

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

All These Trucks Got Bodies?

DRAMATIZING INJUSTICE

AFTER KATRINA, FEMA CREATED A DISASTER MORTUARY Operational Response Team (D-Mort) facility in Carville, Louisiana, a “state-of-the-art morgue built to handle the victims of Hurricane Katrina.” FEMA spent \$17 million to build a 70,000-square-foot facility to handle up to 5,000 bodies. New Orleans coroner Dr. Frank Minyard, who declined to categorize Henry Glover’s killing as murder, and who resisted A. C. Thompson’s efforts to investigate violence by police and white vigilantes after Katrina, called D-Mort “the Taj Mahal of forensic science. It is a beautiful place.” D-Mort in Carville closed in February 2006, ten weeks after opening, having examined approximately 900 bodies. Built to process 150 bodies per day, D-Mort had received only a single body per day by February 2006. FEMA had overestimated the casualties of Katrina. The facility, built on private land owned by Bear Industries, a construction supply company, was decommissioned and abandoned (Dewan, 2006).

In Season 1, Episode 7 of *Treme*, “Smoke My Peace Pipe,” David Simon and Eric Overmyer set a scene at D-Mort, Minyard’s “beautiful place,” to reveal the injustices involved in the treatment of prisoners and in the handling and disposition of the bodies of the people who died in the flood. At the start of Season 1, LaDonna Batiste (Khandi Alexander) enlists the help of Toni Bernette (Melisso Leo) in locating her missing brother, Daymo. They discover that he had been arrested on Sunday, August 28, the day before Katrina made landfall, after a traffic violation.

For the first ten hours of its first season, *Treme* avoided representation of Katrina, focusing instead on the challenge of living in its aftermath. At the end of “I’ll Fly Away,” the tenth and final episode of the first season, Simon and Overmyer present a scene that flashes back in time to Sunday, August 28, 2005, the day before Katrina made landfall. The flashback



Flashback to Sunday, August 28, 2005, the day before Katrina makes landfall. Daymo's phone ringing (Treme, frame capture).

sequence is bracketed by the funeral for David Maurice “Daymo” Brooks (Daryl Williams), LaDonna’s younger brother. In an exterior shot on the St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, as a female singer performs “Just a Closer Walk with Thee,” the camera zooms on LaDonna. As the camera frames her in an extreme close-up, the soundtrack features the sound of a phone ringing. Using the ringing as a bridge, the image begins to dissolve as the camera tracks to the right. The next shot matches this move, tracking to the right to find a cell phone. Daymo reaches into the frame, answering the phone. As he steps back, the camera reframes him in a medium shot, revealing the setting to be the interior of his mother’s house. Anticipating the loss of power, Janette’s sous chef, Jacques (Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine), has called to ask Daymo if he could empty the fridge at Desautel’s, where Daymo works as a busboy.

DAYMO: Tell the boss lady not to worry. I got this.

Daymo grabs his keys and heads toward the door.

By beginning on LaDonna and moving into an extreme close-up on her face, the shot signals that the flashback is initially focalized through LaDonna’s perspective. As she buries her brother, she is thinking back to the chain of events that led to his death. Since LaDonna was not present to see her brother leave for Desautel’s, the shot focuses on her face, rather than constructs her cinematic point of view. The viewer sees LaDonna rather than sees as LaDonna.

Later, the scene cuts back to LaDonna, during her evacuation from New Orleans. In an exterior, high-angle crane shot, the camera quickly tracks

down on LaDonna, her husband Larry, her mother, and her boys in Larry's Land Rover, waiting in a long line at a gas station, jammed with evacuees. The camera frames LaDonna as she gets out, looks around, hot, flustered, and annoyed. In a series of reverses, LaDonna and her mother discuss Daymo. LaDonna tries to call him, but the circuits are busy.

The scene then cuts back to Daymo, driving to Desautel's. The camera frames a cross hanging from his rearview mirror in close-up, approximating Daymo's point of view. Reversing, the shot looks at him through the windshield, before cutting to a shot over his shoulder, out through the windshield. A red light is visible. Singing along to a rap song, Daymo runs the light. The shot reverses again, looking at Daymo through the wind-



LaDonna at Daymo's funeral (Treme, frame capture).



LaDonna and family stop for gas while evacuating to Baton Rouge (Treme, frame capture).



Daymo (Daryl Williams) runs a stoplight (Treme, frame capture).

shield as a police car, lights and siren on, comes around the corner and enters the shot. The camera reverses to show him looking in the rearview, seeing the cop. He pulls around the corner to a stop, watching the policeman approach in his side mirror.

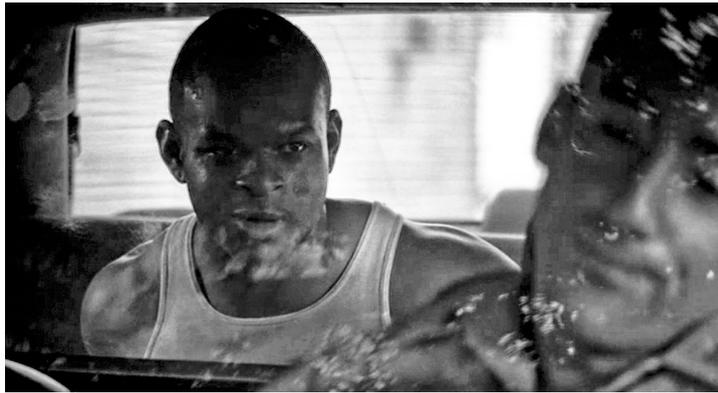
The sequence cuts back to the policeman, framing him in a side view, as he gets into his car, checking Daymo's information. The camera cuts to a shot through the windshield of the police car, showing Daymo in the backseat in handcuffs. He argues with the policeman that the bench warrant for his arrest was a mistake. Daymo asks the policeman to give him a ticket.

POLICEMAN: Sorry. It's a bench warrant. Got no choice.

The final view of Daymo is a high-angle shot, framing the Tchoupitoulas Street sign as the police car drives away. Beads hang down from the sign into the frame, as the camera holds a beat on Daymo's car (where Toni will locate it months later). The reveal of Daymo in the backseat is structured to shock the viewer with the recognition that a traffic stop would become a death sentence. Because of a traffic infraction and bad record keeping by the New Orleans courts, Daymo was arrested for a bench warrant he had already resolved.

GET ME OUT OF HERE, SIS!

Treme's fifth episode, "Shame, Shame, Shame," opens with a dream sequence in which LaDonna imagines Daymo locked in an Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) cell. Like the flashback at the end of the final episode of *Sea-*



Daymo arrested on an erroneous bench warrant (Treme, frame capture).



In a dream sequence, LaDonna (Khandi Alexander) visits prison (Treme, frame capture).

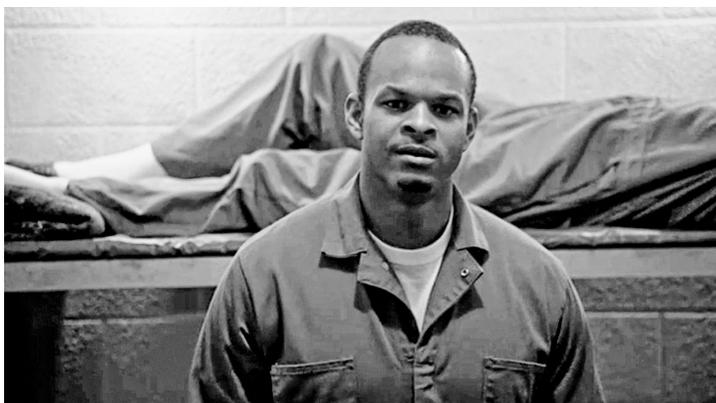
son 1, the dream sequence is focalized through LaDonna's perspective and motivated by her concern about the fate of her brother. These are the only two scenes in Season 1 of *Treme* to break with the realist style employed by Simon on *The Wire*. The scene begins with a shot of an iron jail door being opened. The camera pans left to find Toni Bernette, smiling and nodding at the camera. In the first four episodes of the first season, LaDonna had sought Toni's help to find her brother.

The camera pans back and to the right to follow over a prison guard's shoulder, as he leads LaDonna down a cellblock. The shot then reverses, showing a front view of an African American male guard leading LaDonna down a prison hallway. In the dream, LaDonna wears a bright red dress,

and she draws the attention of the men in the cells as she and the guard pass. The camera shows her perspective on the men pressing against small glass windows to see her. The camera reverses to look at LaDonna, tightening into a close-up as she becomes upset. The camera cuts from LaDonna to a cell door being opened to reveal Daymo. The camera tracks into the cell as he rises from the lower bunk. He looks at the camera and says, “Finally!” There is movement in the upper bunk behind him. The shot reverses to show Daymo’s perspective on his older sister. The cell door closes behind her. A series of reverses show the siblings talking. She accuses him of “messing around with that dope.” At this, the figure in the top bunk begins to laugh, and the camera pans right to frame the figure, his face turned toward the wall, away from the camera. As the camera frames Daymo from LaDonna’s perspective, the figure rises from the top bunk, and the camera tilts up to find Keevon White (Anwan “Big G” Glover). In Episode 4 of Season 1, “At the Foot of Canal Street,” Toni and LaDonna had met White, who had assumed Daymo’s identity in an attempt to gain release after the storm. White had shared a cell with Daymo, but claimed not to know what had happened to him. In the dream sequence, LaDonna reacts to White with horror, the camera looking down at her from a high angle. The camera cuts to a low angle, looking up at White, then tilts down to Daymo.

DAYMO: Get me out of here, Sis!

The camera cuts back to LaDonna’s perspective, as she begins to hear the sound of water. She looks down and sees water entering the frame and covering her feet. Daymo pleads for her help. When she looks down



Daymo appeals to LaDonna to get him out of prison (Treme, frame capture).



Keevon White (Anwan Glover) in the bunk above Daymo (*Treme*, frame capture).

again, the camera observes muddy water now up to her ankles. White continues to laugh. The camera cuts to a long shot on Daymo standing in his cell, with White looming over him, his left leg dangling by Daymo. Water covers the floor of the cell. As the water sound continues, LaDonna wakes up, breathing heavily. She wears a red nightgown and is with Larry in her bedroom in Baton Rouge. As she sits up, the shot fades to black.

The dream sequence recalls Werner Herzog's *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans* (2009). In a scene early in the film, Nicholas Cage, playing a corrupt cop, discovers prisoners abandoned to drown by their guards. In a brief moment of morality, Cage jumps into the water to free the prisoners. Characteristic of Herzog's vision of human morality, the film frames the decision as a mistake. Cage hurts his back diving into the water, forcing him to take painkillers and launching his descent into corruption, dissipation, and murder.

In August 2006, the American Civil Liberties Union published "Abandoned & Abused: Orleans Parish Prisoners in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina." This ACLU report found that the Orleans Parish Prison system abandoned sixty-five hundred inmates during and after the storm. Rather than evacuate the prisoners in advance of Katrina's landfall, Sheriff Marlin Gusman decided to leave them "where they belonged." As a consequence, thousands of prisoners were left locked in facilities that flooded: "As floodwaters rose in the OPP buildings, power was lost, and entire buildings were plunged into darkness. Deputies left their posts wholesale, leaving behind prisoners in locked cells, some standing in sewage-tainted water up to their chests."

The dream sequence and flashback are paired, linked by LaDonna's per-

spective and by shared formal techniques, including audio bridges and point-of-view shots. The flashback shot shows how Daymo was brought into the Orleans Parish Prison on the day before Katrina's landfall, and the dream sequence suggests the peril he faced in OPP, both from floodwaters and from his fellow inmates. Together, these scenes offer pointed criticism of the treatment of prisoners in New Orleans before and after the storm. As per Sobanet's argument about French prison novels, in these scenes, *Treme* references actual events in order to use fiction to advance social critique (2008).

Through their private investigation, Toni and Ladonna confirm that Daymo had been in the Orleans Parish Prison when the levees failed and



LaDonna's point of view down as water rushes into the cell (Treme, frame capture).



Water fills the cell (Treme, frame capture).



Daymo trapped in a flooded cell with White (Treme, frame capture).

the city flooded. Like other OPP prisoners, Daymo was initially abandoned, left locked up in facilities that began to flood. Eventually, he was brought out with other prisoners, forced to spend days without shelter or adequate food, and then eventually shipped to a prison in St. Gabriel, Louisiana, in Iberville Parish (parishes received FEMA funds for holding OPP prisoners, creating an incentive for holding prisoners in the system). Their search eventually revealed that Daymo had switched identification with another prisoner, Keevon White, and later assumed the identity of a cousin who did not have a criminal record. When Toni and LaDonna discover the cousin's name on a list of bodies being held at D-Mort, they drive to Carville to view the body.

Following the scene of Danny's (Deacon John Moore) funeral, the D-Mort sequence begins with a high-angle shot that tilts up as a dark car drives into an industrial site. As the car approaches, a black hearse emerges from deeper in the facility. The sequence cuts inside the car, looking past Toni and LaDonna in the front seat, as the black hearse moves past them on the left side of the frame. The shot then reverses, showing Toni through the windshield, looking at the hearse, before panning over to LaDonna, looking out at the facility and a large asphalt area crowded with eighteen-wheel refrigeration trucks. The sequence cuts to an exterior long shot as they emerge from the car. A white female staff member emerges from between two large trucks. The camera zooms on LaDonna and Toni as they follow the D-Mort staffer. The tighter framing closes down the space around LaDonna, trapping her as she begins to understand the scope of the facility.

LADONNA: All these trucks got bodies?

From this point, the sequence is increasingly focalized through LaDonna. As the women walk past the camera, it pans to follow them, again framing LaDonna, as the staff member leads them to a truck and up a ramp. The shot focuses on LaDonna standing before the truck. When the noise of the door opening is heard offscreen, LaDonna jumps at the sharp sound. After Toni reassures her, the sequence cuts inside the truck's cargo trailer, a new visual perspective from which to see the impact of D-Mort on LaDonna. The shot is black at first, before the door opens at the far end of the trailer, admitting light and revealing bodies in black bags laid out on the left and right sides. The three women enter, with the image cutting to a tighter framing, as LaDonna walks past the bags into a close-up, revealing her apprehension. The D-Mort staff member identifies and begins to unzip a body bag. The camera shifts behind LaDonna to convey her perspective down on the bag as it opens to reveal Daymo's body, discolored by the draining of fluids and scarred from the autopsy. The sequence shows LaDonna in a low-angle close-up as she covers her face and sinks to her knees. As Toni reaches out to her, LaDonna runs toward the opening, out of the shot. The sequence cuts outside the truck to see LaDonna emerge into the light.

Back inside the trailer, Toni identifies the body as David Maurice Brooks and examines the death certificate.

TONI: Cause of death, cerebral hemorrhage. Manner of death, accident. Fall from top bunk!

The implication is that another inmate or a guard killed Daymo at some point during the five months he was imprisoned for a mistaken arrest. Further, Toni believes that his murder was covered up as an accident and that the cover-up was blessed by D-Mort, which did not even attempt to determine his real identity. Daymo did not receive due process, was not allowed to contact his family or a lawyer, and died in custody without a credible investigation or notification to his family. Through the Daymo plotline, *Treme* argues that governmental authority (at the city, state, and federal levels) committed injustice both through neglect and through commission. *Treme* argues that prisoners suffered more than most because of lack of access to representation, advocacy, or communication. When the social contract was abandoned after Katrina, surviving New Orleanians were treated as "refugees," non-citizens. Surviving prisoners, like Daymo, were treated as non-persons.

Outside the trailer, the camera observes LaDonna's reaction to finding

Daymo's body. Beginning with a close-up on LaDonna, trying to find some comfort in a cigarette, the camera pans around her, moving counterclockwise to show the array of trucks, ultimately panning 180 degrees to frame the open door to the trailer behind her. The next shot directly conveys LaDonna's visual perspective through a clockwise pan looking at the trucks. The sequence then cuts to a stationary shot of LaDonna, slowly turning her head in the same clockwise motion, confirming the previous shot as from her perspective. A long, wide shot shows more than thirteen large trucks arrayed across the asphalt. The audio track amplifies the sound of the refrigeration units on the trucks, bringing up a loud buzzing sound, indirectly suggesting LaDonna's perspective. After holding this shot for several beats, the camera shows LaDonna, keeping her in frame as she bends over, as the buzzing noise gets louder. In this moment, she connects Daymo's death and her own loss to the deaths of the other nine hundred people examined at D-Mort.

Through these final shots of the D-Mort sequence, *Treme* offers its strongest critique of the response of authorities before, during, and after Katrina. Through framing, camera angle, and sound design, these shots demonstrate LaDonna's movement from grief to consciousness of the scale of the injustice. The buzzing noise is amplified by her perspective, not by diegetic or afilmic reality, as she fully processes and understands what D-Mort represents. Using the full formal potential of the televisual apparatus, Simon and Overmyer provide their viewers with the opportunity to understand more fully the loss of life during and after the flooding of New Orleans and the consequences for those who survived.

PEOPLE WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED

In Episode 2 of Season 1, Albert and Lorenzo (Ameer Baraka) discover the body of Jesse, Lorenzo's father and Albert's Wild Man in the Guardians of the Flame. Jesse had drowned at his home in the lower Ninth Ward, but search-and-rescue teams missed his body, which Albert and Lorenzo find beneath an overturned boat. In "Right Place, Wrong Time," Episode 3 of the first season, written by David Mills and directed by Ernest Dickerson, Albert and Lorenzo gather together members of the Guardians and representatives of other tribes at Jesse's house to give him an Indian send-off.

The group consists of professional actors (Clarke Peters, Ameer Baraka, Davi Jay), Mardi Gras Indians (Big Chief Monk Boudreaux of the Golden Eagles, Darryl Montana of the Yellow Pocahontas, and Otto DeJean of the

Hard Head Hunters), and other locals. Fred Johnson, co-founder of the Black Men of Labor Social Aid and Pleasure Club, who was interviewed by Lee in *When the Levees Broke*, is also part of the group. By placing actors in the frame with actual Mardi Gras Indians, *Treme* uses referentiality to give the fictional scene strong resonance.

Simon, Overmyer, Mills, and Dickerson stage a performance of “Indian Red,” featuring individual voices and group chanting, with percussion via drums and tambourines. They employ here the same approach worked out by Blake Leyh for recording other forms of live musical performance. They use multiple cameras and mics, placed both inside and outside the circle, to create a range of perspectives on the performance, providing episode editor Alex Hall with a range of shot options.

After Boudreaux arrives, Albert thanks those assembled and then launches into “Indian Red.” As Peters sings, the scene begins with a close-up on him before cutting to a wide shot outside the circle, as the group responds with the refrain, “Injun red, Injun red.” The image tracks around past Boudreaux to Albert before framing Johnson, as he takes a verse of the song. As the group continues to sing, Hall structures a series of reverses, revealing several perspectives on the circle, alternating from inside and outside, and from left and right. The editing creates a visual dynamic to match the performance as the group pushes the song’s tempo.

With the fifty-sixth shot in the scene, a tight shot over Johnson’s shoulder at the group, the audio track includes a noise from offscreen. As the scene cuts to a wider shot of the group, the noise becomes louder, interfering with the singing. In a close-up, Albert looks out of frame left, seeking the source of the noise. With a reverse, the scene reveals the source to be a tour bus driving up the street toward the group. A sign on the bus reads “Katrina Tour.” The group stops singing, looking out of the frame toward the sound of the bus. Reversing again, the scene shows a high-angle shot, panning from the “Tour” sign to frame the white bus driver. The windows of the bus are darkened, so that the occupants can see out but not be seen clearly from the street, like the one-directional look at the television screen. The shot frames the bus, as flashes become visible through the dark glass. The tour-goers are taking photos of the group memorializing Jesse.

The camera looks down on Albert from a high angle as he stares hard at the driver, his head back.

DRIVER: How you doing, sir? What’s this about?

The shot reverses, as Albert looks up at the driver and the group gathers around the bus.



Katrina Tour bus interrupts the memorial for Wild Man Jesse (Treme, frame capture).

ALBERT: You tell me what this here is about?

DRIVER: Well, people want to see what happened. Say, is that your house?

BOUDREAUX: Drive away from here.

The driver struggles to explain their purpose.

DRIVER: No. We were just tryin' . . .

Albert and Chief DeJean face down the driver.

ALBERT: Just drive away.

DRIVER: I'm sorry. You're right. I'm sorry.

The driver fires up the engine and drives away down the street and out of the frame. In a high-angle shot, the group gathers in the street watching the bus depart. The final shot is over the shoulder of a man holding a spear with a blue feather. The camera looks past the feather as the bus drives away and the image fades to black.

The scene of Wild Man Jesse's memorial is a pivotal scene for understanding *Treme* and what and how it can tell viewers about Katrina. The scene begins with and prioritizes the performance of Mardi Gras Indian ritual. The scene begins with Albert and the group and focuses visually and aurally on their singing and playing in honor of a friend who was drowned when the levees failed. The bus arrives from outside, out of the frame, in-

truding and interrupting the ceremony. In contrast to the Indians, the bus is inauthentic, commercial. The tour commodifies the suffering caused by the flood, charging a fee to show passengers the Lower Ninth Ward. While television news coverage initially missed the story of the flooding of the Ninth Ward (just as television news missed the flooding of New Orleans East and St. Bernard), eventually national broadcast and cable television news established “the Ninth Ward” as a crucial site of impact by the flood.

In an interview for this book, Simon criticized the fetishization of the Ninth Ward in media coverage of Katrina. He argued that to focus exclusively on the Ninth Ward, or the idea of the Ninth Ward, was to neglect the impact of the flood on the other devastated neighborhoods: Central City, Mid-City, Lakeview, Gentilly, Broadmoor, and Treme, among many others. One reason he set his television show in Treme rather than in the Ninth Ward was to avoid this tendency. The Katrina Tour bus represents this national fascination and investment in the construct of “the Ninth Ward.” The Wild Man Jesse scene argues against this fetishization and the transactional tourist economy it fueled.

In a sense, viewers watch *Treme* for some of the same reasons they might take a disaster tour: they too “want to see what happened.” Simon and Overmyer and collaborators work hard to create referential fiction that dramatizes the suffering and recovery of residents of New Orleans with respect for the historical record, for what really happened. *Treme* is deeply invested in portraying the dignity of characters such as Albert Lambreaux and LaDonna Batiste-Williams. In these ways, the series is distinctly different from a disaster tour. Yet, viewers are drawn to *Treme* by a desire to see the impact of Katrina on the lives of New Orleanians. While the impulse may be similar, the structure of the television series is different from the narrative structured by the disaster tour. The disaster tour point of view looks at survivors of Katrina from a distance without consciousness of the significance of the separation. In contrast, *Treme* positions viewers inside the lives of its characters, enabling viewers to see their pain, suffering, and resilience.

Geoffrey Hartman has argued that television news structures two positions: those who suffer and those who watch the suffering of others (1994, 2000). Like viewers of television news, *Treme*'s viewers watch the suffering of a group of carefully drawn characters. Like the tour bus passengers, looking out from behind darkened windows, television viewers look at the screen, but are not subjected to a returned gaze. Albert and Big Chief Boudreaux confront the bus driver because he is visible through his open window. He is subject to their gaze, as they are to his. The passengers, however, are not visible during the scene. Like television viewers, they look without being seen.

Paula Rabinowitz has argued that documentary addresses its audience differently from television news (1994). Sturken and Fleetwood argued that television news constitutes viewers as weather citizens, members joined by their fascination with disaster without implication. Like Sturken (2007) and Fleetwood (2006), Hartman critiques the one-directional dynamic of television news. Rabinowitz understands documentary to propose a two-directional dynamic, whereby viewers of documentary are implicated and called to engage and act. Documentary addresses its audience as citizens, people who not only watch suffering but also are called to act in relation to suffering. As documentary fiction, *Treme* wants this same relation with its audience. But unlike documentary, *Treme* can create points of view that allow viewers to occupy the positions of characters, seeing Katrina from the inside rather than staring through darkened glass.

As per Simon, *Treme* asks its viewers to get off the bus, to spend time listening to and learning from New Orleanians. In the Wild Man Jesse scene, viewers are already inside the circle of friends performing a memorial. The logic and structure of the scene separate *Treme's* viewers from the unseen tourists paying to see suffering. The viewer is witness to authentic performance. *Treme* positions its viewer to resent the arrival of the bus, as do the characters. These fictional characters serve as hosts for viewers in two senses. First, they welcome viewers, bringing them along to enjoy privileged perspectives on cultural performance. Second, these fictional characters also serve as positions for viewers to occupy, as host bodies that bring viewers into perspectives on Katrina unavailable through television news or documentary film.

Jill Godmillow has cautioned against the “pornography of the real” (2002). Like Hartman, Godmillow is suspicious of a one-directional gaze that allows viewers to look at the suffering of others without implication. In her own work, Godmillow has increasingly turned to reflexivity and fictionalization to force her viewers to engage their own status in relation to the real. Thus, in *Far from Poland* (1984), Godmillow creates a documentary from performances and re-enactments of events she could not capture with her documentary camera.

Like Godmillow in *Far from Poland*, *Treme* re-creates “real” events with actors, referencing the real, but also benefitting from the flexibility of fiction to construct dynamic perspectives, to show things that television news or documentary cannot. The second line for Kerwin James actually occurred on October 7, 2007, and was stopped by the NOPD, who arrested several musicians, including Glen David Andrews. When *Treme* re-created the real event, the televisual representation was able to show something of Andrews’s perspective, as he exercised agency by singing “I’ll Fly Away.”

By adding the presence and perspective of a fictional character, Antoine Batiste, who stands next to Andrews and is also arrested, *Treme* transforms the reality of the second line into a scene intended to show viewers the dynamic of oppression and resistance from the inside. By using fiction to structure point of view on real events, *Treme* is able to bear witness to things it never saw.

The difference between the Wild Man Jesse scene and the scene of Big Chief Albert dancing in the darkness is who is seeing and who is being seen. Big Chief Albert put on his Indian suit as a performance, to be seen. Simon and Overmyer construct the scene so that *Treme*'s viewers are the audience for Big Chief Albert's display. Before he arrives at Robinette's house and calls him out, the viewer has already watched him emerge from the darkness. *Treme* creates a special place from which its viewers may see the re-creation of local performance and ritual. In the memorial for Wild Man Jesse, the performance is created by camera and editing for the viewer. But, when diegetic viewers arrive, the group objects. They have been on display, just not for disaster tourists. The disaster tour perpetuates and extends viewing without context, generating misunderstanding. *Treme* provides viewers with situated perspectives in order to counter erasure and forgetting.

As noted earlier in this book, Alison Landsberg has argued for the potential of mass media, including television, to produce memories that viewers could adapt and adopt (2004). This allows people to combine lived memory—what Halbwachs called “autobiographical memory” (1992)—with prosthetic memory. Landsberg argues that prosthetic memory is crucially important as the ground for empathy and connection. Like Godmillow, she suggests that fiction can speak powerfully about the real world. For Landsberg, empathy is the product of a dual understanding of connection to and distance from another's experience. Landsberg distinguishes empathy from sympathy, the weaker sense of affective connection without the critical perspective necessary for implication. She argues that media can create possibilities for empathy and connection. In this way, she calls for multi-directional relations among viewers, texts, and reality. Landsberg seeks to theorize a third position beyond Hartman's looking or being looked at. This third position, what I would call looking with, is what allows *Treme*, a fictional narrative television series created and aired by a premium cable network, to show things about Katrina that are crucial for viewers to understand, to know, and to remember.

CONCLUSION

Desitively Katrina

IN 1974, DR. JOHN RELEASED THE ALBUM *DESITIVELY BON-
naroo* (ATCO Records), a follow-up to his hit *In the Right Place* (ATCO Records, 1973). Mac Rebennack, who performs as Dr. John, cultivates a unique patois, ostensibly derived from New Orleans street slang, but augmented by Rebennack's own linguistic inventions. "Desitively" is a portmanteau combining "definitely" with "positively." Rebennack claims that the term originated in the Ninth Ward.

What would constitute Desitively Katrina? How may we know the truth of Katrina? For those who did not experience the storm and flood directly, a flood of images and sounds provided a surplus of representation. As Geoffrey Hartman (1994) has cautioned, television news shapes experience into stories, erasing as much as illuminating. As Aric Mayer (2008) and Diane Negra (2010) argue, television news coverage of Katrina *was* Katrina for most Americans. The shared experience of viewing news stories about Katrina created a powerful collective memory, but one shaped by the conventions of television news production and the values of producers, networks, and parent corporations. Undoubtedly, television news provided the ground for collective memory of Katrina. Because of the significance of television news in shaping these memories, I have sought to analyze the specific visual rhetorics employed to represent and remember Katrina. In this book, I have examined both the specific strategies and the overall process of television news coverage in order to understand the nature of the dominant representations of Katrina, representations that continue to overdetermine collective and national memory.

As Hartman has argued, collected memory offers an alternative to collective memory. In *Flood of Images*, I offer an alternative archive of Katrina media, contextualizing specific broadcasts, documentaries, and television

programs. I have sought to read across different forms and modes of media in order to understand how viewers encountered representations of Katrina. In particular, documentary film offers an array of voices and perspectives missing from television news coverage. Documentaries about Katrina come closest to realizing Hartman's goal of collected memory, but documentary is also produced within conventions and shaped by perspectives and values. For this reason, I have analyzed documentary film in order to understand how documentary has constructed Katrina.

Both television news and documentary film make claims to represent the truth of Katrina. David Simon and Eric Overmyer's fictional television series *Treme* also explicitly claims to represent the truth of Katrina, if not always all the realities of recovery. Like the prison fiction of Jean Genet, Simon and Overmyer's *Treme* is an example of documentary fiction, a form of culture that uses reference to the real to invest fiction with power and possibility for social criticism. Alison Landsberg has argued for the potential of mass media, especially fictional narrative, to provide "prosthetic memory," or the opportunity for viewers to experience something of the lived experience of trauma or disaster via media (2004). Following Landsberg, *Treme's* fictional characters provide viewers with opportunities to experience a powerful, if indirect, form of memory. In the scene at D-Mort, where LaDonna sees her brother Daymo's dead body, *Treme* affords access to the experience of loss and injustice through framing, editing, and Khandi Alexander's performance. This scene creates the grounds for empathy, as viewers understand, perhaps even feel, a version of LaDonna's pain, loss, and outrage, across the distance of mediation and the difference in circumstances between those who suffer and those who watch.

Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory shares with Andrew So-banet's "documentary fiction" the premise that reference to the real transforms the possibilities of fiction (2008). In *Treme*, Simon and Overmyer cast Kermit Ruffins, Donald Harrison, Susan Spicer, and former City Councilman Oliver Thomas to play themselves. When fictional characters connect with real New Orleanians, *Treme* gains power for its representations of Katrina. Landsberg argues that much the same happens in the final scene of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), where actual surviving "Schindler" Jews are filmed with actors from the film. "As the authentic touches the inauthentic, survivor touches actor, the possibility emerges for memory to be transferred across temporal and geographic chasms" (111). Where disaster tours present a form of Godmillow's "pornography of the real," enacting Hartman's division into those who look at the suffering of others, Landsberg's prosthetic memory holds out the promise of connection and understanding. As she argues, thinking ethically means thinking beyond the self

(149). The representations of Katrina in television news, documentary film, and fictional television offer both the lure of sympathy and the promise of empathy. The work involved in the memory project of Katrina is to negotiate the difference in order to work toward understanding.

IN HIS MEMORY AND OUTSIDE OF IT

In his “Magic Hubig’s” editorial in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, David Simon promised that *Treme* would feature moments of “galloping, unrestrained meta.” One such moment was featured in Episode 4 of Season 3, “The Greatest Love.” In this episode, Simon and Overmyer and team re-create the performance of Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* that was staged outdoors in the Lower Ninth Ward. In 2006, Christopher McElroen directed a production of Beckett’s play for the Classical Theater of Harlem, featuring Wendell Pierce in the role of Vladimir. McElroen staged the performance on a rooftop in Harlem, inside a fifteen-thousand-gallon pool, meant to suggest the representation of the Lower Ninth Ward seen on television news. Inspired by this production, visual artist Paul Chan partnered with McElroen and Pierce to develop a staging of the play in New Orleans. Chan’s project was financed by Creative Time, the cultural investment company that funded the projection of ghostly beams of light in place of the missing World Trade Center towers. Produced by Chan and directed by McElroen, the production featured Pierce and J. Kyle Manzay as Estragon. *Waiting for Godot* was performed in New Orleans, in the Lower Ninth Ward, on the corner of Forstall and North Roman Streets, on November 2 and 3, 2007. On November 9 and 10, the production was staged in Gentilly, at the corner of Pratt Drive and Robert E. Lee Boulevard.

In Episode 4 of Season 3, Simon and Overmyer include a scene re-creating the performance of *Waiting for Godot* in the Lower Ninth Ward. In *Treme*’s version, Manzay plays Estragon, but Anthony Anderson, who played Marlin Boulet in Fox’s *K-Ville*, plays Vladimir. In the television show, Antoine Batiste, played by Pierce, attends the performance. In an interview for this book, Simon indicated that this moment was challenging for Pierce, who was performing a character watching a show in which he had himself performed, staged in the same exact location at Forstall and North Roman. In the process, he had to watch Anderson playing Pierce playing Vladimir. Simon described Pierce as being “in his memory and outside of it” at the same time.

Pierce’s experience in “The Greatest Love” episode is a particular version of a more common phenomenon with *Treme* and memory. Because

Treme invested such great care in referencing the real and in avoiding unintentional mistakes, the television series created moments in which viewers experienced a collision between prosthetic memory and autobiographical memory. Like Pierce, viewers found themselves both in their memories and outside of them. Writing in the *Times-Picayune*, Alison Fensterstock described this phenomenon as “*Treme*-ja vu,” which she defined as “those disconcerting moments when things in New Orleans remind you of the show rather than of your actual life.” In Fensterstock’s version, “*Treme*-ja vu” describes an overwriting of actual experience by carefully constructed fiction resulting in confusion between reality and fiction. In an interview for this book, co-creator Eric Overmyer explained “*Treme*-ja vu” as the experience of viewers who recognized an event on the show that they had experienced in real life. Pierce’s experience of the restaging of *Waiting for Godot* was Overmyer’s version of “*Treme*-ja vu.” Rather than implanting a false memory, or replacing autobiographical memory with prosthetic memory, Overmyer argues that *Treme* could reference individual, lived memory in order to make a stronger impact and provoke deeper understandings.

Like other forms of Katrina media, *Treme* both references and incites memory. In order to understand the collective memory of Katrina, one must engage the versions of representation, comparing and contrasting media texts with memories. Landsberg reminds us of Freud’s arguments about “screen memories”: memories transform actual events (15). Memories are composite and synthetic, texts not facts. Thus, to understand what Katrina means and how it is remembered, one must analyze what *Treme* reveals about memory and what memory reveals about *Treme*.

KATRINA IS STILL GOING ON(LINE)

Between 2006 and 2010, Luisa Dantas and her collaborators produced short films on aspects of the recovery of New Orleans with community partners such as the New Orleans Fair Housing Action Council. Dantas posted short videos, including “Sectioned Off” and “Deep Sixed,” individually on sites including YouTube (which launched in 2005) and Vimeo (which launched in 2004). In 2010, Dantas released a feature version of her project, titled *Land of Opportunity*, for European cable network Arte, and she launched a website for *Land of Opportunity*, featuring short video content amplifying and extending the arguments of the feature documentary. In 2011, Dantas released a longer feature version of *Land of Opportunity* at festivals and conferences in the United States.

After completing her feature documentary about housing, devel-

opment, and community agency in New Orleans after Katrina, Dantas sought grant funding from the Ford Foundation's Metropolitan Opportunity Division and BlackPublicMedia.org to create a new interactive website drawing from and extending her documentary material and connecting this material to media from other filmmakers about crises in other American cities. Her new interactive site, launched in fall 2013, provides visitors with opportunities to view rich media content about the impact of the flooding of New Orleans on housing and development, the impact of Hurricane Sandy on the New York and New Jersey coast, the impact of gentrification and development on Brooklyn, and the consequences of the city's bankruptcy for citizens of Detroit. For example, visitors can explore Kelly Anderson's short documentary "My Brooklyn," considering connections between the development of Brooklyn and efforts to develop a new New Orleans after the flooding of the city. While watching videos, visitors can click on embedded triggers to view and explore stories, maps, and data that amplify the documentary content. Visitors can also move between the cities and stories, forging their own points of connection and building their own arguments.

Through the interactive *Land of Opportunity* website (<http://landofopportunityinteractive.com>), Dantas is making Katrina present and relevant, providing visitors with opportunities to test Brian Nobles's contention that Katrina keeps going on. Her web project reaches back to her own past material and to representations consigned to history and collective memory in order to recover these images and sounds for new consideration, comparison, and connection. Through the creation of a transmedia project, Dantas and collaborators have converted their documentary material into an opportunity for experiential learning about Katrina.

Like Dantas's interactive web project, I have intended this book to be an intervention into the memory project of Katrina. Since Katrina keeps going on, both in New Orleans and elsewhere, scholarship must continue to analyze representations of the storm and flood, comparing and contrasting histories of production and textual rhetorics. As Landsberg argues, the urgency of memory projects in the modern era is about acting in the present more than authenticating the past. *Flood of Images* is situated scholarship intended to act in the present by examining representations and memories of the past.

Katrina media require a response. At the end of the credits for *Trouble the Water*, Tia Lessin and Carl Deal include a title card reading "do something." This book responds to Katrina media by intervening in the ongoing efforts to remember what happened, what it means, and what we must do now.

