POLITICAL CAMERAWORK
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Documentary and the Lasting Impact of Reenacting Historical Trauma

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Academic book writing is a process of condensing insights and experiences gleaned across a lot of time and countless places into a little object, wondrous to hold after so much work. Thank you to the team at Indiana University Press, especially acquisitions editor Allison Blair Chaplin, assistant acquiring editor Sophia Hebert, production editors Nancy Lightfoot and Carol McGillivray, the anonymous reviewers, and the board, for actualizing my little object. Beyond this finishing stage, it represents contributions from many people who nudged its form and ideas over years of conversations, critiques, suggestions, and affirmations. These pages pay respect to those who helped the book along its way and surely say something about the argument it puts forward.

First and foremost, I am honored to thank my dissertation adviser Lisa Cartwright, who taught me how to write and think in ways I never could have figured out on my own. Her notes and suggestions consistently demonstrated an incredible breadth of knowledge and speed of thought. Fifteen pages of disorganized material written in doubt would come back within the hour with her incisive details about how to sharpen phrases, signpost intellectual conversations, and rethink wobbly notions. Other comments she made would lead me to an “aha!” moment months or even years later. Somehow, she knew where I would end up before I knew where I was going. She stuck with me through thick and thin, even when my filmmaking ambitions inhibited progress on this project, and even years after I finished the dissertation and left my PhD program. Her theories of affect and intersubjectivity influenced me, too, as I suspect will be evident in the text for those who know her work.

Zeinabu irene Davis was also instrumental in helping me think through the complex relations between filmmaking, documentary, and Black experience.
She was a member of my dissertation committee, my filmmaking adviser, and then my collaborator on film projects including *Spirits of Rebellion: Black Independent Cinema from Los Angeles* (2016), a feature documentary about the LA Rebellion film movement that we coproduced and that I filmed and edited. She remains a cherished mentor in navigating the dual worlds of filmmaking and academia, and a dear friend. Working with her certainly informed ideas in this book but also altered the trajectory of my life. She evokes a heightened sense of conviction and compassion from those with whom she works, and I would like to think that I benefited from her facility in this way. Zee, I celebrate you here and try to pay it forward. Such relationships are rare.

Her commitment to collaboration also allowed me an extraordinary filmmaking experience. Through work on *Spirits*, I had the chance to meet many filmmakers I’d long admired, including Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Barbara McCullough, Haile Gerima, Shirikiana Aina, Ben Caldwell, Billy Woodberry, Alile Sharon Larkin, O. Funmilayo Makarrah, Pierre Desir, Carroll Parrott Blue, Cauleen Smith, Bob Nakamura, Arthur Jafa, Don Amis, and Jamaa Fanaka, and scholars including Clyde Taylor, Ed Guerrero, Bill Nichols, Chuck Kleinhans, David James, Jan-Christopher Horak, Jacqueline Stewart, Allyson Nadia Field, and Shannon Kelley. I listened to conversations with these individuals mostly from behind the camera and then made sense of them at the editing station, where repeated listening toward the end of scene construction makes deep impressions. What a privilege to have learned from these brilliant minds in such a way. I am also grateful for having had the chance to meet and work with Giovanna Chesler on this project and for her introduction to cinematographer Hans Charles, who spoke with me about his approach to camerawork in a provocative phone conversation. The approach to writing in this book, especially in the second half, owes much to these filmmakers and scholars. The California Humanities Documentary Project Grant provided crucial funding for this project, and the UCLA Film and Television Archive and Hammer Museum were incredibly supportive and helpful at every stage of production.

I thank my UCSD dissertation committee members Brian Goldfarb, Patrick Anderson, Bennetta Jules-Rosette, and Roddey Reid for thoughtful comments on chapter drafts and countless conversations. Professors Ariana Hernandez-Reguant, Nitin Govil, Gary Fields, Mike Cole, Val Hartouni, Elana Zilberg, Kelly Gates, and Carol Padden in the UCSD Department of Communication and Rachel Klein, David Gutierrez, Danny Widener, Luis Alvarez, and Nayan Shah in the UCSD History Department also provided theories, histories, and ways of thinking formative to this project. The UCSD Fellowship in Global California Studies provided funding for early-stage summer research for what
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

...became chapter 2. I am grateful for nurturing and generative conversations with fellow members of my PhD program. My office neighbor Reece Peck, now at CUNY Staten Island, deserves a special shout-out, as his Gramscian interpretation of populism and working-class culture was ahead of the curve in the early 2000s, and his perspective on formalist approaches to art offered real challenges to ideas about documentary that I had taken too much for granted.

I warmly solute graduate program comrades Harry Simón, Lauren Berliner, Andrew Whitworth Smith, Muni Citrin, Kim Dewolfe, Laurel Friedman, Erin Cory, Deniz Ilkbasaran, Matt Dewey, Monika Sengul-Jones, Marisa Brandt, Tara-Lynne Pixley, Stephen Mandiberg, Kelli Moore, and Yelena Gluzman, and my fellow traveler from UCSD Sociology Kelly Nielsen.

Three and a half years as the ASPIRE Fellow in Socially Engaged Media in Undergraduate Education Initiatives at UCLA opened an extraordinary opportunity for me to explore areas of film, activism, and teaching that I’d long only been able to imagine. This position offered the chance to refine chapters in the book while teaching activist documentary production and collaborating on performative documentaries. I’m grateful for the counsel and collaboration of Victoria Marks, Wendelin Slusser, Lucy Blackmar, Renee Tajima-Peña, Kyle McJunkin, Patricia Turner, Kristy Guevara-Flanagan, Jenny Jay, Cully Nordby, Raffaella D’Auria, Stephanie Pincetl, Aparna Sharma, and the staff at UCLA Libraries (especially Alicia Reilly, Doug Worsham, and Jessica Mentesoglu) who provided space, logistical support, and encouragement for our experiment in teaching media production as a component of general education within a liberal arts framework. It was a pleasure to have had the chance to speak with Vivian Sobchack while at UCLA as well. Thanks to Urban Planning, Disability Studies, Chicana/o Studies, African American Studies, and Food Studies for partnering with our production offerings. Outside of UCLA, this initiative could never have happened without the energy and know-how of social entrepreneur, film producer, and ASPIRE founder Peter Samuelson, who worked tirelessly on fundraising, publicity, and recruiting impressive guest speakers to campus. I greatly admire his ongoing efforts to improve the lives of foster youth by forming partnerships across social welfare organizations, universities, and school systems via his nonprofit foundation First Star.

At Miami University in Ohio, colleagues in the Department of Media, Journalism, and Film have provided a welcome network of support. Special thanks go to Richard Campbell, Bruce Drushel, Kerry Hegarty, Mack Hagood, Kathleen German, Ron Becker, Dave Sholle, and the Mongeese (they know who they are), as well as librarians Mark Dahlquist, Jacqueline Johnson, and Alia Levar Wegner. Colleagues Adam Rottinghaus, Rosemary Pennington, Katie Day...
Good, Ann Elizabeth Armstrong, and Elena and Juan Carlos Albarrán have been wonderful friends and interlocutors over my years in Oxford, Ohio. The Humanities Center has provided valuable support for the book through their winter book proposal workshop, their yearlong Altman Fellowship to explore the theme “Truth and Lies” with fellow faculty, and Humanities Lab funding with colleague Eric Hodgson to create augmented-reality documentary work with students. Thanks to Tim Melley, Pepper Stetler, Theresa Kulbaga, and Emily Zakin for organizing these various events and keeping the humanities vibrant on our campus.


My thanks are also due to the filmmakers who allowed me to speak with them and study their work in depth, including Jacqueline Olive, Irene Lusztig, Meghan O’Hara, and Mike Attie. Others who generously shared their time with me along the way to completing the project include Cassandra Green, Tyrone Brooks, Charles Steele, Walter Reeves, Wade Marbaugh, Bob and Jennie Caine, and the late John Wagstaffe. To the many interviewees who remain anonymous in this book, thank you for making the work possible. Thanks as well to my filmmaking mentors Alfred Guzzetti, Ross McElwee, Robb Moss, and the late Richard Rogers and Mani Kaul in what used to be called the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University (now the Department of Art, Film and Visual Studies), where I spent my undergraduate
years and four years as a teaching fellow. The approach to camerawork that I practice and teach retains many aspects of what I learned in this program, and parts of the book are in conversation with its philosophy. Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Castaing-Taylor’s filmmaking and support for filmmaking through the Sensory Ethnography Lab and Film Studies Center at Harvard also helped me think through a variety of challenges to documentary work that are represented in this book, and I am grateful for the continued scholarly output of and about these initiatives.

Last, I want to thank my family, who inevitably make the largest sacrifice for a book to enter the world. In addition to working on a range of climate justice and public health initiatives in California and Ohio, my partner, Carla, has patiently conversed, read, moved, watched kids, cooked meals, and provided a range of emotional labor over our twenty-one years as partners. She is a brilliant force, and I am humbled to have lived the better part of my life with her. Olive and Oran, if you’re reading this, you may stop here, at least for now. Thank you for keeping life fascinating and vibrant these last thirteen years. I love you guys and can’t wait to see what you make and do as you grow up. Ginny, Dave, and Colin Rice have patiently listened to me talk about various bits of this book for years and provided many kinds of help, and my uncle Don and late aunt Bunny Uischner were especially gracious with housing when I conducted research in and around Atlanta. George and Marianne Blackmar are the best in-laws one could ask for. Thank you all for the support that has allowed this book to enter the world.
POLITICAL CAMERAWORK
INTRODUCTION
Reflecting on “Moments of Truth”

Check the lens again for dust. Frame Walter in the right half of the flip-out screen. Keep left the small group of angry whites in 1940s church clothes, backlit by the Georgia summer sun. Stay wide and high to show the three hundred Black spectators in the background across the street, witnessing. Today Walter plays “Gene,” the white supremacist and former Democratic Georgia governor Eugene Talmadge, giving his 1946 stump speech in Monroe. “You tell ’em, Gene!” yells the “Talmadge Gal” in the broad red hat and the pearls, unenthusiastic in her performance. I move to find the reverse shot, a low-angle close-up of Walter, and hold the frame as he scowls (fig. 0.1). “I’d like to thank the Atlanta Constitution for coming out two months ago and stating plainly,” he thunders, “that Talmadge is the only candidate in this election for governor who will fight for and champion the reinstitution of a white Democratic primary in the state of Georgia!”

In 1946, a week after Talmadge gave this speech, a white mob murdered common-law Black couples George and Mae Murray Dorsey and Roger and Dorothy Malcom by gunshot at the Moore’s Ford Bridge just outside of Monroe.1 Seeking justice, evidence, publicity, and fairer elections, present-day Black Georgia activists and white allies (mostly from Atlanta) annually reenact this lynching and commemorate the victims on the last Saturday in July. The evolution of their staging since 2005 has been controversial, but the reenactment organizers’ sustained attention to populist discourse in American political life has proved to be prophetic as well as a public service, in part for drawing cameras like mine to document the performance. In keeping with standard practices of camerawork, I suppress my own emotional response behind the lens. Failing to do so while recording would result in intolerable camera shake and too many shame-induced tilts toward the ground. For now, just follow, just follow, just follow. Be quiet.
Still, attentive following demands active work. Documentary camerawork is a way of being that tunes into nearby affective flow, the material base of poignant footage and cinematic structures of time. I cycle through a list of the situation’s tacit commands while filming. Be cognizant of Walter’s family’s Klan past for which this moment stands as a perverse atonement. Be able to love his willingness to play hate here as the camera rolls and the crowd looks on with muted anger. Be mindful of the lynching reenactment scene yet to
come. Be further in the future where this record of 1946 via 2012 reenactment turns into a film, maybe juxtaposed next to other moments you know and dimly consider while filming. Maybe here in this doubled documentary event is a story about ongoing right-wing efforts to suppress the Black vote in Georgia. Be aware that the shot might not be used anyway, that no one else may ever see it. Be the filmer, the editor you imagine, and the viewer you cannot know of the film not yet made, all at the same time. Be a fleshy, imperfect barometer of this chaotic, unfolding, intense set of feelings remade for today, and translate all of it through the camera for those not here.

Be there.

The mantra echoes through training, discourse about the value of documentary, and years of work, and it’s hard to think otherwise in the moment. This is the harvest season, not the winter of reflection. It is the time to follow the messiness of homegrown ritual and everyday life. When I do, my footage is supposed to pledge to the viewer not to preach. The goal, in this sensory ethnographic approach to filmmaking, is to call forth the viewer’s “active engagement in the generation of meaning” rather than arguing for this or that. Rooted in the antiestablishment orientation of the 1960s counterculture and experiments with using lightweight, low-cost, synch-sound filming rigs to move the cinema from studio to street and site, filmers of this school tend to “seek out revelatory moments, those flashes of connection between what would otherwise be lost to flux” by closely recording daily life. Yet these “revelatory moments” still aim to function as the building blocks for a politics we can’t yet name (or maybe care not to label this way), and so this kind of camerawork has come to bear a relation more broadly to the affective turn in the post-2000s humanities and social sciences. In Georgia, I mark my series of shots in memory for director Jacqueline Olive to consider using in her PBS film *Always in Season* (2019)—at this point, in 2012, a cinematic meditation on restorative justice rituals in communities scarred by unresolved histories of lynching, like Monroe. I’ve spent hundreds of similar days on this and other films, recording everyday people as they go about their business.

But the activities that take place in Monroe this day are not exactly business as usual. The performance is an intentional effort to infuse some combination of flesh and concept back into the land and air as well as the cameras nearby. And I am here filming a reenactment in part because I’ve lost faith in the premise of neutrality and the promise of representation on which the ethics of much documentary camerawork depends. To paraphrase Achille Mbembe’s warning, twenty-first-century citizens and activists need to take seriously “the power and effectiveness of abstractions” such as theories, models, simulations, and
reenactments, which “depend not so much on whether their depiction of the world is accurate as it does on their capacity to constitute a world.” In writing this book and devising its peculiar approach to the study of camerawork, affect, and the reenactment of trauma, I have found myself driven by a question intimated by Mbembe’s social theory: what happens when we film simulations like the Moore’s Ford Lynching Reenactment using methods designed to represent the liveliness and dignity of unscripted everyday life?

Political Camerawork: Documentary and the Lasting Impact of Reenacting Historical Trauma explores performances of the past/passed in reenactments and simulations as an angle on an unresolved debate in media studies about the status of evidence in digital culture. I focus on the affective experiences of nonfiction camerapersons and reenactors in what I am calling simulation documentaries like the lynching reenactment described above. Simulation documentaries are not simply films. Rather, they are reiterative, performed scenarios that both reference traumatic historical events and manage to lure documentary cameras to record live performances as events in their own right. Their raw materials are the embodied, collective, live performances carried out with and for cameras in three-dimensional spaces. Attuned to the affordances of digital media distribution, the ubiquity of cameras, and the ways that journalists and documentary camerapersons like me try to follow rather than direct events, simulation documentaries aim to extend the time, space, and framing of documentary attention on an issue or subject over years of recursive performance and filming. Simulation documentaries proceed without narrative closure per se, serving over time as tools for generating particular pathways of feeling for media stories about a given event or as mediatized open-space forums for activism, learning, and social or individual growth. They aim to create what John Protevi called “political affect,” or “affective cognition in social contexts” distributed across individuals, ideological positions, shared somatic experiences, and local contexts invested in discursive power. In simulation documentaries, camerawork and reenactment constitute key vectors for the creation and circulation of political affect and so give cause for this film studies treatment of Protevi’s social concept. Case studies in this book examine such dynamics in the reenactment of the Vietnam War (chap. 1), the US military’s embodied simulation training in California during the Iraq War (chap. 2), and the lynching reenactment described above (chaps. 3 and 4), as well as documentary films and media reports about each simulation scenario. I conduct close analyses of the documentaries In Country (Attie and O’Hara, 2014), Full Battle Rattle (Moss, 2010), and Always in Season (Olive, 2019) as components of simulation documentaries. The ephemeral reality of intense feelings and
sensations experienced by actors, camerapersons, and reporters—so-called moments of truth—take evidentiary precedence here over archival sources or concepts of truths that are timeless.

I argue that in simulation documentaries such as that of the Moore’s Ford Lynching Reenactment, performing bodies create the lively documentary text. Reenactors do not directly experience the traumatic past, but in performing a simulation of it, they become the carriers of its felt traces. During the reenactment performance, the road, the buildings, and the wooded landscape itself seem unusually sensitive to light for those copresent to it, like celluloid inscribing our anxious and troubled projections about this past that remains in our present. Bodies like Walter’s and later those of the committed men and women who play the victims of the lynching become documentary for those who witness them. For a moment, through touching sacred ground in commemoration, they offer evidence of history.

The impacts of these feelings are lasting nonetheless—material, even, in digital culture. Reenactments of trauma are startling little rehearsals for death that stick with us, pain us, retraumatize us, and fascinate us. They can create something akin to what photographer Ariella Azoulay called “planted pictures” involuntarily inscribed into the body and thereby creating a “civil political space . . . not mediated exclusively by the ruling power of the state.” These traces surge up in the bodies of performers and sometimes in copresent spectators through the ineffable energies that performance theorist Peggy Phelan associated with “liveness and disappearance” in performance. For individuals who reenact events from their own lives, as with some of the nonactors in Italian neorealist films or the subjects of psychodrama therapy, the performance can be cathartic or empowering, even a “second chance” to get things right. Within documentary theater adapted for film, alternatively, the reenactment of archival transcripts has allowed practitioners to explore racial and gender surrogacy as a form of critique, defamiliarize acting conventions, and highlight oppressive policies and social practices with an eye toward justice. In the terms of film theorist William Guynn, “fusional moments” experienced in reenactment may facilitate a fleeting sense of insight about past lives outside of narrative interpretation, “an uncanny experience of truth that takes you unawares and thrusts you into a sphere where the usual protocols do not apply.” Perhaps most significantly, reenactment offers a way to conjure past events, experiences, and perspectives produced by asymmetrical relations of power, where recording live was dangerous or impossible. Camerawork amid reenactment aims to “reactivate” some of those energies for imagined viewers in the future in many other spaces.
The films of Rithy Panh about the 1970s genocide in Cambodia, signally, have shown that documentaries premised on reenactments of traumatic history can unearth evidence and create a space for redress. As a child, Panh was deported with his family from the city of Phnom Penh to a forced-labor camp in a rural village. Though his parents and other family members died in these years, he managed to escape to France in 1979, where he learned the craft of filmmaking. Many of his films have focused on aspects of the genocide to force his fellow Cambodians as well as government leaders to reckon with it and work through their collective trauma. Panh’s haunting documentary S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine (2003), for example, excavates fragments of stories about the notorious S21 concentration camp where guards killed over seventeen thousand Cambodians between 1975 and 1979. At S21, so few prisoners survived—only three, including painter Vann Nath, who is featured in the film—that Panh had to depend on the former guards to piece together what had happened there. The film shows these now-middle-aged men acting out and explaining their former routines of surveillance, torture, and killing in the spaces where they once worked. Though they all speak throughout the film with a flat affect, a former guard named Ches unnervingly comes to life when he reenacts the nighttime routine of surveilling prisoners that he learned and honed as a thirteen-year-old boy. Film scholar and psychoanalyst Deirdre Boyle argued that this scene provided crucial evidence of the genocide long denied or suppressed in Cambodia: “Ches’s reenactment demonstrates how alive Cambodia’s violent past is in the psyche of its survivors, both victims and perpetrators. Denial of that past has been the national pattern for dealing with the Cambodian genocide, and Panh quietly argues throughout his film—that his nation’s split-off traumatic memories are the wellspring for its social pathology, violence, and corruption.” Adjacent to sensory ethnographic recording in its patient following of Ches as he reenacts for the camera and himself, this long take accumulates affective force at it plays in the finished film, which translated to political significance in this case. It suggests how powerful documentary evidence can be laid bare through reenactment, and how the camerawork employed during such moments inevitably participates in a nascent politics.

Yet in scholarship on reenactment, liveness in performance, and performance documentation, there is little about the body of the cameraperson almost invariably copresent with performers. I want to emphasize that in simulation documentaries, documentary camerawork is also a part of the act. In many contexts less grave than Panh’s film, the notion of moments of truth must be read as ironic. The subjective recognition of something tingling the body, after
all, might also characterize the spectator’s adrenaline rush upon viewing the climactic action sequence in a cliché blockbuster film. A classical Hollywood plot builds toward a unique event that resolves a crisis, a scripted moment of truth functioning diegetically as the hero’s unlikely individual triumph. Here the film hails its viewers as ideological subjects. Emotionally charged moments recounted and reinforced as truth in journalistic and documentary media representations, similarly, have played their part in propelling the currents of ethnonationalism, populism, and fascism, especially since 2016. If a simulation documentary can steward the documentarian’s quest for affecting moments, then the camerawork starts to function less like critical, neutral, or independent record making and more like a de facto public relations tool.

“Weaponizing Affect: A Film Phenomenology of 3D Military Training Simulations During the Iraq War” (chap. 2), for example, centers on the conundrum of documenting military training simulations during the Iraq War (2004–12), where following staple documentary techniques for raising critical consciousness (such as showing imagery evocative of the horrors of war) functioned instead to tap into perversely pleasurable Hollywood war movie tropes, aid the army’s public relations agenda, and blunt possibilities for dissent. These training simulations also radically altered the desert landscapes of military areas in Southern California and spurred cottage industries across the region to supply Hollywood-trained pyrotechnicians and scenario writers, Arabic-speaking contract role players, and satellite-powered laser-tag accessories for standard-issue rifles in this peculiar, military-driven growth sector. Though simulations, such depictions of war are material for the ways they create new markets and infrastructures to service military-themed cultural work.

Alternatively, cases such as the Moore’s Ford Lynching Reenactment show that simulation documentaries in digital culture can spur participants seeking justice (especially along the lines of race) to reclaim the physical environment, think differently about historical reality, and act in new ways, sometimes facilitating community conversation and growth. Allissa Richardson’s study of smartphones and Black social movements attributes the unique power of “bearing witness while black” to long-standing sentiments of collective identity and shared struggle. For Black viewers, she explains, each videotape of police violence against a Black body points back to all such incidents, not just a singular event. Her observation would extend to spectators and participants in reenactments as well, where performing bodies touch the reality of police brutality and white vigilantism through creating its sensory echoes in a historically significant place. Such witnessing, writes feminist philosopher of ethics Kelly Oliver, “enables the subject to reconstitute the experience of objectification in
ways that allow her to reinsert subjectivity into a situation designed to destroy it.”

Thinking from behind the lens, Hans Charles, the cinematographer of Ava Duvernay’s 13th (2016), who is developing what he calls a “unified black film theory,” insists intriguingly that “literally the atoms that are captured [in the process of digital or analog image recording] are influenced by the bodies that are close to the camera.”

Race mediates the experience of witnessing, the processing of pixels, and the possibilities for political transformation bound up in uses of the documentary camera. Contexts for camerawork matter, and yet they remain invisible in most finished films and thus underexplored by theorists of the image.

These starting points lead the book to pursue a twofold agenda in conversation with ongoing concerns in film and media studies, documentary theory, and performance studies. First, I offer a theory of indexicality—a concept long essential to considerations of ethics in documentary studies—centered in embodied experiences of camerawork and reenactment rather than narrowly technological understandings of photographic inscription and manipulability, which no longer serve the field. Second, I argue that in simulation documentaries (and much of digital culture by extension), camerawork itself often functions as a kind of unspoken reenactment performance of past recording practices. Across my case studies, I explore what it might mean to evaluate camerawork this way.

INDEXICALITY, SIMULATION, AND AFFECT

The book is organized around three major ideas within the framework of embodiment: the problem of the indexical trace within documentary theory, the materiality of live reenactment and simulation performance in digital culture, and embodied reenactment as an intervention into the theory behind sensory cinema practice. The conceptual framework develops in three studies of simulation documentaries in the post-2000 United States over four chapters, which all focus on collective simulations and reenactments of traumatic events. I assess the concept of media indexicality and practices of documentary camerawork, reenactment performance, and spectatorship through the lenses of performance, duration, race, and affect.

Indexicality and the Body

*Political Camerawork* engages questions of evidence in digital culture by bringing into dialogue two areas of post-2000 critical practice: first, camerawork in a group of nonfiction films that I am calling *sensory cinema*, and second,
embodied reenactment in performance. Sensory cinema is an experimental media production practice and academic research agenda dedicated to exploring via ethnography or the representation of memory the affective and bodily dimensions of human experience. I am using the term sensory cinema to refer to small-crew, independent, nonfiction filmmaking practices that aim in a variety of ways to evoke or follow the lived, affective, sensorial experiences of their subjects. In ethnographic styles, sensory cinema techniques center on observational recording, sometimes in ways that include subjects’ subtle recognitions of the camera, to represent vulnerable societies, ways of working, and communities for small audiences in university classrooms, film festivals, and public television broadcasts. In diasporic films and postcolonial filmmaking, sensory cinema techniques center on voice-over engagements with traumatic memory or performative staging to elicit feelings of loss and then critical reflection on a historical event or theme. These films aim to express the sensory experience of surviving trauma, exile, or displacement primarily for audiences who may share similar life experiences or relate to them in more idiosyncratic ways. By embodied reenactment, I am referring to a collection of performance practices across the domains of performance art, simulation training, media archeology, living history, ritual commemoration, documentary filmmaking, and psychodrama in which everyday people perform historical events, memories, or archival records. Reenactors may aim to work through a personally traumatic experience, find a collective identity around the shared interpretation of a historical event, internalize procedures for action in difficult scenarios, or learn about embodied historical experience by simulating archaic material and technological constraints in the present.19

I engage these areas of critical practice through documentary theory, critical media theory, and performance studies on the concept of media indexicality, a term usually associated with the capacity of photographic media to stand as evidence of past events. In his proposal for a semiotic system, late nineteenth-century American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce described “the index” as a sign that bears an existential bond with its object, like the finger pointing to the object of the point, the weathervane to the direction of the wind, or the footprint to the foot. In Peirce’s taxonomy, indexical signs are distinct from iconic signs, which look like the objects they represent, and symbols (such as written words), which arbitrarily stand for referents.21 The concept of indexicality was adopted into film theory by Peter Wollen in Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (1972), where he used it to interpret the arguments of mid-twentieth-century French film theorist André Bazin. In “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” published in his influential What Is Cinema? (1967), Bazin proposed that
the photograph “shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction”—a proposal, in other words, that the photograph is indexical because the mechanical action of the camera physically imprints the image of the world in front of the lens on the film emulsion at the moment of exposing it to light.\textsuperscript{22} He argued that film thus generally bore a stronger relationship to evidence and the real than did plastic arts such as painting, sculpture, and drawing. Neo-Marxist documentary theorists starting in the 1990s accepted this conceit and so saw the emergence of digital recording technologies as a challenge to the material basis of documentary film. Leading documentary scholar Jane Gaines, for instance, captured the spirit of the moment by arguing that her field should leave behind “the impossible claim to indexicality” in favor of resemblance in the context of digital media.\textsuperscript{23} If digital images are made of the same binary data as computer simulations, in this line of reasoning, then they index an easily manipulated computer code rather than a unique moment of past time. They cannot function as documentary evidence in the same way. Many scholars still attribute the rise of performative strategies in documentary film to “digital’s loosening of the referential bond” and the “weakening of photographic image integrity.”\textsuperscript{24}

Influential in setting the terms for this way of thinking was new media theorist Lev Manovich, who celebrated the affordances of digital technologies for inverting what he saw as the stilted ontology Bazin had set out for the cinema. “Given enough time and money, almost anything can be simulated in a computer,” he declared in his widely read article riffing on Bazin, “What Is Digital Cinema?”\textsuperscript{25} If cinema was “an attempt to make art out of a footprint,” he argued, then digital cinema was “no longer an indexical media technology but, rather, a sub-genre of painting,” an emerging condition symbolized in his article by the floating digital feather layered over a stylized crane shot in Forrest Gump (1994).\textsuperscript{26} Subsequent film and digital media scholars in many subfields followed this direction to contribute important insights about nascent labor relations in the globalized digital effects industry, processes entailed in producing computer graphics for blockbuster films, narrative tendencies in the use of spectacular effects, and the impact of image manipulation in shows and films that purport to represent actual events.\textsuperscript{27} But this direction essentially baked into the theorization of digital media a notion of “medium specificity” that failed to account for the labor and cost required to manipulate video images, factors that limited access to such techniques to big-budget studios in the early 2000s.\textsuperscript{28} New uses of small, low-cost digital cameras in documentary production practice and everyday interactions largely went unconsidered in this time
as film and media theorists speculated about potential dangers posed by image manipulation.\textsuperscript{29}

One exception to this general trend is Jennifer Malkowski’s \textit{Dying in Full Detail} (2017), which criticized “existing new media theory’s fixation on the loss of indexicality” for failing in turn to theorize emergent, everyday trends in non-fiction production and reception.\textsuperscript{30} In her study of the complex political and ethical concerns inscribed in digital documentary footage of actual death—the availability of which has increased as a practical by-product of the vast proliferation of digital recording devices and distribution platforms—Malkowski found that the “drama of referentiality seems surprisingly irrelevant in the reception of digital documentary.”\textsuperscript{31}

As a documentary filmmaker who learned observational and participatory recording techniques on synch-sound 16 mm film cameras in the late 1990s, I would add that the “drama of referentiality” seemed beside the point for many camerapersons, as well.\textsuperscript{32} I remember embracing the introduction of low-cost Hi8 and then digital video (DV) camcorders, tape-based recording formats, and nonlinear video editing software such as Apple’s Final Cut Pro (brought to market in 1999) for opening new possibilities to represent intimacy with precision in non-fiction film art. For documentarians working with the activist left, video production emerged as “part of a field of practices producing new subjectivities, new ways of life.”\textsuperscript{33} But it was difficult to imagine at the time the profound impact that the increasing number of cameras, images, and online distribution platforms would have on cultural understandings of time, space, and interaction, and by extension the kinds of subjects and styles that documentarians might pursue. I spent the years between 2001 and 2006 filming and performing in reenactment events as a reverse participant ethnographer tracking US discourses about war after 9/11, and I noticed along the way that more and more “spectators” were viewing the live reenactment performances as camerapersons wielding a range of miniature digital cameras with screens.\textsuperscript{34} Sometimes they even recorded bits of themselves or family members in the foreground as mock battles (reenactments of the Revolutionary War, in my case) played out in the background. This was camerawork “in favor of connective performance rather than semantic reference,” as visual communication scholar Paul Frosh put it in his insightful article about the selfie—in other words, documentary practice for pleasure, comfort, and group identification.\textsuperscript{35} In digital culture, this performative episteme largely displaced or subsumed the power of a representational one, a change that had little to do with the fact that digital imagery could be altered in software programs.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, digital
distribution and low-cost public screening possibilities may also catalyze the mimetic “re-enactment of tactics from elsewhere” in direct action campaigns, wherein activists screen protest videos from elsewhere to prime their bodies for potential conflicts when they take to the street. The recursive cycles of insider recording, screening of footage selects, and embodied protest in effect tether the bodily orientations of protesters to the practices of movement camerapersons. This is a new wrinkle on what Jane Gaines called “political mimesis” in a thoughtful article on the relationship between theatrical documentary and social action.

Already “degraded,” to use a favored term of digital media skeptics, reenactment scenarios present complex and provocative case studies for thinking through meanings of the digital in which image manipulability is not a central consideration. My aim in looking at camerawork and embodied reenactment here is to contribute to this debate but in doing so to decouple documentary ontology from its traditional object, the finished film, without also giving up on the concept of indexicality and the ethical claims it brings in tow. I read media indexicality as primarily affective, ephemeral, and processual rather than technological; instances of indexical signification are inseparable from experiencing bodies and may or may not have much to do with inscriptions on celluloid or digital chips. Reframing the analytic positioning from film to bodily experience also forecloses conceding the troubling point that the concept of indexicality “may have reached the limits of its usefulness.” I explore the experience of indexicality in the body in heavily mediated contexts, not the nature of digital cinema per se.

My study of camerawork here follows film scholars who take up the unresolved question of the trace in digital culture from a phenomenological perspective and who theorize the trace as it registers on and through the bodies of those who experienced trauma. While the authenticating, indexical signs of a traumatic experience (such as repression, forgetting, heightened sensitivity to nonthreatening stimuli, and involuntary psychic reenactments) may “undermine the legitimacy of a retrospective report about a remembered incident,” as Janet Walker framed this epistemological dilemma in her study of documentary “trauma cinema,” the traces of traumatic experience shape future lives and constitute fields of perception in profound ways. They also have little to do with an analog or digital medium of inscription.

To situate media indexicality in the body of the one perceiving the sign is to focus on matters of duration. While the video camera opens its shutter for one-twenty-fourth or one-thirtieth of a second to create an image, the body responds to phenomena in less precise, less measurable ways. A researcher
looking at an old wooden projector carried town to town by a silent-era ambu-
latory projectionist might note with a startle the markings on the box sugges-
tive of repeated use—stains from leather straps or indentations where the box
regularly pressed against the shoulders of its carrier over the years. The surge
of awareness in the researcher that cascades from these observations may be
described as a form of joy or fascination at imagining the lifeworld of the former
projectionist. But these are doubtful sensations. They provoke more questions
than answers. What must this person have thought while walking town to
town carrying “the movies”? How did they identify (or not) with the films they
screened? The researcher does not have answers to such questions. Indexicality
never provides answers. Indexicality provokes thought and directs attention
to evidence of something. It changes the course of the perceivers focus and do-
ing. While this heightened sense of awareness may be momentary, it does not
match in an isometric relation to the time required to generate the sign itself
(those marks were made over a long period of the projectionist’s work). In all
likelihood, the projectionist did not notice these indentations in the box made
by their own shoulders or did not think they were particularly fascinating. They
may have indexed the need to procure a new projector if the wear inhibited use.
The indentations become indexical only through this intersubjective moment
of encounter when the researcher perceives them as startling.\(^{43}\) Indexicality
is felt in the body of the perceiver as a new, challenging, humbling space for
thinking. It is a sensory unit of time. Insofar as this feeling and regard focuses
on the lived experience of other humans from the past in order to preserve,
analyze, or express something about them or to persuade oneself or one’s con-
temporaries about their meanings, a “documentary poetics” might also claim
them as within the field’s purview.\(^ {44}\)

Sometimes, the indexical sign in the body requires time to emerge. One of
the women who played Dorothy Malcom in the Moore’s Ford Lynching Reen-
actment recalled a moment at the end of the event when she was lying still with
her eyes closed in the grass, playing dead. A different woman sang a spiritual to
conclude the reenactment for witnesses and role-players alike and offer dignity
to the day. This particular actress told me she first heard the sounds—crickets,
the flowing stream, the clicks of cameras—and felt the intensity of the heat.
And as her mind wandered over the course of a minute lying still, she began to
think about the temporality of death itself. Her attention shifted as her sense of
time slowed down. Her stillness indexed an alternative trajectory. And it moved
her profoundly. She attributed that powerful, nebulous, momentary sensation
to the presence of Dorothy Malcom’s unsettled spirit, merging with her own
body just for a moment in an involuntary, eerie sense of touch. Participating in
order to witness such idiosyncratic connections speaks to an ethics of reenactment, a reason why embodied performance is not simply another instance of simulation. The bodies of those living with racial trauma may channel a counterhistory in such moments, a way of being and sensing that can inform critical media practices in generative ways. Rather than reject the concept of indexicality because digital imagery can be manipulated, I consider in the ensuing chapters a cultural shift toward performative and affective forms of indexical experience and try to parse how a documentary practice might work within these parameters.

*Simulation and Affect*

Scholars in philosophy, neuroscience, computer science, film and media studies, history, and critical cultural theory use the term *simulation* in different ways, so I want to briefly parse several meanings associated with it. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the earliest uses of the term *simulation* referred to the “attempt to deceive” or “a false assumption or display, a surface resemblance or imitation,” like the play of light and shadow on the wall of Plato’s cave. Between the end of World War II and the rise of computing in the 1950s, however, simulation took on a second, more value-neutral connotation as “the technique of imitating the behaviour of some situation or process (whether economic, military, mechanical, etc.) by means of a suitably analogous situation or apparatus.”45 Simulation came to connote the process of modeling events or potential events in the actual world virtually, usually through the adjustment of variables in computer programs, so as to understand, prevent, encourage, or control a range of possible future outcomes. In the philosophy of mind and history fields, the term *simulation* named the process of imagining oneself into the world of another, which proponents claimed as key to empathy, learning, and intercultural exchange. Starting in the 1990s, neuroscientists conducting fMRI research on relations between perception, action, and brain activity claimed to discover “mirror neurons,” a biological mechanism that seemed to support a simulation theory of mind. Mirror neurons became similarly active when study subjects (including birds, primates, and humans) performed an action and when they watched another perform the same action. The brain itself, in other words, could simulate a particular motor action response simply by watching others perform it. Repeated instances of similar mental simulations over time, in turn, altered the materiality of the brain itself. In critical cultural theory, Sean Cubbit offered the concept of “simulation theory” in 2001 to encapsulate a strain of neo-Marxist thought that theorized the nature of exchange in a postindustrial society. Developed between the 1960s and 1990s in the work of
Guy Debord, Jean Baudrillard, Paul Virilio, and Umberto Eco as a revision of pre–World War II Frankfurt School critical theory, simulation theory in this vein asks how communications technologies such as film, television, computing, and military surveillance tools transformed everyday life.\(^{46}\)

Simulation has been a particularly resonant concept within film and media studies, both because of claims that the cinema itself functions as an apparatus of simulation and because the growing place of moving images in everyday life since the development of video technology in the late 1960s seemed to suggest the emergence of a simulation society. Because dominant cinema production commodifies experiences as media objects and then extracts value (economic, political, military, and cultural) through their distribution in a sign economy, Baudrillard argued that the content and message of any given media work made relatively little impact in the trajectory of its underlying code, toward a world organized around models rather than interpersonal experiences. Moreover, mass media distribution networks facilitated the proliferation of images and ideas without much connection to productive labor, and so the balance of power in a consumer society tilted definitively to those who controlled airwaves, magazines, movies, and newspapers—favoring technologies rather than industrial workers and consumption rather than production. Any information or image commodity that could circulate in mass media, including advertisements, news programs, and Marxist ideas themselves, became tools for establishing status economies among various media consumers and groups: “Needs, affects, culture, knowledge—all specifically human capacities are integrated in the order of production as commodities and materialized as productive forces in order to be sold.”\(^{47}\) In this context, Baudrillard was particularly skeptical of the phenomenological method, suggesting that its focus on individual consciousness failed to acknowledge the “directly and totally collective” nature of consumption in a society saturated with advertising aimed at augmenting desire. “No theoretical analysis is possible without the reversal of the traditional givens,” he claimed in Consumer Society (1970); “otherwise, no matter how we approach it, we revert to a phenomenology of pleasure.”\(^{48}\) Baudrillard revised and reconsidered many tenets from his early writing later in his career, but he did not revisit phenomenology as a means for exploring the relationship between the body, media making, and collective life, even as access to media production tools and distribution outlets expanded.

I interpret the material qualities of embodied reenactment and camerawork through the lens of affect theory, a body of humanities scholarship developed especially since the mid-1990s. In broad terms, affect theory aims to account for prelinguistic, sensorial forms of bodily intensity that shape individual and
sometimes collective instances of perception, attention, and movement as well as more enduring vectors of thought.\textsuperscript{49} Theorists often claim that affective life offers a creative, idiosyncratic terrain through which to reimagine politics, identity formation, and value.\textsuperscript{50} In my case, affect theory offers analytical tools preferable to discourse analysis or ideological critique alone to account for the conjoined experiences of nonfiction camerapersons and reenactment performers. Indeed, camerawork and reenactment performance rarely require language-based reflection from practitioners, which is part of my rationale for writing about such practices in the context of designed, recursive simulation events. I am interested in how such practices come to cohere over time or reveal affective patterns in retrospect that do seem to have a relationship to ideology, discipline, and discourse. And I am interested as well in ways that such creative practices can help catalyze local, specific, critical forms of community infrastructure, conversation, and action—the key space for translating affective experience into new questions, unexpected collectives, or actionable agendas that exceed simulation design.

However, the wide-ranging applications of affect theory have not led to a consensus about premises for developing a field or a shared articulation of political goals. In The Affect Theory Reader (2010), editors Melissa Gregg and Gregory Siegworth positively characterized their subject as a “methodological and conceptual free for all” and then inventoried eight different strands of scholarship on affect.\textsuperscript{51} Intellectual historians Brian Ott and Ruth Leys focused more narrowly on parsing two lineages of affect theory that emerged to address limitations of psychoanalytic theory and the linguistic turn of the 1980s.\textsuperscript{52} Portions of this book draw from film studies variants of each. First, I use affect theory grounded in taxonomies of cinematic intensity described by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze in his books Cinema 1: The Movement Image and Cinema 2: The Time Image, which aim to describe how the cinema generates new kinds of affects. Phenomenologists Vivian Sobchack, Laura Marks, Jamie Baron, and Kara Keeling focused in a similar way on the experiencing body and its “incorporative capacities for scaffolding and extension” in the context of novel technologies, social dynamics, or art forms.\textsuperscript{53} Second, I draw from a body of work grounded in evolutionary theory on motivation attributed to American behavioral psychoanalyst Silvan Tomkins as interpreted by queer theorists Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank in Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader (1995) and adapted to new feminist psychoanalytic film theory analyses of documentary by Lisa Cartwright, Belinda Smaill, and Pooja Rangan.\textsuperscript{54}

Deleuzian affect theory proposes that art (and especially film) can serve as a philosophy beyond language, a prepersonal intensive force acting on human
and nonhuman bodies alike in their processes of becoming. Deleuze created taxonomies of cinematic expressive units (movement-image, action-image, time-image, affection image, recollection-image, etc.) that were incompatible, in his view, with the phenomenological method, and so Deleuze does not theorize embodiment in cinema spectatorship. In adapting the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty for the study of film in *The Address of the Eye* (1992), Sobchack offered the concept of the “film body” to bridge filmic text and spectator experience. The “film body,” in her terms, is a “being” with capacities for expression and intention that emerge between spectator and screen as the film plays. I find the distributed form of agency embedded within this idea to be well suited to the simulation documentary scenarios I analyze in this book and to camerawork in particular, which is, after all, constituted in the space between bodies, objects, and contexts rather than within an individual’s mind. For Marks, who largely follows Deleuze’s affect theory in *The Skin of the Film* (2000), Sobchack’s phenomenological approach opened pathways for theorizing consciousness, sensation, and screen-body permeability, a “bridge to explaining how a viewer experiences images” in the context of particular “states, histories, and circumstances.” Her book focused on 1980s and 1990s experimental, nonfiction films by diasporic makers caught in the violent political and economic disjunctures of late twentieth-century globalization, who repurposed details from everyday landscapes, objects, and interactions in Western metropoles to center films on memories of traumatic events in their homelands. Key to understanding this work for Marks was Deleuze’s interpretation of the “any spaces whatever” in numerous post–World War II European art films, where aimless and powerless protagonists wandered amid rubble without the possibility of any decisive action. As the “disengagement of affective response from action” opened for Deleuze an intense, visceral, unfamiliar, affective experience of time in such films, so Marks described the “narratively thin but emotionally full” films about traumatic memory and loss by postcolonial filmmakers forced to live between two cultures. Intercultural filmmakers sought to create forms of connection between themselves and a kindred diasporic audience—touch with past bodies through film rather than on it. In this way, the intercultural cinema she named was sensory in its effect, though not anthropological in its methodological orientation. Shared affective responses to images functioned to curate a collective and perhaps a politics. In all the case studies that follow, I think through the circuits of affect that function as the locus of indexicality in digital culture—an answer to the call, as Marks put it, to focus on “indexical and nonindexical practices [rather] than indexical and nonindexical media.” Writing about simulation documentaries in this way
thus draws on and contributes to theories of spectatorship core to film studies for a media ecological context irreducible to “screen-essentialism.”59

A second tradition of affect theory used in the humanities is based on descriptions of affective processes from the cognitive sciences and in particular from the writing of Tomkins. Intervening in Freud’s binary theory of the sex and death drives, Tomkins proposed that the human body evolved an innate “affect system” to manage motivation by mediating recursively between perception and consciousness. Tomkins theorized that there are eight affect pairs that function as endpoints for gradients of intensity of response to external stimuli, with positive affect pairs interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, and surprise-startle, and negative pairs fear-terror, distress-anguish, anger-rage, shame-humiliation, and dissmell-disgust. Tomkins credited the early writing of Norbert Weiner (1950) on cybernetics, a field of inquiry into self-correcting machines that subsequently influenced computer science, science studies, surveillance studies, and behavioral psychology, for leading him to theorize the affect system as functioning somewhat like a loop of code hardwired into the body, “the role of consciousness as part of a feedback mechanism,” in his terms. The subject seeking to maximize positive affect, minimize negative affect, and lead a rich affective life would learn over time to pursue optimization strategies within a particular social and historical context. The affect system intensified the sensorial interplay among drives, perceptions, memories, and thought processes but was not beholden to any of them in particular.60

Apropos of the discussion of embodying indexicality, Tomkins identified surprise-startle, one of nine affects in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, as a “circuit breaker” to experiencing the flow of time as continuous. As I show in chapter 1, something like this surprise-startle affect is also central to Peirce’s theory of indexicality. Tomkins described the surprise-startle affect, metaphorically, as a generally neutral response to “any visitor to consciousness who has outstayed his welcome.” In documentary film production, film viewing, and performance, being startled often results from sensations that lead to a heightened awareness of contingency or stakes. We might think of this “visitor to consciousness” as an understanding of the world shaken by what has just been experienced in an encounter with a film or performance event. Becoming conscious of the history of another startles us. The experiencing subject must attend “momentarily to that massive, dense feedback from the startle response,” in Tomkins’s terms, with enough energy to allow for the integration of new information about the world.61 It is a starting point for thinking about indexicality in the body and is analogous, in some respects, to the brief exposure of light to celluloid otherwise continuously existing in the darkness of the enclosed camera.
Sedgwick saw in Tomkins’s writing on affect a way to theorize identity, art, and the bonds of affiliation without recourse to esoteric Deleuzian concepts, ideology critique, or the “paranoid position” of prevailing critical theory focused on naming all-powerful, world-shaping forces always hidden away from view. Through Sedgwick and her coauthor Frank’s endorsement and republication of his selected writings, Tomkins reemerged as a figure of debate in fields outside his roots in psychological and cognitive science research. His work was taken up in critical areas including feminist film studies, game studies, and media ecology, among others. These scholars’ attention to the descriptive sections of Tomkins’s writing on the affects bracketed out his overarching framework, following Sedgwick and Frank’s lead to forego the “irresistibly easy discreditation” of Tomkins’s underlying quest to prove the existence of a universal, innate affect system. “You don’t have to be long out of theory kindergarten,” they quipped, “to make mincemeat of, let’s say, a psychology that depends on the separate existence of eight (only sometimes it’s nine) distinct affects hardwired into the human biological system.”

Such bracketing was bound to attract a critic. In a provocative essay published in *Critical Inquiry* in 2011, Ruth Leys made mincemeat of Tomkins’s project and the affective turn that followed it, a position she expanded into *The Ascent of Affect*, a genealogical monograph on debates over the character of emotions, feelings, and affects within the fields of behavioral psychology and cognitive science dating to the 1950s. She noted that Tomkins was more philosopher than experimental scientist and that his notion that humans are born with a self-corrective affect response system came out of his creative reading of cybernetic theory rather than extensive empirical studies with human subjects. In the hands of protégé Paul Ekman, who claimed to affirm Tomkins’s ideas in empirical, cross-cultural emotion-identification tests with still photographs, this “basic emotions theory” came to orient persuasion consulting for business- and military-funded facial recognition research and the design of eye-tracking software interfaces. Leys also noted that Ekman’s claims remain in dispute within cognitive science.

But while Leys focused most squarely on debunking the basic emotions theory of Tomkins and Ekman, her concluding chapter assessed Deleuzian affect theorists as similarly problematic. If the aims of affect theorists working in critical theory traditions are to radically reimagine an emancipatory culture free from the blame game of political discourse, the constraints of language categories, and the disciplinary force of ideological positions, then she deemed the efforts so far to be a failure. Leys saw in the argument for the political significance of preconscious, nonintentional, autonomic affects, in effect, a
paradigm that must also “mystify the realities of globalization and provide convenient support for, not a critique of, global capitalism and neoliberalism.” Actor network theory, new materialism, neurohistory, and affect theory alike, she claimed, “call into question our usual understanding of human responsibility” and thereby offer an alibi to “company owners, energy traders and deregulators whose blame for the catastrophe would be attenuated.” In other words, while cultural theorists since Sedgwick sidestepped investigating the validity of Tomkins’s claims, it is worse that, in working to affirm the irreducible uniqueness of individual subjects and the unpredictable essence of affective charges, they divested themselves from politics that could be actualized in the world. Or, to quote from Eugenie Brinkema’s formidable argument for a return to close textual analysis in film studies, *The Forms of the Affects*, “the return to affect on the part of critics from wildly divergent disciplinary backgrounds . . . leaves intact the very ideological, aesthetic, and theoretical problems it claimed to confront . . . *Affect is not where reading is no longer needed.*”

I read this line of argument as less a rejection of affect research per se than a call to reengage critical language and political accountability in the exploration of such concepts when and where possible. Documentary scholar Pooja Rangan, for example, followed concepts of intersubjectivity and affect in Cartwright’s writing on childhood and disability in film to offer a trenchant postcolonial critique of “immediations,” her term for the realist aesthetics in participatory documentaries aiming to communicate the immediacy and urgency of humanitarian crises. She argued that such films exploit the liberal imaginary of subaltern voices speaking to in fact reify inequalities they purport to redress: “Endangered, dehumanized life not only sustains documentary, but supplies its raison d’etre.” When survival is at stake, she argues, underlying political issues take a back seat to a rhetoric about “saving” particular lives. The participatory documentary *Born into Brothels* (2004), for instance, follows a female British photographer who somewhat unconsciously teaches the children of Kolkata sex workers to photograph their lives as emblems of childhood innocence that might be saleable to wealthy philanthropists on an international art market. Rangan’s book identifies intractable problems with humanist positions on affect, attention, perception, consciousness, and desire in a global documentary film economy creating and created through vast cultural and economic differences between film subjects and viewers.

When I write here about camerawork carried out in simulation documentaries, I aim to account for affective experiences and sensations without losing sight of political accountability. Camerawork is a form of affective labor, and in nonfiction traditions of camerawork that aim to follow everyday events and
sensory textures without too many interviews or breaks in flow, it remains a responsive, quasi-improvisational craft. Camerawork seeks out moments of unpredictability and contingency within otherwise reliable structures of representational practice (framing, sound recording, movement, anticipation of editing, etc.). Moments of heightened affective intensity unfolding spontaneously in the cameraperson’s field of perception tend to draw the attention of the camera. To gaze on the world is to imbue it with fascination (perhaps dangerously) and to hold it up for the regard of somewhat unknowable others in somewhat unknowable futures. In this way, camerawork draws on the kinds of affect categories that Deleuzians have identified as operational in various types of cinema (camerapersons may have these in mind as they record objects, landscapes, or unfolding activity) and on something close to the affects that Tomkins, Sedgwick, and their followers have associated with the evolution of human attention and motivation (camerapersons participate actively in interpersonal interactions by aiming the camera at and speaking with individuals who endure, explain, fight, cry, or converse).

Whereas camerapersons recording everyday life may long have envisioned themselves serving as surrogate witnesses to events for future spectators, they cannot follow the same rules and imagine to serve the same function when they record amid simulation documentaries. Simulation documentaries make use of performing bodies, props, and staging in part to direct the attention of camerapersons and then provide verbal explanations for the events just filmed. There is a danger that recording in the realist mode will be complicit by default with the aims of the simulation itself. When I write about conducting camerawork amid simulation scenarios, however, I do not operate strictly in reaction to affective sensations on site. To conduct a media phenomenology of camerawork is thus in part to invert the dictum of a filmmaker I greatly admire, Russian documentarist Dziga Vertov. “We cannot improve the making of our eyes,” he wrote in 1923 amid a bout of revolutionary fervor for mechanization, “but we can endlessly perfect the camera.” But in writing about camerawork, I can historicize, double back, and decode the cinematic conventions in play. I can try to interpret how the cinematic lures drew my camera, question the political intent behind such designs, and speculate about what I missed in the flurry of ongoing everyday activity to be filmed. I can begin to regard the phenomenon of simulation documentary as a critic rather than a cog. I can treat my own flesh with camera extension in tow as a kind of inscriptive substrate, measuring affect performed for my camera as I record. The camera becomes part of my skin, part of my screen. I can become a theorist of camerawork performance amid simulation, striving to articulate its traps, limitations, and peculiar possibilities.
My method crosses media phenomenology as applied to my own experiences of ethnographic camerawork with a genealogical approach to discourses about the real in each case study. Reenactments and simulation performances are recursive practices and so offer traces in textual and cinematic accounts about affects, attitudes, narratives, and rationales associated with recurring performance events. I piece together changing discourses about sites and practices over time through interviews with key organizers, media workers, and actors, as well as archival research and close analysis of moving-image materials and written reports.

I cross two relatively distinct strains of writing in media phenomenology. Within the field of visual anthropology, sensory ethnographic filmmakers advocate for treating film productions on the sensory textures of everyday life in diverse communities as a form of scholarship. These proponents of sensory ethnographic filming, observational cinema, and sensory vérité write reflexively about the processes of realist camerawork and editing conducted during ethnographic fieldwork for a growing audience of anthropologists who see audiovisual media offering a means to communicate the sense of other peoples and places differently than can written theory. Deeply invested in the technological aspects of indexicality afforded by cameras and microphones but less concerned than film studies theorists about distinctions between celluloid and digital chips, these practitioners tend to eschew voice-over, music, acted scenes, and montage editing so as to maximally communicate the visual and aural perspective of the filmmaker while immersed in a given culture or environment. Within film studies, a group of writers largely coming from feminist theory traditions has adapted the phenomenological method (attending to the feeling of being) to write about embodied experiences of media spectatorship. Rather than focus on unmet desire and lack in spectatorship, they provide a “thick and radical description” of personal, contingent cinema and media experiences as tools for analyzing culture and practicing “a healthy and adult polymorphousness, a freedom of becoming.”

While the practices of camerawork I employ and write about in this book largely follow tenets theorized in the visual anthropology tradition, I analyze the phenomenological experience of my camerawork using the tools and techniques of the feminist film phenomenology tradition. Sensory ethnographic footage offers a useful memory aid for my writing, but as with the experience of cinema viewing, the encounter between body and cinematic code in my case
studies occurs outside the field of view, in affective experience and memory. As I show explicitly in chapter 1, noninterventionist camerawork can function as its own form of reenactment within simulation documentaries, undercutting the realist rationale for observational and ethnographic recording styles. To interpret the peculiar dynamics of camerawork in simulation documentaries, then, I especially rely on feminist media phenomenology in the chapters that follow. I hedge against solipsism inherent to phenomenological and autobiographical writing by situating my phenomenologies of camerawork within archival-historical research on others’ experiences of the sites in question and through semiotic analysis of others’ documentary films about similar sites or situations.

ETHICAL ORIENTATION AND CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Though I theorize all three case studies in the book as simulation documentaries, spokespersons for each group account differently for the ethics of their institution’s reenactment of others’ traumatic experiences. It is not self-evident, after all, that playacting others’ pain would—or even could—have an ethical center. How is such activity not either a form of “possessive individualism” attuned to consumption within an experience economy or a scandalous form of theft? Leaders of the groups analyzed in this book are wary of such critiques and account for the ethics of their reenactments as a form of commemoration (chap. 1), training (chap. 2), or advocacy for justice (chaps. 3 and 4). These ethical accounts and their potential blind spots are important to understand as a starting point in the project, and so I offer brief explanations here as part of the chapter summaries.

For my own part, as a critical researcher and writer considering camerawork and performance practice, I am placing some measure of faith in the power of language to describe, critique, understand, and help organize lived phenomena that are often inchoate. I see this approach as ethical insofar as it minimizes risk to participants; leads the reader to new thinking about things felt, seen, and heard; and develops concepts to frame somatic, social, and psychic inequities. Following standard ethnographic research practice, I use pseudonyms for interviewees unless they already had a public profile and explicitly asked me to use their actual names. On occasion, an interviewee speaking about their experience in a reenactment or simulation would recall a traumatic event from their own past, a highly unpleasant experience that can make it more difficult for some individuals to heal. In many cases, however, retelling painful stories in safe conditions can contribute to healing. To this end, I tried to interview
participants in places where they felt comfortable—living rooms, quiet kitchen tables, and familiar cafés of their choosing—to mitigate risks of harm. Where subjects were willing and able to participate in reenactment events in public and conduct interviews with the press, I deemed further risk of harm to their speaking about role-playing to be minimal.

“Being There Again: Reenacting Camerawork in In Country (2014)” (chap. 1) develops a critique of noninterventionist cinema styles in the context of simulation documentaries by conducting a close analysis of camerawork and performance in In Country (Attie and O’Hara, 2014). Building on insights drawn from making my own reverse ethnography feature documentary about participating with a group of Revolutionary War reenactors in New England, this chapter reconsiders assumptions about temporality and presence in observational camerawork when used to film simulation documentaries. I trace a genealogy of indexicality in reiterative labor and performance practice rather than the camera’s mechanical reproducibility, which I argue better explains the function of camerawork in this film and in others by extension. I adapt Marks’s theory of the “recollection-object” to identify three ways that camerawork reenacts in In Country, in a gestural touch on crisis coverage, an archived repertoire, and a process of psychic repair. The chapter is also in conversation with Ken Burns and Lynn Novick’s The Vietnam War, Baron’s book The Archive Effect, the legacy of American direct cinema, and the noninterventionist work of and rationale for the Sensory Ethnography Lab at Harvard.

The group of reenactors featured in the film, like many other units of war reenactors, espouses an ethics of commemoration. They say that they reenact the Vietnam War to honor those soldiers who fought and died for their country, and individuals’ feelings about the rationale for the war itself are secondary to this concern. Many participants featured in the film are veterans, and they believe that their participation cements a kind of intergenerational bond among soldiers. It may also serve as a way for some individuals to cope with post-traumatic stress, as several tell the filmmakers in interviews featured in the film. Within the ethics of commemoration, however, there are potential blind spots to issues of inclusion, authenticity, and justice. The reenactors do not address atrocities carried out by US soldiers against North Vietnamese civilians, the flawed rationale for the war or lies the Johnson and Nixon administrations told the public about it, or the use of racist, dehumanizing, “authentic” language in the reenactment itself. From a critical perspective, these aspects of the reenactment (and to some extent the film about it) are ethical shortcomings. The filmmakers, who follow and honor their subjects in the spirit of understanding them, mostly reproduce the ethical orientation of the reenacting troupe.
“Weaponizing Affect: A Film Phenomenology of 3D Military Training Simulations during the Iraq War” (chap. 2) considers the place of camerawork and other forms of cinematic labor in the production of military training simulation scenarios during the Iraq War. Drawing from a phenomenology of my own camerawork at the Fort Irwin National Training Center during visits in 2007 and 2012, Tomkins’s concept of “ideo-affective orders,” ethnographic interviews, and archival research, I analyze three-dimensional military training simulation scenarios developed during the Iraq War in the Mojave Desert of California. Following news reports of torture at Abu Ghraib, the US military began to implement cultural awareness training for all troops set to deploy to the Middle East. The military contracted with Hollywood special-effects studios to develop a series of counterinsurgency warfare immersive-training simulations, including hiring Iraqi American and Afghan American citizens to play villagers, mayors, and insurgents in scenarios. My primary question centers on the military technoscience of treating human bodies as variables for affective attunement in a reiterative simulation scenario.

Here, the ethical orientation of the institution in question centers on training. Spokespersons say that reenacting attacks from the recent past in Iraq to simulate potential events in the near future serves to save the lives of American soldiers. This assertion justifies all role-playing decisions within the scenarios, including those by hired Iraqi American actors and local townspeople. It is an ethics justified by a rhetoric of urgency: training soldiers to be hypervigilant about potential threats and highly distrustful of civilians may keep them alive in a war zone in the very near future. Within the military, there may be some individuals who disagree with the rationale for war or the tactics decided on by commanders, but they can rationalize their contributions to the overall effort by saying that they save lives by improving safety, cross-cultural understanding, and troop performance. This seems to be the narrative communicated to nearly all visiting journalists and filmmakers to the fort, ostensibly in the spirit of transparency and the public’s right to know—at least, nearly all visiting journalists and filmmakers pass the saving-lives ethical rationale on to their readers and viewers. I critique this ethical orientation due to the lack of access to perspectives from Iraqi civilians living through the war, the video-game-level presentation of violence, and the staging of access for documentarians and the press to observe training.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the Moore’s Ford Lynching Reenactment, which centers on an ethics of opposition and advocacy for justice. Organizers rationalize the reenactment of the quadruple lynching as a means of honoring the victims and seeking the arrest and prosecution of perpetrators in their names.
They also view the reenactment as part of a broader movement for Black dignity and voting rights, which motivated multiple lynchings in 1946 and remain contentious policy issues in Georgia. The reenactment is a powerful symbol that moves a particular collective to action, they say, and so they foreground descendants of lynching victims and oral history accounts of Black community elders in their staging decisions, which in turn arouse strong affective sentiments among attendees. This ethical orientation collides with those of historians who have studied this case in the archives and disagree with the historical accuracy of key points in the performed narrative, as I discuss in chapter 3. The reenactment has also fractured the once-biracial local organizing committee along the lines of race. But significantly, of the three case studies in the book, this is the one that has deployed reenactment and the indexicality of the body to achieve social change. It is the one that provides an oppositional, affective framework from which to invert dominant narratives past and present about race and criminality.

“‘Do You Want to Play a Klansman?’ Lynching Photography, Civil Rights Camerawork, and the Moore’s Ford Lynching Reenactment in Georgia” (chap. 3) analyzes how and why this reenactment originated, changed over time, and shaped public perceptions about a crime for which little physical or photographic evidence still exists. Performance studies scholars and rhetoricians have written about this reenactment by focusing on race and memory, healing, and community reconciliation, but less on the ways that the reenactment functions as a media strategy for a social movement. I trace the reenactment as a media strategy to two divergent photographic practices: first, of spectacle lynchings in the South between 1893 and 1936, and second, of the development during the civil rights movement of a media strategy centered on television coverage. I propose that the Moore’s Ford Lynching Reenactment confronts the community-making elements of the first through reappropriation and deploys staging strategies in keeping with the second. I conclude this chapter with an analysis of camerawork in Keith Beauchamp’s TV documentary Murder in Black and White (2008) and then my own in 2012 for Olive’s film Always in Season (2019).

“Establishing a Black Affective Infrastructure: From Lynching Performance in the Hollywood of the South to Always in Season (2019)” (chap. 4) revisits the lynching reenactment in Georgia in the wake of the narrow and controversial defeat of the first Black, female gubernatorial candidate in US history, Stacey Abrams, in 2018. I note and consider the exponential increase in the number of cameras filming every aspect of the 2019 reenactment in a region now dubbed the Hollywood of the South for the state’s success in using tax breaks to lure
studio dollars to Georgia. Following Lauren Berlant, I propose thinking of the annual Moore’s Ford Lynching Reenactment as an affective infrastructure, or a tool, so to speak, for contextualizing stories about Black death in the South. I then analyze the use of the Moore’s Ford story in Olive’s Always in Season (2019), which won a special jury prize for moral urgency following its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2019 and aired on the national PBS documentary program Independent Lens in February 2020. I focus especially on the representation of the lynching in the film, which employs what I call an *oppositional acousmetre* at odds with the aspirations toward dramatic realism at the reenactment itself.

The conclusion, “Toward an Embodied Social Cinema,” offers directions for theoretical and practical work that build on notions of intersubjectivity, distributed authorship, reenactment performance, and interracial collaboration suggested in the book. I reflect on the place of camerawork in the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin and three others in May 2020, recorded in a single long take by then-seventeen-year-old community resident Darnella Frazier. I consider the debate that emerged within days of the publication of her video about how to characterize its aesthetics and impact, and I note the ways that the video itself inspired symbolic, memorial reenactments across the country. Framing her camerawork as a form of resistance rather than documentation or cinema vérité per se, I propose exploring how such nascent simulation documentaries express embodied social sense rather than point of view.

NOTES

1. A scandalous event in the context of nascent Cold War geopolitics made especially poignant by the fact that Dorsey was a World War II veteran and prospective voter, this “last mass lynching in America” set off months of activism, the first federal commission on civil rights, and extensive FBI investigations that amounted to nothing in the face of community silence—unbroken to this day. Talmadge won the election in 1946, and no one was prosecuted for the lynching. See a contextualization and reception study of this event in Childers, “Transforming Violence,” 573–74.


4. I flesh out the debate within visual anthropology over salvage ethnography, the sensory qualities of observational cinema, and affect in Rice, “Salvaging the Bees.” See also Clough and Halley, *Affective Turn*; Stevenson and Kohn, “Leviathan”; Lee, “Beyond the Ethico-Aesthetic.”

According to the American Psychological Association, trauma refers to “an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster” that frequently results in shock, denial, emotional strain, or the repression of conscious memory. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra DeBruyn used the terms historical trauma and historical unresolved grief to refer to the lingering effects of sustained oppression and violence across multiple generations on a targeted group such as Jewish Europeans, the descendants of enslaved Africans and Black Americans in North America, and Native Americans that the US government forcibly displaced from ancestral lands. The place of the camera in documenting peoples who struggle to survive in the wake of historical trauma is complicated. On the one hand, as RaMell Ross put it in his poetic reflection on filming *Hale County This Morning, This Evening* (2018), “the God of the camera is a colonizer” that often ensures a “peculiar death of the imaginable” for those on the receiving end of its gaze. The camera tends to objectify human subjects and make them stand for something outside of their control, thus reproducing the winnowing of their agency in a harmful way. On the other hand, witnessing and acknowledging past wrongs has long been recognized as a starting point for creating a collective movement for justice and healing, and to this end, the camera can play a crucial part in organizing momentum and helping a community create and communicate an affirming identity or achieve shared goals. Angela Aguayo, for example, cited film reviews and materials from Black-owned company archives even during the silent era to show how national Black leaders created documentary films (no longer in existence to see as such) to “challenge commonsense thinking around race and labor,” especially after the release of *The Birth of a Nation*. The tension across these two functions of camerawork in simulation documentaries is a central theme in the book, and I return to it in each chapter in different ways. As a starting point in the vast literature on the impacts of trauma and historical trauma in oppressed groups and the cinematic representation of living with trauma, see Walker, *Trauma Cinema*, 4; Ross, “Renew the Encounter,” 17; Brave Heart and DeBruyn, “American Indian Holocaust”; Marks, *Skin of the Film*; Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*; Torchin, *Creating the Witness*; Van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*; Malkowski, *Dying in Full Detail*; Aguayo, *Documentary Resistance*, 110.

6. According to the American Psychological Association, trauma refers to “an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster” that frequently results in shock, denial, emotional strain, or the repression of conscious memory. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra DeBruyn used the terms historical trauma and historical unresolved grief to refer to the lingering effects of sustained oppression and violence across multiple generations on a targeted group such as Jewish Europeans, the descendants of enslaved Africans and Black Americans in North America, and Native Americans that the US government forcibly displaced from ancestral lands. The place of the camera in documenting peoples who struggle to survive in the wake of historical trauma is complicated. On the one hand, as RaMell Ross put it in his poetic reflection on filming *Hale County This Morning, This Evening* (2018), “the God of the camera is a colonizer” that often ensures a “peculiar death of the imaginable” for those on the receiving end of its gaze. The camera tends to objectify human subjects and make them stand for something outside of their control, thus reproducing the winnowing of their agency in a harmful way. On the other hand, witnessing and acknowledging past wrongs has long been recognized as a starting point for creating a collective movement for justice and healing, and to this end, the camera can play a crucial part in organizing momentum and helping a community create and communicate an affirming identity or achieve shared goals. Angela Aguayo, for example, cited film reviews and materials from Black-owned company archives even during the silent era to show how national Black leaders created documentary films (no longer in existence to see as such) to “challenge commonsense thinking around race and labor,” especially after the release of *The Birth of a Nation*. The tension across these two functions of camerawork in simulation documentaries is a central theme in the book, and I return to it in each chapter in different ways. As a starting point in the vast literature on the impacts of trauma and historical trauma in oppressed groups and the cinematic representation of living with trauma, see Walker, *Trauma Cinema*, 4; Ross, “Renew the Encounter,” 17; Brave Heart and DeBruyn, “American Indian Holocaust”; Marks, *Skin of the Film*; Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*; Torchin, *Creating the Witness*; Van der Kolk, *Body Keeps the Score*; Malkowski, *Dying in Full Detail*; Aguayo, *Documentary Resistance*, 110.

7. See Zimmerman and De Michiel, *Open Space New Media Documentary*.

8. This line of thought follows the paradigm of “distributed cognition” (DC), a term coined by cognitive scientist Edwin Hutchins (1995) to describe “cognitive systems” that include human actors, machines, objects, and environmental contexts collaborating somewhat unwittingly on behalf of a bounded system’s goal-oriented behavior. Cognition, in this way of thinking, takes place outside the individual brain and so should be studied “in the wild” (rather than in a lab) by observing and experiencing interactions among people and things. While this idea was not generally taken up as a theory or method in the field of film studies (except in Cartwright’s *Moral Spectatorship* and Karen Pearlman’s “Documentary Editing and Distributed Cognition” in *Cognitive Theory and Documentary Film*), I see my approach and questions as appropriate for a loose DC framework. In my case studies, I cross the film phenomenological method as applied to experiences of camerawork and reenactment with a DC-inspired understanding of context, nonhuman agency, and history as embedded in objects, landscapes, and gestures. Protevi’s theory of political affect in the domain of the social and somatic provides language helpful to my overall approach. See Hutchins, *Cognition in the Wild*; Cartwright, *Moral Spectatorship*; Pearlman, “Documentary Editing and Distributed Cognition”; Protevi, *Political Affect*, xi.


11. In his introduction to a key dossier on reenactment in documentary film, Jonathan Kahana noted a correspondence between the documentary films of George Stoney from the 1950s and a flurry of films released in the early 2000s, equally carried out under principles akin to those of Italian neorealist Cesare Zavattini. Ordinary people in reenactment cinema can “give themselves and others a ‘second chance,’” Kahana explained of this renewed rationale for reenactment in documentary, “when psychological or social circumstances have initially prevented them from acting as they would have liked.” As with psychodrama, the momentum of such “social actor documentaries,” as Rowena Santos-Aquino called them, often aims at personal growth, healing from trauma, or community reconciliation through what Ivonne Marguiles characterized as “a dynamic between repetition and alienation” from which a broader viewing public might learn. Nonfiction films of this sort include *Close Up* (1990), *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), *Bombay Beach* (2011), *Tower* (2016), and *Bisbee ’17* (2017). In contrast, *The Act of Killing* (2012) uses social actor reenactment techniques with the executioners of genocide rather than everyday people to craft a critique of state corruption. Working at the nexus of social solidarity rather than social actor dynamics are recent projects including Dread Scott and John Akomfrah’s *Slave Rebellion Reenactment*, a participatory, community-based reenactment of the largest slave revolt in US history staged and filmed in and around New Orleans on November 8–9, 2019, and Irene Lusztig’s thought-provoking *Yours in Sisterhood* (2018), which employs the technique of embodied listening to allow contemporary women to read and reflect on letters written to the editor of *Ms.* magazine in the 1970s. Lusztig spent years traveling across the country to cast and film contemporary readers from the towns from which the 1970s letters had been sent, documenting processes of identification with and resistance to the surrogacy required of reading. “I think there is something about simply repeating something, putting someone’s words into your body enough times that you start to actually feel different,” Lusztig explained. I expanded on this analysis of reenactment and memory in Lusztig’s documentaries in my article “The Sense of Feminism Then and Now.” See also Kahana, “Introduction,” 46–47; Marguiles, “Exemplary Bodies,” 217; Kipper, “Emergence of Role Playing,” 106; Santos Aquino, “Necessary Fictions”; Lazic, “Irene Lusztig”; Simblist, “Dread Scott’s Struggle.”

12. This direction for reenactment filming is more about public interest issues than social actors getting a second chance. Initiated during the civil rights and antiwar movements by groups including the Living Theatre, Open Theatre, and Teatro Campesino, documentary and verbatim theater practitioners compiled their scripts entirely from archival sources to mitigate accusations of sensationalism and subjectivity. More recent works have played with gender and race dynamics entailed in acting out transcripts. A key example of this intersection between verbatim theater and documentary film is Anna Deveare Smith’s *Twilight: Los Angeles* (2000), in which she videotaped interviews with dozens of Los Angelinos responding to the Rodney King beating video, verdict, and uprising and then acted out selected transcripts of many interviewees in a one-woman performance that was later recorded for the PBS documentary. For many years, the film was used to spur role-play pedagogy in California’s K-12 classrooms. The *New York Times* reprised these techniques in its “Verbatim” Op-Doc video series in the absurd deposition transcript “What Is a Photocopier?” (2014) and the staging of testimony from the police killing of Michael Brown in “The Ferguson Case” (2015). See a brief synopsis of this tradition in Odendahl-James, “History of U.S. Documentary Theatre”; Watanabe, “When Time Allows”; *New York Times*, “Ferguson Case, Verbatim”; *New York Times*, “Verbatim”; Smith et al., *Twilight—Los Angeles*. 
15. In his insightful article on the documentarian’s dilemma in a “post-truth society,” Dirk Eitzen argued that in documentaries centered on storytelling style over information and argument, such as *The Jinx*, the ambiguity of evidence can play a helpful part in driving the plot. These films exploit ambiguity to interoperate viewers as insiders to rumor, offering “social and emotional validation” to this community now in the know. In the context of Trumpism, he is alarmed by such trends. Eitzen, “Duties of Documentary,” 96. Also see a disturbing account of the reemergence of fascist rhetoric, for instance, in Stanley, *How Fascism Works.*
18. Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity at Duke University, “Film Question and Answer Session.”
26. Ibid., 1–2.
28. With the development of consumer technologies for producing deepfakes, however, cost may be less relevant in the coming years. For example, see Rini, “Deepfakes Are Coming.”
29. Many of the works from this era on the affordances of video focus on documentary, including Renov, *Subject of Documentary*; Rosen, *Change Mummified*; Wahlberg, *Documentary Time*, xiv; Belton, “World in the Palm”; Razsa, “Beyond Riot Porn.”
31. Ibid., 8.
32. For example, Russian documentarian Marina Goldovskaya wrote the following reflection on filming *The Prince Is Back* (2000) on DV: “I must confess that never before did I feel so good and free as during the making of [my first digital] film. . . . Whenever you work for someone, you feel a sense of responsibility: they gave you money to film, and you must kill yourself to get it done on time. In this case, for the first time in my entire career, I was completely free.” Goldovskaya, *Woman with a Movie Camera*, 206.


34. While not the focus of this book, the experience of filming and editing my first-person documentary *About Face! Reenacting in a Time of War* (2010), about performing in reenactments of the American Revolutionary War to trace proxy discussions of war in the years after the 9/11 attacks, informs my approach to analysis here. In chapter 1, I reflect on ethical questions raised by following a realist epistemology in documenting reenactment.


36. One interesting line of documentary studies research in the 2010s focused on how digital technologies afford—or even demand—the creation of new kinds of spaces and communities for screening and discussion. In some cases, the spaces are online, and the communities framed to include the technologies that enable ongoing connection. Summerhayes, for example, viewed the spatially and temporally discontinuous image mapping on the “Crisis in Darfur” website as “examples of new documentary gestures that are emerging on the web,” with the people forced far from home and the images themselves together constituting an “intimate community.” Zimmerman and De Michiel, on the other hand, see advantages in the digital context for foregrounding “open space,” no-budget filmmaking, community events, and quickly made shorts that aim to foster dialogue about local issues of public import. Juhasz emphasized that, faced with the data-mining defaults of proprietary social media platforms, temporarily leaving digital spaces is what now creates possibilities for “realms of behaviour, interaction, and feelings that are not ownable.” Jihoon Kim synthesizes a lot of this conversation in *Documentary’s Expanded Fields*, a monograph that blends documentary theory and new media theory to consider interactive documentaries, multiscreen installation work, nonfiction virtual reality experiences, augmented reality works, and online vernacular activism in social movements, among other topics. See Summerhayes, “Web-Weaving,” 83–84; Zimmerman and De Michiel, *Open Space New Media Documentary*; Juhasz, “Ceding the Activist Digital Documentary,” 46; Kim, *Documentary’s Expanded Fields*.

37. Activist-ethnographer Maple Razsa argues that the affective dimensions of the collective viewing of “riot porn” among his antiauthoritarian Croatian activist subjects catalyzed mimesis—a politics inextricable from ongoing media practices but not, in his view, thereby antithetical to “political intimacy, even love.” See Razsa, “Beyond Riot Porn,” 4, 23.

38. Gaines, “Political Mimesis,” 84.

39. I see the concept of reenactment offering a provocative lens on claims sometimes attributed to digital devices. Anne Friedberg’s protégé Heidi Rae Cooley, for instance, characterized “the moment of texting, imaging, or posting” in language that performance theorists use to describe the experience of participating in reenactment: we “materialize our feeling, our thinking, thereby actualizing ourselves as signs,” she says. See Cooley, *Finding Augusta*, 48.

40. Tom Gunning, quoted in Malkowski, *Dying in Full Detail*, 8.

Optics); Walker, Trauma Cinema; Keeling, Witch’s Flight; Smaill, Documentary; Torchin, Creating the Witness; Baron, Archive Effect; Malkowski, Dying in Full Detail; Richardson, Bearing Witness While Black.

42. Walker, Trauma Cinema, 4.

43. My thinking through the projector box, phenomenology, and intersubjectivity is a riff on and response to Cartwright, “Hands of the Projectionist.”

44. Renov, “Toward a Poetics of Documentary.”


46. See, for instance, Hayles, How We Became Posthuman; Mossner, “Engaging Animals in Wildlife Documentaries,” 169; Goldman, Simulating Minds; Baudrillard and Glaser, Simulacra and Simulation; Cubitt, Simulation and Social Theory; Cross, Hamilton, and Grafton, “Building a Motor Simulation”; Rizzolatti and Fabbri-Destro, “Mirror Neurons,” 223; Doidge, Brain That Changes Itself.

47. Baudrillard and Poster, Jean Baudrillard, 19, 22.

48. Emphasis in the original text. Ibid., 46.

49. Affect is an old concept in this regard, dating at least to Baruch Spinoza’s Ethics (1677), which parsed three affects—joy, sadness, and desire—as our baseline bodily responses to stimuli in the world. More recent research on affect still considers bodily responses to perceptions of our surroundings and art, but it diverges on the particulars of how and why affect moves us. See, for example, Massumi, Parables for the Virtual; Gregg and Seigworth, Affect Theory Reader; Hagood, Hush; Ott, “Affect in Critical Studies.”

50. Massumi reiterates this argument in subsequent publications. While highly critical of the use of affect theory by humanities scholars, Ruth Leys accepts this premise as foundational for both Deleuzian theorists and those following Tomkins’s basic emotions theory. See especially the exhaustive literature review in “The Turn to Affect,” a reprint of Leys’s article of the same name published in Critical Inquiry in 2011, in Leys, Ascent of Affect. See also Massumi, 99 Theses, 8–9.


52. Ott, “Affect in Critical Studies”; Leys, “Turn to Affect.”

53. Clough and Halley, Affective Turn, 6. See also Sobchack, Address of the Eye; Marks, Skin of the Film; Keeling, Witch’s Flight; Baron, Archive Effect.

54. Cartwright, Moral Spectatorship; Smaill, Documentary; Rangan, Immediations; Sedgwick, Frank, and Alexander, Shame and Its Sisters.

55. Sobchack, Address of the Eye.

56. Marks, Skin of the Film, 150.

57. Deleuze quoted in Marks, Skin of the Film, 27.

58. Emphasis in the original text. Ibid., xv, 5, 28, 253.

59. New media theorist Nick Montfort began using the term screen essentialist in early 2000s conference presentations. Theorists of media infrastructure have since taken aim at screen essentialism in media studies to push the field beyond analyses of content and representation. While not focused on the brute, material qualities of technological artifacts, I see my project in dialogue with this gesture. See, for instance, Montfort, “Continuous Paper”; Kirschenbaum, Mechanisms, 31–35; L. Parks and Starosielski, Signal Traffic.

60. Though questions about memory and repression remain unresolved in behavioral psychotherapy, neuroscience, and psychiatry, several new research areas have built on Tomkins’s work or related ideas about the influence of the autonomic nervous system on


64. Tomkins’s philosophical orientation in and of itself would not likely have bothered critical theorists who used his work. But of particular concern for the queer and gender theorists embracing Tomkins’s writing was his enthusiasm for the take-up of his ideas by researchers who tested them empirically, like Ekman. Elizabeth Wilson and Adam Frank’s response to Leys’s article in *Critical Inquiry*, for instance, downplayed affiliations between Tomkins and Ekman. Ekman had used results of his experiments to proselytize for the universality of concepts such as anger, enjoyment, and distress as tethered to involuntary facial expressions. Leys shows how Ekman and like-minded colleagues developed the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) to test emotional response to still photographs cross-culturally. Over several decades of research, this team established as dominant Tomkins’s speculative claim that core emotions are hardwired and precultural within the fields of neuroscience and behavioral psychology. Leys then noted sharp critics of Ekman’s methodologies such as constructivist cognitive scientists Alan Fridlund and Lisa Feldman Barrett, as well as Ekman’s ties to persuasion consulting and the military. So I proceed here with caution. Frank and Wilson, “I: Like-Minded”; Leys, *Ascent of Affect*.


69. See a summary, for instance, in Kasic, “Sensory Vérité.”


71. This is the argument put forward on the ethnographic study of Civil War reenactments by Handler and Saxton, “Dyssimulation.”

72. In line with precepts outlined in Larry Gross et al.’s *Image Ethics* and Pat Aufderheide et al.’s *Honest Truths*, I understand the term *ethics* to signify a set of moral values that shape research design and documentary filmmaking, including informed consent among participants, protecting the vulnerable, fulfilling obligations to sponsors, honoring the reader or viewer’s trust, and creating new knowledge attuned to the researcher’s interests, limitations, sense of import, and allied constituencies. As the authors of these works admit, even core values such as informed consent are approximations in research and documentary work. One’s consent to be represented may change after the signing of a release form, learning more about a project, seeing one’s image on screen or in print, or reading public commentary on a film or book in which one appears (at which point it’s too late to do much about it). A researcher, moreover, will not likely know exactly what they will say or show about those depicted in their works until after they’ve had exchanges, observed events, thought a long time, and written out their ideas. The story they tell about what they’re doing and why they’re doing it may change, potentially altering the terms on which consent was given. Oppositional film and research projects may also emphasize accountability to the researcher’s constituency
or community over and above dominant norms that the constituency perceives to be oppressive. Ethics is not one size fits all. See Gross, Katz, and Ruby, Image Ethics; Gross, Katz, and Ruby, Image Ethics in the Digital Age; Oliver, "Witnessing, Recognition, and Response Ethics"; Aufderheide, Jaszi, and Chandra, Honest Truths; Cartwright, Moral Spectatorship.

73. See a review of approaches to trauma therapy and their rationales in Van der Kolk, Body Keeps the Score.

74. The ethical issues entailed in filming as a form of scholarly research and documentary making are complex. In this case, the Public Affairs Office (PAO) at the Fort Irwin National Training Center facilitated my access to film training simulations that involved hundreds of soldiers. Because it is not feasible to speak with every individual about their consent to be filmed in such scenarios, the PAO grants institutional permission for the press and documentarians to film military personnel carrying out training that they deem to be in the public interest. None are identified by name in this chapter. Any individual with whom I spoke on camera granted explicit, informed consent to do so.

75. I believed that Olive's Always in Season had the potential to catalyze important conversations about race and historical trauma, and I came to trust her as the guiding voice for such a project. Over the two weeks I filmed for her documentary, I followed the standard PBS release and consent protocols that she was using and filmed mostly individuals that we had both gotten to know over our time working and in ways that she indicated would be useful to her project. We agreed that I could have access to raw footage for analysis from the series of shoots conducted at Moore's Ford, and she could use the footage I recorded for her film. Within the book, I use those materials for phenomenological analyses of camerawork rather than for information about subjects featured in the footage. I do conduct a close analysis of reenactments and reenactors depicted in Olive's finished film in chapter 4 that draws from publicly available sources. I know and have interviewed many people featured in the film, but I largely use these conversations as background for analysis.