

Implicit in any act of commemoration is its own inadequacy. Any attempt to remember or represent the past must contend with the incompleteness of memory, with the fact that every representation of the past falls short of replicating the remembered person or event. This inadequacy is matched by memory's social importance: nations operationalize the past for political purposes; groups remember as a means of identity construction; individuals remember those who have gone before us in part because we hope those who come after us will do the same. Rather than trying to overcome memory's incompleteness, my research takes the partial, provisional nature of remembering as a productive starting point. I ask several related questions: What transformative possibilities for memory are opened up when we understand remembering as dynamic rather than static, as manifesting in repetition and the differences that accompany this repetition? What are the ethics of memories that are consciously provisional, inhering in traces, in fragment and rupture, in ordinary objects and everyday ephemera? What work might memory do when we follow the play of its metonymic associations? These questions concern remembering as it is instantiated in scenes and processes that engage the past to perform vital social work in making, and remaking, the future.

My current dissertation project, *Naming the Dead: An Ethics of Memory and Metonymy*, is about naming the dead in three commemorative contexts: the archival circulation of pre-war personal photographs found at Auschwitz, focusing on one photograph in particular; the Toni Morrison Society's Bench by the Road Project understood in relation to Morrison's ghostly *Beloved*; and the use of shoes in politico-ethical exhibits ranging from the Majdanek concentration camp to the temporary Monument for Our Kids on the lawn of the United States Capitol Building. *Naming the Dead* seeks to describe a situational ethics embedded in *everyday remembering*, tracing contexts in which the name attaches to mundane objects and scenes of

memory that exceed monumentality. Rather than taking for granted the proper name as memorial “end” (following such inscriptive projects as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial), my dissertation posits the name as an unsettled signifier, full of loose threads and always on the edge of unraveling. I ground my work in performance studies, critical cultural theory, and rhetoric as I argue for three metonymic functions of the proper name in commemorative contexts: displacement, repetition, and what I am calling the “performative slide” that gives rise to new meanings. The name is not a *commemorative end* but a *critical beginning*. I begin with practices of naming the dead to open up a series of memorial scenes, asking what the name makes visible, what it displaces or is displaced by, and how power is organized through the confluence of the visible and the displaced. In this project, I trace the ways in which we name our encounters with the dead across various media of memory—a photographic image, memorial sites, material objects, and literary fiction—and through different registers, from the intimacy of my personal reading of a photograph to the memorial work of a public site contending with slavery’s legacy in the United States.

I have published two recent pieces related to this larger project. The first is a web installation titled “An Offering: Meditations with Walter Benjamin,” published in *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* (2019). This essay, structured as a textual montage, focuses on a pre-WWII photograph found in Auschwitz of a young woman whose first name—Minka—was uncovered only after the photograph’s publication in a memorial book. I grapple with memory before and after learning the young woman’s name, asking: *What commemorative possibilities are opened—and foreclosed—by varying instantiations, markers, and performances of “Minka”?* A second article called “Ghosted (I went looking for a haunting)” appears in *Text and Performance Quarterly* (2019). In this piece, I perform hauntological memory through a series of

failed attempts to encounter, to re-member, and to write the ghosts of 18th century Africans who disembarked slave ships at Sullivan's Island, South Carolina. In this piece, I trace the body of the critic as one potential site of activation for that which haunts what we think we know about the past.

In my next project I will turn toward a given place, Orlando, Florida—land of the fantasy landscape—as also a memory landscape, marked by an oscillation between the everyday and the extraordinary. As an Orlando native, a map of the city marks for me not only *place* but a trip in and through *time* as it materializes on local, national, and personal scales. The city landscape shimmers with memories: events of national interest and my own lazy summer afternoons; the revelry of long-gone vacationers and my grandfather's dreams of space flight; moments of intense mourning and the everyday, tinged by Orlando's surreal status as home to “the most magical place on earth.” Tracked through with unrecognized or contested histories, Orlando memories can be multiple, even excessive. What does it mean to remember a place in its excess? And what does it look like to remember a place teeming with excess *as home*?

As a whole, my work on remembering contributes to performance, rhetorical, and cultural studies as well as to the interdisciplinary field of memory studies. My work understands *naming* as allied with writing more generally, and it appreciates the metonymic possibilities in both. It advances an ethics of commemoration attuned to the particular and the performative in everyday remembering, with a view towards recreating memorial landscapes and the futures they contour. And finally, it respects the ephemeral and excessive dimensions of remembering often foreclosed in monumentality.