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DOCUMENTARY TESTIMONIES

GLOBAL ARCHIVES OF SUFFERING

EDITED BY

BHASKAR SARKAR AND JANET WALKER

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contents

introduction

moving testimonies

bhaskar sarkar and janet walker

The will to contribute audiovisual testimony about catastrophic events and social suffering is readily observable across the globe. Tens of thousands of people have delivered on-camera attestations of shocking experiences to local or broadly affiliated visual archives. These archives, in turn, are benefiting from the emergence of new media technologies for the capture, assembly, storage, and circulation of the gathered materials. In our latter twentieth and twenty-first century "era of the witness,"[1] media testimonial initiatives—be they official, grassroots, guerrilla, transitory, insistent, or any combination thereof—participate in the creation of ethical communities by bringing testifiers and testimonial witnesses together at the audiovisual interface.

The "documentary testimonies" this volume studies take various forms: from unedited video recordings to documentary films, from one-on-one reminiscences to site-specific public presentations and perambulations. Cobbled together, "documentary" and "testimony" signal the migration of the testimonial scene from documentary film, where it has been since

the coming of sound a staple of advocacy and historical filmmaking,[2] to the humanitarian digital video archive[3]—and back again.

But while "documentary" and "testimony" are certainly related, they also possess distinct disciplinary genealogies. Through the analysis of their affinities and disjunctures, we seek to challenge some of the maxims of documentary studies as a sub-field of media studies, and, concomitantly, some of the presumptions that structure the sites where testimony is administered. For instance, while documentary scholars have tended to view the "talking head" as evidence of a lack of imagination on the part of film and filmmaker, now, nearly fifty years after the advent of direct cinema dimmed the luster of direct address,[4] official, non-governmental, and upstart entities—and documentary practitioners—are tapping the expressive, ethical, and activist potential of audiovisual testimony to further human rights and transitional justice initiatives. Here we seek to register the restrictiveness of documentary studies scholarship where it has neglected the policy considerations and wider networks through which individual documentary films make meaning.

Conversely, we seek to make available to archivists and other curators of public memory documentary studies' invaluable emphasis on the constructedness of non-fictional as well as fictional media texts. "If we consider the imaginary realm of fiction as having a metaphoric relation to history and lived experience," writes Bill Nichols, "as a kind of carefully shaped, translucent cloud that displays contours and shapes, patterns and practices that closely resemble the ones we encounter in our own lives, we might think of documentary as a mode where this fictive cloud has settled back to earth."[5] Quite a few of the chapters in the current volume proffer compelling close textual analyses of specific documentary works. And they do so always with a view to the wider landscape where these texts "settle back to earth" and form the pages of a volume conceived to enable a relational dynamic, within and among the chapters.

Media studies' nuanced debates about the vicissitudes of representation and subjectivity have this and more to offer archivists and institutions grappling with practical issues, including the veracity (or frailty) of testimony, the image ethics of victims and perpetrators, and, more generally, the use of audiovisual materials for the amelioration of social suffering. Whereas literary, history, and other non-media specialists often misconstrue the medium-specificity of audiovisual testimony, seeing it as residing in the "dimension of *the real*," "shorn of 'literary' ornaments,"[6] or, alternately, as somehow less indexical or historically valid than printed documents, we feel prepared to inject a note of constructive criticality into testimonial projects by speaking up around the hushed tones with which atrocious images are often met in order to facilitate a diversity of opinion and action about the complicated construction and uses of video testimony in the furtherance of agendas that vary.

Of course, we media scholars are also vulnerable, in the rush to construct a meta-archive of suffering (this book, for example), to the tendency to ignore the specifics and underlying conflicts of testimony's mechanisms of self-presentation. Aptly, these formations are given serious attention by our contributors and, we hope, in this introduction as well. All of the book's chapters are original to this volume, with each being a closely analytical and thickly contextualized study of an archive of social suffering tied to a particular locale: Cambodia, Chiapas, Darfur, India, Indonesia, Korea, New Orleans, Norway, Rwanda, South Africa, and Washington, DC. Together, these individually expert and informative studies inspire the multiplication of perspectives and queries: what are some of the cultural differences in bearing emotional reactions, in institutional prescriptions and proscriptions, and in the distinct kinds of knowledge enabled by testimonies in various media forms? How can we differentiate between and among televised public hearings and activist videos in terms of the kinds of archives they generate? Are these archives official? Renegade? Ephemeral? What does the comparative project lead us to discover about the limits and potentialities of documentary as public record? To what extent can or should aggregated testimonies be used to garner tangible reparations or enact social change? What are the corporeal and performative dimensions of testimony? And how do they compensate for or exacerbate the frailty of memory? The current planetary salience of documentary testimonies raises further questions regarding the politics of knowledge production, and the underlying cognitive, moral, and policy frameworks that are fast congealing into regulative global structures.

This introduction is one place—in addition to the crucial intellectual spaces of the classroom, center, archive, library, museum, and mind of the individual reader—where such compelling questions may be addressed at some length. And indeed, a number of consistencies and differences in the creation and use of testimony have become apparent as we have explored, along with our contributors, its cultivation by public administrators and institutions, human rights activists and organizations, documentary and ethnographic filmmakers, and other individuals and groups to serve the interests of environmental justice, human rights, social advocacy, and the commemoration and prevention of genocide. These differences and similarities will be broached as the introduction proceeds. Here, at the start, we do wish to highlight one profoundly significant tension that informs many of the individual chapters as well as this study of "global archives of suffering" as a whole: that is, the tension between the local and the translocal. While grassroots creators may strive to realize the existence, meaning, and import of collected testimonies in a local context, there may be certain instances when it would behoove even the most committed community activists to orchestrate their testimonial projects for a global audience. But then, when does local testimony's intricate play of meaning get usurped by

universal and universalizing templates for the legitimation of suffering? And what do we mean, after all, by the global?

Even as we subtitle our book "Global Archives of Suffering"—hoping, frankly, for a wide audience—we resist the universalizing gesture that establishes the West at the epicenter of a globalized world, or, perhaps even worse, the mechanism of othering that construes everything but the West as a global-out-there where suffering occurs. Here too, we maintain a critical tension: expanding our geographic reach while realizing that there is plenty of suffering and there are plenty of good testimonial projects right here in the US. We hope that any loss of specificity from global hopscotching can be mitigated to a large extent by the potential of the anthology form and will be mitigated by the consummate expertise of our contributors, specialists on diverse subjects and regions who have eagerly embraced this joint analytic enterprise. Recognizing testimony's relational essence, we attend to its disconnections as well as its affiliations and, while celebrating existing and emerging, small- and large-scale audiovisual testimonial projects around the world, we assess the complexities of the mode and the manifest idealism of the "see it, film it, change it" formula.[7]

Two key analytical positions underlie our editorial work (without, of course, becoming a litmus test for contributors) and result from it. First, out of respect for social protest and commitment to the continuance of individual and collective life beyond devastating experiences, we follow the critical shift from a politics of "victims" and victimhood to one of "survivors" and agency. Whereas to stress victimhood even from an empathetic perspective is to disregard survivors' resolute resourcefulness, turning them into hapless pawns of geopolitical maneuvers doubling as philanthropy,[8] testimony is one of the most tenacious expressions of a desire to overcome adversity, to keep on living, to secure the future of a community. And yet, the opinions of our contributors make for a multivocal text; we take this opportunity to signal Bjørn Sørenssen's intriguing critical and etymological discussion of "victim" in the Scandinavian context ("From 'Super Babies' and 'Nazi Bastards' to Victims Finding a Voice").

Second, we invoke social suffering as a necessary supplement to the trauma paradigm or, indeed, as an inherent aspect of the particular understanding of trauma theory that is ours. Refreshing the debate by moving away from a polarization of trauma's tortuous psychodynamics on the one hand and its messy sociological and political negotiations on the other,[9] Arthur Kleinman and Veena Das, with various collaborators in their trilogy on "social suffering," break down disciplinary boundaries around the fields of health, welfare, law, morality, and religion in order to reestablish "the collective and intersubjective connections of experience" and the salubrious subjectivity that social suffering damages.[10] Without undertaking an exhaustive explication of an area of critical studies that is both beyond the scope of this volume and the subject of our respective other works,[11] we too recognize the embeddedness of trauma's psychic structures and mechanisms within broader intersubjective networks and public transactions.

Reflecting on the theory and practice of Cuban documentarist Víctor Casaus, Michael Chanan remarks that "the vocation of documentary is testimonial."[12] Here we acknowledge that insight and extrapolate two others as foundational to our project: the vocation of testimony is archival, and, jointly, the vocation of the archive is ethical. This is the series of interlocking concepts and practices that structures our approach to the project as a dynamic whole, and organizes the introduction to this volume as it pieces together section by section. The contemporary social purchase of documentary practices motivates us to engage with testimony as, all at once: the most intimate manifestation of the survivor-witness relationship and the product of intercalated institutions and practices; profoundly human and incontrovertibly cyborgian; a performative act continually in the making; and, at the level of methodology, both a circumscribed object of documentary studies and the gold standard for global human rights initiatives.

This volume aims to study, therefore, what we think of as *moving testimonies*: the faces and voices that emanate from close or distant locations; the sounds and images that animate our ubiquitous screens; the archives we establish and the histories we resuscitate. These are the new assemblages that compel us to bear witness, move us to anger or tears, and possibly mobilize us to action for social justice.

I. talking heads

Imagine a length of film or video footage—or a ration of bytes on a hard drive—onto which a certain scene has been recorded: a seated individual speaks with conviction, eyes directed to an off-camera listener (stationed slightly to the left and below the lens) whose quality of attention is nevertheless palpable in the intensity of the speaker's gaze. The account of abuses survived and atrocities witnessed flows more or less without halting and in chronological order. The media object that houses this testimony may be pulled from the shelf or selected from the digital bank where it is stored, and played for an audience of one or more. Video is "a powerful, accessible and affordable medium that ... will become more and more vital as a form of witnessing current events and therefore of future historical evidence," writes Roxana Waterson.[13] Or, as the group WITNESS explains, the strength of human rights defenders is enhanced when "the power of visual images and the reach of emerging communications technologies" are united "to transform personal stories of abuse into powerful tools for justice."[14] Indeed, as we have indicated above and will continue to discuss below, the testimonial act has become "a crucial mode of our relation to events of our times," a mode increasingly germane to the construction of global civil society.[15]

However, this imagined triangular *mise-en-scène* of speaker, listener, and camera, with its distributive and motivational qualities in the public theater, is highly idealized. Would that we lived in a world where the act of speaking truth to power were purely achieved and politically transformative.[16] In our more complex (and perhaps, after all, more deeply satisfying) reality, testimony is a precious, horrifying, faceted, institutionally related, liminal force that, through its address to the other and its temporal multiplicity in reflecting on past actions for present and future purposes, constitutes the human symbolic—though not necessarily the human listener—as politically and historically attuned. There is a quality of abjection in testimonies of suffering (where they exist at all) in that paradoxically, uncannily, and necessarily they raise "what human life and culture must exclude in order to sustain themselves."[17]

Testimony is rare. Even though this volume is spurred by the proliferation of audiovisual testimonial projects, including those (such as the USC [University of Southern California] Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education) that have cultivated tens of thousands of testimonies and those (such as the videotaping of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission) that have been instrumental to state policies and even state formation, we wish nevertheless to recognize situations where ongoing human rights abuses include the suppression of testimony. For example, restrictions on Chinese media, including the Internet, limit mention of the unarmed civilians killed by the People's Liberation Army in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989 to the officially sanctioned characterization of these protestors as "counter-revolutionaries."[18] To this day, researchers, relatives, and survivors struggle even to count and name the dead, let alone engage in public mourning and remembrance.[19] The filmed testimonials by exiled Chinese dissident leaders in Michael Apted's 1994 documentary *Moving the Mountain* contribute greatly to the film's discursive power. To take another example, because Yong Kim is the only prisoner known to have escaped from North Korea's labor camp #14, his testimony to the Human Rights Committee of the US Congress in April 2003 and in the book *The Long Road Home* is both unique as such and representative of those who remain incarcerated. In response to Janet Walker's query as to whether he had ever observed fellow inmates writing down their experiences, Kim mimed the neck of a jar with one hand while gesturing with the other as if to stash a slip of paper. Yes, there are buried written testimonies; but they may never be retrieved, he stated, let alone the prisoners freed to express their testimonies in audiovisual form.[20]

Where testimony does occur, the presence of a given story sharer—a survivor of Hitler's Holocaust, for example—highlights the absence of others who are not, or are no longer, present.[21] Just as the poet Paul Celan has emphasized the solitude of (literary) witnessing, "no one bears witness for the witness," it is simultaneously the case, continues Shoshana Felman, that the "*appointment* to bear witness is, paradoxically enough, an appointment to transgress the confines of that isolated stance, to speak *for* others [whose testimonies we may lack] *to* others."[22]

Moreover, the presence of a story sharer may attest, again paradoxically, to "the impossibility of telling,"[23] or to the unavoidable incompletion of testimony itself. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's magisterial *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* has been for us and many others the germinal work on testimony. We depend on these authors' articulation of the (literary, psychoanalytic, and historical) "*practice of the testimonial*" as a form of retrospective public witnessing of shattering events of a history that is "essentially *not over*" and is in some sense brought into being by the (itself interminable) process of testimonial witnessing.[24] As a concept drawn from its "traditional, routine use in the legal context," testimony is called for, Felman reminds us, "when the facts upon which justice must pronounce its verdict are not clear, when historical accuracy is in doubt and when both the truth and its supporting materials are called into question."[25] Its presence, therefore, signals not the attainment of knowable truths about the past, but rather a "crisis of truth" or an "accident" of witnessing that nevertheless is profoundly important to the reintegration, working through, or even the liberation of psychic and social life (17–25). These are the insights of psychoanalytically informed studies of the written form of testimony that we, as film and media studies scholars, wish to hold onto and not ignore. While we heartily agree that the medium specificity of video testimony relative to its literary counterpart is deeply significant—for example, Noah Shenker points out that the gestural reenactment in a woman's description of a hanging she witnessed cannot be rendered in written form[26]—still we would attribute the perceived rawness of videotaped testimony to *an impression* it conveys rather than an inherent quality of the video testimonial mode. As with a literary work, the audiovisual representation of a person, animal, object, or geographical setting is ontologically distinct from the creature or thing itself; video testimony visits but does not inhabit the traumatic past anymore than it does "the real."

Audiovisual testimony, like documentary film, does, however, participate in what Bill Nichols has termed "the discourses of sobriety," "systems" such as "science, economics, politics, foreign policy, education, religion, welfare" that "regard their relation to the real as direct, immediate, transparent."[27] But the apparently constative mode also shares the multidimensionality of "representing reality" (Nichols' apt title) that this introduction introduces and the chapters develop. Audiovisual testimonial utterances are always already mediated at the level of the speaking subject whose personal narrative is a product of selection, ordering, interpretation, partisanship, prohibition, character, reflection, and the vicissitudes of memory; and at the level of the media text. As James Young has insisted, "a survivor's memories are necessarily unified and organized [at least]

twice-over in video testimony: once in the speaker's narrative and again in the narrative movement created in the medium itself."[28]

We are interested not only in the ingredients but also in the (Lévi-Straussean) cooking process of video and cinematographic testimony. In this respect we concur with Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas, who reject both the mimetic presumption that a moving or still photographic image is an authentic representation of the world it depicts and that images therefore speak for themselves, *and* the iconoclastic notion that all images are false and their claims to truth and value must be shattered.[29] As Guerin and Hallas indicate, citing the work of Bill Nichols and Michael Renov, documentary studies has long ago made the conceptually productive shift "from a narrow focus on questions of truth and referentiality in documentary film to a theoretical and historical concern with its complex discursive construction."[30] Guerin and Hallas call on documentary studies to recognize, as they so eloquently put it, "the specific ways that the material image enables particular forms of agency in relation to historical traumas across the globe."[31] Discussing the "collective symbolic forms" of narrating traumatic experience, Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman, in a Levinasian vein, articulate a philosophically complex form of subjectivity: "the appearance of the face through which communities torn asunder by violence begin to accord mutual recognition to each other."[32]

As scholars steeped in documentary studies and engaged with audiovisual testimony, we are invested in the images, voices, faces, and also the sounds, archives, times, and places. In nominating retrospective "talking head" documentaries and other assembled interviews as our main focus, we emphasize the audiovisual testimonial scene as one of the most common and geopolitically significant—but as-yet-under-researched—venues for the attestation, reception, and mitigation of social suffering. Thus we adapt with all due criticality cinema studies' psychoanalytically informed "apparatus theory" so as to conceive of testimony as a kind of ideological, institutional technology—a "testimonial apparatus"—that produces the details and emotion of suffering in and through the constitution of the spectator subject.

The "talking head" is an effect of this particular apparatus, at the basic level, with the head, according to convention, selected for framing and inclusion in an ordered sequence or hypertextual archive. In fact, the "talking head" (into which anatomical designation users generally throw a supporting neck and shoulders) only *seems* bodiless because the torso, hips, legs, and feet have been framed *out* by the film's compositional imperative. And the head *only seems* to be alone.

The interlocutor is also there, just beyond the frame; beside, below, or behind the camera, which latter device, like the projector, is invisibly necessary and necessarily invisible. And the meaning-making function of this physically present listener as actant and proxy for future media spectators

is both significant in and of itself and key to a comparison with: 1) literary narration as *testimonio* (where, convention would have it, the writer is alone in a room although s/he will likely invoke "an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives and experiences");[33] 2) audiovisual or written autobiography in a confessional mode (again, the conceit is that the narrator stands alone); and 3) audiovisual or written oral history (where the balance of rhetorical power shifts to the social scientist recorder who, as a kind of midwife[34] of the audiovisual testimonial interlocutor, is more forceful than the latter in affixing his own stamp on the testimony).[35]

Moreover, as Chon Noriega has so succinctly stated, "the 'talking head' must always belong—at some level—to a body politic."[36] Where political urgency has motivated the practice of spoken and literary *testimonio*[37] in Latin America and Latin American studies, so too "*cine-testimonio*," in Michael Chanan's apt term, has arisen in contexts of struggle by marginalized and terrorized peoples.[38] These movements are part of the history and context for testimonial efforts on behalf of anti-colonial, feminist, and other egalitarian, reparative, and counterhistorical efforts around the world. The *testimonio* is a "counterdocument," Noriega writes, "intimately tied to the need to legitimize the postrevolutionary nation or struggles against state terror."[39] Drawing on literary *testimonio* studies also helps qualify our appropriation of an apparatus theory widely criticized for its monolithic notions of the powerless "interpellated subject" of Althusserian Marxism and the "inscribed spectator" of screen studies.[40] While not wishing to underestimate the subjugation of social subjects to state terror or ethnic fundamentalisms, we assert our belief in individual and collective agency as a motive force of social justice. The "testimonial apparatus" of this volume is ideologically conjunctural but not deterministic, technological but not mechanistic, structured but not unvaried.

But where do questions of truth in testimony fit into this interdisciplinary topography? Various well-publicized debates about the veracity of autobiographical testimony pertain. For example, factual inaccuracies in *I, Rigoberta Menchú*,[41] the celebrated book transcribed from taped interviews with indigenous political activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Menchú (edited by anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos-Debray), have been analyzed by Ana Douglass, who writes that Menchú's "gesture to see her story as emblematic of the story of all indigenous peoples of Guatemala opens up a critical space in which the reader can then come into some proximity to 'strangeness,' optimistically into some proximity of 'truths' about an intolerably inhumane situation."[42] (But Douglass also makes it a point to avoid conflating the category of literary testimony with the form of testimony given in a court proceeding [73].)

Truth may also be "proximate" in the cases of misremembering. As Dori Laub has famously described, "knowledge in the testimony is ... not simply a factual given that is reproduced and replicated by the testifier, but

a genuine advent, an event in its own right." Analyzing the case of a woman's verbal testimony as an eyewitness to the Auschwitz uprising in which inmates attacked the crematoria with explosives, testimony that was later recognized by historians to be exaggerated since only one chimney, rather than the three she recalled, was actually blown up, Laub argued that historians have much to gain from attending to the "subtle dialectic between what the survivor did not know and what she knew." Reading back and forth among testimony and other forms of historical evidence, an analyst may come to understand "not merely [the testifier's] subjective truth, but the very historicity of the event, in an entirely new dimension."[43] In fact, the eminent Holocaust historian Christopher Browning too has raised the question of how conflicting or even clearly mistaken testimonies might be used "to construct a history that otherwise, for lack of evidence, would not exist."[44] And then, reading back and forth among perpetrator, investigator, and survivor testimonies, in written form and on videotape, he has proceeded to do just that in his 2003 book *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*.[45]

All of this is to say that the "testimonial apparatus" is performative with regard to the truths and memories of testifying and witnessing. Yes, certainly, there is a "receding horizon"[46] of truth that the testimonial apparatus, like the documentary film, fixes in its sights while grounded by its force. But audiovisual testimony—inevitably staged in that it wouldn't exist at all if not for the midwifery of the testimonial apparatus—is also at pains to enact, to bring into being, to perform, a world of hurt.[47]

With the imaginative and material constitution of the testimonial scene as a backdrop, we can now proceed to enumerate in a descriptive vein (not purporting to summarize the theses of the chapters) some of the varieties of audiovisual testimony our contributors explore. What Barbara Martineau has taught us about "synchronized sound close-ups, or 'talking heads,'" applies in spades to the testimonial scene: it "can be used in different ways to achieve very different results."[48]

It is the individual videotaped testimonies that comprise the foundational, enormous, partially digitized, and globally dispersed archives of suffering known in aggregate as "Holocaust testimony" that are most apt to be (mis)taken for the ideal type. Framing is in close or medium shot, the interviewer—usually a professional psychologist or layperson with sensitivity training—is off-screen, and the interviewee's glance is at an oblique angle just past the camera lens. And yet, what Noah Shenker makes clear from the start and throughout his chapter—and what has motivated us to place this chapter at the start of our volume—is the enormous value of understanding how the individual testimonial scene as a "*process* of witnessing" is mediated by the interrelationship among "individual practice," "institutional practices," and the architecture of testimony. The latter, as Shenker demonstrates through the case of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), includes the architectural space of the museum itself.

The four chapters that follow Shenker's inaugural analysis of a landmark video archive take up the case of filmed (or videotaped) testimony as a foundational trope of the social issues documentary film. The groupings of documentaries identified by Bishnupriya Ghosh, Janet Walker, Bjørn Sørenssen, and Hye Jean Chung all feature sympathetic advocates for change in discriminatory public consciousness and unjust policies and actions: for the modification of massive dam-building projects that are displacing hundreds of thousands of people along the Narmada River in western India (Ghosh); for racial and environmental justice in post-Katrina New Orleans (Walker); for an end to the legal and cultural discrimination against Norwegian women and children whose wartime connections with the German soldiers of the Nazi occupation turned them into social pariahs for four decades to follow (Sørenssen); for an unqualified official apology from the Japanese government for the military involvement in the sexual enslavement of Korean women (Chung).

But *how* do these films employ testimony to channel their respective "demand[s]" (Ghosh) in keeping with, in spite of, or to recuperate the iconicity of testimony? Bishnupriya Ghosh and Janet Walker explicitly study the documentary creation of what the latter calls "situated testimony": reflective interviews delivered *in situ* from the very place where catastrophic events occurred and, in some cases, while the situation continues to unfold. Ghosh expressively analyzes how testimonies from heterogeneous constituencies, such as indigenous activists, resettled camp-dwellers, and subsistence farmers pushed upstream to less fertile ground, are combined with moving camera shots of people living on the banks of the river to create what she calls an "immersive cinema." Chest deep in water, with hands tied in Gandhian protest, or on high ground in front of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, people articulate their sense of loss and activist commitment as would-be agents of change. Walker writes of testimonies delivered by returning evacuees from the rubble maw of New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward.

Testimony *in situ* is also featured in the two documentaries discussed by Deirdre Boyle and the documentary cycle discussed by José Rabasa. But now the content of the attestations harks decades back to events that have in a literal sense come to a close, while living on in people's psychic and bodily memories and, in these particular cases, in continuing initiatives and rituals in the present. To create *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*, filmmaker Rithy Panh (himself a survivor of Cambodia's Pol Pot regime) returned to Tuol Sleng prison (code named S21, where an estimated 17,000 men, women, and children were killed between the years 1975 and 1979), taking along former guards, interrogators, a clerk-typist, a photographer, a "doctor," and two of the seven surviving prisoners. There, Khieu Ches, a guard from the age of 12 or 13, not only reenacted but actually "re-live[d],"

argues Boyle, his past actions and trained behaviors. Unlike other critics who are uncomfortable with the film's departure from the verbal testimonial mode, as well its/our exposure to perpetrators and perpetrator testimony, Boyle identifies in the films she analyzes an embodied form of testimony. "By reviving memory of this traumatic past," she states, "[Panh] makes the past present to engage public consciousness about the evil done in the name of the state." José Rabasa also has his own reasons, in dialogue with films about the Acteal massacre in Chiapas, for enlarging what might qualify as testimony beyond survivor, witness, and expert reportage of past events. Because revisionists, including former president Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, also testify, it behooves us, Rabasa argues, to develop a "poetics of testimony" capable of reconceiving the "politics of truth."

Reading back and forth among Rabasa's, Boyle's, and Chung's chapters in the context of the volume as a whole, our intuition that rhetorical strategies in documentary testimony are grounded in regionally specific practices is confirmed. But the significant formal differences one may therefore expect to find among geographically disparate sites of testimony often pale next to their affinities as grassroots practices against the grain of official or would-be official institutions and historiographies. While the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum archivists seek—through the means Noah Shenker so insightfully analyzes—to establish their large assemblage of sober direct address testimonies as the royal road to historical truth, independent filmmakers throughout the world are engaging in alternative testimonial practices that are expanding the modalities of testimony and its capacity to incorporate a diversity of voices and views.[49] Deirdre Boyle has observed that "documentary as embodied memory" (or vice versa) "seems more acceptable to Asian documentary makers than to most Western audiences." And indeed, we are struck by the applicability of her discussion to Hye Jean Chung's finding that Byun Young-joo's "*Murmuring* trilogy" brings testimony into existence through the sensate choreography of filmmaker, camera, and subject. In this latter case, filmmaker Byun herself is even audible and at times visible, "sharing the ... space within the frame," and attempting, like Panh, actively, physically to form an impression and influence policy through the *mise-en-scène* of documentary practice. But if we consider as well José Rabasa's explication of reenactment and commemorative practices in the documentaries of the Chiapas massacre, it would appear that broadly cross-regional and transnational *continuities* in testimonial modalities may well exist, especially where previously suppressed views or countercultural patterns are being cultivated by testimonial works against the dominant values of the relevant state formation.

The next two chapters in the volume, by Catherine Cole and Mick Broderick, are concerned with the testimonial function of audiovisually documented public proceedings including hearings, commissions of inquiry, and legal trials. When they are available (Cole reminds us that

public availability is not something we may take for granted) as "raw material" or edited works (or both, as in the case of the Eichmann trial of 1961),[50] these institutionally generated artifacts constitute a modality of "documentary testimony" helpful for the elasticization of the rubric. Instead of two people sequestered in a room, we encounter here panels of official auditors and galleries of spectators, often with personal involvement in the events under testimony by the speaker—who may him/herself be alleged to have engaged in criminal and/or sociopathic acts. The camera may be set off a ways, forced to zoom in for closer shots, observed or unobserved, and, as the case may be, party or not to the ricocheting play of looks.

A scholar of theater and performance concentrating on contemporaneous media coverage of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation process, Cole reveals how "[t]he mediated and theatrical dimensions," of both hearings and broadcasts, "allowed for multiple renderings and interpretations of the truths, lies, and everything in between which spilled forth." Comparing footage of the Commission hearings themselves with the selective use of this footage in the 87-episode *TRC Special Report* by the South African Broadcasting Corporation, she finds salient differences in the physical and filmic *mise-en-scène* of staging, camera placement, and shot selection, differences that greatly affect the implication of audiences—that is, the public—in this historical state occasion.[51]

Mick Broderick's chapter examines the culturally specific and internationally significant process of generating and archiving orchestrated public testimony about the Rwandan genocide. Yves Kamuronsi, a digital producer and online archivist at the Kigali Memorial Centre, and independent filmmaker Gilbert Ndahayo both work with audiovisual records from community "gacaca," or local truth and reconciliation tribunals where tormented individuals and perpetrators meet face to face. "It is harrowing to watch," attests Broderick, when Ndahayo, as director of and gacaca participant in *Behind this Convent*, "confronts the murderers of his parents and sister in this public space." Keenly aware of the tensions between "a 'memory industry' dominated by characteristically Western official practices" and the local digital initiatives he describes—the makers of which are themselves cognizant of the wider import of their efforts—Broderick analyzes how a "new generation of Rwandans" is attempting to use innovative testimonial practices to achieve lasting impact.

The volume concludes with a chapter on a newly emerging form of witnessing, one that, in Lisa Parks' astute analysis, calls into question the very definition and function of media testimony. The Google Earth "Global Awareness" layer, including its central component "Crisis in Darfur" developed in partnership with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, is a geo-referenced humanitarian interface that invites users to "fly" to troubled areas of the globe that are represented on the site through satellite images, photographs, data frames, and graphics. But what happens to testimony and

its attendant questions, Parks queries, when a set of non-anthropomorphic representations, technologies, networks, and practices—commercially driven and purporting to be a transparent window on the world—not only figures in (as always) but in this case actually marginalizes and in some respects even replaces diverse knowledge sources and personal accounts? What happens to the testimonial scene, we may ask, when its surveillance is expanded from a camera in a room to a camera mounted on a satellite in geostationary orbit 36,000 kilometers from earth? With this volume, cognizant of the balancing act it entails, we celebrate both the humanity inherent in the concept of the talking head and the criticality inherent in the concept of the testimonial apparatus.

II. bodies of evidence

The testimonial impulse is nurtured by and, in turn, feeds into proliferating archives of suffering. Many of these contemporary archives congeal around audiovisual testimonies. The contributions to this volume explore a fair range: the Kigali Memorial Centre in Rwanda ("12,700 audio cassette tapes, 3,300 DVCAM tapes, 3,300 VHS tapes and 7,700 DCs");[52] South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (thousands of testimonies videotaped and broadcast via television and radio);[53] and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum's holdings. But there are many others, some in novel sites and formats, which continue to expand in scope, size, and influence. For instance, in Japan, "Voice of Hibakusha" eyewitness accounts of the bombing of Hiroshima were filmed for the program *Hiroshima Witness* produced by the Hiroshima Peace Cultural Center and NHK, the public broadcasting company of Japan. In the 1990s the individual accounts were translated into English and digitized by college students for a web-based archive.[54] In conjunction with his documentary film *Sicko* (US, 2007), Michael Moore has established a website and portal entitled "SICKO: What Can I Do" as an organizing tool for the advocacy of healthcare reform in the United States.[55] In a direct address video posted to the site, Moore invites people to videotape their own "healthcare horror stories" and post them to the companion YouTube site "SICKO: Share Your Healthcare Horror Stories." The 98 videos posted at the time of writing, many of which are testimonial in style and all but one of which have garnered hundreds or thousands of hits, constitute a substantial, issue-driven video testimonial archive of an interactive, innovative nature.[56]

Clearly, testimonial holdings have emerged as a key and favored institution for coping with collective suffering across disparate geographical locations. What might these bodies of evidence teach us about the nature of the contemporary archive? What networked tendencies, ideologies, and regimes contribute to the translocal authority of these institutions? While the first question is the focus of this section, the second query is explored in the next.

Generally speaking, an archive is no mere aggregation of documents: it is driven by its internal logics of selection, classification and organization, orchestrated to produce a single and cogent corpus. That is to say, a set of regulatory concerns, aimed at achieving a measure of cognitive, ideological, and affective commensurability, comes into play in the creation of every collection. In this volume, our primary interest is in archives that are constituted through the very production of the audiovisual documents that the archive appears merely to assemble. In a fundamental sense, it is the act of archiving that designates the testimonies as such. Perhaps the sheer scale of social traumas and the resource needs of testimonial holdings demand that the creation of such documents be closely aligned with some archival formation: for instance, the recordings of eyewitness accounts for the *Hiroshima Witness* program broadcast by the NHK, or the 2,000 victim statements recorded at TRC hearings for public broadcasting in South Africa. So far as a testimony is being solicited for a particular collection (Shenker's account of the audiovisual depositions housed in the Holocaust Museum of Washington DC, whose definitive scope is articulated in its mission statement), or feeding into an emergent archive (Ghosh's analysis of an ecologic in the growing mass of activist documentaries featuring "drowned out" subalterns of the Narmada valley), considerations of integration with the entire collection will inform individual acts of witnessing on camera.

How does the archive present itself to its public as an institution with a certain social authority? Derrida proposes a reflexive logic that governs the institutionalization of a body of evidence, its consolidation into an *archive*. As he points out, the archive rests on two distinct but reciprocally enforcing principles: an ontological principle, invoking the primary or originary status of assembled documents (*commencement*), and a nomological principle, harnessing order and authenticity (*commandment*).[57] The archive is the place where we return to trace the beginning of things; it is also the site where authority inheres, which confers legitimacy. The mutuality of the two principles—the manner in which each fortifies the other—indexes the performativity of the archive as a social institution. In short, the archive is the name of a social performance that is both its subject and object: in that sense, it *nominates itself*.

The location and organization of the archive as a physical institution add to its social aura. The architectonics of the archive comprise not only a cognitive grid and a hermeneutic framework, entailing the classification of artifacts and interpretive schemata, but also a set of material features: the concrete form of its holdings, its actual spatial layout, and its technological and infrastructural support. With respect to audiovisual documents, considerations of format (16 mm film or super 8? analog or digital video?), source and copyright (newsreel or home movies? classified or public domain footage? industrial or non-profit?), editing and transfer parameters

(linear or non-linear editing? commensurate formats, or requiring complicated transfer software?) become crucial to the questions of storage, access, and future use.

The chapters in this volume examine archives whose materiality and organization cover quite a range. The contributors' fieldwork and research objects present a similar diversity: Boyle, Chung, and Ghosh consider films; Broderick, Cole, and Walker visit actual sites of suffering; Shenker reads behind-the-scene memos to supplement his exploration of the USHMM; Sørenssen attends to radio; Cole examines television current affairs programming; Parks considers websites and satellite images; Broderick looks at grisly skull displays (his field trip and the resultant film provides the image on the volume's cover). This variety complicates the stereotype of the archive—the dank and dusty rooms, the ill-lit aisles and freezing vaults. With digitalization, the archive increasingly exists on microchips; networks turn topological assumptions on their head, making access potentially instantaneous. In short, the audiovisual archive is becoming more plastic, porous, and portable. Nevertheless, tangible constraints to technological development, access, and use remain. Switching to new formats requires not only the significant overhaul of equipment, but also the intensive retraining of personnel. Questions about the lifespan and reliability of digital formats persist, and are exacerbated by the drive toward cheap, soon-to-be-obsolete modes of data storage at the cost of quality and stability. It is not some arcane conservatism that induces many audiovisual archivists to prefer film to digital formats. Furthermore, archival resources continue to be sadly limited, funding being especially scarce in societies of the Global South.

The question of display is central to the architectonics of both the archive and the museum. Developments in museological practices in the past two decades have profoundly transformed the modalities of exhibition; emerging media forms compound these shifts by restructuring propinquity and immersion. Intermedial formats and displays now interact with the structure and space of the museum to generate novel contexts of exhibition. These transformations have implications for the public life of archives. Innovative spatial configurations and multiple scalar levels shape the ways in which we approach and experience archival holdings. Shenker, for instance, relates the visitors' perambulatory experience of the archive/museum to the sensory apprehension of its overall layout and its multimedia displays as they walk/work through it. He examines the specific ways in which testimonial recordings are incorporated into the USHMM in relation to its other exhibits. Broderick's chapter maps out an emerging archive, which began as a terrifying exhibition of skeletons from the Rwanda killings, was extended to the Internet as a photographic site, and is now augmented by the actual massacre sites (e.g., a church) being turned into nodes of commemoration. These contributions draw attention to the

embodied learning facilitated by the topological and material dimensions of the archive.

The pedagogical intent is only one of many intersecting, and at times conflicting, objectives behind testimonial archives. Cole reminds us that it would be a mistake to reduce any such collection "simply to the level of utility": TRC public hearings, for instance, "were a complex 'rainbow' genre that mixed ritual, law, media event, religious ceremony, confessional, theater, therapy, storytelling, and politics." Let us explore some of these functions in more detail.

Survivors and witnesses provide testimonies to record their experiences, to generate empathy in their audiences, and to produce secondary witnessing on the part of other social groups. These recordings bring forth uncharted or overlooked dimensions of suffering, and help elicit recognition from broader publics. As Shenker shows, while the USHMM—"America's national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history"[58]—is deeply committed to historical education, it is also at pains to produce an "affective community." The very act of bearing witness in front of a camera helps politicize consciousness, stirring members of affected communities toward acts of resistance. Their testimonies mobilize collateral groups, producing empathic—and possibly activist—coalitions from below. As Ghosh demonstrates, the testimonies of tribals displaced by the construction of dams serve as charged evidentiary nodes around which peasants, workers, NGOs, and intellectuals come together to resist an impassive state wedded to an instrumentalist and opportunistic paradigm of development. As in Rabasa's chapter, testimony in this instance emerges as a conduit to radical participatory politics, instigating lateral networks of activism. Sørenssen records the transformation of public attitudes toward the Lebensborn women and children after the broadcast of radio and television documentaries about a few of them. Walker discusses Spike Lee's orchestration of standard and in-situ testimonies, which produces a trenchant critique of the ruling bloc's criminal neglect of disadvantaged communities of New Orleans, raising public awareness about policies that appear to rest on unstated presumptions about the relative disposability of entire groups.

As we noted in the previous section, providing testimonies allows survivors to narrativize their traumas, begin to find meaning in incomprehensible experiences, and realize a modicum of voice, perhaps even an attenuated sense of agency. This is why testimonies are intimately linked in the popular imagination to the possibility of healing. Two related impulses propel testimonials: the need to wrest a form of immortality, and the need to record one's experiences for posterity. In a sense, both are transgenerational imperatives: not only does the speaking subject hope to subvert the inevitability of her/his passing, but s/he also seeks to leave for succeeding generations a sense of history. Teleporting oneself from the other side of

the grave, as it were, the witness strives for some manner of historical continuity. When the testimony is played back after the death of the witness, this spectral trace bridges various times. What begins as an eschatological impulse, as a reckoning of one's mortal life, ends up proffering an unbounded opening onto the future.

Testimonies do not aspire only to psychic and existential recompense: various injured communities, once exploited and marginalized (indigenous populations, descendants of slaves, minority groups), have based their claims to material reparations on archives of oral, written, and, now, audiovisual testimony. The testimonial situation enables feuding communities to confront each other in a civil manner and force perpetrators to encounter their own brutalities; it presents an opportunity to move beyond murderous conflicts and work toward social reconciliation. The significance of such a shift for the future of community life cannot be underestimated in societies torn asunder by rancor and violence. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa remains by far the most noteworthy attempt at achieving such settlements. The TRC's ambitions are not limited to collective healing: it purports to nothing short of state formation in the post-apartheid era.

Testimonies recorded today give rise to an archive that will constitute a body of evidence in the future; in that respect, witnessing proceeds from what Shoshana Felman has called the "juridical unconscious."[59] Indeed, testimonies have a long history of performing quasi-legal functions in various war tribunals and judicial courts adjudicating crimes against humanity, from the Eichmann trials of the early 1960s to the World Court hearings on Central European pogroms in the past decade.[60] The significance of these trials for backstage diplomacy and international relations, while somewhat opaque, is undeniable. Contemporary media assemblages only intensify their impact, as seen with the trial of Saddam Hussein, widely covered by international media, and the subsequent Internet broadcast of the unsanctioned cellphone recording of his execution. Was this simply an opportunistic act feeding into a global voyeurism, or did it also mark a populist attempt at witnessing history? In the context of emergent telecommunication networks, transnational fora, and a post-state global system, such peripatetic and viral archives will play an increasingly crucial role in shaping public opinion, forging political alignments, and recalibrating ethical standards.

There is no guarantee that the complex attempts to achieve reconciliation and justice will work according to plan, or produce the intended effects: given the volatility of populations strained by violence and agony, the odds stack up against such initiatives. Documented public responses to well-intentioned media engagements with social conflicts underscore the endemic uncertainties of traumatized polities.[61] The persistent and extensive popular support for Central European leaders pronounced war

criminals by international tribunals (e.g., Radovan Karadžić, who has been dubbed the "Butcher of Bosnia" for his alleged role in atrocities such as the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, and the late Slobodan Milošević, whose policies in Kosovo made the term "ethnic cleansing" a part of common parlance), indexes deeply engrained regional sentiments that fly in the face of global opinion.[62] More significantly, attempts at public resolution have contradictions built into them. For some perpetrators, the confessional mode of TRC hearings offers a royal road to impunity, shielding them from prosecution and denying survivors what they might consider proper justice. Official interventions, notwithstanding their aura of rationality and fairness, routinely lead to a gendered silence. Urvashi Butalia documents the erasure of agency on the part of women kidnapped during the 1947 Partition of South Asia, when the governments of India and Pakistan decided, without consulting these women, to return them to their families. Many of these "sullied" women became victims of honor killings at the hands of their family members; others were consigned to a kind of social death, spending the rest of their lives in shelters.[63] Alexis Dudden has shown that the Japanese government's gesture of apology to South Korea for the former's use of Korean "comfort women" during World War II effectively deprives these women of a voice.[64] Chung's contribution to this volume explores the increasingly collaborative labor to wrest a kind of public understanding for these women that official diplomatic maneuvers could never achieve.

There is a common, ingrained assumption that testimonies invariably contribute to social good and democratization, helping to make the world a better place. In practice, testimonies frequently get folded into archival formations with established command structures and entrenched social interests; at other points, they become the basis for emerging sites of power. And as Rabasa reminds us, perpetrators also testify and shape social truths. More importantly, why an individual testifies may have very little to do with how or why her testimony gets included—and in what manner—in an archive. The intricacies of the dyadic relation between individual testimonies and the overall archive, and their multifarious impacts in the public sphere, are the focus of several contributions. Cole comments on the continuing difficulties of not only accessing but also taking cognizance of the entire TRC archives; Parks interrogates Google Earth's use of a variety of assembled images to shape global opinion on Darfur and to promote intervention in the name of humanitarianism. What is insidious about archives in general is that their knowledge function, with its aura of authenticity, immediacy, and spontaneity, masks their cognate social role as institutions of power.

Nevertheless, testimonial archives hold great promise for participatory politics and the promotion of social justice. The institutional performativity of the archive (its self-nomination as a reserve of collective wisdom)

also opens up the possibility for all kinds of contradictions and collaborations. The chapters here index many such moments: in Chung's chapter, the ageing "comfort woman" who takes over some of the interviewing in the testimonial trilogy; the reunion on camera of a man from the GDR with his Norwegian half-sisters, analyzed by Sørenssen; Broderick's account of Gilbert Ndahayo's realization while watching his footage in the editing room that the woman crying at the gacaca court while listening to graphic descriptions of the slaughter and incineration of nearly two hundred villagers is the daughter of one of the perpetrators rather than a relative of a survivor. Such unwitting and unanticipated potentialities constantly challenge the regulatory grasp of the testimonial apparatus; due to the stretched temporalities of testimonies, all such documents remain particularly amenable to interpretation and appropriation.

Keeping in mind the significance of such critical hermeneutical gestures in coping with archives of suffering, we must also recognize the limits of their utopian promises. While more affordable and fungible technologies have, undoubtedly, produced a democratization of the capacity to archive, we take note of the persistent global disjunctures and inequities (in culture, climate, resource, institutional networking) that impose very real constraints on archives in diverse locales. In short, the world of testimonial holdings is anything but "flat."[65] It remains essential to analyze how these assemblages not only help integrate stupefying experiences into collective knowledge, but also draw on—even as they inflect—global practices, institutions, and values. In the final section, we examine testimony's role in the instantiation of planetary civil society at a time when, as Mark Philip Bradley and Patrice Petro point out, "the sovereignty of the nation" is less determinate than the changing boundaries "among the rights of individuals, states, and the international community."[66]

III. ethical communities

As local testimonial archives are assembled into global networks, two countervailing processes unfold. On the one hand, archives adopt broader languages and frameworks to address translocal publics, undergoing a certain standardization through institutional forms of translation. On the other hand, these universal concerns—routine or inordinate violence, social justice, human rights—keep getting recalibrated in their encounter with local contexts. This mutuality points to the constant negotiations entailed in the global extension of a testimonial apparatus. What are the terms on which various communities will relate to each other and to the evolving universal norms? How do these global publics conceive of fundamental categories such as the human, or community? What are the ramifications of turning a singular experience such as the Holocaust into a test case for these queries? What happens when various injured populations

recast their sufferings as "our Holocausts"? What coalitions and power blocs might these networks of empathy and affiliation congeal into? At stake is the production of a global civil society with its attendant values, institutions, and politics.

In theory, global civil society sounds like an attractive ideal, especially in the context of a world beset with seemingly obdurate conflicts: perhaps that is why the concept has achieved the broad support of scholars across the political spectrum.[67] However, the ideal comes with its own problems, not the least of which is the challenge of making it a reality. What kind of global institutions are required to facilitate its operation? How to devise universally acceptable principles and standards that might form its basis? Are such benchmarks possible at all? Who gets to adjudicate and settle disputes that arise from incommensurable outlooks and values? It is in the context of this indeterminacy that the testimonial form becomes significant, as its power derives more from a pledge of truthfulness and a performance of good faith than from a strict, conclusive evidentiary reliability.[68] But one's pledge of good faith is another's duplicitous intent to dominate. Even as we write this introduction, Radovan Karadžić has refused to enter any plea (either 'guilty' or 'not guilty') in front of the International War Crimes Tribunal, denouncing the tribunal as a western conspiracy to kill him.[69] The UN-sponsored International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, meeting in 2008 in Tanzania, raises similar charges from its defendants. Thus the question of a global civil society, with its ancillary testimonial archives, truth commissions, and justice tribunals, remains open-ended and subject to continual ethical evaluation.

That lessons from a local experience of social suffering have the potential to help prevent future atrocities all over the world has become something of a contemporary cliché. But how precisely such learning might be operationalized globally remains a largely unanswered question; indeed, even as this concern animates our volume, its intractability marks a limitation of our comparatist approach. How do people imagine and understand their overlaps and disjunctions with global principles and paradigms? How much of this relationality remains an opportunistic positioning, a mere pretense? What insights are more deeply absorbed, holding the promise of actual transformation?

The political efficacy of a testimonial apparatus is determined in the constant negotiation between universalizing norms and local imperatives: on the one hand, overarching and somewhat rarefied ideals of fairness, equality, and humanity continue to shape collective aspirations; on the other hand, there is the ground-level necessity of getting back to a semblance of normalcy in everyday interactions, for which the implications of translocal standards are not always clear. In her chapter, Boyle points out that local testimonial modalities may or may not translate to a distant audience. While Panh's films have "helped catalyze" in 2007 a UN-sponsored

tribunal to investigate the Khmer Rouge's crimes against humanity, she reports, Indonesian filmmaker Garin Nugroho's adaptation of the musical form of the *didong*, with its innate circular structure and charged performative register, has been dismissed by a Ford Foundation spokesperson as producing, at best, "quasi-history." While Walker is critical of the claim that genuine fairness after Katrina may be achieved by invoking a generalized "right of return," she simultaneously appreciates the strong sense of community articulated by displaced residents of New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward and the need for the allocation of federal resources to the region. The chapters by Ghosh and Broderick highlight the quandary of universal(izing) values and local practices, interrogating the notion that cultural modalities can and should circulate unproblematically. Their analyses bring out somewhat unanticipated nuances: Ghosh identifies the limited benefits that have accrued to local initiatives from global networks when demands have been couched in universalizing terms, and Broderick registers the eagerness of local filmmakers both to create their own commemorative works and to communicate to an international audience.

The globalization of a testimonial apparatus is aided by certain techno-economic developments since the late twentieth century. Rapid progress in telecommunication has had a profound and palpable impact on planetary networks and paradigms of knowledge. What John Tomlinson calls "telemediatization" has contributed to "shifts in our emotional sensibilities" and "the extension of our ethical horizons."[70] We take note of critical interrogations of media's fascination with suffering: the reification of suffering as prime-time spectacle, the desensitization induced by the excessive exposure to morbid imagery, the self-valorizing aspects of projective identification, and the specious nature of remote charity work.[71] Nevertheless, the extensive impact of the televisual coverage of devastations wrought by the South-East Asian Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, or the earthquake in China, beamed into people's homes with a new immediacy and urgency, certainly cannot be dismissed. In early 2008 mobile phone recordings of official atrocities in Myanmar, posted on the Internet, mustered strong global opinion and led to talk of armed intervention on humanitarian grounds in the UN Security Council. And in July 2009, extensive audio-visual postings by people on the streets of Iran—on YouTube, Tweeter, and Facebook—covering the pro-democratic protests in the wake of an allegedly rigged presidential election culminated in an unprecedented "Global Day of Action on Iran" in cities across the planet. Clearly, contemporary technologies engender a more intense impression of proximity and engagement. This sense of involvement is part of a larger culture of intimacy, whose most patently populist expressions include reality/tabloid television, viewer participation through telephone calls and text messaging, and a ubiquitous confessional mode in the public sphere.

A series of cognate philosophical shifts have contributed to the cultural and political purchase of the testimonial apparatus. The so-called post-structuralist turn—privileging difference and heterogeneity, subjectivity and intimacy, the contingent and the everyday—encapsulates many of these shifts. The transformations in the discipline of history include a new attention accorded to memory;[72] appreciation of the phenomenological dimensions of experience inflects a modernist obsession with facticity.[73] In particular, the notion of "public history," with its expressive blending of fact and fiction, its affective punch, and its broad address, signals a sea change in historiographic standards.[74] The traumatic event, which poses challenges for referentiality, representation and knowledge, and brings embodied aspects of experience to the foreground, has emerged as a pivotal node for these transformations in critical thinking.

These disciplinary initiatives partake in a more general trend—what Charles Taylor has called a "politics of recognition"—through which heretofore marginalized groups come to constitute themselves as political subjects, and to wrest agency within mainstream political processes.[75] Not surprisingly, the empowering function of documentary testimonies and archives in the face of state brutality, negligence, and/or silence is a recurring point throughout this volume. The participation of minority groups in identity politics, or multiculturalism, and the formation of transnational coalitions among the dispossessed, comprise important steps toward the global democratization of politics. But multiculturalism gets all too easily folded into strategies of the hegemonic state: in western liberal democracies such as the US, France, and Australia, multiculturalism becomes more an instrument of managing difference than a means of promoting a radically pluralist society.[76] In the presence of significant, frequently insurmountable differences in resources, attitudes and institutions, the translocal extension of either a multiculturalist system or a liberal testimonial apparatus cannot be taken for granted.

Contemporary neo-liberalism speaks a language that, in many ways, expropriates minority and subaltern discourses, but to very different purposes. Ultimately, the vaunted ideals of freedom and democracy are made subservient to the consolidation of capitalist markets in all parts of the world. When political freedom and market calculations come into conflict, the latter take precedence; choice is reduced primarily to a consumerist preference among commodities. While the neo-liberal emphasis on the globalization of human rights and social justice has facilitated the dissemination of testimonial initiatives, it remains a vexed alignment, for market and humanitarian concerns are not easily reconciled. The non-profit nature of most testimonial collections, as well as their cultural-political significance, shield these initiatives against a strictly pecuniary calculus. Nevertheless, demand and supply—shaped by psychosocial and demographic determinants such as the clout of a community, the number of survivors, a persistent

sense of threat—remain important factors. The archives generate not only cultural capital, but also employment for videographers, interviewers, and researchers, not to mention archivists. Large-scale private or corporate efforts—most notably Spielberg's Shoah Foundation and Google Earth's Darfur initiative—raise charges of the privatization and corporate branding of human misery. Thus testimonial assemblages, aimed at commemoration, education, and working towards a better future, carry within them the spectral trace of exchange value. One might even say that there is now a global testimonial industry with its own market specifications.[77]

The geopolitical implications of this confluence of neo-liberalism and a global testimonial imperative are even more noteworthy: the former harnesses the latter to shore up a neo-colonial world order. What guarantees the legitimacy of a planetary testimonial apparatus in a unipolar world? Even the past is not immune to forms of colonization: as Shenker points out, the aspirations of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in providing ethical leadership, not to mention its geographical location, place it "squarely in the heart of an official American commemorative landscape." Even if we take a more pluralist view of the world, a few powerful states (the G8, the nuclear club) appear to exercise an inordinate amount of influence on the institutions of global governance (notably the WTO, the UN, and the World Court). In this post-Westphalian era, when the sovereignty of most nation-states stands eclipsed by these global bodies, societies of the Global South understandably blanch at any suggestion of a unitary globality—even a global responsibility to alleviate human suffering. If testimonial assemblages foster global civil society by promoting constructive human interaction and collective working through, they also instigate interventionist policies, the operative sentiment being: if we are all part of a global family, how can we remain silent and sedentary witnesses to human suffering? Humanitarian intervention is predicated on a discourse of rights steeped in long-standing prejudice: the link can be traced back to John Stuart Mill's 1859 essay "A Few Words on Non-intervention," in which he basically argued that not all populations were worthy of or ready for the same set of human rights. (For Mill, the principle of international reciprocity could not hold for "barbarians," who stood to benefit from civilized intervention.)[78] Not only are the arrangements achieved through international intercession usually short-term, as a rule they also are discriminatory, serving particular interests and reiterating the transnational authority of the armed arbiters. The trouble spots of our world, from Africa to Central Europe, from the Middle East to South Asia, stand as legacies of past meddling, their histories cautionary tales of externally imposed solutions. Even in the most egregious cases of communal violence—whether in Bosnia, Somalia, or Rwanda—the urgency to take action to save human lives is set in balance against local concerns, including fractious social stratification, resource distribution, and national sovereignty.

Nevertheless, the current trend is toward greater interventionism, as evidenced by the new approach outlined in the "Responsibility to Protect" or R2P Report of 2001, and the adoption of this doctrine by the UN in 2005, mandating armed action on humanitarian grounds (including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, but excluding natural disasters and health crises).[79] The collaboration between Google Earth and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (the topic of Parks' chapter, also alluded to by Shenker—thus effectively bookending this volume), touted as a means of raising consciousness, is clearly part of a global civil society initiative to bring a just solution to the Darfur imbroglio. At the heart of such endeavors is a strong testimonial impulse, now pressed into service of a universal community with all its attendant contradictions.

The truck between a globalized testimonial apparatus and hegemonic geopolitical structures comes under critical scrutiny in several chapters of this volume. Analyzing the formal, institutional, and political aspects of testimonial assemblages and exploring the furtive workings of power in them, the contributors collectively underscore the constitutive presence of suffering in contemporary experiences of globality. In that sense, our volume participates in a recent analytical move that comes to regard loss not as a simple waning of possibilities, but as a generative experience: the focus now shifts to the multifaceted fallouts of loss. As David Eng and David Kazanjian have argued so eloquently, such a move—from "what is lost" to "what remains," even if what remains is only the indelible sense of loss—restitutes a sense of agency even to melancholy subjects and enables a politics of mourning.[80] Hence our move from victimhood to survival within a framework of social suffering, a framework marked by a greater attention to collective mechanisms of working through and learning to live with loss. It is in terms of such maneuvers of analytical space-clearing that this volume seeks to make a modest intervention in thinking about, archiving, and instrumentalizing testimonies.

Assembling critical ruminations on documentary testimony from various geographical locations, our volume in effect puts forward a meta-archive of suffering. While we are clear about our objective of promoting social justice, our approaches and methodologies are far from sanguine. Nor are we always certain about the precise nature of our investments and positions: hence the worry about the portability of testimonial practices and forms across cultures, or the tension of wanting to hold onto a sense of ethical globality while being critical of it. The contributors share a set of core assumptions, central amongst which is a faith in the mobilizing potential of testimonies; but their engagements with particular instances of social suffering index a range of positions with regard to underlying concerns. The point is not to produce a definitive set of answers, but to mobilize the complexities of testimonial assemblages through this gathering of authors, and to instigate further research opening onto more hospitable futures.

notes

1. See Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006; originally published as *L'ère du témoin*, 1998).
2. For instance, the direct address interviews in Edgar Anstey's and Arthur Elton's influential *Housing Problems* (1935).
3. For example, the "Virtual Museum" site's posted video recordings of atomic bomb survivors. Virtual Museum, www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/virtual/VirtualMuseum_e/visit_e/testimony_e/testimo01.html (accessed 3 July 2008).
4. By "direct cinema" we mean a mode of documentary filmmaking that was developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Canada and the United States. This mode is characterized by a lack of extra-diegetic elements such as music or narration and the concentration on the filming of real people and events in uncontrolled situations. See Stephen Mamber, *Cinema Verite in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974) and Thomas Sobchack and Vivian Sobchack, "The Documentary Film," in *An Introduction to Film* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1980), 351–4. It is important to note, however, that while Mamber uses the terms cinema verité and direct cinema synonymously, Sobchack and Sobchack find it useful to distinguish the two modes on the basis of cinema verité's use and direct cinema's philosophical rejection of subject interviews (talking heads) by filmmakers (356).
5. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 5.
6. Shoshana Felman, "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 42, emphasis original. Discussing her choice to draw on materials from the repository now named the Fortunoff Video Archive, Shoshana Felman writes that she decided "to move on, as it were, from poetry into reality and to study in a literary class something which is *a priori* not defined as literary, but is rather of the order [of] raw documents—historical and autobiographical," to "shift in medium from text to video—from the literary to the real" (42). Likewise, Lawrence Langer, while emphasizing the textuality of video testimonial accounts in his path-breaking *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, nevertheless distinguishes videotaped interviews from written memoirs in part by characterizing the former as being "shorn of literary ornaments" such as the "lyrical subtexts" or "allusions" of the latter. Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 57.
7. These quick characterizations, we believe, whether literal, as in the case of the WITNESS organization's mottos "see it, film it, change it" and "WITNESS uses video and online technologies to open the eyes of the world to human rights violations" (www.witness.org; accessed 18 July 2008), or assumed, are extremely effective in articulating for participants and announcing for supporters the organization's goals and commitment to the struggle for a just society. We wish only to draw attention to the enormous difficulty and uncertain trajectories of testimony-based political advocacy.
8. In the literature of documentary studies, Brian Winston and Calvin Pryluck offered seminal critiques of the tendency in socially conscious documentaries to patronize working class subjects as less educated, less able to look after their own lives. See Brian Winston, "The Tradition of the Victim in Griersonian Documentary," and Calvin Pryluck, "Ultimately We Are All Outsiders: The Ethics of Documentary Filming," in *New Challenges for Documentary*, ed. Alan Rosenthal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). See also Maurice Stevens, *Troubling Beginnings: Trans(per)forming African-American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), and Laura Jeffery and Matei Candea, "The Politics of Victimhood," *History and Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 287–96.
9. Susannah Radstone, "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics," *Paragraph* 30, no. 1 (2007). Here we are referencing Radstone's call for trauma theory "to act as a check against, rather than a vehicle of the Manichean tendencies currently dominant within western politics and culture" (26). However, in using that formation to support our understanding of the sociocultural and subjective co-constitution of trauma, in fact we may be departing from Radstone's commitment to see trauma as an unconscious process located within the psyche.
10. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, eds., *Social Suffering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), x. See also Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds, eds., *Violence and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) and Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Margaret Lock, Mamphela Ramphele, and Pamela Reynolds, eds., *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Proffering a constructivist model, Jeffrey C. Alexander ("Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004]) writes that trauma is a "socially mediated attribution" (8) whereby a "claim" is made about "some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution" (11). With more space to devote to the subject, we would discuss the extent to which Alexander's model, though seemingly designed to link psychic and social subjectivity, in fact loses hold of valuable psychoanalytic insights.
11. Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Janet Walker, *Trauma Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
12. Michael Chanan, "Rediscovering Documentary: Cultural Context and Intentionality," in *The Social Documentary in Latin America*, ed. Julianne Burton (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 40.
13. Roxana Waterson, "Trajectories of Memory: Documentary Film and the Transmission of Testimony," *History and Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (2007): 52.
14. "Witness Workshop—WSIS Parallel Event; Video as a Tool for Human Rights Advocacy," handout for a workshop event held on 14 November 2005, Tunis, Tunisia, www.witness.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26&Itemid=78 (accessed 30 June 2008).
15. Shoshana Felman, "Education and Crisis," 5. Citing Elie Wiesel, Felman states: "It has been suggested that testimony is the literary—or discursive—mode par excellence of our times, and that our era can precisely be defined as the age of testimony" (5). For Wiesel's original statement, see Elie Wiesel, "The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration," in *Dimensions of the Holocaust*, eds. Elie Wiesel, Lucy Dawidowicz, Dorothy Rabinowicz, and Robert McAfee Brown (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1977), 9. Annette Wieviorka identifies the Eichmann trial in 1961 as

"a pivotal moment in the history of the memory of the genocide [the Holocaust], in France and the United States as well as Israel" and describes the end of the 1970s as "the era of the witness" when "the systematic collection of audiovisual testimonies began." *The Era of the Witness*, 56.

16. The phrase comes from the American Friends Service Committee's 71-page pamphlet *Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence; A Study of International Conflict* (Philadelphia, PA: American Friends Service, 1955). More recently it has been adopted by the following among other publications: Darlene Clark Hine, *Speak Truth to Power: Black Professional Class in United States History* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1996); Anita Hill, *Speaking Truth to Power* (New York: Doubleday, 1997); Ariel Dorfman, *Speak Truth to Power: Voices from Beyond the Dark* (London: Index on Censorship, 2001); Kerry Kennedy, *Speak Truth to Power: Human Rights Defenders Who Are Changing Our World*, photographs by Eddie Adams, ed. Nan Richardson (New York: Umbrage Editions, 2005); and "Speak Truth to Power," an online human rights forum based on the Kennedy book, www.speaktruth.org/ (accessed 18 July 2008).
17. This definition of Julia Kristeva's notion of "abjection" as developed in her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) is drawn from the *Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary References*, eds. Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 1. Ana Douglass states that Shoshana Felman, in discussing the problems of testimony, witnessing, and truth, "shows that the witness speaks from and about her own abjection." Ana Douglass, "The Menchú Effect: Strategic Lies and Approximate Truths in Texts of Witness," in *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma*, eds. Ana Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler (New York: Routledge, 2003), 83.
18. See Wei Shi, "What Do the Chinese Know about Tiananmen Square?" The Observers: Your Eyes across the Globe, 6 May 2008, observers.france24.com/en/content/20080605-tiananmen-square-china-censorship-media, (accessed 18 July 2008). See also "Censorship in the People's Republic of China," Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_in_china (accessed 18 July 2008); and Pankaj Mishra, "Tiananmen's Wake: A Novel of Hope and Cynicism," review of *Beijing Coma* by Ma Jian, *The New Yorker*, 30 June 2008, 74–7.
19. James Conachy, "Victims' Families Campaign for Reassessment of Tiananmen Square Massacre," World Socialist Web Site, www.wsws.org/articles/1999/jul1999/Jun4-j14.shtml, 14 July 1999 (accessed 30 June 2008).
20. "Voices from the Dark: A Story of a North Korean Camp Survivor," dramatic reading by Courtney Ryan and Jason Narvy and interview of Yong Kim by Suk-Young Kim moderated by Hye Jean Chung, Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, University of California, Santa Barbara, 19 May 2008. See Yong Kim and Suk-Young Kim, *The Long Road Home: Testimony of a North Korean Camp Survivor* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
21. Audiovisual and written testimonies by Holocaust survivors very often include the given speaker's explicit remembrance that her or his will to survive was strengthened by the hope of living to tell the stories of those who perished. See, for example, the testimony of Judith Meisel in the documentary film *Tak for Alt: Survival of a Human Spirit* (dir. Laura Bialis, Broderick Fox, and Sarah Levy, US, 1999). Janet Walker along with Kwame Braun and Dr. Elizabeth Wolfson, the latter with Jewish Federation of Santa Barbara, has been honored to videotape interviews with sixteen residents of the area who are survivors and refugees of the Holocaust, many of whom expressed a desire to testify on behalf of others who did not live for the sake of current and future generations. DVD copies of these interviews are available in the media library of Jewish Federation of Greater Santa Barbara, 524 Chapala Street, Santa Barbara, California, 93101; 805-957-1115; www.jewishsantabarbara.org. *Video Portraits of Survival*, *Volume One* (2006) and *Volume Two* (2007)—compilations of short, expressive videos about Holocaust survivors and refugees created collaboratively by Walker, Braun, students of the Department of Film Studies (now Film and Media Studies) at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Wolfson, and the subjects themselves—are available for purchase through Jewish Federation; ordering instructions are available online at www.jewishsantabarbara.org/page.aspx?id=120323.
22. Felman, "Education and Crisis," 3, emphasis original.
23. Dori Laub, "An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival," in *Testimony*, 79–80.
24. Felman and Laub, foreword to *Testimony*, xvii, xv.
25. Felman, "Education and Crisis," 6.
26. See Noah Shenker, "Embodied Memory: The Institutional Mediation of Survivor Testimony in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," in this volume.
27. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 3–4.
28. James Young, "Holocaust Video and Cinemagraphic Testimony," in *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 158.
29. Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas, Introduction to *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, eds. Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 1–22. See also Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1977) for one among many discussions of the inevitably interpretive nature of the photograph. On visuality and iconoclasm, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
30. Guerin and Hallas, introduction to *The Image and the Witness*, 5.
31. Ibid. What surprises us, though, about Guerin and Hallas's volume is the extent to which the materiality of the image is explored and in fact rhetorically secured, apart from, and, in places, in contradistinction to, an understanding of "the word" that seems to presume the latter's immediacy. Although a few chapters do raise the image/word relationship as a productive problematic (for example, Stephanie Marlin-Curiel's insightful analysis of the interaction of "media images and testimonial excerpts" in South African artist Sue Williamson's interactive panels and CD-ROM installation and Hallas's own chapter about a film of witnessing in light of its deliberate exclusion of the body from the frame), the majority focus on (silent) photography, sculpture, fiction films, and/or works in and around but determinedly other than those where direct address testimony is figured.
32. Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman, introduction to *Remaking a World*, 22.
33. John Beverley, *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2004), 34.
34. We adapt the notion of film midwifery from Patricia Zimmermann, "Flaherty's Midwives," in *Feminism and Documentary*, eds. Diane Waldman and Janet Walker (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1999).
35. Beverley writes that "[i]n oral history it is the intentionality of the recorder—usually a social scientist—that is dominant, and the resulting text is in

some sense 'data.' In testimonio, by contrast, it is the intentionality of the narrator that is paramount" (*Testimonio*, 32). We would suggest that both of these statements apply to audiovisual testimony, since there is the triangular scene of narrator, listener, and camera that constitutes what we are calling the "testimonial apparatus."

36. Chon Noriega, "Talking Heads, Body Politic: The Plural Self of Chicano Experimental Video," in *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices*, eds. Michael Renov and Erika Suderberg (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996), 211.
37. Literary *testimonio*, according to Beverley, "coalesced as a new narrative genre in the 1960s and further developed in close relation to the movements for national liberation and the generalized cultural radicalism of that decade," especially those of Cuba and Nicaragua. It "implies a challenge to the loss of the authority of orality in the context of processes of cultural modernization that privilege literacy and literature as norms of expression" and "represents an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle." He draws on the work of Raymond Williams to develop the question of whether, or rather how, "social struggles give rise to new forms of literature." *Testimonio*, 31, 35, 41, and 29. See Raymond Williams, "The Writer: Commitment and Alignment," *Marxism Today* 24 (June 1980): 25.
38. See Chanan, "Rediscovering Documentary," and Julianne Burton's own "Toward a History of the Social Documentary" and "Democratizing Documentary: Modes of Address in the New Latin American Cinema," in *The Social Documentary in Latin America*.
39. Noriega, "Talking Heads, Body Politic," 210.
40. See, for example, the entry for "apparatus" in Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7–8, and the discussion of the term in Pamela Robertson Wojcik, "Spectatorship and Audience Research," in *The Cinema Book*, ed. Pam Cook, 3rd edition (London: British Film Institute, 2007 [1985]), 538–9.
41. *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, ed. Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, trans. Ann Wright (London: Verso, 1984), originally published in Spanish in 1982 as *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (*My Name is Rigoberta Menchú and This Is How My Consciousness Was Born*). David Stoll has identified factual inaccuracies in the account presented by Menchú, who survived massive human rights violations by the Guatemalan armed forces during the country's civil war (1960–96). See David Stoll, *Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999). Defenders of the text's value tend to make their cases out of respect for both the culturally specific practices of oral testimony (here, the acceptability of narrating as one's own "the story of all poor Guatemalans") and the pressure exerted by the western valuation of eyewitnessing. The debate is the jumping off point for Beverley's *Testimonio*.
42. Douglass, "The Menchú Effect," 84. Douglass termed the book "the single most celebrated text of witness of the last two decades" (55). She makes her case with reference to Felman and Laub's *Testimony*.
43. Laub, "An Event without a Witness," 62. See Walker, "Testimony in the Umbra of Trauma: Film and Video Portraits of Survival," *Studies in Documentary Film* 1, no. 2 (October 2007); "The Vicissitudes of Traumatic Memory and the Postmodern History Film," in *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, eds. E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang (Hong Kong University Press, 2004); "The Traumatic Paradox: Autobiographical Documentary and the Psychology of Memory," in *Contested Pasts*, eds. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003). See also a recent contribution to the debate on Laub's discussion of truth and testimony: Thomas Trezise, "Between History and Psychoanalysis: A Case Study in the Reception of Holocaust Survivor Testimony," *History and Memory* 20, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 7–47.
44. Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 39. Interestingly, Browning makes the point that perpetrator testimony is often used with appropriate historical skepticism in courts of law and historical accounts, whereas there has been more hesitancy to incorporate survivor accounts into the writing of history.
45. Interestingly, Browning located videotape from two different sessions of a single woman's testimony about the liquidation of a Polish labor camp. In the first interview, "barely audible" on a "technically flawed" tape, the woman stated, almost as an aside, that fellow Jews killed members of a labor camp elite on the train bound for Auschwitz. In a later retaping, to replace the cassette with technical problems, "she did not repeat the story" (presumably since it could be regarded as reflecting badly on Jewish survivors), Browning reports (79).
46. Linda Williams, "Mirrors with Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 11.
47. We adapt this phrase from Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
48. Barbara Halpern Martineau, "Talking about Our Lives and Experiences: Some Thoughts about Feminism, Documentary and 'Talking Heads'," in *"Show Us Life": Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*, ed. Thomas Waugh (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1984), 259.
49. The "committed documentary" (as per Waugh's subtitle: *Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*) may be seen as analogous in its oppositional or counterhistorical aims and attitudes to what we are describing here as alternative testimonial practice.
50. Wierviorka, *Era of the Witness*, 56–83.
51. Subsequent to Cole's three-year effort to obtain videotapes of the series, *Special Report* was digitized by the Yale Law School Goldman Library and made available via streaming video on the Internet as the South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission Videotape Collection, 84 episodes assembled by journalist Max du Preez, www.law.yale.edu/trc/. As such it constitutes another highly significant example of the documentary testimonial archive that is the subject of this volume.
52. See the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) website, www.ictr.org. Quoted figures are from a summary of the ICTR judicial archives available at www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=ictr+publications+and+materials+tanzania&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8 (accessed 21 July 2008). See also the Kigali Memorial Centre website, www.kigalimemorialcentre.org.
53. Cole, "Mediating Testimony: Broadcasting South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission" in this volume.

54. See "The Voice of Hibakusha," Atomic Archive, www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/Hibakusha/index.shtml. See also Mick Broderick, ed., *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Images in Japanese Film* (London: Kegan Paul, 1996).
55. Michael Moore, "SICKO: What Can I Do," www.michaelmoore.com/sicko/what-can-i-do/ (accessed 24 October 2008). Thanks are due to Bishnupriya Ghosh and Lucia Ricciardelli for drawing our attention to this site.
56. "SICKO: Share Your Healthcare Horror Stories," YouTube, www.youtube.com/groups_videos?name=SiCKOthemovie (accessed 24 October 2008). Additional video testimonial projects of note include the ACT UP Oral History Project (http://www.actuporalhistory.org/ [accessed 13 July 2009]) and the Nakba Archive (http://www.nakba-archive.org/ [accessed 13 July 2009]).
57. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1–2.
58. Mission statement, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org/museum/press/kits/details.php?content=99-general&page=05-mission (accessed 5 January 2008).
59. See Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
60. For a comparative evaluation of truth commissions and judicial trials, see Donald Shriver, "Truth Commissions and Judicial Trials: Complementary or Antagonistic Servants of Public Justice?" *Journal of Law and Religion* 16, no. 1 (2001): 1–33.
61. For instance, the 1987 broadcast of a fictional television mini-series about the Partition riots of 1947 led to the ransacking and burning of several television stations in India and a legal contest that went all the way up to the Supreme Court. Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation*, 230–58.
62. Indeed, many—not all of whom are Serbians—now consider such "global opinion" to be hopelessly lopsided and intent on demonizing Serbia. For some, the realpolitik of the Central European crisis has to do less with a virulent Serbian nationalism and more with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, which serves the interests of Germany, a key player in the EU. See, for instance, Ron Fraser, "The Demonizing of a Nation," *Trumpet*, www.thetrumpet.com/index.php?q=5466.0.108.0 (accessed 27 August 2008).
63. Butalia and other feminist scholars finally gathered their oral testimonies in the 1990s, crucially supplementing official history. Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000). Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
64. Alexis Dudden, "The Politics of Apology between Japan and Korea," in *Truth Claims: Representation and Human Rights*, eds. Mark Philip Bradley and Patrice Petro (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 73–91.
65. We are in emphatic disagreement with the view, propounded most famously by Thomas Friedman, that globalization has led to a flattening of opportunities and aspirations across the planet, notwithstanding the very real differences in resources and institutional structures. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Picador, 2005).
66. Mark Philip Bradley and Patrice Petro, introduction to *Truth Claims: Representation and Human Rights*, 1.

67. Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003). See also the *Global Civil Society Year Book* series published by Sage.
68. Derrida makes a sharper distinction between testimony and evidence: "It is possible for testimony to be corroborated by evidence, but the process of evidence is absolutely heterogeneous to that of testimony, which implies faith, belief, sworn faith, the pledge to tell the truth, the 'I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.' Consequently, where there is evidence, there is no testimony." Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 94.
69. Bruno Waterfield, "Radovan Karadžić Refuses to Enter Genocide Plea," *Telegraph*, 30 August 2008, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/serbia/2645213/Radovan-Karadzic-refuses-to-enter-genocide-plea.html (accessed 29 August 2008).
70. John Tomlinson, "Globalization and Cultural Analysis," in *Globalization Theory: Approaches and Controversies*, eds. David Held and Anthony McGrew (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 157.
71. For a deeply felt and far-reaching rumination on these issues, see Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2004).
72. For Marita Sturken, history and memory are inextricably entangled. Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
73. See the essays in Vivian Sobchack, ed., *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
74. A critical view of memory's insurgence is provided by Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations* 68 (Autumn 1999): 127–50. A more receptive engagement with cultural memory is to be found in Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Sturken, *Tangled Memories*. See also the essays in the special journal issue "The Public Life of History," *Public Culture* 20, no. 1 (Winter 2008).
75. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "the Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
76. Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).
77. Various commentators have noted the sprouting of entire industries of commemoration around instances of social suffering, including the Holocaust and the South Asian Partition. Perhaps the most famous of these is Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000).
78. Mill categorically wrote that it would be "a grave error" to "suppose" that the "rules of international morality" that "obtain between one civilized nation and another" also hold "between civilized nations and barbarians." Further, barbarians (his examples included Gaul and Spain in Roman antiquity, and Algeria and India in the modern era) "have no rights as a nation, except *a right to such treatment as may, at the earliest possible period, fit them for becoming one*." Mill, "A Few Words on Non-intervention," *Online Library of Liberty*, oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php&title=255&search=%22A+Few+Words+On+Non-intervention%22&chapter=21666&layout=html#a_809352 (emphasis added).
79. This doctrine was invoked unsuccessfully by Bernard Kouchner, a co-founder of the much-feted Doctors without Borders and the current French Foreign Minister, to argue for military intervention in the wake of

the government crackdown on Myanmar dissidents, and the subsequent devastation wrought by Hurricane Nargis in early 2008. Opinion on the matter was far from unified: the French argument prompted a Chinese diplomat at the UN to observe acerbically that the principle of "responsibility to protect" had not been invoked to sanction external relief action during the fatal French heatwave of 2003. *Economist*, "The UN and Humanitarian Intervention: To Protect Sovereignty, or to Protect Lives?," 15 May 2008, www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11376531 (accessed 25 August 2008).

80. David Eng and David Kazanjian, introduction to *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, eds. Eng and Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1–25.

one

embodied memory

the institutional mediation of survivor testimony in the united states holocaust memorial museum

noah shenker

Although an extensive range of scholarship addresses archived Holocaust testimony, particularly in terms of its ethical, narrative, and psychoanalytic dimensions, considerably less work examines how the interrelationship between institutional and individual practices mediates the process of witnessing.[1] Furthermore, most of the critical inquiry on the subject focuses on the one-to-one transferential dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee. It rarely extends to an analysis of how formal practices and institutional infrastructures shape not only the process of testimonial production but also dissemination and reception. This area of examination is particularly pressing, considering how Holocaust testimony archives have expanded in recent years in anticipation of the passing of the survivor community and the epistemological and ethical transition from living memory to postmemory.[2] This begs examination of how experientially charged testimonies of the Holocaust will be resuscitated in the absence of living witnesses, and how their pedagogical and commemorative potentiality will be activated beyond the boundaries of the archive and the museum. Rather than suggesting that the testimonies of living survivors

Environmental Crises and the Literary Imagination (Boston, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005).

50. Baba Amte, the *satyagrahi* known for his work with leprosy, gave the NBA instant national visibility when he joined the protests in 1989–90, despite his failing health; but it is Patkar who is largely seen as responsible for the grassroots mobilizing from 1985 until today.
51. Jane Gaines, "Political Mimesis," in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, eds. Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 84–102.
52. Thomas Waugh, "Introduction: Why Documentaries Keep Trying to Change the World, *or* Why People Changing the World Keep Making Documentaries," in *Show Us Life: Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*, ed. Thomas Waugh (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984), xi–xxvii.
53. For example, a localized small-scale water harvesting plan costing 90 million rupees which would bring water to 900 water-scarce villages in Gujarat, a state which stands to spend 200 million rupees for its dam-related costs.
54. Appadurai's case in point is the Shackdwellers International (SDI) in Africa and Asia (but also Japan, Latin America, and the United Kingdom). Arjun Appadurai, "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition," in *Culture and Public Action*, eds. Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 59–84.
55. Appadurai, "The Capacity to Aspire," 67.

three

rights and return

perils and fantasies of situated testimony after katrina

janet walker

"After the storm, I came back. Things were so ... turned over that ... I actually got disoriented in the neighborhood that I grew up in."

James Gibson, III, *Right to Return: New Home Movies from the Lower 9th Ward*[1]

The object *of knowledge is, precisely, the fragmented and uncertain connection between elaborated representations of space on the one hand and representational spaces (along with their underpinnings) on the other; and this "object" implies (and explains) a* subject*—that subject in whom lived, perceived and conceived (known) come together within a spatial practice.*

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*[2]

[T]he lived body is coterminous with place because it is by bodily movement that I find my way in place and take up habitation there.

Edward S. Casey, *Remembering*[3]

Judith Morgan and a friend command the space of Morgan's demolished home, its raised foundation a haunting platform for their gestural and verbal descriptions of its former state. Now the debris has been removed, the premises cleaned and painted, and a small camping tent pitched in what was once the interior space of the home. The women, at first in front of the structure and then within its footprint, trace with physical movements the rooms and features that were washed away when the levees breached in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. "Duck your head," reminds her friend, with conscious irony, as Morgan mounts the three short steps-to-nowhere—all that remains of a staircase that once led to a second story supported by a low beam.

This walking testimonial is one of many heart-rending on-site interviews that comprise the video footage and finished documentaries shot in New Orleans in the months and years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the flood control system failures that put 80 percent of the city under water. The cameras captured a devastated landscape in which everything had shifted: houses lifted off foundations, or reduced to jutting piles of rubble; cars climbing the walls or weirdly conjoined, chassis to chassis; people wandering displaced, lost in the once-familiar neighborhoods where they had been born and raised. "That china closet doesn't have no business being over here," exclaims a grief-stricken Wilhelmina Blanchard, inspecting her destroyed home for the first time since having evacuated. As director Spike Lee comments on the documentary's commentary track, "The foundation is not there. Your feet are not on solid ground." The geography of the terrain—from its furnishings to its urban architecture to its ecology to its economic and racial relations—was massively altered such that the ways and means of rehabilitation and bioremediation are an open question. And yet the bodily presence of returning residents describes a strong and tangible connection to place, community, neighborhood, and home, an affective geography that is established and transitory, solid and imaginative.

The current chapter focuses on the potentialities and limitations of filmed or videotaped testimony delivered *in situ*, from the place where catastrophic past events—that generate the subject and the subject matter both—occurred. This is a form of *situated* direct address simultaneously to filmmaker, camera, and spectator. It is elicited for the purposes of retrospective documentary works, where typically it is intercut with other direct address interviews conducted with the same and different individuals in their homes, offices, by-ways, or against a neutral background arranged by

Figure 3.1
New Orleans under water (*When the Levees Broke*)

the filmmaker. By figuring the relationship among the body of the individual, the ground from which s/he speaks, and the past events that transpired of a time but are, at the same time, brought into being by the testimonial act,[4] situated testimony realizes the materiality of testimony in the power of place.

As a type of filmed interview, an audiovisual testimony is always in some sense "staged"; staged in that the interviewee would not be speaking if not for the occurrence of the filming, and staged in the sense of being put into a scene, a *mise-en-scène* in fact, that can be as simple as a black background or as complicated as a churchyard of Polish villagers surrounding a child survivor returned years later to the site of a genocide (as in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* [France, 1985]).[5] Situated testimony, then, not only staged but also localized to certain haunts, may be said to found a geography of return.

But what of reminiscence and the psychic aspects of testimonial reflection? Psychoanalytically informed trauma studies has drawn on the concept of temporal "belatedness" to theorize trauma as a psychic structure of experience for which violent acts and physical settings are of passing importance. As Cathy Caruth has written: "The impact of a traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time," or, putting it differently, "in connection with another place and time."[6] Indeed Caruth's influential work has inspired a rich debate about the historical truths and enigmas that traumatic experience arguably renders—but significantly less attention has been paid to its spatial aspects.

Focusing here as much on place as time, I want first to relate this notion of trauma's distanced, other place to the apparently self-same geography of situated testimony. What of those occasions when testimony is given

from the very spot, and not "another" spot, where catastrophic events transpired? What about the Rwandans who speak from the grounds of the Kigali Memorial Centre, built on the site of the graves of more than 250,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu massacred during a one hundred day period, or from a school classroom near to where neighbors set against neighbors? What about the indigenous activists who edge as close as possible to land their families farmed for generations prior to its inundation by the construction of massive dams for hydroelectric power?[7] It may be that the prominence of Holocaust subject matter in testimony studies, the prominence, that is, of a major diasporic testimonial paradigm in which the overwhelming majority of testimonies have been delivered at a temporal and geographic distance from the events they invoke, has obscured our view of the other distinctive testimonial paradigm: that of situated testimony as a kind of post-traumatic reassertion of physical belonging and right of return. Tens of thousands of people around the world have presented their audiovisual testimonies through the pain of disastrous propinquity: because they have chosen—or because they have no choice but—to reregister their presence in a place from which they (temporarily) and loved ones and/or neighbors (permanently) have been wiped out.

I wish, therefore, to examine rooted testimony, to take it seriously, that is, while still recognizing that the presence of returnees to a "fatal environment" does not by any means obviate the need to comprehend the psychic dimensions and the unassimilability of place and occurrence that make up the traumatic experience of which they speak.[8] The ground of testimony *sur place*—like exilic space—is always, already "other." Here, the insights of critical human geography are crucial, for in this post-positivist subdiscipline a materialist critical spatial perspective is reasserted (against what Edward Soja, for example, sees as "despatializing historicism"[9]) such that location matters, but place is not essentialized or reified as a truth-telling topography. The stones don't speak except through a kind of critical ventriloquism, yet they are more than mere inert features of a fixed terrain.

Inspired by Henri Lefebvre's concept of social space, art historian Irit Rogoff celebrates critical human geography's "situated knowledge" as enabling a "shift from a moralizing discourse of geography and location, in which we are told what ought to be, who has the right to be where, and how it ought to be so, to a contingent ethics of geographical emplacement in which we might jointly puzzle out the perils of the fantasms of belonging as well as the tragedies of not belonging."[10] Contemporary works of art engage with the "problematic of geography," she proposes, by arraying the "alternative strategies available to review our relationship with the spaces we inhabit" (frontispiece). And indeed, film and media studies—as a field that studies nothing if not the constitution of subjectivity within and through what Lefebvre has termed the "representation of space" (found, constructed, or both) and "representational spaces" (media aesthetics,

institutions, and practices)—is benefiting from scholars' increasing attention to the mutually formative aspects of spatial topography and being-in-the-world.[11]

Zooming in on several documentary works about people in a disaster landscape in the United States, this chapter studies how situated testimony as a performance of return materializes as both an expression of social suffering and a spatial practice that transforms the social ecology of place. Here in the United States, as elsewhere, "natural disasters" or sudden "acts of god"—wind, earthquake, fire, drought, flood—are inextricably entwined with public policy and private sector decisions that exacerbate or alleviate pollution, erosion, famine, displacement, and inter-group strife; here, as elsewhere, place is "space invested with meaning in the context of power."[12] In the case of "Katrina," social justice was usurped by an aggressive discriminatory husbanding of resources, disguised as passive neglect, and I use the moniker in its popular sense to evoke the constellation of meteorological and man-made forces that wreaked havoc on the Gulf Coast and beyond.

The situated testimonies this chapter seeks to witness are protests delivered after (and sometimes before and during) Hurricane Katrina: what people say or do not, or cannot, say from their silted streets and water-ransacked homes; the meanings imported and exported with the cameras and crews who also "return" to the scene. From the vast and growing archive of online and physically distributed testimonial works about suffering and survival after Katrina,[13] I will look at Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* (US, HBO, 2006); Tia Lessin and Carl Deal's *Trouble the Water* (US, 2008); and a video short, *New Orleans for Sale!* (US), by Brandan Odums and Nik Richard, with the group 2-cent;[14] for how these works, each in its way, help us envision new and promising modes of "practicing space."[15]

showing, telling, and missing new orleans

Spike Lee's Emmy Award-winning four hour and fifteen minute documentary[16] premiered at the New Orleans Arena on August 16, 2006 and aired on the HBO cable network in its entirety on August 29, 2006, the first anniversary of Katrina's landfall. Described as "one of the most important films HBO has ever made,"[17] the magisterial work stands as a passionate critique of the profound *unnaturalness* and ongoing negative effects of Katrina.

In documentary studies terms, the film may be categorized as an analysis documentary of the compilation type for its assemblage of archival footage drawn mainly from television news sources, on- and off-site interviews conducted for the purposes of the film, and original sequences in which peoples' actions are facilitated and captured by the cameras of Lee and his crew.[18] Broadly chronological, the film's four acts carry us through from immediately before to after the hurricanes (Katrina and Rita) and flood.[19]

But a finer vernier reveals a "sort of overture" to each act,[20] comprised in most cases of an achronological, associational montage set to music that includes at least one, usually more than one, aerial shot of New Orleans amongst images on the ground including a signature shot along a road narrowed by the heaped timbers and shingles of ruined homes. Each act or "movement" (to invoke the film's rich soundtrack as well as its own titular musical reference) ends with a departure of sorts: Act II's montage of dead and bloated bodies, left floating or breached by the receding waters, is followed by a low-angle long take of poet Shelton Shakespear Alexander delivering his piercing recitation against the high arched gate of a cemetery with the sky behind. Then comes a repetition of the roadway tracking shot, and finally, over the destroyed rooftops, an indelible image of the giant barge that allegedly (court cases are still pending) broke through the Industrial Canal Floodwall into a residential neighborhood in the Lower Ninth Ward causing massive physical destruction and contributing indirectly and directly to Katrina's total death toll of over 1,800 people. A model of its kind for epic complexity as well as sweep, the film spirals down into the maelstrom of the flooded city and yet resuscitates the bodies, voices, and ideas of people on the ground.

Although they are not as numerous, nor do they command as much screen time as the interviews conducted against artificial backdrops, the film's interviews on site are crucial to its geopolitical claims.[21] Their spare but increasing inclusion as the film advances—as people *can* get back to their neighborhoods to be interviewed there—adds weight and rhythmic momentum as the subjects seem, in Edward Casey's phrase, to "find [their] way in place and take up habitation there." Bodily, gesturally, as well as vocally, the subjects of these grounded interviews comprise the connective tissue between the city's ruined landscapes and the interviews in the indeterminate space (of which more later). Situated testimonies do not just state but also *incarnate* the film's core problems and critique—that people were stranded, evacuation impaired, help and rescue grievously delayed; that the government was and is at fault, racial and economic discrimination a factor, insurance companies corrupt, developers poised to profit from desperate homeowners forced to sell out cheaply, the act of return immeasurably difficult or impossible for the poor, of which most, in New Orleans, are black; that white gentrification is occurring; that many subsequent deaths should rightly be ascribed to the traumas of Katrina; that suffering is extending, hyperbolically, into the post-evacuation phase (as one protest sign puts it, "Katrina Survivor, FEMA victim," referring to the Federal Emergency Management Agency); and that the reengineering of the levees was not achieved in the nearly 40 years after Hurricane Betsy and was by no means achieved to date of filming (or writing).

One of the film's most memorable speakers is Phyllis Montana LeBlanc, a woman of great charisma whose emotional range from ironic humor to

deep despair is matched by her ability to assess the complicated issues at hand, and whose interviews in two locations (and against the neutral background) anchor the film. We see her first—and this is also the first situated testimony of the film—at the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport. In that emphatic interview, distributed across the length of the film, she describes her call for rescue by a helicopter pilot: "I mean, I'm standing there with a mop on a stick with a towel that I found somewhere, a white towel, with SOS and on the back of it 'help me please.' And I'm waving this thing like I'm going crazy, and he looks at me and he does this [index finger pointing and spiraling up into the air], like 'get up and go.' And he left us!" Right there in the airport where people were marooned, and intercut with a walking tour by airport director Roy Williams, LeBlanc tells how special details were brought in to "keep order" because "we were getting 'out of order' because people were yelling 'my child is dying,' 'my mother is dying,' we were getting 'out of order.'"

In addition to the sequences featuring LeBlanc's testimony, substantial on-site interviews conducted with Joyce Moses and Anthony Dunn; Gralen Banks; and Tanya Harris, Josephine Butler, and Chirrie Harris (three generations of women), also segmented and distributed throughout the film, make up some of its most physically explicit and affecting moments. Following news footage of men wading chest deep in water to the soundtrack's solo trumpet rendition of the "St. James Infirmary" blues, a new sequence begins with the camera picking out a red "Danger" sign and panning right, across where the flood waters invaded, to the landlocked barge. "This is the barge, and when it came ... we thought we were going to die," we hear Moses recall in anguished voice-over. Then a close-up of the barge's alphanumeric marking accompanied by Moses' voice-over testimony: "and I remember the number ING 4727." The camera cuts to her: a slender African American woman, perhaps in late middle age, with yellow hair, and bracelets on her wrists. Now we are on the ground in proximity to this iconic image of upheaval (around the other side of it, I believe). "If they would've took this away I would've remembered the number, 'cause I wrote it down and put it in my pocketbook."

The camera follows Moses' gesturing arm and pointing finger to the settled barge, and the houses crushed beneath and in front of it. "And the couple that live there, they couldn't get—afford to get—out either. They're still in there if they're still there."[22] The camera continues right to reveal a different house that withstood the inundation, its spray-painted marking including a "0" to denote no dead bodies found within. But we know from media reports that two children and a man were sucked off a rooftop and drowned as the floodwaters in this vicinity rose and surged through the floodwall breach.[23] With a downed roof as backdrop, Moses turns around nearly one hundred and eighty degrees and stretches out her other arm. Again the camera follows. We see houses and their contents

Figure 3.2
Situated testimony by Joyce Moses (*When the Levees Broke*)

smashed to smithereens, a white appliance, and something yellow—perhaps a child's ride-along toy—pop against the grey driftwood of peoples' former lives. These objects are generative of narrative rather than mere vessels for symbolic meaning. Her companion attends quietly as Moses speaks: "They have a man that living here. He tied hisself to beer kegs. They may still be in the yard. And he floated in the water just for three days and I just kept talking to him, telling him God gonna make a way, God gonna make a way. You goin' a make it. And he was saying, I'm so tired. I know you're tired." Now Moses looks straight into the lens as the sequence ends with her remembered helplessness. All she could do was observe, record what she could, and, later, tell what she witnessed and felt: "And I wanted to feed him what I had, but I couldn't get to him 'cause I didn't know how to swim." It is possible to question whether the choice to open the sequence with a danger sign might not be overly melodramatic, too on the nose. But the sentiment is more than balanced by the resonance of human feeling in Moses' voice and body. "Object survivors"[24]—physical reminders of what was—stop and start Moses' memories of prior habitation as they unfold vacantly in the crook of her extended arm. Riffing on the connotations of the camera "viewfinder," Martin Lefebvre points out that views are as much framed as they are found, and, concomitantly, that "the view itself cannot be divorced from the other experiential aspects that accompany it."[25] Turning as the camera pans, Moses delivers a kinesthetic testimony that is a matter of sensory and cinematic movement both.

Against the backdrop of the city, Gralen Bryant Banks celebrates the life-giving smell and taste and sight of New Orleans that residents imbibe:

> When you are born in this, and your first breath when the doctor slapped you was tinted with magnolia blossoms, and you drink Mississippi tap water in your first formula, it's a thing you won't find anywhere else. And folks who had to evacuate know. You might go somewhere and you might have a good time. But it's nothing like home. And when you can call New Orleans, Louisiana home, *baby, you know what it means to miss New Orleans*. Trust me.

Elsewhere a printed sign with the bold announcement "I am coming home/I will rebuild/I am New Orleans" makes explicit the felt connection: people and their city inhabit a single body.

belonging

It is against this painful reality of displacement that the film makes its case for return. "New Orleanians and Louisianians are a resilient people," states New Orleans City Council Member Cynthia Hedge-Morrell, as the film cuts from a sequence in which the Harris-Butler family describe the wreck of their maternal home to a formal (unsituated) interview with her, "they will rebuild their lives." But weak as it is today, recovery in New Orleans was still weaker—and certainly a struggle—during the film's shooting and post-production phases and at the time of the film's release one year after Katrina.[26] Civic groups such as ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) were fighting for the resources and the right to rebuild African American neighborhoods against pressure from certain quarters, including the Urban Land Institute, to rebuild only on high ground, i.e., in the wealthier, whiter areas of the city.[27] Basic public services and infrastructure, including public schools, child care, mail delivery, garbage pick-up, restaurants, bus and streetcar routes, and so on, took months or even years to resume in various parts of the city.[28] There is no definitive "after" to the brief before and extended during that are the time frame of this film.

But the film has adopted a number of strategies to do its part to secure New Orleanians', and especially African American New Orleanians', staked claims to the territory and right of return, with situated testimony, both encountered (as when the crew comes upon a person who consents to be interviewed) and enacted (as with Wilhelmina Blanchard), prominent among them. Blanchard presumably would have inspected her home around this same time in any event, but this particular visit—accompanied by her son, musician Terence Blanchard, his aunt, and also, off camera, by cinematographer Cliff Charles and Spike Lee who had asked to be present for the occasion—was made in partnership with the film project. The light illuminating the interior space of the home was likely shone from a portable spotlight provided by Charles. On the commentary track, Lee expresses gratitude to Blanchard for allowing the visit to be filmed, as well as uncharacteristic tentativeness about the breach of privacy: "Now the

camera follows Terence, his mother, and his aunt into the house, but I stayed outside ... I mean she, Terence's mom, was breaking down even before she went into her house and I just did not want to be in there. So I stayed outside."

Be it ethically sound or not, the film relies on this instance of enacted return to develop the relationship between indigenous belonging and shocking dispossession.[29] As Blanchard says, tearing up, when interviewed later on the neutral set, "Today when we went to the house; that was really hard because, you know, you can't go home." In several other instances, edited sequences are used to construct the impression of what we are hearing from an interview subject, an impression, that is, of the audience's situated witnessing. Off-site, in the formal setting, actor Wendell Pierce describes the visit of an insurance adjustor to the damaged home of his octogenarian father. Pierce's father had purchased the home after World War II by putting down $10 to hold the contract—rushing home to tell Pierce's mother the news—and he had paid off the 30-year loan and laid out 50 years of homeowners insurance premiums. Meeting at the house, he asked the adjustor to be fair: "Just be fair, be fair," Pierce quotes his father as having said. But what his father didn't know, Pierce tells us, is that the adjustor had already taken Pierce aside to tell him that the company would not pay out more than 40 or 50 percent of the value of the home. Intercut with Pierce's verbal account of that visit to the home is another visit in which hand-held footage of the ruined house personifies the particularly traumatic return with the adjustor through its bobbing motion, as if Lee and his crew had been there with Pierce and his father to witness this draining away of the social contract through the loopholes of the literal one.[30]

In its production history as well, Lee's filmmaking process constitutes a kind of (home)coming to New Orleans. The disaster hit while Lee was in post-production on the thriller *Inside Man* (US, 2006). He knew he wanted to make the film but was unable initially to leave the New York area. So he sent a crew to Louisiana to conduct research and do some preliminary shooting while he himself followed the news, read voraciously, and began interviewing evacuees who had ended up in New York,[31] against backdrops that betray no hint that a given interview was not taking place in New Orleans. Gina Montana was an early New York interview subject and it was she who led Lee to her sister Phyllis, already back in New Orleans. As soon as possible, Lee made it to New Orleans, and we hear his voice from time to time on the dialogue tracks of situated interviews (with Judith Morgan, for example) and sense his directorial presence, as when he returns to Gentilly Woods with Terence Blanchard, who is after all a long-time collaborator having scored a number of Lee's films, including *Inside Man*.[32]

Quite beautiful to look at for their warm ochres and siennas, luminous blues and greens, and various subtle textures, the geographically neutral interview backdrops are another important aspect of the film's signature aesthetic and ultimately much more than a choice for expediency's sake: this visual (dis)location of more than half of the interview subjects, their interviews set in no place at all rather than in New Orleans—and rather than someplace else in particular—underlines the massive, continuing displacement of people that the film works to overcome in its depiction and advocacy of the right of return. When Phyllis Montana LeBlanc explains from her FEMA trailer (finally delivered four months after she put in for it and eight months after landfall) that although she and her husband are in the city they love, her mother, sisters, niece, and nephew are dispersed and unable to return because, for one thing, appropriate support services for LeBlanc's autistic nephew no longer exist in the city, her words are affirmed by the fact of Gina Montana's interview, out of place against its neutral background. Montana's pained reflection on the lack of physical options and autonomy serves as an apt and moving summary: "With the evacuation scattering my family all over the United States, I felt like it was an ancient memory; as if we had been up on the auction block."[33] The use of the neutral backgrounds also levels the playing field for interview subjects, since "ordinary people," public officials, and experts receive the same graphic treatment; and furthermore, floating free of the city's recognizable landmarks, the neutral space of the interviews encourages the realization that the concerns of the monologists extend beyond the local arena.

Oscillating as it does, therefore, between situated testimony as an expression of territorial belonging and geographically neutral testimony as a controlled expression of outrageous dispossession, the film pauses pregnantly at the words of FEMA chief Michael Brown. Caught in news footage from the time, struggling to explain his lack of response to the tens of thousands stranded without food, water, tampons, or diapers, Brown stated: "There are people that are beginning to manifest themselves out in the community that *we didn't know were there*." Just so.

The famous split-screen CNN interview by Soledad O'Brien juxtaposing Brown's professed unawareness with Louisiana Superdome and Morial Convention Center footage the whole world was watching is included in *Levees*, along with the film's own interview with O'Brien expressing her bafflement that the FEMA chief could have less "intelligence" than that contained in a research file prepared by her 23-year-old production assistant. This interview-about-an-interview is itself embedded in a larger sequence that combines retrospective assessments of the situation by scholars[34] and public officials[35] with localized footage of people "we didn't know were there" to rebut the murderous irresponsibility of Brown's pronouncement and government inaction. In news and archival footage of those who rode out the storm we see: a woman in a life vest stepping out of a boat, the Coach purse she grips a wordless testimony to safer times; adults importuning the media to give or seek aid; and kids taking up the chant,

some seemingly more able than the adults to maintain high spirits, perhaps confident of the shelter of their parents or, naively, the government. Gathered in as well are situated testimonies, including Judith Morgan's, about how the evacuation was grievously mishandled given peoples' lack of means of evacuation: "They don't have the funds, they don't have the place to go, they don't have the vehicles." All of these filmicly coordinated claims are juxtaposed, in best Michael Moore fashion, with archival footage of public figures making empty protestations that all is in hand, or callously going about their privileged lives—among these President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove, and, memorably, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice shoe shopping and playing tennis.[36]

The film directs the attention of viewers—returns it in a way—not only to physical presence in this city but also to people's neglect when public transportation out of the city was not arranged, to their confinement (as when some were turned back by armed police as they tried to self-evacuate by walking across the Crescent City connection into the demographically white city on the other side[37]) and, most of all, to their apparently *alienable* belonging that the film itself undertakes to rectify through enacted return, cinematographic return, and the exposure of impossible return.

social ecology of a documentary

Disenfranchisement as a kind of distancing of certain residents from their home city was already a problem of enormous historical, economic, social, *and environmental* consequence *before* Katrina struck. Key premises of social ecology, according to Yoosun Park and Joshua Miller, are that "[t]he most disadvantaged members of the most disadvantaged communities suffer the greatest losses when disaster strikes," and that, according to the demographics of disadvantage, "[t]he ongoing environmental risks for poor people and people of color are consistently higher than for white people and those who are economically privileged."[38] Specifically in New Orleans, "[s]ome of the most historic Black neighborhoods ... were on the lowest ground and sustained some of the most severe damage."[39]

Certainly I agree with the Internet Movie Database's description of the film as being about "the gross incompetence of the various governments and the powerful from the local to the federal level" and "how the poor and underprivileged of New Orleans were mistreated in this grand calamity and [are] still ignored today."[40] But I believe the film's even greater impetus is to represent the calamity as social ecological in nature.[41] Park and Miller's social ecological analysis of urban landscapes reads like a location breakdown of this documentary project:

> The socially disadvantaged are more likely to live near chemical plants, landfills, and other contaminated lands. There is a greater likelihood that they will be living in more vulnerable, substandard dwellings served by older, less well-maintained infrastructures, for example, roads, sewers. They are more likely to be living in overcrowded, environmentally risky areas. Much of public housing, built during the 1950s and 1960s, tend to cluster in areas that are along major transportation routes, reclaimed land, or adjacent to industrial facilities.[42]

In *Levees*, location shooting in the devastated Ninth Ward, combined with archival footage of the stranded inhabitants, reveals a city noticeably segregated by race and income where middle and upper-middle class white residents of New Orleans' "outlying (and ... literally higher) suburban communities" are nowhere to be seen, while poor blacks wade through the toxic ooze in "low-lying flood-prone areas."[43] Although some people in post-Katrina New Orleans continue to regard Katrina as a colorblind or "equal opportunity" natural disaster,[44] the film for its part portrays the unevenness of risk factors in the face of calamity and the "malign intersection of weather and water with a man-made social and racial topography."[45]

Moreover, the film's character and narrative trajectories correspond with a social ecological analysis of institutional life. The frustrated inability of so many of *Levees*' interviewees to rectify the problems that they so eloquently describe pertains to a larger context in which the people who are the most dependent on governmental support of major flood-prevention projects (the building and maintenance of levees; the preservation and restoration of protective wetlands) lack money, education, and political clout for mobilizing to demand change.

Throughout the film we see and hear many individuals decrying the neglect of the disadvantaged: Kanye West's impromptu statement to Mike Myers that "George Bush doesn't care about black people" and the film's own interview with West; Mayor Nagin's query after noting that people were dispersed with one-way tickets: "Why don't you give them a ticket home?"; Al Sharpton addressing the Congressional Black Caucus and importuning the media "Stop calling them refugees. These are American citizens that in most cases were very viable taxpayers and ... the connotation of refugees is like they are others from somewhere else needing charity" [and if they were from elsewhere??].[46] A woman holds up her mortgage statement before the Bring New Orleans Back Commission meeting as proof of paid-up property taxes earmarked for police and school services while protesting that she "can't get a school open" in her neighborhood. As Florence Jackson asks: "Where is my government?" All of these are passionate speakers with legitimate claims. But we see little or no evidence of responsive action.

In fact, the film's vision of the future is dire, especially given its concentration in the penultimate segment on the interruption of the intergenerational

transfer of wealth (this section is where Pierce's story of his father's loss comes in) and the continuing inadequacy of the flood protection.[47] Professors Robert Bea and Calvin Mackie, and Louisiana State Representative Arthur Morrell, among others, describe the history, politics, and engineering of New Orleans' flood control system: in certain places there was an I-wall but no actual levee (created from a dirt berm) because the necessary land was deemed too costly to purchase and because revenue from oil and natural gas leases in the Gulf of Mexico was appropriated by the federal government instead of flowing to Louisiana. The breaches represent the "most tragic failure for a civil engineering system in the history of the US" and yet the Army Corps is immune to lawsuits. To Lee's audible question "Is it safe [to return]?," Bea responds "The answer is no, it's not safe." It would be difficult in this context not to give credence to Hot 8 Brass Band leader Benny Pete's comment: "They been knowing this thing could happen ... if they knew it *could* have happened, it's almost like they *let* it happen."

Two interviews in contradistinction with one another exemplify the film's expressivity: Dr. Ivor van Heerden of Louisiana State University Hurricane Center discusses his trip to the Netherlands and the film cuts to footage of the extensive flood control installation there. "I was actually embarrassed to talk about ours," he says.[48] Back in the US, Colonel Lewis Setliff, Commander of Taskforce Guardian, US Army Corps of Engineers, has been photographed and interviewed inspecting the sheet pile and I-wall levees. At the beginning of Act III we saw him in close-up turning his face to the sheeting. Now, almost at the end of Act IV, he walks away from the camera. The film then dissolves to his further receding form, until, in an optical effect, his body fades away completely as if absorbed in a cinematographic/atmospheric heat mirage. The disappearance of this would-be guardian of the disadvantaged connotes another kind of vanishing: structural failure in a geopolitical environment lacking accountability and economic justice. The end comes with LeBlanc in her FEMA trailer (before the formaldehyde contamination problem was widely known) reading for the camera a poem of her own composition that I quote in part: "My being together broke when I fell apart. My smell broke away from my skin."

evacuating agency

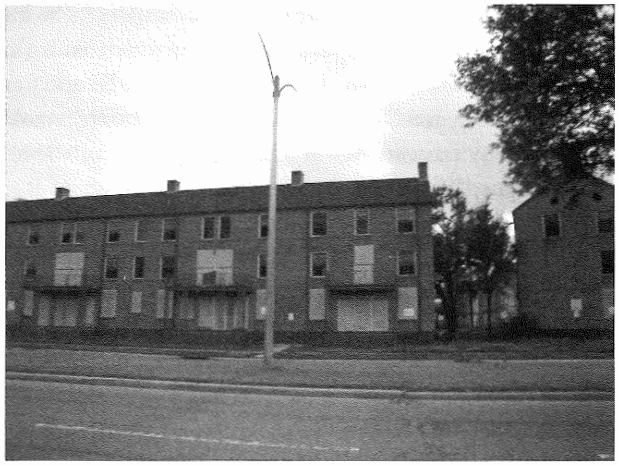
When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts is a commanding work on Katrina by virtue of its visual and analytic power as the creation of a cinema auteur and authoritative commentator on race relations in America for whom the regional tragedy of Katrina bespeaks the national shame of ongoing, widespread, institutionalized racism. Its images and sounds were in my eye and ear when I undertook my own small trip to this environment out of which people were blown, flown, bused, flooded, rescued, evacuated, and disappeared, about which they speak with such dignity, and to which they struggle to return,

both literally and in terms of a return to structural integrity.[49] The disposition of areas of the city in April 2008 was very much in line with what Lee and those who appeared before his cameras had predicted two years before.

Pictured overleaf (figures 3.3a, 3.3b, and 3.3c) is the Lafitte Avenue public housing complex on the verge of demolition, the last of the ambitious projects built in post-World War II New Orleans by President Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration to be demolished against public protest. The Lafitte had become notorious for criminal, especially drug-related, activity. But, scaled to fit the surrounding neighborhood and designed with wrought iron balustrades and communal courtyards, the red brick housing blocks were also home to working poor: the maids and other service workers of the city's tourism industry. Tenants were given a window of opportunity to return to New Orleans from Houston, Memphis, Atlanta, or Chicago to collect their belongings. But when that metaphorical window closed, so did the *actual* doors and windows of their homes, sealed up at considerable expense by the installation of metal plates before being opened for clearing. Latino workers, possibly recent arrivals, bagged up and threw away the worldly possessions of displaced African American families, in preparation for demolition.[50] All but one block of the complex is gone now and as I write this the residences of some of New Orleans' working poor, with the destruction of public housing, the end of federal rental subsidies, and the recall of temporary trailers, are tents under the I-10.[51]

This condemning and razing of the houses of the poor in the aftermath of Katrina is an effect of the phenomenon Naomi Klein has described as "disaster capitalism": a form of opportunistic corporatism that capitalizes on sudden catastrophic events to "rai[d] the public sphere" by suspending governmental checks and balances in favor of high stakes insider business dealings, privatization, deregulation, and drastic reduction of social spending, all of which adversely affect poor and middle-class people and any others who dissent.[52] Disaster capitalism is "fundamentalist," Klein explains, invoking the supremacist ideology of its advocates as well as its historical and philosophical affinities with religious extremism. Within the first three paragraphs of her book *Shock Doctrine*, Klein quotes Congressman Richard Baker's chilling post-Katrina statement (also included in *Levees*): "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did."[53] As of March 2008, two and a half years after Katrina, the city had reached only 71.8 percent of its pre-Katrina population of about half a million people, with African Americans, those living in poverty, and registered Democrats as significantly overlapping demographic categories in which the rate of return is dramatically lower.[54] The city of NOLA (New Orleans, Louisiana), it could be said, is under the kind of occupation known as gentrification.

And so I've been praising *Levees*' use of the various forms of testimony to stake an ongoing claim to New Orleans' contested landscape. However, it seems important simultaneously to recognize the nostalgic aspect of *Levees*,



Figures 3.3a, 3.3b, and 3.3c

Lafitte Avenue public housing complex on the verge of demolition (photos by Janet Walker)

a "longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed."[55] In its occupation with the "tragedies of not belonging," the film may lose its chance to "puzzle out" Rogoff's aforementioned "perils of the fantasms of belonging." Relatedly, while *Levees* includes frequent references to (lost) home ownership by African Americans in New Orleans, it contains few references to the long-term, intransigent problems of poverty even though—as outside statistics reveal—prior to Katrina 91.2 percent of the city's poor families of all races were African American and 35 percent of African Americans (compared with 11 percent of whites) were living below the poverty line.[56] By concentrating on immediate contingency, idealizing home and community, and embracing identity politics, *Levees* may actually inhibit to a certain extent the "working through" of a long-standing social malaise at the very moment when exposed racism demands a new order.

Likewise, the film's investment in the human rights discourse of "right of return" may be a political, interpersonal, and geographic dead end. I hazard this claim while acknowledging monumental negligence by the federal government and private insurance companies; disproportional capital in the hands of residential, commercial, and industrial developers; and the fact that rational people may find quite a bit of traction invoking the right of return from the standpoint of ethical commitment. The deepest problem of right of return, I submit, is not that people are not back, but rather that the geography this discourse tends to imagine lacks potential. In a petrified topography, return may serve no purpose more fully, as Wendy Brown has argued, than to further "reify and regulate the subject produced by social powers."[57] It is not safe to return to former conditions in which subjects were constrained by the economies of structural engineering and engineered race- and class-based segregation. Interviewee Herbert Freeman represents a possible, albeit sad, exception to *Levees*' and the speakers' advocacy of the right of return. Telling with great self-possession the story of how his mother died in her wheelchair while waiting for the buses to come outside the Morial Convention Center—the buses came four days later—Freeman concludes: "I don't ever want to be under their jurisdiction. I don't want to be under the leadership of no one in New Orleans or Louisiana or nothing."[58]

trouble the water

Kimberly and Scott Roberts, protagonists of *Trouble the Water*, do return to New Orleans, initially to survey the destruction of their neighborhood (like Wilhelmina Blanchard, Joyce Moses, Wendell Pierce, and others in *Levees*) and eventually to take up residence once again. But the film is less idealizing with regard to return, more open than *Levees* to airing the dirty laundry of monoeconomic and monoracial community, and thus more resistant to a separatist geography that "bind[s] us all together under the aegis of the dominant."[59]

In terms of testimonial time, person, and place, *Trouble the Water* could be viewed as *Levees* inside out. With its complicated temporal structure that begins in the middle and flashes back and forward, *Trouble* encompasses distinct "before" and "after" Katrina time frames in which the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood is depicted warts and all; there is an active agent in the person of Kimberly Rivers Roberts who not only self-evacuates with her husband, taking along children and others who cannot help themselves, but also plans and shoots the cinema verité-style home movie footage that anchors this autobiographical documentary (a model of *its* kind).[60] As we hear her say to neighbors from behind the video camera she happened to pick up just prior to the storm,[61] "If I get some exciting shit, maybe I can sell it to the white folks"; and, more than a situated testimony here and there, the film includes an extended return trajectory in which the Robertses retrace their evacuation route, reencountering along the way objects, obstacles, and those who would also testify.

"I'm on my way to New Orleans," Kimberly Roberts says into her cellphone as she and her husband return with their friend Brian two weeks after the storm (although released after *Levees*, *Trouble* began its post-Katrina location shooting earlier). "Some people I met are doing a documentary; a real documentary." And through the windows of the car, the lens of the camera these protagonists hold, and the lens of this "real documentary," we see the muddied streets and downed buildings, the unfortunate iconography of the Katrina cycle: "I didn't expect to see this. This is like a movie. This can't be real." And once she arrives, we see Kimberly and company walking and gesturing and speaking of what was: "Everybody! This is my neighborhood ... I miss those days and it's hurt me to know that it's not going to be the same no more."

Roberts is not only viewing the devastation but actually reconnoitering, performing inspections that had not yet been carried out: "keeping it real," as Hot 8 band member Dinerral Shavers put it in *Levees*, gesturing toward homes bearing spray-painted marks of inspection but also barred windows and locked doors belying the graphic claim that anyone had entered ("They didn't go into none of these houses!").[62] We are with Roberts on the street when the group discovers her uncle, dead in the front room of a house where he had sought shelter, and pulls in National Guardsmen to handle the body; the odor of death suffuses the scene throughout their efforts to show respect while bearing the stench. And we are with Roberts inside her own former house when she reclaims from its wall hook the framed photograph of her mother who died of AIDS when Roberts was a girl of 13.

Nor do the proactivity of the group's situated testimony and the critical acuity of the film's compound testimony stop there. The next "return" installment is constituted from Kimberly and Scott Roberts and company's retracing of the path they had followed during their self-evacuation, returning, that is, to the stations of their self-help and mutual cooperation

in the face of abandonment by the government. Like Joyce Moses in *Levees*, the group members narrate the steps they took, perhaps tamping down some of the same mud molecules that had swirled around their legs upon evacuation. But in comparison with *Levees*, here the territory is not inertly deserted but rather occupied by personnel of the powers that be and reanimated by the group's perambulatory dialogues with these squads. Outside the US Naval Support Activity, ten blocks from his former house, Scott Roberts explains that the Coast Guard had directed the band to this naval base that was being decommissioned so that they could take advantage of the potential resource of its two hundred empty family housing units and five hundred evacuated barracks. Not only was the group denied entrance, he reports, but twenty troops came out to the gate with M-16s cocked and aimed to disperse the crowd. His testimony is disputed, however, by a military authority who states that there was "never any hint of us using any type of force," yet continues, somewhat self-contradictorily, "we had to do our job and protect the interest of the government." Another example of conflicting perceptions of a single situation follows when Scott Roberts pushes student desks together at Frederick Douglass High School to show how they improvised to avoid sleeping on the floor, while young white Guardsmen describe in disgust how "they," the evacuees, "trashed" the high school and how lacking they are in survival skills. Although *Trouble* shares the Robertses' perspective by presenting a trajectory strewn with landmarks of the group's resourcefulness and generosity (the dogs that greeted them with wagging tails upon their first return to their street; the boat they used to ferry the group to high ground; the spot where Scott and Brian felt around with their feet under standing water to find the keys to the truck owned by a local business that they used to evacuate thirty people to Alexandria, Louisiana), it also enhances the possibilities of testimony as a truth-seeking mode by acknowledging the existence of conflicting testimony.

I would compare these sequences in *Trouble*, in which the face value of individual testimony is superseded by a more complex testimonial regime, to an exceptional sequence in *Levees* that complicates the film's generally straightforward acceptance of the evidential status of testimony. In Act I half-a-dozen people talk about having heard an explosion. Some ascribe it to an engineered bombing of the levees to prevent the waters from flooding into wealthy areas. Michael Knight describes the sound: "At first I heard one boom. I thought it was a big transformer. 'It's a transformer,' I say. But, we been sitting in the dark now for about two hours, three hours [so the transformer would have blown previously; this must be something else]." Sylvester Francis offers, "I think the levee cracked and they helped it the rest of the way. They had a bomb; they bombed that sucker." As the sequence proceeds, we are presented with black and white archival footage of damage wrought by Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and of the purposeful dynamiting of the levees during the 1927 Mississippi flood. We witness as well

Gina Montana's statement that "during Betsy ... they dynamited the levees and flooded the Lower Ninth Ward in order to save some of the more expensive property in the lakefront area." These claims are not so much confirmed as explained by Professor Mackie ("when the water gushed through a gaping hole ... you gonna hear some type of sound; the levees gave") and (former) Mayor Marc Morial who states that while the rumors of the dynamiting of the levees during Hurricane Betsy "became almost an article of faith with people," the situation has never to this day been investigated. Historian Douglas Brinkley calls the belief that the levees were dynamited during Katrina an "urban myth" but one that is understandable given that "these people have a long experience of being ripped off," thereby articulating what must be Lee's own view. On the commentary track, we hear Lee respond with some trepidation as this "dynamiting" sequence begins, saying, "Alright, here we go. I felt that it was my duty as a filmmaker to have this in the film." Proceeding with his commentary, he insists that there is "some legitimacy" to what people say, even though whether you want to believe it, "that's on you." Lee concludes with the explanation that many African Americans, he among them, "don't put anything past the United States government when it comes to black people." *Levees* and to some extent *Trouble* refuse the role of exposing falsehoods and adjudicating testimonial factuality in order to suggest, through the accumulation of information and opinion, that testimony is contingent on social ecological perspective, and knowledge on a relational reading of persons and places.[63]

Cinema verité lends immediacy to *Trouble*'s enunciative presence. In contradistinction to *When the Levees Broke*, where situated and geographically neutral testimonies hark back with feeling to a community we spectators know mainly through these elegiac means, *Trouble the Water* presents Roberts' own down-to-earth footage of "the before": "It's me, reporting live; Kold Madina," using her professional name as singer/songwriter.[64] This is no idyll of com-munity. Through Roberts' eyes and our own saccadic vision we observe alco-holism, drug dealing, and combative behavior, as when the men at a corner store challenge Kimberly filming them and she snaps back, presumably alluding to the surveillance camera, "What you looking at? You got *me* on camera."[65] We see snippets of a car interior while on the soundtrack Roberts' voice is heard talking with the car's occupant who is looking to buy some weed (another type of "shit" for her to sell?); we see her uncle passed out on a well-trodden stoop in a drunken haze, prior to his death in the storm. "Don't do that when ya'll get big," Roberts warns children playing nearby.

The film is pragmatic in its assessment of the causes of the social problems we observe. In its orchestration of situated testimonial and cinema verité sequences, we hear the accusation of bias so loudly played in *Levees* as well as the tones of self-induced damage. Scott Roberts explains that he had previously turned to drug dealing because there were no good employ-ment options for a person with limited education and yet, by the end of the

Figure 3.4

"Three cars of people pass and they all know me" (Kimberly Roberts in *Trouble the Water*)

film (perhaps eighteen months later), we see the results of his personal choice to take a carpenter job with his comment that it is good to "do something and come back and see it and say 'I did that.' ... Now I get to rebuild my city ... I love the smell of that sawdust."

Near the end of the film Roberts is back in her neighborhood, speaking warmly of the benefits of community:

> Three cars of people pass and they all know me ... If something happened to me right around here, right now, somebody's gonna do something for me 'cause they know me ... If I ain't got a ride, somebody's gonna give me a ride. And if I need some money ... they might not loan me no money, but they'll give me some conversation. So, you know, it feels good to be back home.

Yes, but. In her own footage at the beginning of the film, we had heard Roberts state that she had tried to rent a car but just "couldn't afford the luxury" of leaving. And as the film too informs us with a line of text subtitling the image of the bumper-to-bumper exodus, there was no public transportation provided for pre-storm evacuation. (Although Mayor Nagin did order traffic contraflow for those with wheels.) Perhaps Uncle Ned also lacked a neighborly ride out of town.

More than simply sharing *Levees*' longing for black community, *Trouble* suggests the perils of the fantasms of belonging to a racially and economically segregated geography where neighbors lack the resources to help neighbors, and interracial strife makes hotspots of the islands and perimeters that mark out difference. And yet, where *Levees*' mood is one of tragic

dignity against outrageous injustice,[66] *Trouble* ends with an impression, however utopian, of integrated community. Scott's white boss is presented as a good person and mentor, and the "white folks" to whom Kimberly did sell her footage (or, presumably, reach some sort of positive financial arrangement) incorporated her music as Kold Madina amply into the film. Roberts' displacement by the storm and flood and, significantly, her co-authorship of a return narrative (living history that could be filmed and filming history that demanded to be lived) expanded Roberts' orbit beyond New Orleans: "I'm trying to do something different. I see it now. I couldn't see it before when I was inside."

conclusion

If at first I distinguished the spatial otherness through which Caruth defines traumatic experience (that it is only "fully evident in connection with another place and time") from testimony in *the same* place, in light of documentary uses of situated testimony I have also qualified that view. In a certain respect, the situation and even the place to which people return is always both an "other" spot and the same spot. Heraclitus' "continually flowing river" applies, as does Rogoff's insight that territories are always multiply inhabited—with an effect of strife or benefit as the case may be.[67]

Unprecedented upheaval on the Gulf Coast exposed the grotesqueries of a racially biased infrastructure and I share the outrage of residents and activists who are experiencing and protesting the disenfranchisement of African Americans from New Orleans by profiteering disaster capitalists. But it does not seem to me that the equitable solution lies in a return to pre-Katrina conditions.

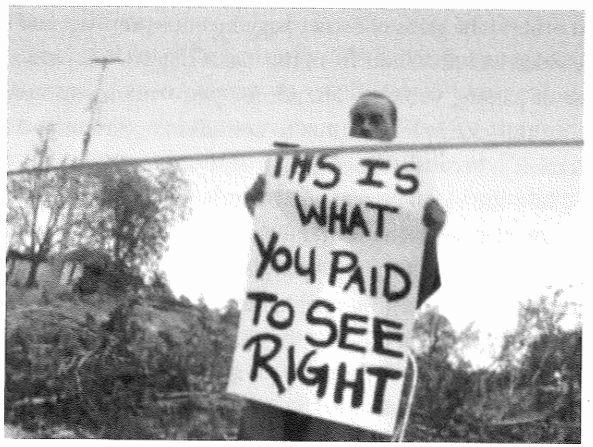
In the context of Israel-Palestine, Eyal Weizman has suggested that how we "practice space" is important, especially when historical moments of evacuation offer new and humanizing possibilities for the reallocation of resources (that we would implement thoughtfully and in opposition to the "clean slate" fundamentalism of a Richard Baker). Importing Weizman's terms, the flooded city of New Orleans could be seen to represent a moment of "ungrounding"; undeniable disaster, yes, but, still, an opportunity to "disactivate" the ills of economic and racial segregation characteristic of the pre-Katrina environment.[68] Buildings can be repurposed, surface structures—such as roadways and green spaces—reorganized to connect formerly divided habitations, and the US infrastructure—including the levees—reengineered in the interest of human rights. I cannot but feel that such a *transformative* view of race and place—which could, arguably, include an economically, architecturally, and, where appropriate for the black community, a racially mixed housing plan along with a complete reworking of the system of resources distribution—would be a most desirable and ethical foundation for a rebuilt New Orleans.

Levees and *Trouble* are at their most interesting when they offer a critical sense of space, as they do when their situated testimonies expose the politicized granularity of the ground below our feet or the deceptiveness of landmarks. To take one final example, consider the sequence in *Levees* when Tanya Harris (an ACORN activist) tells how she misread the rubble in her grandmother's neighborhood and brought back incorrect information about the house her grandmother had built on property bought around 1949. "We were looking for the house. We were, like, 'Do you see it?' 'Did it move?'" To her grandmother she reported, "I think it's in Mr. Johnny's yard." Turns out she had been mistaken in a street where the landmarks themselves had shifted and it was not easy to be definite about anything in the wreckage.

In certain respects, if not to perfection, *When the Levees Broke* and *Trouble the Water* deploy situated testimonies of return to tap the potential Rogoff sees in contemporary artworks; they suggest how far we have come and how far we still must go to realize spatial transformation. So I want to end with a comment about a video piece that, while short in length (at a minute and a half), is long on commentary, as an explicitly activist art piece, about the complexities of shared space.

New Orleans for Sale! screened at the 2008 New Orleans International Human Rights Festival and is currently available for viewing on YouTube, as well as 2-cent.com. I saw it on my visit to the city several days after the desire to conduct ethnographic research on "disaster tourism" led me to take an official "Hurricane Katrina Tour" with the Gray Line bus company. To create the video, the group 2-cent performed and documented a special kind of "return" to the Ninth Ward, reoccupying the space from which many families have been expunged and registering (to disaster tourists such as myself and others) the gains of carpet-bagging entrepreneurs and outsiders.

But the video includes shots from the inside (Figure 3.5c) as well as from the outside of passing vehicles. The filmed performance succeeds, I contend (hoping this example amounts to considered opinion and not mere self-justification), because the tourists and 2-cent meet on common ground.[69] While the video polices the boundaries of the neighborhood, it also enacts an energetic encounter between those who have returned home and those who visit. In the spirit of engagement, I submit that we have an ethical imperative to come, to see, and to act together; to spend our dollars not only to visit but also to remake space as multiply inhabited community. And, indeed, the new and colorfully painted homes of Musicians' Village in the Upper Ninth Ward were jointly created by New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity and the sweat equity of local homeowners. Moreover, although the Lafitte Avenue and other housing projects were torn down rather than remodeled,[70] the nonprofit developer has made a commitment to the "'one-to-one' replacement of public housing units" with a promising mix of new on-site housing and "'in-fill' development" in the surrounding neighborhood. Existing but dilapidated



Figures 3.5a, 3.5b, and 3.5c
Disaster tourism engaged (*New Orleans for Sale!*)

homes are now being stripped back to their cypress studs, remodeled, and prepared for subsidized ownership by low-income residents.[71]

Committed to physical propinquity, engaged with the affective lure of home, a given documentary of situated testimony may also describe an "*unheimlich*" or "unhomed geography" that is transformative with regard to rites/rights of return and porous in its ethnic, racial, generational, and economic contours.[72] Each of the three Katrina documentaries discussed here invites a particular form of the "site-seeing" Giuliana Bruno attributes to cinematic spectating in general,[73] a form that migrates through checkpoints and across geographical distance to contest a racially and topographically essentialized mapping of post-Katrina New Orleans. Each is an active interlocutor in a conversation about the geopolitics of our multiply inhabited planet at a time of increasing mobility, forced migration or forced repatriation, and intense struggle for places to call home.

acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Holly Willis for introducing me to *Trouble the Water* and for her insightful, informative review of the film on the occasion of its Sundance premiere (see note 61). I am also grateful to Dave Cash, a friend and now high school teacher of history and African American history in New Orleans, for teaching me about the city and sharing a trip to the Lafitte Avenue housing projects on the verge of demolition. Liz Dunnebacke, Royce Osborn, Jennifer Peterson, Tim Ryan, and Betsy Weiss also showed me generous hospitality in New Orleans. Finally, thank you Bhaskar for going it alone as editor of your co-editor's chapter; your astute comments and high standards are much appreciated!

notes

1. *Right to Return: New Home Movies of the Lower 9th Ward* (US, Jonathan Demme, 108 min.). The film was presented by Demme at the 5th Annual New Orleans International Human Rights Film Festival, 9 April 2008.
2. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (original French language text 1971; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 230.
3. Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 180.
4. This concept of testimony or traumatic witnessing as a process not only of recording but actually of bringing the past into being is drawn from the work of Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Cathy Caruth, prominent among other theorists of trauma and testimony. In particular, see Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, coauthored by Shoshana Felman and Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 57. See also Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) and Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

5. See my discussion of staging in Janet Walker, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 26, 135–6.
6. Caruth, *Trauma*, 8–9.
7. These specific examples are drawn from other chapters in this volume: on Kigali, see Mick Broderick, "Mediating Genocide: Producing Digital Survivor Testimony in Rwanda," and on the *adivasi* of the Narmada river valley, see Bishnupriya Ghosh, "We Shall Drown, but We Shall Not Move: The Ecologics of Testimony in NBA Documentaries."
8. I adapt the term "fatal environment" from Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985).
9. Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 1–4.
10. Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 25–8, 3.
11. For several superb film and media studies works that incorporate spatial studies, see Linda Krause and Patrice Petro, eds., *Global Cities: Cinema, Architecture, and Urbanism in a Digital Age* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Edward Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); and Martin Lefebvre, ed., *Landscape and Film* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006). I wish also to mention here Maurice Stevens' valuable development of the concept of "traumatic iconography" in its particular relationship to the experiencing and representation of Hurricane Katrina. For Stevens, the mode of visual representation that traumatic iconography describes is simultaneously materially significant and profoundly inaccessible. Maurice Stevens, "From the Deluge: Traumatic Iconography and Emergent Visions of Nation in Katrina's Wake," *English Language Notes*, 44, no. 2 (Winter 2006), Forum on Photography and Race, eds. Leigh Raiford and Elizabeth Abel.
12. Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 12.
13. In addition to the films discussed here, see *Right to Return: New Home Movies from the Lower 9th Ward*, *Still Waiting: Life after Katrina* (dir. Ginny Martin and Kate Browne, 2007, 58 min.); *The Drive: A Documentary Tour of Post-Katrina New Orleans*, Segment One: The Lower Ninth Ward (dir. Tim Ryan and Matt Wisdom, 2006, 75 min.); *Kamp Katrina* (dir. David Redmon and Ashley Sabin, 2007, 75 min.); *The Axe in the Attic* (dir. Ed Pincus and Lucia Small, 2007, 110 min.); *God Provides* (dir. Brian M. Cassidy and Melanie Shatzky, 2007, 9 min.); and *Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans* (dir. Dawn Logsdon, 2008, 68 min.). See also online archives including: the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank, a project of George Mason University's Center for History and New Media and the University of New Orleans, in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and other partners, www.hurricanearchive.org (accessed 15 August 2008); the New Orleans Video Access Center, which supported local film- and videomakers to create works about Katrina that were posted online and screened throughout the country, www.novacvideo.org (accessed 15 August 2008); Alive in Truth: The New Orleans Disaster Oral History and Memory Project, which collects and makes available transcripts of oral interviews, www.aliveintruth.org (accessed 15 August 2008). For a discussion of some of these and other Katrina archives, see Alan H. Stein and Gene B. Preuss, "Oral History, Folklore, and Katrina," in *There Is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster*, eds. Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires (New York: Routledge, 2006).
14. Available on 2-cent.com (accessed 4 October 2008). The piece was screened at the 5th Annual New Orleans International Human Rights Film Festival on 12 April 2008 under the title(s) *Truth*, or *This Is What You Paid to See* and won the Audience Award for Best Short.
15. Eyal Weizman used this term in "Conversations," a talk presented at the REDCAT, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, 6 May 2008. See also Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).
16. The HBO mini-series won Emmy Awards in the categories of Exceptional Merit in Nonfiction Filmmaking (Spike Lee, Producer; Sheila Nevins, Executive Producer; Jacqueline Glover, Supervising Producer), Outstanding Directing (Spike Lee), and Outstanding Picture Editing for Nonfiction Programming (Sam Pollard, Supervising Editor; Geeta Gandbhir, Editor; Nancy Novack, Editor).
17. Wikipedia, "*When the Levees Broke*," en.wikipedia.org/wiki/When_the_Levees_Broke (accessed 14 August 2008).
18. Thomas Sobchack and Vivian Sobchack set out the categories of "observation," "analysis," "persuasion," and "aesthetic expression," as well as the three subcategories of the analysis documentary: epic, compilation, and cinema verité. Sobchack and Sobchack, "The Documentary Film," *An Introduction to Film* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980).
19. For the sake of accuracy, I would like to point out that the film does contain some sparing use of earlier images of life in New Orleans prior to the fateful storm season. These are drawn from archival and news sources and include, for example, black and white footage of the devastation caused by Hurricane Betsy in 1965, more recent footage of musicians playing and diners dining in New Orleans, and so on. Such sequences appear as relatively brief flashbacks in a temporal structure that concentrates, as I have indicated, on the Katrina period.
20. Ernest Callenbach, "*When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*," *Film Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2006): 4–10.
21. The film includes more than three-dozen people interviewed in the local environment, many of whom are also within the group of nearly seven-dozen people interviewed against the neutral background. However, as indicated, the screen time of the on-site interviews is disproportionately less.
22. Having listened repeatedly to this passage, I think Moses' words are properly transcribed. But she may have stated that the couple "couldn't get aboard [a boat perhaps?] to get out either" rather than "couldn't get—afford to get—out either." Suffice it to say that financial wherewithal was an enormous factor in people's ability safely to evacuate.
23. Martin C. Evans, "Recalling Family Taken by Katrina," *Newsday*, 30 August 2006, newsday.com/topic/ny-usmom304870424aug30,0,6469431.story (accessed 15 August 2008).
24. The term "object survivors" is borrowed from its use in Holocaust museology. See Noah Shenker, "Embodied Memory: The Institutional Mediation of Survivor Testimony in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," in this volume.
25. Lefebvre, Introduction to *Landscape and Film*, xv.
26. One year after Katrina less than 50 percent of New Orleanians had returned, including substantially fewer African American than white former residents.

US Census Bureau, State & County QuickFacts, quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/22/22071.htm (accessed 15 August 2008); Adam Nossiter, "New Orleans Population Is Reduced Nearly 60%," *New York Times*, 7 October 2006; Wikipedia, "New Orleans, Louisiana: Demographics," en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_orleans#Demographics (accessed 14 August 2008). Other major reports on post-Katrina recovery include Amy Liu, Matt Fellowes, and Mia Mabanta, "Special Edition of the Katrina Index: A One-Year Review of Key Indicators of Recovery in Post-Storm New Orleans," Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, August 2006, http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/2006_KatrinaIndex.pdf (accessed 22 October 2008); and Amy Liu and Allison Plyer, "Executive Summary: State of Policy and Progress, April 2008: Two Years, Eight Months since Katrina Made Landfall," *The New Orleans Index* (Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program and Greater New Orleans Community Data Center: April 2008), http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2007/~/media/Files/rc/reports/2007/08neworleansindex/200804_katrinaES.pdf (accessed 22 October 2008). An additional feature length segment of *Levees*, entitled "Next Movement: Act V," is included on the DVD box set (released 19 December 2006). However, it does not represent a later period of recovery, being comprised instead mainly (perhaps entirely) of interview material and other footage that was available for but not included in Acts I through IV.

27. See Sheila Crowley, "Where Is Home? Housing for Low-Income People after the 2005 Hurricanes," in *There Is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster*, and Martha Carr, "Rebuilding Should Begin on Higher Ground, Group Says," *New Orleans-Picayune*, 19 November 2005.
28. See Liu, Fellowes, and Mabanta, "Special Edition of the Katrina Index," and Rick Jervis, "66% Are back in New Orleans, but Personal Services Still Lag," *USA Today*, 13 August 2007, usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-08-12-neworleans_N.htm (accessed 15 August 2008).
29. By "enacted" I mean real people in a real situation engaging in an activity for the purpose of its filming: see Walker, *Trauma Cinema*.
30. The film also documents Paris Ervin's search for his mother, whom he had assumed had escaped the flood. Instead her body was found under the refrigerator, where she had been dead for weeks.
31. Spike Lee, commentary track, *When the Levees Broke* DVD.
32. The score of *When the Levees Broke* borrows themes Blanchard composed for *Inside Man*. We also sense Lee's literal and orchestrating presence when the Hot 8 Brass Band reunites in New York and, subsequently, New Orleans after many had lost their instruments and more. Act IV opens with the band accompanying a horse-drawn hearse carrying a coffin labeled with a homemade sign, "Katrina," down the debris-straitened street we had seen several times previously, emptied of life, while playing a funeral dirge. About an hour later, the closing sequence of Act IV and the film itself features the band playing an upbeat "I'll Fly Away" ("hallelujah by and by ...") as per the tradition to conclude funerals with a joyful sound.
33. An interview with public intellectual Michael Dyson is edited in here to take up Montana's reference to the history of slavery. He mocks those who would disclaim the validity of the reference: "Oh, no, you're being hyperbolic. You're just engaging in all forms of racially inflammatory rhetoric." And then concludes: "Well, the fact is they were treating them like slaves in the ship. Families were being separated. Children were being taken from their mothers and fathers. Those more weary and those who were more likely to be vulnerable were separated from those who were stronger ... The separation of the evacuation where people lost sight and lost sound and lost sense of their loved ones."
34. These include Michael Dyson (*Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster* [New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2005]); Douglas Brinkley (*The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast* [New York: Harper Collins, 2006]); John Barry (*Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* [New York: Touchstone, 1997]); and Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Tulane University Calvin Mackie.
35. These include Al Sharpton, Louisiana State Representative Karen Carter, and Mayor Ray Nagin.
36. With thanks to Bhaskar Sarkar, who pointed this out, I would say that, yes, the film could very well be construed as a documentary example of Fredric Jameson's "conspiratorial allegory": a new (from the 1970s) cognitive mapping realized in cultural productions as "heightened and spatialized perception" that "on some level, in the superstate, the conspiracies are real." Although the "object survivors" seen in *Levees* are not generally of a technological nature, Jameson's discussion of the "technological object" of the "conspiratorial text" gets at a generative quality of objects in certain narratives that those of *Levees* would seem to share. See Fredric Jameson, "Part One, Totality as Conspiracy," *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 31–3, 19.
37. While widely known and decried, *as an example of racial bias* this event has been denied by Gretna Mayor Ronnie Harris. A lawsuit was filed by State Senator Cleo Fields (D-Baton Rouge) and State Representative Cedric Richmond (D-New Orleans) against the city of Gretna and the Gretna Police Department. See Richard Webster, "Gretna Police Blocking Passage of New Orleanians Seeking Refuge," *New Orleans CityBusiness*, 9 October 2006, findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4200/is_2006009/ai_n16769340 (accessed 4 August 2008).
38. Yoosun Park and Joshua Miller, "The Social Ecology of Hurricane Katrina: Re-Writing the Discourse of 'Natural' Disasters," *Smith College Studies in Social Work* 76, no. 3 (2006): 10.
39. Crowley, "Where Is Home?" 141.
40. Kenneth Chisholm, Plot Summary: *When the Levees Broke*, Internet Movie Database, imdb.com/title/tt0783612/plotsummary (accessed 15 August 2008).
41. One might also say, immediately to borrow the term defined by Bishnupriya Ghosh, that the film operates through an "ecologics," or "a logic of *oikos* (*house* in Greek), or dwelling in a system connecting human and nonhuman worlds," in its abutment of *situated testimonies* about the human effects of Katrina to *place-specific* images of people in a storm-churned landscape and to unsituated but deeply informed expert and eye-witness testimonies (Ghosh, "We Shall Drown," in this volume).
42. Cited in Park and Miller, "Social Ecology," 10. The authors for their part cite L. Cutter, "The Geography of Social Vulnerability: Race, Class and Catastrophe, 2005," http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/cutter/pf/.
43. Chester Hartman and Gregory D. Squires, "Pre-Katrina, Post-Katrina, Editors' Introduction," *There Is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster*, 5.
44. Such a statement was made by the guide of the Gray Line "Hurricane Katrina Tour" in which I participated on 8 April 2008.

45. The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, 2005, 17, quoted in Park and Miller, "Social Ecology," 15.
46. Viewed in a comparative context, including various occurrences of displacement around the world, Sharpton's and the other speakers' calls for this change in vocabulary might be seen as a jingoistic demand for special treatment for US citizens. A related, sore irony is seen in the efforts by various agencies to deny aid to people who were already homeless before Katrina in favor of the "homeless homeowners" (evacuees, that is) displaced by the storm and flood. The National Alliance to End Homelessness estimated that 6,000 to 10,000 people who were homeless before Katrina were ineligible for disaster aid. See "HUD Program May Strand Many Previously Homeless Katrina Victims," National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2005, endhomelessness.org/do/uncoveredhomelessdhap.pdf, discussed in Crowley, "Where Is Home?" 134. See also Avis A. Jones-Deweever and Heidi Hartmann, "Abandoned before the Storms: The Glaring Disaster of Gender, Race, and Class Disparities in the Gulf," in *There's No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster.*
47. Before Katrina, the Lower Ninth Ward was 98 percent African American, with approximately 60 percent of residents owning their own homes, many of them free and clear. See Wikipedia, "New Orleans."
48. Van Heerden participated in a study of the path of the floodwaters by plotting the location and times of stopped clocks. David Kestenbaum, "Stopped? Clocks Tell Tale of Katrina Flooding," NPR, 30 January 2006, npr.org/templates/story/storoy.php?storyld=5175772 (accessed 19 August 2008). He continued to act as a whistleblower in his role as deputy director of the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center, having indicated that the Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA knew the levees had breached and had flown over to take photos, but that the federal government chose not to alert the state or begin rescue operations. The reason for this inaction, according to Van Heerden, was fear of federal culpability in the event of a systems failure rather than a hurricane as an "act of god." See Greg Palast, "Hurricane George: How the White House Drowned New Orleans," 23 August 2007, gregpalast.com/hurricane-georgehow-the-white-house-drowned-new-orleans/ (accessed 19 August 2008).
49. My friend Dave Cash in the Fair Grounds Race Course area of New Orleans still does not have heat upstairs because water remains in his gas line and neither his homeowners insurance nor the city will take responsibility.
50. See Mandalit del Barco, "Katrina Cleanup Puts Focus on Latino Workers," an NPR story originally aired on 24 October 2005, for a report on the controversy over the arrival of Latino workers from Texas, Florida, and Mexico to undertake the strenuous cleanup work in post-Katrina New Orleans, in some cases over the protests of local residents concerned that they had been "replaced by lower-wage Spanish-speaking workers" (1 of 2), http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyld=4972419 (accessed 28 December 2008). See also Tom Bearden, "New Orleans Sees Rise in Latino Population," Online NewsHour: Report, originally aired 28 August 2007, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social_issues/july-dec07/katrina_08-28.html (accessed 28 December 2008).
51. "Recently released estimates by Unity for the Homeless show that 150 people are living in tents under the I-10 overpass, 31 percent of whom are recently homeless because of the loss of federal rental assistance or their removal from temporary trailers," according to Amy Liu and Allison Plyer, "Executive Summary," 1.

52. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 6.
53. Klein, *Shock Doctrine*, 4.
54. Gordon Russell, "New Population Statistics Gloomy—Rate of Return to Area down Dramatically," *Times-Picayune*, 8 August 2006; William W. Falk, Matthew O. Hunt, and Larry L. Hunt, "Hurricane Katrina and New Orleanians' Sense of Place: Return and Reconstitution or 'Gone with the Wind'," *Du Bois Review* 3, no. 1 (2006): 115–28; William H. Frey, "Are We 'A Whole Other City'?" *Times-Picayune*, 28 August 2007. Frey indicates that "while 64 percent of the city's pre-Katrina white population returned by July 2006, only 43 percent of black residents—and just 22 percent of black residents age 25–34—did so." See also John A. Powell, Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Daniel W. Newhart, and Eric Stiens, "Towards a Transformative View of Race: The Crisis and Opportunity of Katrina," Crowley, "Where Is Home?" and Robert O. Zdenek, "Reclaiming New Orleans' Working-Class Communities," all in *There Is No Such Thing.*
55. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.
56. Cited in Park and Miller, "Social Ecology," 13. There are some such references in *Levees*, as when Mackie refers to pre-Katrina social problems including New Orleans' high murder rate, high dropout rate, and low wages.
57. Wendy Brown, "Revaluing Critique: A Response to Kenneth Baynes," *Political Theory* 28, no. 4 (2000): 471. See also the chapter "Rights and Losses" in her book *States of Injury* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). Although space constraints preclude the development of this thought in the body of the chapter, I would like to mention here that reification of black subjectivity in the case of Katrina also consists in the tendency to attribute discriminatory actions, inactions, and practices on the part of public officials to the "fact" of blackness instead of to the failings of said officials. This point occurred to me while listening to Nessan McMillan's superb presentation "Bearing Witness: The Rwandan Genocide on the Global Stage" at the international conference entitled Interrogating Trauma: Arts & Media Responses to Collective Suffering, sponsored by Murdoch University and Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Western Australia, 3 December 2008. I would also like to acknowledge Claire Sisco King's response to my presentation of a shorter version of this chapter at that same conference. It's all too easy, she indicated, to bracket off New Orleans as an isolated place of trauma—a kind of "Global South" in the United States, I would add.
58. There is only one short sequence in which we see Freeman *in situ*: he lights a memorial candle at the crypt in New Orleans where his mother was laid to rest. His acts of defiance, as I see them, are to have told this story, to have stated clearly that he will not return to New Orleans, and, also, to have pursued a lawsuit against the state of Louisiana, city of New Orleans, and several public officials. On 2 April 2008, however, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeal in New Orleans upheld the decision by the Orleans Parish Civil District judge to toss out Freeman's case on the basis that the government is entitled to immunity. Michael Kunzelman, "Appeals Court Denies Katrina 'Wrongful Death' Lawsuit," Associated Press, http://www.wwltv.com/local/stories/wwl040408tpwrongful.30516b44.html (accessed 15 August 2008).
59. Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, 110–11.
60. The film won the Grand Jury Prize in the Documentary category at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival among other awards, and received an Academy Award nomination for Best Documentary.

61. Holly Willis, "The Political Becomes Personal: Docs Use Real People to Make Big Issues Easier to Tackle," Sundance Film Festival, Focus on Film, 22 January 2008. sundance.org/festival/insider/2008-01-22-FOF-political-personal.asp (accessed 23 January 2008).
62. A prominent New Orleans musician, Shavers was shot dead while driving in a car with his wife and two children on 28 December 2006. He was 25 years old. See Gwen Filosa, "Two Die in New Orleans Shootings," *Times-Picayune*, 29 December 2006.
63. This sequence, like quite a few in the film, possesses a similar construction to that of *Shoah*, as described by Patricia Erens, where the process of testimonial evidence gathering is cumulative and open. "*Shoah*," *Film Quarterly*, 39, no. 4 (Summer 1986): 28–31. See Walker, *Trauma Cinema*, especially "Catastrophe, Representation, and the Vicissitudes of Memory" and "Disremembering the Holocaust: *Everything's for You*, *Second Generation Video*, and *Mr. Death*," for extended discussions of the uneven relationship among testimony, factual accuracy, and truth.
64. The songs of Kold Madina (Kimberly Rivers Roberts)—included in the film—are autobiographical and recursive; testimonial in a way.
65. I use the term saccadic vision with all due caution against overinvestment in the democratizing capabilities André Bazin attributed to long takes composed with multiple planes in sharp focus such that the spectator's eye, in theory, may rove at will. See André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," in *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
66. This affective meaning with which *Levees* leaves us is consolidated in the ending coda; the film's credit sequence is presented as successive images of the people who have appeared, stating their names and identifying information while holding in front of their faces, or being digitally framed by, empty picture frames.
67. Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, 23.
68. Weizman, "Conversations."
69. Reference here is to Common Ground Collective, founded seven days after Katrina struck by Sharon Johnson, Malik Rahim, and Brandon Darby to "rebuild the spirit of Southern Louisiana." See commongroundrelief.org.
70. The sole remaining block, mentioned above, has been left standing to serve as temporary housing while the new buildings are under construction.
71. Katy Rechdahl and Leslie Williams, "Lafitte Revival to Encompass Neighborhood," *Times-Picayune*, 21 August 2008, posted on nola.com, nola.com/news/index.ssf/2008/08/meeting_tonight_on_lafitte_off.html (accessed 21 September 2008).
72. Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, "Introduction: This Is Not ... Unhomed Geographies."
73. Giuliana Bruno, "Site-Seeing: The Cine City," in *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002).

four

from "super babies" and "nazi bastards" to victims finding a voice

the memory trajectory of the norwegian lebensborn children

bjørn sørenssen

I

A spread of nine photos taken by Robert Capa dominates page 37 of the August 13, 1945 edition of *LIFE Magazine*. The images are of toddlers looking at the camera, six of them more or less preoccupied with food or with eating. Under these photos we find the following caption: "The Hohenhorst [*sic*] bastards of Himmler's men are blue-eyed, flaxen and pig fat. They must eat porridge whether they want or not." This leads into a short comment:

> **"SUPER BABIES" Illegitimate children of SS men are housed in a German chateau**
> Last fortnight *LIFE* photographer Robert Capa visited a German chateau which housed a Nazi establishment known as *Lebensborn*, or "Well-of-Life," home. At the Hohenhorst *Lebensborn* home, as in many such institutions in Germany, live dozens of illegitimate babies who have no father or mother but the now-defunct Nazi state. They are the products of an official government policy of encouraging