cinema, for example, speaks across language and class barriers. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

38. Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 57.
39. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 16. On the ramifications of nineteenth-century industrialization for traditional forms of memory, see also Richard Terdiman, "Deconstructing Memory: On Representing the Past and Theorizing Culture in France Since the Revolution," *Diacritics* (Winter 1985): 13–36.
40. See, for example, James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). In Grossman's words, "The Great Migration . . . drew upon black southerners who looked to urban life and the industrial economy for the social and economic foundation of full citizenship and its prerequisites" (19).
41. On the centrality of movement and "travel" in the contemporary world, see James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).
42. Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," *Diaspora* 1 no. 1 (spring 1991): 14.
43. Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin write, "We want to propose a privileging of Diaspora, a dissociation of ethnicities and political hegemonies as the only social structure that even begins to make possible a maintenance of cultural identity in a world grown thoroughly and inextricably interdependent. . . . Assimilating the lesson of Diaspora, namely that peoples and lands are not naturally and organically connected, could help prevent bloodshed such as that occurring in Eastern Europe today" (723). See Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (summer 1993): 693–725. Also see Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart), 222–37.
44. Appadurai convincingly argues that in this new economy, the old center-periphery model for cultural dissemination no longer obtains. Instead he proposes a model based on ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas, and ideoscapas, which more accurately reflect the present overlapping and disjunctive global order. These scapes become the building blocks of "imagined worlds": "multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (296–97). See Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (1990): 295–310. Appadurai elaborates on this scheme in his book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
45. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 264.
46. Anne Friedberg writes, "Rather than proclaiming a single distinct moment of rupture—when the modern ended and the postmodern began—I suggest a gradual and indistinct epistemological tear along the fabric of modernity." See Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 2.

47. Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 22.
48. Cecil B. DeMille, *The Autobiography of Cecil B. DeMille*, ed. Donald Hayne (New York: Garland, 1985), 268, 170. In the case of *Joan the Woman*, an explicitly historical film, DeMille's "historical flashback" is indebted to D. W. Griffith, who in his film *Intolerance*, released the year before, juxtaposed stories of contemporary life with those of parallel moments in the history of the world. As Miriam Hansen has noted, in *Intolerance*, the young female characters who appear at each historical moment seem like typological incarnations of one another, other personae that are drawn on to inform the subjectivity of the character in the present. See Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 163–72.
49. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, nos. 3–4 (fall 1986): 63–64.
50. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction," 65–66. According to Gunning, the variety bills did not list the titles of films but instead advertised "Biograph," "Vitascope," and so forth.
51. Anne Friedberg points to the diorama as an important precursor to the cinema. The viewing device called the *diorama* was designed in 1822 by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, the man who went on to invent the photographic process named daguerrotypy. Spectators looked at a scene composed of objects set against a backdrop, and moments later the platform rotated, exposing a new dioramic opening. As Friedberg observed, unlike the unmoving spectators at the center of the building, the changing views were "mobilized," as the diorama itself was designed to alter the spectator's view. See Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, 25–26. The cinema is in fact the culmination of a long list of visual and spectatorial devices of the nineteenth century that also took as their goal the fantastical transporting of people from one temporal and spatial register to another. See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).
52. Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction," 64. On the actualities and their similarity to newspapers, see Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 10.
53. Charles Musser, "The Travel Genre in 1903–4: Moving Towards Fictional Narrative," in *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 123. According to Musser, "Approximately half of the 'features' listed in Vitagraph's 1903 catalogue of headline attractions are travel subjects" (123).
54. As Musser points out, in June 1903 the French filmmaker Méliès, "the leading producer of story films in the world, opened a New York City office." The Edison company had to follow the market and move toward story-oriented films. See Musser, "The Travel Genre," 124.
55. Edison Manufacturing Company, *Edison Films* (Orange, N.J.: Edison Manufacturing Company, October 1903), 16, cited in Musser, "The Travel Genre," 124.

56. That these all are films that attempt to convey history, or at least historical consciousness, suggests that the “historical film” is the genre that most clearly has grown out of the genealogy I have outlined.
57. Musser, “The Travel Genre,” 128.
58. Each of the following films is either of, or taken from inside of, a moving train: *Arrivée d'un train en gare de Villefranche-sur-Saône* (Louis Lumière, 1895), *The Black Diamond Express* (Edison, 1896), *Leaving Jerusalem by Railway* (Louis Lumière, 1896), *Niagara Falls* (Louis Lumière, 1896), *Pack Train on Chilkoot Pass* (Edison, 1898), *Panoramic View of the White Pass Railroad* (Edison, 1901), *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (Edison, 1902), *The Great Train Robbery* (Edison, 1903), *What Happened in the Tunnel* (Edison, 1903), *Railroad Smash-Up* (Edison, 1904), *Interior NY. Subway, 14th Street to 42nd Street* (Mutoscope and Biograph, 1905), and *The Hold-up of the Rocky Mountain Express* (Mutoscope and Biograph, 1906).
59. Lynne Kirby, “Male Hysteria and Early Cinema,” *Camera Obscura* 17 (May 1988): 115. Kirby draws on Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s work *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Anselm Hollo (New York: Urizen Books, 1979).
60. Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment,” *Art and Text* 34 (spring 1989): 32.
61. Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment,” 31. Gunning attempts to demystify that first cinematic event, arguing that the first spectator’s experience was not mere “child-like belief” but an awareness of and delight in the illusion offered up by the filmic image (43). Though plausible on an intellectual level, his argument sacrifices the rich possibilities the myth affords: that spectators experienced a sensuous, bodily reaction to the images before them.
62. The most important work on the ideological positioning of the spectator, which is called “apparatus theory,” emerged in the 1970s under the influence of Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser. What these accounts share is a belief that the spectator is a crucial part of the cinematic apparatus. The cinema, in other words, is an apparatus for positioning the spectator as a subject. Apparatus theory attempts to locate ideology not just in the content of a particular film but also systematically, in the way that cinema as an institution reproduces ideology. See, for example, Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” *Film Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (winter 1974/75): 39–47; Jean-Louis Baudry, “The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema,” in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 299–318; Jean-Louis Comolli, “Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field” [parts 3 and 4], in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 421–43; Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977); Nick Browne, “The Spectator in the Text,” *Film Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (winter 1975/76): 26–38; and Laura Mulvey, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, *Screen* 16, no. 3 (autumn 1975): 6–18. For a thorough and synthetic account of both the history and the theories of specta-

torship, see Judith Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Later work on spectatorship has tended to focus on its bodily component. Steven Shaviro offers a clear articulation of the shifting emphasis in film theory from a psychoanalytic paradigm to one attempting to account for the power of the image to engage the spectator's body. See Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Also see Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (summer 1991): 3–13; and Murray Smith, "Altered States: Character and Emotional Response in the Cinema," *Cinema Journal* 33, no. 4 (summer 1994): 34–56.

63. See Kaja Silverman, "Suture" [excerpts], in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 219–35.
64. See Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 60–89. She contends that the Hollywood myth of ethnically segregated audiences might have had some truth in the nickelodeon days, but not after that.
65. Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 3, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), 303.
66. Freud, "Screen Memories," 318. Freud returns to screen memories twice. See Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, trans. Alan Tyson (New York: Norton, 1965). In 1901, Freud expanded the definition to include situations in which screen memories are displaced forward so that the pivotal event occurs before the screen and in situations in which the screen memory and the event are contemporaneous (44). Again, he emphasized the chronological fluidity of memory. Screen memories are thus substitutive formations: "displacements along a superficial association" (45).
67. Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, 47.
68. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 137.
69. *Ibid.*, 139.
70. Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (spring 1993): 423.
71. *Ibid.*, 424.
72. *Ibid.*, 436.
73. *Ibid.*, 425–26.
74. *Ibid.*, 426.
75. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 236.
76. *Ibid.*
77. *Ibid.*
78. Walter Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 158.
79. *Ibid.*, 186.
80. Benjamin's last work—which he did not live to see finished—was his attempt to overcome the opposition between the *mémoire involontaire* and the *mémoire*

volontaire, and it is not at all incidental that it takes as its object of inquiry the material objects of mass culture. This work on the Paris arcades (*Passagen-Werk*)—conceived in some measure as a history of the nineteenth century and of modernity at large—was an attempt to constellate place, history, and individual subjectivity. The arcades offer an account of memory in which memory is lodged not in the individual body as either *mémoire volontaire* or *mémoire involontaire* but in configurations of material objects. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999). Also see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 217. Her book offers a thoughtful and comprehensive discussion of Benjamin's Arcades project.

81. For an explanation of this phenomenon, see Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of *Memory* in Historical Discourse," *Representations* 69 (winter 2000): 127–50.
82. Michael Schudson, *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 51. While prosthetic memories cannot be owned by a person, they nevertheless can be worn in an intimate fashion.
83. Amos Funkenstein makes a similar point, suggesting that although all remembering occurs in social contexts, we must never forget that it is individual people who do the remembering. See Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
84. Pierre Nora pointed to "this uprooting of memory, its eradication by the conquering force of history." See Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 2. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi argues that "memory and modern historiography stand, by their very nature, in radically different relations to the past." In his account, historiography becomes necessary at the moment when structures of collective memory begin to disintegrate. Furthermore, historiography does not bring to the surface the same events, practices, texts, and the like that collective memory kept alive. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 94.
85. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5, italics in original.
86. George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 17.
87. *Ibid.*, 12.
88. *Ibid.*, 213.
89. Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
90. Klein, "On the Emergence of *Memory* in Historical Discourse," 142.
91. Lipsitz makes a similar point, suggesting that "electronic mass media" enable people from different backgrounds to share a sense of ancestry with people they

have never seen and to take on memories to which they have no natural link. See Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, 5.

CHAPTER 1: PROSTHETIC MEMORY

1. Frances Yates points out in her classic work *The Art of Memory* that mnemonic devices were of crucial importance to the ancient Greeks and Romans because they lacked the memory prompts that came with later technological developments in printing. For the Greeks and the Romans, and subsequently the Europeans who eventually became the heirs to this highly elaborate system for remembering, memory was a learned skill, a practice developed in order to disseminate knowledge through oratory. Yates notes that the clearest description of the process was given by Quintilian, which she elaborates as follows: “In order to form a series of places in memory, he says, a building is to be remembered, as spacious and varied a one as possible, the forecourt, the living room, bedrooms, and parlours, not omitting states and other ornaments with which the rooms are decorated. The images by which the speech is to be remembered . . . are then placed in imagination on the places which have been memorized in the building. . . . We have to think of the ancient orator as moving in imagination through his memory building *whilst* he is making his speech, drawing from the memorized places the images he has placed on them.” See Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 3, italics in original.
2. Herbert Bronstein, ed., *The Passover Haggadah*, prepared by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 56.
3. Walter Benn Michaels, “Race into Culture: A Critical Genealogy of Cultural Identity,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (summer 1992): 680.
4. This is not at all intended as a celebration or even an “apology” for capitalism. Certainly, the mere fact of commodification does not translate into equal access to all. It was the case, though, that in cinema’s early days the audiences were made up largely of the working and immigrant classes, of those with limited means. See Garth S. Jowett, “The First Motion Pictures Audiences,” in *Film Before Griffith*, ed. John L. Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 196–206.
5. Lary May, *Screening out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 43–45.
6. *Ibid.*, 43.
7. In addition to the treatises written by Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, the *Saturday Evening Post* had many articles in the 1920s and 1930s on the “biology of race.” See Madison Grant, “The Racial Transformation of America,” *North American Review* 219 (March 1924): 343–52. For further discussion of this topic, see chapter 2.
8. In *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson argue that “the formulation of the classical mode began quite early, in the period around 1909–11, and that by 1917, the system was complete in its

basic narrative and stylistic premises” (157). In early cinema, spectators were equivalent to audience members in a theater and therefore were placed at a distance from the events depicted, not in the scene, but looking in. But with the establishment of what is now referred to as classical Hollywood cinema, the spectator’s position in relation to the images changed rather dramatically. As Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson describe, the classical cinema “assumes that the narration places a spectator within or on the edge of narrative space . . . a variety of stylistic devices combined to extend that space out toward the plane of the camera, as well as to move the spectator’s viewpoint periodically into the narrative space” (158). See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

In her work on spectatorship in early American film, Miriam Hansen contends that the filmic conventions and practices now referred to as classical Hollywood cinema were used in part to position the spectator ideologically. Hansen explains that the new “spectator” for classical cinema was not an actual viewer but an ideological construct: “With the elaboration of a type of narration that seems to anticipate—or strategically frustrate—the viewer’s desire with every shot, the spectator became part of the film as product. . . . As reception was thus increasingly standardized, the moviegoer was effectively invited to assume the position of this ideal spectator created by the film, leaving behind . . . an awareness of his or her physical self in the theater space, of an everyday existence troubled by social, sexual, and economic discrepancies” (23). See Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

9. Susan Buck-Morss draws out this connection in her etymology of “aesthetic.” See her “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered,” *new formations* 20 (summer 1993): 123–43.
10. For a discussion of the sensuous, or bodily component of reading, see D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
11. Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (New York: Dover, 1970), 95.
12. Herbert Blumer, *Movies and Conduct* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), xi.
13. *Ibid.*, 67.
14. For instance, see Jean-Louis Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” *Film Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (winter 1974/75): 39–47; and Jean-Louis Comolli, “Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth,” in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 421–43.
15. Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, 74.
16. *Ibid.*, 84.
17. *Ibid.*, 94.
18. *Ibid.*, 116.
19. *Ibid.*, 63.

20. W. W. Charters, *Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 25.
21. Miriam Hansen, "'With Skin and Hair': Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseilles 1940," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (spring 1993), 458, italics in original.
22. Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3.
23. *Ibid.*, 4–5, italics in original.
24. See Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 24, italics in original. Shaviro offers a clear articulation of a shifting emphasis in film theory from a psychoanalytic paradigm to one that attempts to account for the power of the image to engage the spectator's body. Also see Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (summer 1991): 3–13; and Murray Smith, "Altered States: Character and Emotional Response in the Cinema," *Cinema Journal* 33, no. 4 (summer 1994): 34–56.
25. Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, 24.
26. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).
27. *Ibid.*, 2.
28. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 21.
29. *Ibid.*, 19.
30. Walter Benjamin, writing in the 1930s, prophesied that the new technologies for reproduction would require a retooling of the human senses. See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 217–51.
31. See, for example, David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Hayden White, *The Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); and Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
32. As Néstor García Canclini put it, "We conceive of postmodernity not as a stage or tendency that replaces the modern world, but rather as a way of problematizing the equivocal links that the latter has formed with the traditions it tried to exclude or overcome in constituting itself." See Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 9. See also Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
33. See Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Also see David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001). Glassberg writes, "Considering the frequency of commemorative ceremonies and historical festivals, the output of historical films and novels, the

number of visitors to historic sites and museums, the intensity of campaigns to mark and preserve historic buildings . . . it appears that if Americans do not have a strong sense of history, they certainly spend a lot of their leisure time looking for one, in historical pursuits of one kind or another" (6).

34. See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 109–42. Also see Miriam Hansen, foreword to *Public Sphere and Experience*, by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenke Oskiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), ix–xli.
35. See Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–81. A cyborg world, she suggests, "might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanent partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (154).
36. The particular kind of difference here is important. The beggar is dismembered, has lost a hand. His particular ailment seems symbolic of his class position; he would be a worker, perhaps at a factory. The loss of his hand, the symbol of his capacity for labor, might well have been lost in an industrial accident, the result of an assembly line mishap. The lost hand conjures up the Taylorist and Fordist practices.
37. See, for example, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
38. This distinction between the human and the Replicant is in many regards the same as the one Baudrillard finds between the robot and the automaton. The automaton copies the human, like a "counterfeit," whereas the trying-to-be-human of the automaton has the effect of reinscribing their hierarchical relationship. The robot, by contrast, is a machine and thus achieves equivalence; furthermore, with the robot there is no presumption of an always detectable distinction between the two. See Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 92–94.
39. Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968). Page references are in the text.
40. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 313.
41. Giuliana Bruno, "Rumble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner*," *October* 41 (1987): 71.
42. Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (spring 1993): 430.
43. *Ibid.*, 429.
44. Kaja Silverman believes that the photographs do work to construct subjectivity for the Replicants. See Kaja Silverman, "Back to the Future," *Camera Obscura*, September 1991, 109–32.
45. Kracauer, "Photography," 435–36.
46. *Ibid.*, 436.

47. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *Collected Papers*, vol. 4, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 368–407. In his famous footnote, Freud describes the following scene: "I was sitting alone in my wagon-lit compartment when a more than usually violent jerk of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown and traveling cap came in. I assumed that he had been about to leave the washing-cabinet which divides the two compartments, and had taken the wrong direction and had come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass of the open door, I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance" (403).
48. We might use this complicated account of spectatorship to respond to those who argue that violent movies make violent individuals. The cinema is a powerful medium with the ability to affect the bodies and sensibilities of its spectators, and yet those subjectivities are not simply overwritten by the images on the screen; there is a transaction, or negotiation which takes place. Getting guns out of movies is not going to get guns out of homes.
49. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror-Stage," *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 2.
50. Martin J. Lee, *Consumer Culture Reborn: The Cultural Politics of Consumption* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 26.
51. See Lee, *Consumer Culture Reborn*, 175. See also Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).
52. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment As Mass Deception," in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1991), 120–67.
53. Jean Baudrillard, "Forget Baudrillard: An Interview with Sylvère Lotringer," in *Forget Foucault*, trans. Phil Beitchman, Lee Hildreth, and Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1987), 69.

CHAPTER 2: THE PROSTHETIC IMAGINATION

1. Quoted by Werner Sollors, in Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 89–91.
2. Cited in Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, 89–90.
3. See Fredrick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Norton, 1967).
4. Cecelia Tichi, *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature and Culture in Modernist America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 80.
5. See Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). Also see Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 15–55.
6. Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, 91.

7. See John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). Bodnar provides a nuanced account of the complexity of the immigrant experience, proposing that “if the entire experience is broken down into innumerable points of contact between various categories and beliefs, what emerges is a clearer portrait of the process of social change stimulated almost incessantly by the changing imperatives of the marketplace and the diverse responses of human beings themselves” (xx). See also Elizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Looking at workers in Chicago and their immigrant communities, Cohen creates a picture of the world and experience of these diverse laborers. Also see Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
8. In many of the most compelling accounts of how national identity is constructed, forgetting plays a crucial role. In his lecture at the Sorbonne on March 11, 1882, Ernest Renan declared, “Yet the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things.” See Ernest Renan, “What Is a Nation?” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 11. Benedict Anderson describes forgetting as institutionally driven, “a systematic historiographical campaign deployed by the state mainly through the state’s school system.” See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991), 201. Part of what constructing a national history entails is the forgetting of other histories, and this is usually considered the work of the state. I propose that the top-down model is not entirely adequate—or accurate—to describe the process by which national identities are articulated. As the immigration texts I consider reveal, this necessary type of forgetting actually takes place on an individual level.
9. “Classical Hollywood cinema” is the term used for the conventions and codes established by Hollywood at the end of the silent era. See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). Also see Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
10. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860–1925* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 265–66. See also John Higham, *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).
11. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 311. This legislation, together with the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, was the culmination of a series of exclusionary acts. The law of 1891 “laid a permanent administrative foundation for national control of immigration” by placing “immigration wholly under federal authority.” See Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 99. The Immigration Restriction League, which was established in Boston in the 1890s, became a major agitator for the immigrant literacy test originally proposed by Edward W. Bemis in 1887 and later taken up

- by Henry Cabot Lodge in 1891. Though ultimately defeated in Congress, the popularity of the literacy test reveals the mounting nativist sentiment.
12. As Higham noted, Johnson “wanted to put European immigration on a 2 percent quota computed from the 1890 census, thereby cutting the Italian quota from 42,000 to 4,000, the Polish from 31,000 to 6,000, the Greek from 3,000 to 100.” See Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 319.
 13. Loren Baritz, ed., *The Culture of the Twenties* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 94. Evans is referring here to the play *The Melting Pot*, by Israel Zangwell.
 14. Baritz, *The Culture of the Twenties*, 51, italics in original.
 15. *Ibid.*, italics in original.
 16. *Ibid.*, 65.
 17. I use “native American” here as it was used at the time, to denote those Americans—mostly of Anglo-Saxon descent—who defined themselves in opposition to the immigrants. The term did not, in other words, refer to the indigenous population of North America.
 18. More than 160 articles on immigration were listed in the *Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* for those years.
 19. In her book *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), Jan Cohn argues that the *Saturday Evening Post* “became not only the preeminent medium of its day but finally itself an artifact of American mass culture” (6). The *Post*, she explains, “was designed to reach audiences ignored by ‘highbrow’ magazines like *Harper’s* and the *Atlantic*” (9). It was therefore an instrument for producing the typical American, for “to read the *Post* was to become American, to participate in the American experience” (10). “If the *Post* did not command political power, it did continue to influence the ways in which Americans thought, or at least preferred to think, about themselves and their country,” offering as evidence “the fact that week after week, year after year, and decade after decade, millions and millions of Americans bought and read it” (15).
 20. Lothrop Stoddard, “The New Realism of Science,” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 6, 1924, 121.
 21. Kenneth L. Roberts, “Lest We Forget,” *Saturday Evening Post*, April 28, 1923, 160.
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. Lothrop Stoddard, “Lo, the Poor American,” *Saturday Evening Post*, January 6, 1923, 58. Lothrop Stoddard was quite vocal on this subject. In addition to his writing for the *Saturday Evening Post*, his infamous work *The Passing of the Great Race, or, the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Scribner, 1923) was first published in the United States.
 24. Roberts, “Lest We Forget,” 1.
 25. Roberts, “Lest We Forget,” 160. Other relevant articles in the *Saturday Evening Post* are (no author given), “America Last,” March 4, 1922, 24; T. Ellis, “Americans on Guard,” August 25, 1923, 23; (no author given), “Do We Want Coolie Labor?” February 24, 1923, 24; E. Greenwood, “Ellis Island Sob Stories,” July 7,

- 1923, 25; Henry H. Curran, "Fewer and Better, or None," April 26, 1924, 8–9; J. J. Davis, "Jail, or a Passport," December 1, 1923, 23; Kenneth L. Roberts, "Shutting the Sea Gates," January 28, 1922, 11; and J. H. Collins, "Who Will Do Our Dirty Work Now?" September 6, 1924, 6.
26. Stoddard, "The New Realism of Science," 121.
27. As early as 1899, Thorstein Veblen theorized the development of the "leisure class" and the practice of "conspicuous consumption." See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994). In his collection of essays, Warren I. Susman identifies the 1920s and 1930s as the moment of a profound shift in the American experience, marking the emergence of the "culture of abundance." See Warren I. Susman, *Culture As History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).
28. Kenneth L. Roberts, "Slow Poison," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 2, 1924, 56, italics added. According to Edward Filene, "There is a limit, even in a country like this, to the capacity for *absorbing* foreign peoples." See Edward A. Filene, "Immigration, Progress and Prosperity," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 28, 1923, 8, italics added.
29. (No author given), "Our New Nordic Immigration Policy," *Literary Digest*, May 10, 1924, 13, italics added.
30. S. J. Holmes, "Immigration and the Future American," *The Independent*, March 17, 1923, 181, italics added.
31. On the racialization of immigrants, see Matthew F. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
32. One cannot responsibly refer to *Birth of a Nation* without mentioning its fundamental racism.
33. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 23.
34. *Ibid.*, 60.
35. I am drawing on the Althusserian concept of "interpellation." See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). For a discussion of cinematic interpellation vis-à-vis gender, see Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).
36. Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, 73.
37. *Ibid.*, 76.
38. Cited in Lary May, *Screening out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 60.
39. For further discussion of DeMille's use of the historical flashback, see my introduction. In his "historical flashbacks," a character's memories derive not from a childhood self but from a previously led life.
40. David Mayall, *Gypsy-Travelers in Nineteenth-Century Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 71, italics added. See also Katie Trumpener, "The Time of the Gypsies," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (summer 1992): 843–84.
41. Mayall, *Gypsy-Travelers in Nineteenth-Century Society*, 71.

42. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 309–10.
43. See Mayall, *Gypsy-Travelers in Nineteenth-Century Society*, 92; and Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 284.
44. Ian Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Karoma Publishers, 1987), 115.
45. Cecil B. DeMille, *The Autobiography of Cecil B. DeMille*, ed. Donald Hayne (New York: Garland, 1985), 3.
46. *Ibid.*, 7.
47. Sollors notes the freedom of the third generation to choose their grandparents: “If we are all third generation (at least as an ideal), we may have parents who, for all practical purposes, are more ethnic than we are; but we can transcend them by invoking real or imaginary grandparents or founding fathers. The achieving of an identity in the world of Lincoln and Washington thus proceeds along the same lines as the invoking of a focal figure of national or ethnic authenticity. . . . We may thus create an independent self in the name of America.” See Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, 230.
48. The question of agency here is complicated and not unlike questions raised by Judith Butler’s notion of gender performativity. In her *Bodies That Matter*, she explains that she is not positing a “a willful and instrumental subject” because “such a theory would restore a figure of choosing subject—humanist—at the center of a project whose emphasis on construction seems to be quite opposed to such a notion” (x). Rather, Butler recognizes that the “assumption” of a sex “is *compelled* by a regulatory apparatus of heterosexuality” such that the “‘assumption’ of sex is constrained from the start” (12, italics in original). If there is any agency—and she believes that there is—it might be found “in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law. . . . The forming, crafting, bearing, circulation, signification of that sexed body will not be a set of actions performed in compliance with the law; on the contrary, they will be a set of actions mobilized by the law, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects” (12). In other words, agency does not emerge in a vacuum; it is possible only through a redeployment of the norms of the dominant regulatory system. See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Likewise, the pasts from which one might “choose” are not infinite but circumscribed by the historical specificities of one’s life.
49. Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, 151.
50. For an excellent account of the racialization of European immigrants, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). Jacobson and others contend that in the face of racial prejudice, many immigrants embraced whiteness and tried to define themselves against the even more degraded African Americans. See David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991). On the topic of “how the Irish became white,” see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995). On the topic of how Jews became white, see Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood*

Melting Pot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); and Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks*.

51. Lauren Berlant, "National Brands / National Bodies: *Imitation of Life*," in *Comparative American Identities*, ed. Hortense J. Spillers (New York: Routledge, 1991), III.
52. Berlant, "National Brands / National Bodies," III–12. My account of the kind of prosthetic imagining in which immigrants engaged is greatly indebted to this work by Berlant.
53. Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 364. Page references are in the text.
54. Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 291.
55. William James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 43, italics added.
56. James breaks "me" into its constituents: the material me, the social me, and the spiritual me. See James, *Psychology*, 44.
57. James, *Psychology*, 72.
58. *Ibid.*, 68, italics added.
59. George Santayana, "Materialism and Idealism in American Life" (1912), in *Character and Opinion in the United States* (New York: Scribner, 1924), 167.
60. *Ibid.*, 168.
61. Susan Mizruchi, "Fiction and the Science of Society," in *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. Emory Elliot (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 190.
62. *Ibid.*
63. Mizruchi, "Fiction and the Science of Society," 191. See also Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
64. Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 115.
65. See Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975). As Bercovitch points out, "Biographically, the New Englander and the Israelites were correlative types of Christ; historically, the struggles of the New England saints at that time, in this place—the deeds Christ was now performing through them in America—were chronicled before they happened, in the figures and types of the ancient story" (36). The Puritans, he asserts, were different from other colonists in that "they conceived of the American paradise as a fulfillment of scripture prophecy" (137).
66. Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, 137.
67. The main typological assumption was that "Christ, the 'anti-type,' stood at the center of history, casting His shadow forward to the end of time as well as backward across the Old Testament." Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, 36. See also Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).
68. Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, 56.

69. See Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).
70. Ian Hacking takes up the issue of statistical persons. See Ian Hacking, "Making up People," in *Reconstructing Individualism*, ed. Thomas C. Heller et al. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986), 222–36.
71. Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines*, 55.
72. Michael Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 384.
73. Irving Howe, *The World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 250.
74. *Ibid.*, 254–55.
75. Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep* (New York: Avon Books, 1962), 10. Page references are in the text.
76. Kenneth Warren argues that for the Diasporic subject, the grounds for recognition have less to do with essential ties between people, like skin color, than with shared historical specificities, like class position and culture. See Kenneth Warren, "Appeals for (Mis)recognition: Theorizing the Diaspora," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 392–406.
77. David's memories are both inherited and performed. As Michael M. J. Fischer points out, ethnicity is a "recognition of something about one's essential being [that] seems to stem from outside one's immediate consciousness and control, and yet requires an effort of self-definition" (195–96). See Michael M. J. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 194–233.
78. Again, I do not mean to suggest that any of these people are able to "choose their past" from an infinite array of possibilities. They are, however, able to forget. David Schearl, in other words, appropriates a particular version of the past—a version that was available to him because it was within his own conscripted archive of possibility—and, in so doing, rejects or "forgets" another.
79. Cornel West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, ed. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), 19–36.
80. *Ibid.*, 34.
81. *Ibid.*, 36.
82. *Ibid.*, 31.

CHAPTER 3: REMEMBERING SLAVERY

1. This museum is the new home of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, which originally opened in 1965.

2. See Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
3. See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
4. William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 303. Page references are in the text.
5. Don Merrick Liles wrote about the homoerotic configurations of this novel, which he feels have been undertheorized. See his "William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*: An Exegesis of the Homoerotic Configurations in the Novel," in *Literary Visions of Homosexuality*, ed. Stuart Kellogg (New York: Haworth Press, 1983), 99–111.
6. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 12.
7. See Sigmund Freud, "Family Romances," in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989), 297–300.
8. On the children of the Holocaust, see Deborah Dworkin, *Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991).
9. Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1963), 101.
10. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 5.
11. *Ibid.*, 7.
12. *Ibid.*, 5.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 6.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 5, italics added.
17. See, for example, Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Random House, 1974); John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); and Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1980).
18. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, II, 14–15.
19. For a relevant discussion of Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, see Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition"; Shirley Samuels, "The Identity of Slavery"; and Lynn Wardley, "Relic, Fetish, Femma: The Aesthetics of Sentiment in the Work of Stowe," all in *The Culture of Sentiment*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
20. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Penguin, 1981), 44. Page references are in the text.
21. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin; Presenting the Original Facts and Documents upon Which the Story Is Founded* (Manchester, N.H.: Ayer, 1987), 265.

22. See Sigmund Freud, "Infantile Sexuality," in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 39–72. "It is noticeable that writers who concern themselves with explaining the characteristics and reactions of the adult have devoted much more attention to the primeval period which is comprised in the life of the individual's ancestors—have, that is, ascribed much more influence to heredity—than to the other primeval period, which falls within the lifetime of the individual himself—that is, to childhood" (39).
23. Freud, "Infantile Sexuality," 57.
24. *Ibid.*, 50.
25. *Ibid.*, 60.
26. *Ibid.*, 63.
27. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 48.
28. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), xv, italics in original.
29. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 263. On historicizing childhood, see Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Knopf, 1962). Ariès traces, mostly through art, the gradual emergence of the child as such. In medieval art, for example, the child was rendered as a miniature adult. It was not until the seventeenth-century, he argues, that the sentimentalized version of childhood emerged, which coincided with the romantic valorization of childhood. In the eighteenth century the family began to seal itself off from the world. In the "modern family" the child emerges as a site of potential for the future in which the rest of the family can invest. "All the energy of the group is expended on helping the children to rise in the world, individually and without any collective ambition: the children rather than the family" (404). Also see Bernard Wisly, *The Child and the Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968). Wisly describes the adult investment in childhood as it manifests itself in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. "In the world after 1880, in which many adult writers sensed a decline of 'principles' and the open use of any means to secure an end, the child loyal to high ideals also served as a center of sanity and as a rebuke to corrupt adults. Often the child had near magical powers to do what adults had failed to do or to put right what adults had bungled" (171). See also Leslie Fiedler, "Adolescence and Maturity in the American Novel," in *An End to Innocence: Essays on Culture and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 191–210.
30. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 46.
31. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 264.
32. Bill Brown, "American Childhood and Stephen Crane's Toys," *American Literary History* 7, no. 3 (fall 1995): 443–76. In regard to narrative accounts of children's relationship to their toys, Brown asserts that "the economy of play and consumer economy do not mirror one another—they simply merge. Where

- childhood does not represent an economy but resides within the existing economy, the child produced by psychology and the boy's book disappears" (463).
33. Brown, "American Childhood and Stephen Crane's Toys," 469.
 34. Lauren Berlant, "The Theory of Infantile Citizenship," *Public Culture* 5, no. 3 (spring 1993): 395–410.
 35. *Ibid.*, 399.
 36. *Ibid.*, 405.
 37. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (New York: Plume, 1987). Page references are in the text.
 38. Robert Stepto, "Intimate Things in Place: A Conversation with Toni Morrison," (1977) in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. Danille Taylor-Guthrie (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1994), 11–12.
 39. As his journey reveals, genealogy is characterized not by continuities but by fissures and disjunctures. Michel Foucault emphasizes that genealogy is not about biology or heredity in the scientific sense, nor is it a way of isolating origins. His genealogy attempts "to expose a body totally imprinted by history" (148). See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *language, counter-memory, practice* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139–64.
 40. Lauren Berlant described this moment as one in which "Milkman is unbelievably stimulated by the project of decoding and inhabiting the allegory, which he gradually discovers to be about *him*, his *patria*, the history of his *body* and about the possibility that families do not hyperstabilize identity . . . but precisely shift the terms of identity around constantly, forcing the name and the knowledge it organizes always to migrate and to become unfamiliar" (143). See Lauren Berlant, "'68, or Something," *Critical Inquiry* 21 (autumn 1994): 124–55. Susan Willis wrote, "The end point of Milkman's journey is the starting point of his race's history in this country: slavery. The confrontation with the reality of slavery, coming at the end of Milkman's penetration into the historical process, is liberational because slavery is not portrayed as the origin of history and culture. Instead, the novel opens out to Africa, the source, and takes flight on the wings of Milkman's great-grandfather, the original Solomon" (271–72). I would have to disagree with Willis, because where the novel ends is not Africa but America and not with life but with the death of both Pilate and Milkman. The epiphany for Milkman comes not at the end—not in Africa—but in his own moment of interpellation. See Susan Willis, "Eruptions of Funk: Historicizing Toni Morrison," in *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 263–83. Also see Kimberly W. Benston, "Re-Weaving the 'Ulysses Scene': Enchantment, Post-Oedipal Identity, and the Buried Text of Blackness in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*," in *Comparative American Identities*, ed. Hortense J. Spillers (New York: Routledge, 1991), 87–109. Benston argues, among other things, that this Ulysses story exposes "the father's law of identity [as] an illusion of finality" (105).
 41. Sethe is quite literally marked by slavery, as her back is a tangle of scars—her "chokecherry tree."

42. Many have written on the ghosts in *Beloved* and on *Beloved* as the instantiation of Freud's concept of the "uncanny." See Rebecca Ferguson, "History, Memory and Language in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," in *Feminist Criticism: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Sellers (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 109–27; Linda Krumholz, "The Ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *African American Review* 26, no. 3 (1992): 395–408; and Carol E. Schmudde, "The Haunting of 124," *African American Review* 26, no. 3 (1992): 409–15.
43. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Signet Books, 1991), 62, 63. Page references are in the text.
44. Many have written about Sethe as a figure for the historian and about the ways that "history" emerges in the narrative. See Mae G. Henderson, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Re-Membering the Body As Historical Text," in *Comparative American Identities*, ed. Hortense J. Spillers (New York: Routledge, 1991), 62–86; Emily Miller Budick, "Absence, Loss, and the Space of History in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *Arizona Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (summer 1992): 117–38; and Sally Keenan, "'Four Hundred Years of Silence': Myth, History and Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," in *Recasting the World: Writing After Colonialism*, ed. Jonathan White (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 45–81.
45. Michel de Certeau writes, "The occasion [for memory] is taken advantage of, not created. It is furnished by the conjuncture, that is, by external circumstances." See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 86–87.
46. Stepto, "Intimate Things in Place," 11.
47. Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Woman's Film* (New York: New Press, 1992), 80. Page references are in the text.
48. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 236.
49. Like Nana Peazant, Paul Gilroy insists on the "unashamedly hybrid character" of black Atlantic cultures, urging us to resist "the idea that an untouched, pristine Africentricity resides inside." See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 99, 101.
50. Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 9. Page references are in the text.
51. Barbara Omolade, "Hearts of Darkness," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow and Christine Stansell (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 354. As Omolade observes, "To him [the master] she was a fragmented commodity whose feelings and choices were rarely considered: her head and her heart were separated from her back and her hands and divided from her womb and vagina. Her back and muscles were pressed into field labor where she was forced to work with men and like men. Her hands were demanded to nurse and nurture the white man and his family as domestic servant whether she was technically enslaved or legally free. Her vagina, used for his sexual pleasure, was the gateway to the womb, which was his place of capital investment—the

- capital investment being the sex act and the resulting child, the accumulated surplus, worth money on the slave market" (354).
52. Charles Ruas, "Toni Morrison" (1981), in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. Danille Taylor-Guthrie (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1994), 109.
 53. Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory," in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. William Zinsser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 121.
 54. Ruas, "Toni Morrison," 96.
 55. Michael Kirkhorn, "A Saga of Slavery That Made the Actors Weep," *New York Times*, June 27, 1976, B1.
 56. Thomas Lask, "Success of Search for Roots' Leaves Alex Haley Surprised," *New York Times*, November 23, 1976, 40.
 57. Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Corroborating Evidence," *New York Times*, October 14, 1976, 35.
 58. Barbara Gamarekian, "Interest by Blacks in Genealogy Is Gaining," *New York Times*, October 11, 1976, 16.
 59. Ibid.
 60. Maya Angelou, "Haley Shows Us the Truth of Our Conjoined Histories," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977, B27.
 61. Manthia Diawara, Arjun Appadurai, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Lauren Berlant, "Editorial Comment: On Thinking the Black Public Sphere," *Public Culture* 7 (1994): xi.
 62. Thomas A. Johnson, "'Roots' Has Widespread and Inspiring Influence," *New York Times*, March 19, 1977, 46. See also Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Invention of Africa," in *In My Father's House* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3–27.
 63. Kirkhorn, "A Saga of Slavery," B25.
 64. Les Brown, "ABC Took a Gamble with 'Roots' and Is Hitting Paydirt," *New York Times*, January 28, 1977, B1.
 65. Ibid.
 66. Ibid.
 67. Les Brown, "'Roots' Success in South Seen As Sign of Change," *New York Times*, February 10, 1977, 18.
 68. In a point-of-view shot, the camera is placed at the position where the characters eyes would be, revealing what the character would see. This shot has the effect of heightening spectatorial identification.
 69. Charlayne Hunter-Gault, "'Roots' Getting a Grip on People Everywhere," *New York Times*, January 28, 1977, B5.
 70. Ibid.
 71. Thomas A. Johnson, "'Roots' Has Widespread and Inspiring Influence," *New York Times*, March 19, 1977, 46.
 72. Ibid.
 73. Ibid.
 74. While this technique was central to abolitionism in the nineteenth century, as seen, for example, in Harriet Beecher Stowe's antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's*

- Cabin*, it was only just being attempted on television in the 1970s. For a discussion of the airing of the Holocaust miniseries in Germany in the 1970s, which also tried to mobilize affect for political reasons, see chapter 4.
75. C. Gerald Fraser, "Blacks and Whites Found to Have Misapprehensions on Impact of 'Roots,'" *New York Times*, June 7, 1977, 71.
 76. (No author given), "Guilt and Pride Felt by Youths Viewing 'Roots,'" *New York Times*, February 20, 1977, 28.
 77. Ibid.
 78. Roger Wilkins, "The Black Ghosts of History," *New York Times*, February 2, 1977, 22.
 79. The controversy surrounding the facticity of *I, Rigoberta Menchu* is virtually the same as the one generated by *Roots*.
 80. Robert D. McFadden, "Some Points of 'Roots' Questioned; Haley Stands by Book As a Symbol," *New York Times*, April 10, 1977, 1.
 81. Ibid.
 82. See Israel Shenker, "Some Historians Dismiss Report of Factual Errors in 'Roots,'" *New York Times*, April 10, 1977, 29. Among the historians who came to Haley's defense was David Brion Davis, whom Shenker quoted as saying, "One could take almost any history and go over it with a fine-tooth comb and come up with errors or points that are debatable. To be scholarly or pedantic, you can make all kinds of qualifications" (29).
 83. Wilkins, "The Black Ghosts of History," 22.
 84. Morrison, "The Site of Memory," 119.
 85. Ibid.
 86. Maya Angelou, "Haley Shows Us the Truth," B27.
 87. (No author given), "Poll Shows Interest in Origins Growing," *New York Times*, April 10, 1977, 29. Statistically, "the national average, which was similar for blacks and whites . . . indicated that 29% of the public are 'very interested' in tracing family history, 40% are 'somewhat interested,' 28% have no such inclination and 3% have no opinion on the question."
 88. Edward Said similarly noted the absence of institutional commemoration in the United States for the formative experience of slavery, leading him to suggest that it has not yet been incorporated into the nationalist understanding of the past. He wrongly suggested that no such memorial exists for African Americans anywhere in the country. See Edward W. Said, "Guerre d'Irak: Un autre façon de voir les États Unis," *Le Monde diplomatique* 50, no. 588 (2003): 12.

CHAPTER 4: AMERICA, THE HOLOCAUST, AND THE MASS CULTURE OF MEMORY

1. Cited in Kenneth L. Woodward et al., "Facing up to the Holocaust," *Newsweek*, May 26, 1975, 72.
2. Jean-François Lyotard, "The *Différend*, the Referent, and the Proper Name," *Diacritics* 14, no. 3 (fall 1984): 4.

3. Lyotard, "The *Différend*, The Referent, and the Proper Name," 5.
4. While there has been much debate about the parameters and aesthetic constraints of Holocaust representation, Holocaust testimonies—the firsthand eyewitness accounts of survivors—have always held a privileged position. There have been many attempts to construct an archive of Holocaust testimonies. Perhaps the largest—the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies—was established at Yale University in 1982 and contains more than 1,400 recorded testimonies. Such testimonies—because they are on video—rely quite heavily on the survivors' bodies and on the story those bodies tell. Lawrence Langer has written extensively on the genres of Holocaust testimony and argues that unlike a fictional story with linearity and closure, the Holocaust testimony is riddled with gaps, fissures, ruptures, and digressions, making closure impossible. See Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991). Also see Geoffrey Hartman, "Public Memory and Its Discontents," *Raritan* 13, no. 4 (spring 1994): 24–40. Such testimonies are imagined as a bulwark against the tide of Holocaust deniers, and their value and importance should not be underrated. I would also like to point out that I am sympathetic to the project, in part because of the tribute they pay to both those who died and those who survived the atrocities of the Holocaust. More recently, Steven Spielberg compiled a video archive of survivors' testimonies and a film, *The Last Days*, which portrays the stories of five Hungarian Holocaust survivors.
5. The problem becomes even more apparent when we enter the age of digitalization, when any image can be constructed to look "authentic."
6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 61.
7. Lyotard, "The *Différend*," 7.
8. On the power of the photographic record, see Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Zelizer contends that photography was, and continues to be, crucial to the efforts to convey the atrocities of World War II and to construct a collective memory of the Holocaust. On the voyeuristic quality of Holocaust photography, see Andrea Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows: Memory, Photography and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).
9. Peter Novick tried to explain the explosion of Holocaust discourse in America in the 1990s, arguing that the Holocaust has become for secular American Jews a way of being Jewish. In America, he explained, Holocaust memory has become depoliticized and has been co-opted by both the left and the right, problematizing the idea that there are coherent lessons to be learned from remembering it. See Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).
10. In his work on the aftermath of the apocalypse, James Berger claims that the boom in Holocaust representation might be read as the "'third generation' of Holocaust representation" (67). Because the "third-generation" contact with survivors has been virtually lost, "third-generation" representation must take

- place “after the end of the possibility of testimony and witnessing, and this impossibility gives rise to the myriad and problematic forms that these representations have taken” (67–68). See James Berger, *After the End: Representations of the Post-Apocalypse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
11. The few articles published between 1945 and 1947 pertaining to the event were listed under “Internment Camps.” Germany was included with Borneo, China, Greece, Hong Kong, Japan, the Netherlands, and United States as the locales of such camps. Of the fifteen articles on German camps, the majority were published in Catholic periodicals and took as their subject incarcerated priests. The journal with the most articles was *Catholic World*. Its articles were J. McCawley, “Atrocities, World War II” (August 1945); J. M. Oesterreicher, “Christ in Buchenwald” (February 1947); and P. van Gestel, “Priests in Dachau” (September 1945).
 12. Myron Emanuel, “Back-Page Story,” *New Republic*, February 17, 1947, 12.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Ibid.
 15. Between 1945 and 1959, for example, the *Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* listed articles pertaining to what we now think of as “the Holocaust” under the heading “Internment Camps.” For 1959/60, under “Internment Camps,” the index instructs readers to “see World War II—Atrocities,” a taxonomy that lasted throughout the 1960s. In the 1970/71 index, however, the Holocaust became a specifically Jewish event, and readers were instructed to see “World War II—Jews.” In the 1970s, the “Holocaust” finally became an event unto itself.
 16. Woodward et al., “Facing up to the Holocaust,” 72.
 17. Ibid.
 18. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 15, italics in original.
 19. Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), 116. Page references are in the text.
 20. Much of the literary scholarship on the Holocaust is on this topic. Modes of representation have been a central topic ever since Theodor W. Adorno’s polemical assertion that there could be no poetry after Auschwitz. For an overview of the positions of prominent Holocaust historians and literary critiques, see Berel Lang, ed., *Writing and the Holocaust* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988). Also see Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). More recently, Ernst van Alphen examined the work of three artists—Charlotte Salomon, Christian Boltanski, and Armando—each of whom represents a different approach to artistic production after Auschwitz. See Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust in Contemporary Art, Literature & Theory* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).
 21. Geoffrey Hartman, “Darkness Visible,” in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 21. See also Hartman, “Public Memory and Its Discontents.”
 22. Art Spiegelman, *Maus II: A Survivor’s Tale: And Here My Troubles Began* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), 16. Page references are in the text.

23. Miles Orvell, "Writing Posthistorically: Crazy Kat, Maus and the Contemporary Fiction Cartoon," *American Literary History* 4, no. 1 (spring 1992): 119.
24. In his work on dreams, Freud argues that affect is more closely tied to "truth" than to narrative. While the original dream thoughts undergo distortion—condensation and displacement—the affect of the dream thoughts remains unaltered. See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 497–525.
25. What I call a *mimetics of absence* is not unlike what Andreas Huyssen calls "mimetic approximation." Unlike Huyssen, however, the form of mimesis I imagine is mediated through a relationship to objects. See Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
26. Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 154.
27. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," *language, counter-memory, practice* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 148.
28. *Ibid.*, 162.
29. Miriam Hansen, foreword to *Public Sphere and Experience*, by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge and trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenke Os-kiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), x.
30. In his comprehensive account of collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs explains the way in which memory in the nineteenth century was most commonly imagined as a collective social memory. Memory, like tradition, was handed down by means of social frameworks. The notion of a collective memory made possible a mechanism for the vertical transmission of memories across generations. As Halbwachs suggests in his *Collective Memory*, "The individual calls recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory. In other words, the various groups that compose society are capable at every moment of restructuring their past" (182). See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
31. See Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).
32. Hansen, foreword to *Public Sphere and Experience*, xi.
33. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment As Mass Deception," in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1991), 120–67.
34. For Negt and Kluge, experience (Erfahrung) "is seen as the matrix that mediates individual perception and social horizons of meaning." See Hansen, foreword to *Public Sphere and Experience*, xvii.
35. Eric L. Santer, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 28. For Santer, the cinema has the potential to be a site of "play, that symbolic space of ritual and aesthetic experience" (151).

36. This could be true of all popular movies, and yet *Schindler's List*, because of its historical truth claims, lends itself more easily to the construction of a public sphere.
37. Art Spiegelman, "Schindler's List: Myth, Movie, and Memory," *Village Voice*, March 29, 1993, 27. In the same discussion, Spiegelman admits that he has a personal vendetta against Spielberg: "I must confess that I have a Spielberg problem. It dates back to his producing *An American Tail*, the animated cartoon about Jewish mice who escape the Cossacks/Catsacks in what I perceived as a horrible appropriation from *Maus*" (27). While he goes on to say that his feelings for Spielberg do not affect his attitude toward Schindler, that "I feel secure that my unhappiness with this film would remain intact if I thought it had been made by Martin Scorsese or anyone else" (27), we cannot help but read the harshness of his critique in light of his admitted vendetta.
38. Elinor J. Brecher, *Schindler's Legacy* (New York: Plume Books, 1994), 24.
39. Ibid.
40. See Siegfried Zielinski, "History As Entertainment and Provocation: The TV Series 'Holocaust' in West Germany," *New German Critique* 19 (winter 1980): 81–96.
41. Ibid., 87–88.
42. Ibid., 88.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 94.
45. Ibid., 88.
46. Ibid., 87–88.
47. Andreas Huyssen, "The Politics of Identification: 'Holocaust' and West German Drama," *New German Critique* 19 (winter 1980): 135.
48. Ibid., 134.
49. Miriam Hansen, "Schindler's List Is Not *Shoah*: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism and Public Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (winter 1996): 292–312.
50. Spiegelman, "Schindler's List: Myth, Movie, and Memory," 26.
51. Ibid., 26–27.
52. Santer critiques Kluge's ambivalence toward affect, claiming that "to work through means in a fundamental sense, to recuperate *affect*—the absence of which, as Freud claimed, is the real cause of traumatization." See Santer, *Stranded Objects*, 155, italics in original.
53. The scene that veers closest to triumphalism is the one near the end when Schindler collapses, regretful that he did not save more Jews. The film, however, does not end there but, rather, with the rescued Jews.
54. See, for example, Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 365–70.
55. Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 51.
56. Miriam Hansen, "'With Skin and Hair': Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseilles 1940," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (spring 1993): 458.

57. Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, 17, italics in original.
58. See Elie Wiesel, chairman, "President's Commission on the Holocaust: Report to the President" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), September 27, 1979. Edward T. Linenthal's book, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995), offers a lucid and useful account of the building of the museum.
59. See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 3 vols. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985); Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986); Leni Yahil, "*The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932–45*," trans. Ina Friedman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Historians Götz Aly and Michael Geyer are working on reconstructing the historical context of the Holocaust.
60. Leon Wieseltier, "After Memory: Reflections on the Holocaust Memorial Museum," *New Republic*, May 3, 1993. As I describe, the much-debated museum exhibition and display strategy is such that affect is always connected to historical fact. See Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: A History of the Holocaust As Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993).
61. Philip Gourevitch, "Behold Now Behemoth: The Holocaust Memorial Museum: One More American Theme Park," *Harper's*, July 1993, 60.
62. *Ibid.*, 61.
63. James Young makes a similar point in his thorough and insightful book *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning in Europe, Israel and America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993).
64. I do not mean to suggest that the Holocaust was illogical. I wish only to convey the enormous difficulty of trying to fathom, on the level of an individual person, how such events could have been a lived reality. In fact, important work is currently being done that exposes how terrifyingly logical the "Final Solution" actually was. As I mentioned, Raul Hilberg, Götz Aly, and Michael Geyer all are historians reconstructing the historical context in which the events of the Holocaust seem logical.
65. *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, April 1990, 4.
66. A film shown at the beginning of the exhibition on the history of anti-Semitism is an example of the museum's presumption that it is speaking across ethnic, racial, and national lines.
67. *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, November 1988, 6. As an article in the March 1990 newsletter states, "In the permanent exhibition, when visitors gaze at a section of the Warsaw Ghetto Wall, or pass beneath the Auschwitz 'Arbeit Macht Frei' (Work Will Make You Free) gate, read the markings on the wall built of headstones in the Krakow Jewish cemetery or walk along a path that once connected two sections of the Treblinka death camp, what they see, feel and experience will be authentic." See *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, March 1990, 6.

68. I use *aesthetic* here with the intention of invoking its original etymological meaning. Susan Buck-Morss traced its roots back to the Greek word *Aisthisis*, which she defines as “the sensory experience of perception” from which she concludes that “the original field of aesthetics is not art but reality—corporeal, material nature” (125). See Susan Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin’s Artwork Essay Reconsidered,” *new formations* 20 (summer 1993): 123–43.
69. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 8.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*
72. Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 33–34.
73. Walter Benjamin, “On the Mimetic Faculty,” in *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 333.
74. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 21.
75. *Ibid.*, 26.
76. James Inigo Freed, “The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,” *assemblage* 9 (1989): 59.
77. *Ibid.*, 73.
78. Sigmund Freud, “A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 22, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 244–45.
79. “Sympathy,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed. According to the *OED*, sympathy is “a (real or supposed) affinity between certain things, by virtue of which they are similarly or correspondingly affected by the same influence.”
80. “Empathy,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed.
81. In Eric Santer’s account, “The capacity to feel grief for others and guilt for the suffering one has directly or indirectly caused, depends on the capacity to experience empathy for the other *as other*.” (7). See Santer, “*Stranded Objects*,” 7, italics in original.
82. Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working Through,” 154.
83. Freed, “The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,” 64.
84. In his book *Representing the Holocaust* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), Dominick LaCapra maps the Freudian account of trauma and its therapy onto our relationship to the Holocaust; the stages are repetition, acting out, and working through. LaCapra ends up favoring working through, because for him, it is impossible to achieve critical distance through acting out. But he acknowledges “the need to work through them critically rather than to remain fixated in at times necessary processes of acting-out” (175).
85. LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust*, 193.
86. Jacques Lacan, “The Line and the Light,” in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 99.
87. When the museum launched the Bringing the Lessons Home program, created in large part from Lynn Williams’s vision, it set out to develop long-term part-

nerships with schools, churches, and other institutions in the Washington, D.C., area. What is so compelling about the success of this program is, literally, its success. It strove to create new stakeholders in the museum and in Holocaust history, and it actually did. As the museum's annual report stated, by 2001, student leaders had guided nearly six thousand people through the museum (10). The success of this program led to other outreach activities, including programming for the military through the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.; the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.; and the National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. In 1998, workshops at the museum became a permanent component of the cadet training for the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police, and the program was expanded in 2000 and 2001 to include numerous police departments in Maryland and Virginia, including the FBI's training academy. As the D.C. police chief Charles H. Ramsey noted, "Any person who walks through this Museum or goes through our training would be hard-pressed not to go home and take a deep look inside themselves at their own attitudes and values. I know because I do each time I visit here. And because our recruits take this introspective journey early on in their careers, I am convinced they start off being more aware and more tolerant than they might otherwise have been" (9). See *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Annual Report, from 2000–1*, 9–10.

88. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 270, italics added.

EPILOGUE: TOWARD A RADICAL PRACTICE OF MEMORY

1. Using standard survey practice and random-digit dialing, they completed 808 national interviews. As a pool, the interviewees reflected the varied demographics of America. Because Rosenzweig and Thelen also were interested in the way that minority groups articulate their relationship to the past and to American history, they also developed three minority samples: African American, Mexican American, and American Indian. For a detailed discussion of how the survey was conducted, see Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), app. 1, 209–31.
2. Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 2.
3. Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 12. In setting out to discover "what relationship Americans have to history" Americans have, David Glassberg identified a "sense of history" that "reflects the intersection of the intimate and the historical—the way that past events of a personal and public nature are intertwined, so that public histories often forcefully, and surprisingly, hit home." See David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 6.
4. Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 179.

5. Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 186. The kinds of memories of the past most people favor are private ones, memories that have some personal component.
6. Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 115.
7. In a study designed to explore the generational basis of historical knowledge, Howard Schuman, Robert F. Belli, and Katherine Bischooping found that people best remembered and understood historical events that took place in their adolescent and early adulthood and that their knowledge of past events declined gradually across cohorts. However, their study revealed that of the nine historical events of the twentieth century about which they questioned their respondents, the Holocaust was remembered by people of all generations. "Of course, the extent to which age alone is crucial depends on the nature of an event and the degree to which it is recreated for new generations. Despite concerns that have sometimes been expressed about lack of knowledge of the Holocaust by Americans, it is one of the best known events studied, no doubt because it has been repeatedly recalled and recreated in many forms. . . . The extent to which dramatic recreations, such as films, can match or conceivably even extend what Mannheim (1928/1952) called experience 'personally gained in real situation' (296) is a question that deserves further investigation." See Howard Schuman, Robert F. Belli, and Katherine Bischooping, "The Generational Basis of Historical Knowledge," in *Collective Memory of Public Events*, ed. James W. Pennebaker, Dario Paez, and Bernard Rimé (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1997), 71.
8. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 164–65.
9. This is particularly clear in the case of advertising, in which ideologies concerning beauty, class, and "normalcy" are embedded in the product through marketing strategies. See Sut Jhally, *The Codes of Advertising* (New York: Frances Pinter, 1987); and Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
10. Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 31.
11. *Ibid.*, 57.
12. Much work in cultural studies has been devoted to this issue. See, for example, Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979); and Janice Radaway, *Reading the Romance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). For a synthetic work on "consumer culture," see Martyn J. Lee, *Consumer Culture Reborn: The Cultural Politics of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1993).
13. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 190.
14. *Ibid.*, 6.

15. Ibid., 5.
16. Ibid., 168.
17. For Hall, there are three identifiable decoding positions: the “dominant hegemonic position,” which takes the meaning at face value and operates hegemonically within the dominant code; the “negotiated code or position,” which draws on both hegemonic and oppositional elements and tends to focus on situational or local meanings; and the “oppositional code,” in which the viewer decodes the message in an oppositional or “globally contrary” way, rejecting the cultural/political framework in which the message was encoded in favor of an “alternative framework of reference.” See Stuart Hall, “Encoding, Decoding,” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1993), 100.
18. In her critique of the ideological grip of the “heterosexual matrix,” Judith Butler argues that there is no outside to the symbolic economy. In order to bring about change, one must work not outside but inside the existing sign system. Social transformation is possible by changing how certain things signify, through what she calls *redeployment*, attaching new meanings to existing concepts. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
19. Etienne Balibar, “What Is a Politics of the Rights of Man?” in *Masses, Classes, Ideas*, trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1996), 220.
20. Certainly at present, not everyone has equal access to the Internet. However, as public schools incorporate technology into their curricula, the promise of accessibility and equal access might eventually be realized.
21. David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 1–2.
22. Ibid., 2.
23. Ibid., 110, italics in original.
24. Ibid., 112.
25. Ibid., 357.
26. Ibid., 360.
27. Etienne Balibar, “Racism as Universalism,” in *Masses, Classes, Ideas*, trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1996), 200, italics in original.
28. The ideological problem of “speaking for” the other has been widely theorized in the field of subaltern studies. See, for example, Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988).
29. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word *sympathy* first appeared in 1567 and was understood to mean “agreement in qualities, likeness, conformity, correspondence.” In 1596, its usage reflected a new shade of meaning, not just a conformity, but a “conformity of feelings, inclinations, or temperament, which makes persons agreeable to each other.” This sense of conformity, of adapting oneself to be like the other, or, more commonly, reimagining the other to conform to oneself, has for centuries been central to the meaning of sympathy.
30. Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. Peter Heath and ed. W. Stark (1913; reprint, North Haven, Conn.: Archon Books, 1970).
31. Ibid., 47.

32. Ibid., italics in original.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 48, italics in original.
35. Note that in *The Nature of Sympathy*, Scheler rejects empathy, but the “empathy” he rejects sounds more like what the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as sympathy. “When all is said, the theory of empathy offers no grounds for assuming the existence of other selves, let alone other individuals. For it can only serve to confirm the belief that it is *my* self which is present ‘all over again,’ and never that this self is other and different from my own” (242, italics in original). My working definition of empathy seems more akin to what he calls “fellow feeling.”
36. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 35. This text, originally delivered as four lectures in 1946/47, was first published in 1948.
37. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 41.
38. Ibid., 42.
39. Ibid., 74.
40. Ibid., 75.
41. Levinas writes, “I have attempted a ‘phenomenology’ of sociality starting from the face of the other person—from *proximity*—by understanding in its rectitude a voice that commands before all mimicry and verbal expression, in the mortality of the face, from the bottom of this weakness.” See Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 109.
42. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 109–10.
43. Ibid., 110.
44. Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Finding Connection in a Computerized World* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1994), 5.
45. See, for example, Kevin Robins, “Cyberspace and the World We Live In,” 77–95; Michele Willson, “Community in the Abstract: A Political and Ethical Dilemma?” 644–57; and Ziauddin Sardar, “ALT.CIVILIZATIONS.FAQ: Cyberspace As the Darker Side of the West,” 732–52, all in *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2000).
46. Robins, “Cyberspace and the World We Live In,” 86.
47. Ibid., 90.
48. Willson, “Community in the Abstract,” 655.
49. Ibid., 645. Similarly, Ziauddin Sardar condemns the Internet as yet another Western apparatus involved in the project of colonizing “Others.” Cyberspace, a space charted and created firmly in the West, is inevitably inflected by the “subconscious perceptions and prejudices, conscious fantasies and fears” of its architects. See Sardar, “ALT.CIVILIZATIONS.FAQ,” 750.
50. See, for example, <http://www.moveon.com>.
51. For example, the Center for History and New Media, at George Mason University is dedicated to advancing historical knowledge online. See <http://chnm.gmu.edu>. See also the American Social History Project, <http://www.ashcunyu.edu/>.

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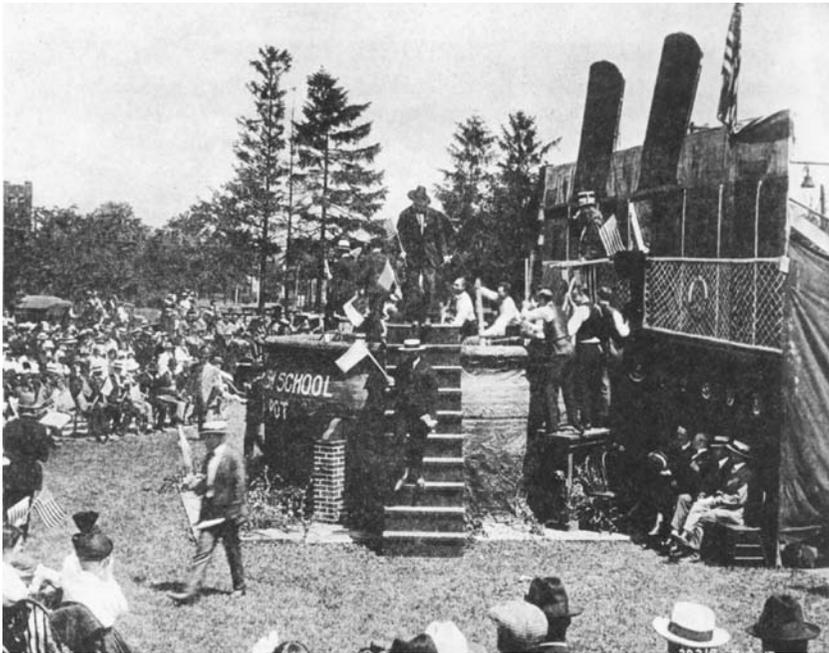
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1 Face to Face in the Video Monitor, *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990).



2 The "Melting Pot" of the English School of the Ford Motor Company of Detroit, July 4, 1917. From the Collections of Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village. From the original negative number N.833.20218.



3 Gypsy Wedding, *Road to Yesterday* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1925).



4 Slave Ship Exhibit, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. Photograph by Felicia Hunt-Taylor, courtesy of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.



5 Group Photograph, *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, 1992).



6 Unborn Child, *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, 1992).



7 Making a Noose, *Rosewood* (John Singleton, 1996).



8 Mass Grave, *Rosewood* (John Singleton, 1996).



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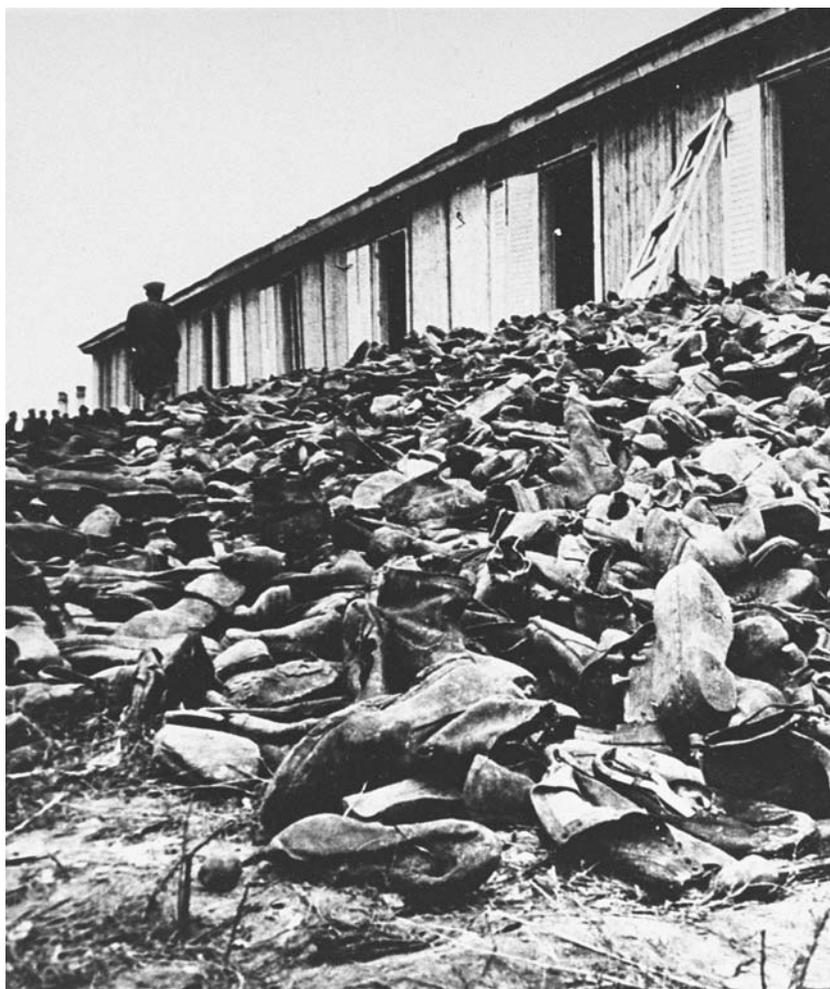
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11 Visitors on the fourth floor of the permanent exhibition at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. [Photograph #No3933.17] Courtesy of USHMM.



12 Interior view of the railcar on display in the permanent exhibition of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. [Photograph #No0339] Courtesy of USHMM.



13 A mound of victims' shoes found in Majdanek after the liberation. August 1944
[Photograph #13108] USHMM, courtesy of Archiwum Akt Nowych.



14 Shoes confiscated from Majdanek prisoners as displayed on the third floor of the permanent exhibition. [Photograph # No2456] Courtesy of USHMM.