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An ethnography of "Hang It Out To Dry"

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AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF “HANG IT OUT TO DRY”

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agriculture and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by

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December 2009

For Mom and Dad

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ABSTRACT

This study is an ethnography of a performance ethnography. The performance “Hang It Out To Dry” explores the experiences of residents from Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This dissertation traces “Hang It Out To Dry” from the beginning of fieldwork to the aesthetic staging of collected narratives and through two years of community building as the performance toured the nation. Particularly, I develop methods for collecting materials from fieldwork for adaptation to the stage. The study demonstrates the intellectual work of performance composition in scripting and staging a performance ethnography. In doing so, I mark the collaborative efforts of the coproducers of “Hang It Out To Dry,” focusing on set design, musical composition, stage work with colleagues, and audience response. I also discuss the communities of “Hang It Out To Dry” to show the power of performance as a primary redressive act in community building. Finally, I map the web of remaking the story, “Hang It Out To Dry.” The dissertation concludes with a reconstituted script, a reminder that performance is a doing of remembrance and therefore forward making. My study is significant because while scholars have discussed the method and process of performance ethnography, they have not fully explored the aesthetics of a staged ethnography. This study highlights the performance composition and production while tracing the many events and stories of those who bore witness.

CHAPTER ONE BEGIN WITH A STORY

A pattern in a story can generate a larger context in which all patterns, all constructed forms of lived experience, can symbolically converge.

-H.L. “Bud” Goodall, Writing The New Ethnography (41)

Home is the place where my affections are centered.¹ Home is my place of origin, my residence, my refuge. As a native of Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana, my home is a place called Chalmette, the location of the Battle of New Orleans, surrounded by water, filled with history and overflowing with storytellers. Spanish speaking settlers of the Canary Islands, one of the first groups to establish themselves in the area around 1778, have told stories there for centuries. As a descendant of the *Islenos* (referring to the Canary Islanders in Saint Bernard Parish), I have witnessed the proliferation of stories told through folk artists such as my great great uncle Joseph “Chelito” Campo, my great grandmother Mathilda Guerra Campo, and my father Kenneth Sears, Sr. As a performance artist and scholar in performance studies, I have taken up the proverbial baton as one of my community's storytellers. As Walter Benjamin states in his 1936 essay “The Storyteller,” storytelling is a communicable experience, an active process between storyteller and listener in which the act of repeating stories creates a transmission of human experience (145).

For Benjamin, the storyteller, like the sage:

is granted the ability to reach back through a whole lifetime (a life, incidentally, that comprises not only his own experience but much of the experience of others; what the storyteller knows from hearsay is added to what is most his own). His gift is the ability to relate his life; his distinction, to be able to relate his entire life. (162)

Stories of home are how and where I make sense of my own life and the importance of the human experience. I know who I am through the stories of my family and my native region.

However, I knew this before fully encountering theorists like Benjamin. I was always interested

¹ A version of this academic story was published in Text and Performance Quarterly, 2008 (copyright Taylor and Francis); Text and Performance Quarterly is available online at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a794917969?words=hang,out,dry>

in storytelling and folklore, and so begins my history of researching Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana.

Errol Morris's film Vernon, Florida depicts everyday life within a small swamp-like town and became the inspiration for my first project about my home, a one-person show. The peculiar and odd undertakings of Vernon residents, from turkey hunting to sidewalk talk, inspired and reminded me of my own hometown, Chalmette, Louisiana, a place that has been the butt of many jokes through the years as the stepsister of New Orleans, Louisiana. I performed "Chalmette, A Promised Land" in the spring of 1998 as a one-person show in the HopKins Black Box theatre at Louisiana State University. The show included natural narratives about my family and neighbors, material collected from parish magazines, tourism pamphlets, jokes, superstitions, and a slide show of photographic images. Through this performance, I became even more interested in my Spanish roots as a Canary Island descendant of Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana. This growing academic interest, in turn, caused me to be more involved in my community.

Frequenting festivals and heritage celebrations of the *Islenos* of Saint Bernard Parish, I began to be an active participant in my community. These exploits fueled my art and research. I wrote, directed and performed "A Tribute to Storytellers: *Isleno Decima* Singers of Louisiana" in the HopKins Black Box theatre in March of 2000. I collected and composed the mystory using natural narratives, prose pieces and poetry presented in the script while researching the *decima*, a ten to twelve stanza folk narrative song.² I performed "Chalmette A Promised Land" and "A Tribute to Storytellers" in classrooms and performance festivals as well as several communication conferences at the regional and national levels. After so many performances, I thought that eventually the projects would end with further research on the *decima* alone.

² Developed by Gregory Ulmer, the mystory is a text incorporating public, private and professional discourses. I explain the mystory later in this study.

The *decima*, beloved folksongs of the *Islenos*, has become endangered as an aesthetic form due to the decrease of *Isleno* Spanish speaking citizens and *decima* singers remaining in Saint Bernard Parish. Once a part of everyday life, the *Isleno* storytellers now sing the *decima* as a necessity to preserve the *Isleno* culture. Now the main source of *Isleno* history and culture, all who are interested turn to the form. Like the *decimas*, my research subject, Chalmette, Louisiana, runs the risk of becoming endangered, mainly because of the events of August 2005.

When the president of the United States fails to mention our Gulf Coast in his State of the Union Address on January 23, 2007, only seventeen months after the most devastating natural disaster in our country's history, when Saint Bernard Parish community members are experiencing post traumatic stress, anxiety and depression due to the traumatic events of Hurricane Katrina, when community members are no longer in touch with their neighbors, and when the process of rebuilding lives is at the forefront, the fear of erasure or forgetting the oral histories of the community becomes a major concern. As Della Pollock says in Remembering Oral History Performance, "Remembering is necessarily a public act whose politics are bound up with the refusal to be isolated, insulated, inoculated against both complicity with and contest over claims to ownership" (5). That is, oral history cannot be held privately. Stories of Katrina and of the devastation experienced by the community of Chalmette must be shared within the community and outside the community. If these stories are not told, then Chalmette and its experience of Katrina follows the same path as the *decima*, an art that was shared within an isolated, insulated and inoculated community for many years. Art, particularly the art of oral history, becomes a necessity instead of a luxury in times of disaster.

On August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina savaged Saint Bernard Parish. Tidal surges from the Gulf of Mexico rose to more than thirty feet high in some places. According to The Times-

Picayune's Katrina: The Ruin and Recovery of New Orleans, "Of more than 25,000 residences in the parish, exactly five were unflooded. And most of the rest were in fact a total loss" (Amoss 137). Over 95% of the parish structures were destroyed. In one day, my life, my home, and my research changed forever.

However, I did not engage this event as an artist or scholar for some time. My personal life was swamped by the effects of Katrina. Twelve evacuees, seven dogs, and three parrots moved into my two-bedroom, one-bathroom home in downtown Baton Rouge and were my primary focus for months to come. Over the next six months the group slowly narrowed down to two (my parents and their dog), who stayed with us for a full year. All family members aside from my brother's family lost everything to their name, except a weekend bag, photographs, and an ice chest full of seafood. Four years later, my family and neighbors are still struggling through the recovery process. Their stories are in danger of being erased—from our nation, from their homeland, and from their culture. Much like the *decima* needs to be told, the people of Saint Bernard Parish need their stories to be told. Only through storytelling does my culture have any chance of survival and sustainability.

After the storm, professors and colleagues asked me about performing a third installment of my research, this time concerning the aftermath of Katrina in Saint Bernard Parish. Always with interest yet hesitation, I prolonged the possibility for more than half a year. My primary focus was making sure my family could regain some stability in their lives. I finally warmed to the idea through the encouragement of my colleagues and submitted a proposal for the HopKin's Black Box 2006/07 performance season. I knew that my research had taken on a different level of importance. I was in tune with what my family was going through in trying to get support from our local, state and federal governments, fighting with insurance companies, applying for

compensation through the Louisiana Road Home Program, and battling with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I saw how often the community at large dismissed their trials and struggles with putting their lives back together. Those outside of the areas devastated by Katrina expected them to “pick up and move on,” but their voices needed to be heard; their experience could not be forgotten; their re-establishment needed attention. And so, committing to a show in the fall of 2006, I had to begin the process of creating “Hang It Out To Dry,” a solo performance and the finale of a three-part cycle of performed narratives collected from residents of Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana.³

I began the process of collecting materials for the show on the anniversary of Katrina, August 29, 2006. I took a drive down to New Orleans and Saint Bernard Parish with my father and a digital camera. I began to take snapshots of images that I thought would convey the message of my show, a message not of devastation but of hope and rebuilding lives. I also wanted to make the facts quite apparent—that Saint Bernard’s residents’ troubles were not over. They indeed have a long road ahead of them. I took photographs of “Now Open” signs in front of businesses. I captured images of trailers and food trucks in front of restaurants serving hot meals on a daily basis. I collected images of messages residents left in spray paint on the fronts of their damaged homes, messages such as “We’re OK. In Dallas. Call us,” or “Thank you for bringing my statue back.” I traveled down to Yscloskey, a small fishing community in lower Saint Bernard Parish where the parish council erected an iron cross memorial in the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, a body of water that swamped the area during the storm. Thus I imagined the initial concept of the show as a community in repair, a community managing rebirth. I collected

³ See Appendix A for the complete script of “Hang It Out To Dry.”

pictures of people cleaning salvaged glass, china and attic memories representing a culture attempting to hold on to a life before the storm, before their life was turned upside down.

After my image collection, I began interviews. I started with my father, Kenneth Sears. While living with me for a year as he was building a new home, he would tell stories about the Parish and everyone he knew in his hometown. He would tell stories about his experiences with families and businesses within Saint Bernard in a way that was so moving, I had to capture it on camera. I sat him down and interviewed him using my video camera. I then ran across Mr. Charles “Pete” Savoie in a furniture store in Gonzales, Louisiana, a place where many folks from Saint Bernard Parish would reconnect due to the loss of household items. He agreed to meet with me for an interview and a week later, I sat in his FEMA trailer and videotaped his stories about his mission to close the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet as the seismographic inspector for Saint Bernard Parish. Next, I met with Jason Mac Fetters, a lawyer who was working for the Louisiana Road Home Program in Saint Bernard Parish, whom I knew through my sister. My sister and Jason worked together in New Orleans a few years ago. I met with him in his FEMA trailer in Saint Bernard, and we discussed what was going to happen to the area. I then contacted an old friend, Chad Alphonso, who moved to Braithwaite, Louisiana, an area in lower Saint Bernard Parish. Chad moved further “down the road” (an expression used by locals to distinguish upper and lower Saint Bernard Parish) to live on the same street as his parents, grandparents, and brothers. He moved to a street that backs up against Bayou Terre Aux Boeufs, a bayou with a visible crevasse, where officials and businessmen from the city of New Orleans had blown the levees during the flood of 1927 in order to save New Orleans itself. We sat in Chad’s backyard as he explained why he was not going to leave Saint Bernard Parish. I also interviewed Shannon Sanders, a dance school owner in Chalmette who lost her business and her

home to the storm. She now lives in Houma, Louisiana and was able to meet me in Prairieville. She sat with me and explained why she was not going to move back to the Parish. I began to think about the *decimas* and thought that I should revisit a local historian and former interviewee from my master's research. Mr. Irvan Perez, a *decima* singer or *decimero*, sat with me in Poydras, Louisiana in his FEMA trailer and did not discuss the storm or its aftermath but the traditions and stories of the community that have been passed down for generations. As we sat in his trailer, Mr. Gene Alonzo contacted my father and wanted to stop by for a visit. Mr. Gene Alonzo lives further "down the road," in Ysclosky, and experienced the storm with his disabled brother in Saint Rita's Nursing Home, a facility that was not evacuated and where 34 people drowned. Mr. Gene sat down in Mr. Perez's trailer and gave a vivid account of what he remembered happening the morning the floods. I then contacted Mr. Kenny Sigsworth, the father of Shannon Sanders and a family friend. As a resident of Chalmette, he stayed in the Parish when the storm came through. He successfully rescued almost 200 people in need during the days when outside assistance was not available. I sat on the back porch of his new home in Prairieville as he explained his rescue efforts and his struggle with leaving his community to move to higher ground.

Eight interviews later, I began to write about my own experiences of this event. Remembering the first day I saw my parents' home in ruins, recalling the cleaning process that we went through and are still going through to salvage my family's heirlooms, recounting the stories of neighbors, finding old photographs, and writing about *decimas* were all central in focusing on my goals for the show—a show about rebuilding a culture, a community, a place to call home.

During these initial stages, I had lots of questions about ethics. I had a conversation with Nick Slie and Bruce France, two artistic directors of Mondo Bizarro, a theatre production company in New Orleans, Louisiana. I asked the question: who tells the story? Their work on the “I-10 Witness Project,” “a community based oral history collective formed to document the myriad stories emerging from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina,” posed the same question. They opted to have Xavier University students in New Orleans tell the stories and have made those stories available online (“The I-10 Witness Project”). Emerson, Fretz and Shaw in Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes state that as a participant-observer, one should be able to have “physical and social proximity to the daily rounds of people’s lives and activities” (1-2). My study places me in this proximity; however, I have known these people and this community previously in an intimate way. I am a complete participant. Thomas R. Lindlof and Brian C. Taylor state in Qualitative Communication Research Methods: “A complete participant role allows researchers to use the self to understand behavior in a natural setting. In that sense, it holds real promise for getting inside the subjectivity required for meaningful communicative action” (145). As a researcher and as a resident of Baton Rouge, I can experience a degree of removal, but I am also very much a participant in an authentic relationship with those I interviewed as family members and friends. As Emerson, Fretz and Shaw describe it: “With immersion, the field researcher sees from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful, and how they do so” (2). The ethical question of who tells the story then is clear to me. I am immersed in the lives of my informants and can step inside their lives on a regular basis to participate in their experiences. If immersion is the goal of the ethnographer, then my research holds some promise. Theorizing group identity, communication scholars Lindlof and Taylor discuss how positive outcomes arise out of having similar identities

and attributes, even though “affiliation is no guarantee for success” (142). To balance the telling of other’s stories, I write and perform my own story as well—the story of my community and my family. As such, I maintain the authority and ownership of this research. I have witnessed and dealt with the aftermath of Katrina on an everyday basis as a participant and as an observer; therefore, I can tell the story.

Practical limitations for this research include interviewing eight informants for the purpose of this study, culminating in an hour performance on stage. Most of the informants lived an hour to two away from me; therefore, trips to Saint Bernard Parish were frequent yet still limited. Most of my fieldwork occurred on the weekends over a four month span. I am fortunate to have such access to my informants. Having close connections with them as family and friends, my limitations are less than a typical ethnographic study. In creating this performance ethnography, I have explored my community’s experiences post Hurricane Katrina, through the scripting and staging of “Hang It Out To Dry.” I engage in performance ethnography as a method of exploring a culture by collecting, translating, and interpreting materials from fieldwork to develop a staged production. The staged production serves as a mode of understanding where witnesses can “step into another’s shoes” to understand that other world. I myself have witnessed the power of performance ethnography as a “dialogical” method able to put “culture into motion” in the forming of collaborations and community building.⁴ The following outlines the remaining chapters.

⁴ Dwight Conquergood in “Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance” calls for a dialogical stance in performance, one that avoids the pitfall extremes of his moral map. A dialogical stance “struggles to bring together different voices, world views, value systems and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another” (9). Conquergood also uses the phrase “putting culture into motion” in his article “Of Caravans and Carnivals: Performance Studies in Motion” when discussing the shift to kinesis, a shift that “unleashes centrifugal forces that keep culture in motion, ideas in play, hierarchies unsettled and

In Chapter Two, I discuss the ethnographic methods I used in creating “Hang It Out To Dry.” First, I begin by defining performance ethnography. With reference to a number of scholars, I outline the goals and principles of ethnography as a way to contextualize my own research. I focus particularly on the principles of performance ethnography created by Joni Jones or Olorisa Omi O. Olomo.⁵ By describing performance ethnography as “how culture is done in the body,” Jones provides six principles of performing ethnography for an “audience centered” production.⁶ Using her concepts of context, accountability, subjectivity, multivocality, participation, and ethics, I discuss my own performance in relation to Jones’ ideology.

Once I define the basic goals and principles of ethnography, I engage in a comparative analysis of practitioners who inspire my own work. I explore the methods and ethics of Dwight Conquergood and Anna Deavere Smith to form a map upon which I pinpoint my own location in the field as a scholar and an artist of performance ethnography. To do this, I compare the subjects, sites, investments and aesthetics of Conquergood, Smith and myself. Subjects are the “who?” of fieldwork. I analyze participants in terms of culture, social and political status, and numbers of participants. Site concerns the ethnographer’s location of research, focusing on the “where?” of fieldwork. I discuss site both in everyday, fieldwork contexts, and in the aesthetic

academic disciplines alert and on edge” (138). I use Conquergood’s phrase “putting culture into motion” as well as his “caravan” metaphor throughout the document to discuss my travels and interactions with multiple audience members and the many collaborators who coproduced this project.

⁵ Joni Jones changed her name to Olorisa Omi O. Olomo. When I refer to her work authored as Joni Jones, I will use the name Joni Jones. When I refer to her work authored as Olorisa Omi O. Olomo, I will use the name Olorisa Omi O. Olomo.

⁶ Jones defines performance ethnography in her article, “Performance Ethnography: The Role of Embodiment in Cultural Authenticity,” as a “cultural exchange” where “culture is done in the body” (7). She also uses the term “audience centered” to refer to staged performance ethnographies. Jones six principles of performance ethnography are used to “underscore the personal nature of fieldwork and the bodily understandings that can be derived from performance” (8).

context of the stage. Investment refers to the duration of the ethnographer's lived experience with fieldwork participants in their native location. I explore investment by concentrating on the question of "when?" ethnographers participated, coexisted, and shared experience with their subjects. Finally, I analyze aesthetics as "how?" the research is interpreted and translated into a production or performance practices. I use the performance practices of Conquergood, Smith and myself to create a continuum of performance ethnography.

Finally, Chapter Two offers my five step method of establishing positionality, locating experts, building relationships and trust, collecting materials, and attending to ethical responsibility to create a performance ethnography such as "Hang It Out To Dry." I draw from D. Soyini Madison's Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics and Performance and H.L. "Bud" Goodall's Writing the New Ethnography to formulate my own recipe for performance ethnography. Madison defines the method of critical ethnography as "always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among the Other(s), one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the Other's world" (9). In Writing The New Ethnography, Goodall describes an ethnography saying, "It's ethnographic slant has been fashioned by a way of working, a way of entering the world every day, which privileges asking questions about others in cultural contexts constructed and understood by a self whose presence is very much in the text" (21). Like Goodall, I work by converging texts to create a pattern of stories. Both Madison and Goodall's approach to ethnography provide my study with a firm foundation with which to build my own approach to performance ethnography.

Chapter Three begins my ethnographic analysis of the performance. In this chapter, I concentrate on the scripting and staging of "Hang It Out To Dry." Specifically, I identify the

methods and theories used in the creation of the performance. I supply a “thick description” of several substantive performance choices I made in order to identify the harmony between theory and practice.⁷ I discuss the theoretical, literary and aesthetic frameworks that make my performance choices significant. Particularly, I trace my rationale for staging imagery, creating subtexts, adapting personal stories, and framing collected narratives.

Scripting imagery and subtexts involves knowledge of creating stage pictures and blocking bodies and objects on stage. Through Molly Bang’s Picture This, a book demonstrating “the relationship between picture structure and our emotions,” I conceptualized the blocking design for the show (xi).⁸ A range of theories and methods are linked together to discuss the imagery and subtexts in “Hang It Out To Dry.” For example, I use Bertolt Brecht’s notion of the social gest paired with D. Soyini Madison’s ideas of positionality, along with many others, to discuss the visual imagery of a turtle pose I use throughout the show.⁹

The adaptation of personal stories also requires a theoretical framework. I created five personal stories in the script of “Hang It Out To Dry” through the methods of performative writing.¹⁰ Performative writing as explained by Della Pollock “challenges the boundaries of reflexive textualities; relieving writing of its obligations under the name of ‘textuality’; shaping,

⁷ Clifford Geertz writes in The Interpretation of Cultures “thick description” is a method showing the “intellectual effort” involved in composing an ethnography (6).

⁸ Molly Bang’s Picture This offers a basic understanding for how pictures work. Picture structure is used in making visual art such as blocking and image creations for the stage.

⁹ Melanie Kitchens supplies a succinct definition of a social gest in her dissertation, Performing Photographs: Memory, History, and Display stating, “Understood as a calculated pose that acknowledges its draw on a socially shared referent and conveys a ‘particular attitude’ towards it” (12). D. Soyini Madison’s discussions of positionality in Critical Ethnography are echoed throughout this document. Positionality as Madison states is, “vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (14).

¹⁰ The personal stories present in the script of “Hang It Out To Dry” follow the assignments from Michael Bowman’s Spring 2000 class on Performative Writing at Louisiana State University.

shifting, testing language” (75). In discussing my personal stories, again I rely on an array of theories to justify my choices. I employ Pollock’s performative writing as “metonymic” when discussing such methods as Brecht’s alienation effect, or the literary device of the double entendre (82).¹¹ The “technology” of performative writing provided me with a means to incorporate my personal experience into the show.¹²

Judy E. Yordon states in Experimental Theatre: Creating and Staging Techniques, “Stories are heightened forms of discourse, and by staging them, we are able to preserve our familial ties and our cultural heritage” (29). I analyze the scripting and staging of collected narratives as heightened forms of discourse, using Mikhail Bakhtin’s heteroglossia, Michel de Certeau’s notions of home, and Erving Goffman’s writings on framing. I also employ the hauntology of Avery Gordon, Freud’s concept of the uncanny, and the literary device of foreshadowing to facilitate my discussion. I particularly address the staging and scripting choices of collected narratives by discussing the editing and the placement of narratives within the show.

Finally, I conclude Chapter Three by offering the script as a souvenir. Considering the script as a “material remnant” from an ephemeral experience, I discuss the possibilities of the script as a means to share culture and experience with others.¹³ As a means to renegotiate and reuse the images, narratives, and personal stories present in the script, others can reinscribe the

¹¹ Performative writing as metonymic is “self consciously partial” to what it represents (82).

¹² In “Performing Writing” Pollock states “I want to suggest that performative writing is a technique, even a technology, that must and can be commonly deployed” (79). In claiming performative writing as a technology, she offers a framework consisting of six excursions. My personal stories are often filled with what Pollock states in describing metonymic writing as “longing for a lost subject/object, for a subject/object that has disappeared into history or time, and for what, in the face of that disappearance, may seem both the inadequacy and impossibility of evocation” (84).

¹³ In On the Beaten Track, Lucy Lippard writes of the souvenir as a “material remnant” of constructed identity (159).

script to “make themselves” a part of the larger story of Hurricane Katrina, Saint Bernard Parish and partake in performance ethnography.¹⁴ As a committed ethnographer, I offer the analysis of the scripting and staging of “Hang It Out To Dry,” and the script of “Hang It Out To Dry” in the appendix, as a possibility for social change and justice. In this way, I pass the proverbial baton or souvenir of the role of storyteller to my readers.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the collaborative process of performance ethnography. I detail the many collaborations of “Hang It Out To Dry” and, in doing so, I illustrate for my reader the “many tellers” of this story.¹⁵ I divide the discussion of collaboration into four groups of co-producers. First, I discuss the interview collaborations from the eight individuals who shared their experience of post Katrina with me. I provide a description of character for each individual in order for my reader to get a sense of the real people involved in this project. The rich description also serves as a means to create on the page what audiences cannot see in the staged adaptation. In providing a multidimensional perspective of each informant, I also expose my close relationship with each individual I perform in this production.

Next, I offer an explanation of the collaborative process with the interior design department at Louisiana State University to design the set for “Hang It Out To Dry.” The collaboration occurred as an experiment for artists and designers initiated through the Communication Across the Curriculum (CXC) studio on campus. Student designers conceived potential set pieces for “Hang It Out To Dry” and presented their work to me, their client. The

¹⁴ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refers to “making themselves” in “Objects of Ethnography.” As ethnographers, when we consider our own actions and performances as a medium or artifact, we become a “living sign” of ourselves (18).

¹⁵ Norman Denzin in Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture, argues the collaborative format occurs because the “interviewer and respondent tell a story together” (66). To further Denzin’s relationships of interviewer and respondent, I discuss the co-producers of the “Hang It Out To Dry” as telling the story of this performance ethnography together.

students developed four projects under the supervision of their professors, T.L. Ritchie and Phillip Tebbutt, throughout the fall semester of 2006. I use Bertolt Brecht, Robert Breen, and D. Soyini Madison's work to discuss the relationship between the body and stage design.¹⁶

I then discuss the collegial collaborations involved in the co-production of "Hang It Out To Dry." Tracy Stephenson Shaffer and Ruth Laurion Bowman contributed to this project tremendously. As prolific directors, their knowledge of the stage facilitated the overall aesthetic of "Hang It Out To Dry." Tracy's work in the show focused on body movement and my relationship to the set. Ruth contributed to the development of the transition sequence in the show. Her Brechtian influence aided in my "variations" of language.¹⁷ She also assisted me in my characterization of the narratives as I traveled with the show. While Brecht plays a major role in theorizing my stage choices, I also utilize the work of D. Soyini Madison, Walter Benjamin, Vera Zolberg, Ruth Bowman, Melanie Kitchens and Linda Shkreli to discuss my collegial collaborations.

I also focus on the musical collaborations in "Hang It Out To Dry." The soundscape in the show is credited to two musicians, Jonathan Alcon and Benjamin Powell. Jonathan Alcon, president of the Louisiana State University percussion society in 2006, composed the soundscape for the show. Using an improvisatory style of percussive beats, Jonathan experimented with the sounds of the vibraphone by using a number of unconventional tools such as rakes and violin bows. He performed his experimental music in "Hang It Out To Dry" creating a call and response system between the soundscape and the performed narratives. At those performances

¹⁶ In Robert Breen's Chamber Theatre, chapter seven includes a discussion on scenery which privileges the word over an elaborate set design.

¹⁷ Brecht discusses the "variations" one can create in order to pull from the "initial invention" to create a "truer and richer" aesthetic model (211). I analyze my transition sequence using Brecht's "variations."

where Jonathan was unavailable, I discuss the failings of replicating the live musician when I substituted a recording of vibraphone sounds by William Winant. After my unsuccessful IPOD use, Benjamin Powell, fellow scholar and digital composer, orchestrated a computerized soundscape which remained true to the work of Jonathan Alcon. Powell focused his soundscape on the balance between “grace and clarity” in a live performance.¹⁸ The music collaborations are analyzed using the work of experimental musician, composer, and collaborator, John Cage.

Finally, I address the audience collaborations throughout the travels of “Hang It Out To Dry.” In the two years of traveling with the show, I have encountered many audiences who graciously offered their insights, comments, and questions about the show. Their responses primarily developed out of post show discussions. I use the comments of audiences from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Nunez Community College in Saint Bernard Parish to discuss issues of “citizenship” and “accountability” discussed by Olorisa Omi Osun Olomo.”¹⁹ I also analyze two written responses by Cindy Spurlock and Lisa Flanagan.

In Chapter Five, I concentrate on the multiple communities affiliated with “Hang It Out To Dry.” Diverse in demographics, each community represented in this study demonstrates the power of building community in creating a performance ethnography. Particularly, I focus on my hometown, disciplinary, and performance communities. I explore how the mentioned communities are built, sustained, reinvented, and rearranged by “Hang It Out To Dry.” Using

¹⁸ I use John Cage’s discussion on grace and clarity in Silence to discuss the balance between music and performed narratives in “Hang It Out To Dry.” I also discuss the music collaborations and performing narrative as a partnership on stage, creating what Cage refers to as “identification” and a sensual aural empathy within the performance (95).

¹⁹ Olomo, in “Performance and Ethnography, Performing Ethnography, Performance Ethnography,” discusses audience collaborations in performance ethnography as “enacting the rights of citizenship” because when you “join in,” you “have your position heard” (344). She also addresses “accountability” in terms of representing another on stage. I discuss her notions further in Chapter Four.

Judith Hamera's Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City, I discuss the aesthetic as "inherently social" (3). Hamera's work aided in my discussions of the many "labors of creation" involved in the communal worlds of *Hang It Out To Dry*" (3).

First, I discuss my hometown community of Saint Bernard Parish in regards to documenting narrative, social advocacy, and cultural memory. Drawing upon the *Isleno* community and their beloved *decima*, I explore the efforts of preserving community stories. Diana Taylor, in The Archive and The Repertoire, discusses the Mexican *cantares*, which are similar to the *decimas*, as purposed for the "telling of history and past glories" (35). Taylor stresses the importance of practice "passed down through bodies" in the telling and writing, so that the archive and the repertoire "mutually produce" one another (35-36). Focusing on social advocacy, I pull from the works of D. Soyini Madison, Norman K. Denzin, Olorisa Omi Osun Olomo, Dwight Conquergood, and Hannah Harvey Blevins to explore the ethical "positionality" of a performance ethnographer endowed with a "sixth sense" that she uses to create a "political frame," which maintains the "integrity" of the "voiceless."²⁰ I concentrate on the cultural memory of my hometown established through "Hang It Out To Dry." Marita Sturken defines cultural memory in Tangled Memories as "Memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning" (3). Referring to conversations with and emails by Louisiana residents, I demonstrate how the

²⁰ D. Soyini Madison's work on "positionality" in "Staging Fieldwork/Performing Human Rights" addresses the role of the audience, by placing them in a position to ask the question, "Where am I in this debate?" (402). Norman K. Denzin's discusses the "sixth sense" in Interpretive Ethnography as the ethnographer's role as the "advocate for the public" (284). Olorisa Omi Osun Olomo argues performance ethnography as political, because "embodiment is political" (343). Dwight Conquergood reminds us that in a staged ethnography "each voice has its own integrity" (10). Hannah Harvey Blevins argues for performance ethnography as social advocacy in giving "voice to the voiceless" (398).

stories told in “Hang It Out To Dry” are negotiated outside of the traditional historical discourse to become cultural memory.

Next, I focus on my disciplinary community. I use Victor Turner’s “communitas” to discuss the involvement of the performance studies community, as well as other disciplines in constructing “Hang It Out To Dry.” Particularly, I spotlight the conferences and festivals that furthered the travels and progression of the show. I discuss the contributions of scholars within the setting of performances, post show discussions, and roundtable and performative panels at national and regional communication conferences and festivals.

Finally, I explore the performance community developed out of “Hang It Out To Dry” through my workshops as a visiting artist at two universities. I utilized John O’Neil’s method of the story circle in my workshops at Purchase College State University of New York and at Lake Superior State University. John O’Neil is an artist, civil rights activist, and founder of New Orleans-based Junebug Productions. He developed the story circling process to discuss issues of race and social change. In workshopping students, I used O’Neil’s method along with the modifications set by New Orleans based theatre company Mondo Bizarro to explore notions of home and community. Along with Patricia Suchy, we furthered the process of story circling by incorporating montage and collage to synthesize the performances of students. I include a detailed explanation of the workshops from “Hang It Out To Dry” in the chapter.

I conclude Chapter Five with Victor Turner’s theories of drama. I discuss Turner’s phases of the breach, crisis, redress and reintegration by applying them to the communities of “Hang It Out To Dry.” I demonstrate the power of performance as a primary redressive act in community building. The redressive phase is one that “forces a coming together . . . to make

amends.”²¹ I also consider the limitations in applying Turner’s social drama to the communities of “Hang It Out Dry,” knowing that the reintegration phase of Turner’s drama is not always successful.

In Chapter Six, titled “A Listening Backward Is A Listening Forward,” I address the remaking of stories in order to make our own “life” stories. The remaking of stories relies upon the shifting positions from the role of listener to the role of teller. To use Kelly Oliver’s term, in Witnessing: Beyond Recognition, telling and listening involves a “response-ability, or response to address” (5).²² We are, as Della Pollock in Remembering: Oral History Performance states, “beyond storytellers, we are witnesses. We see each other and we (must) see to each other through the performance of witnessing” (4). My “response to address” holds me accountable for the dialogic interactions of my past, the past of others, and the future of those pasts. I “pick up and move on,” activating the proverbial baton in the role of storyteller. In this chapter, I offer my own “response to address,” by creating another script concerning the multiple histories of witnesses woven into “Hang It Out to Dry.”

I presented the performative script at the end of Chapter Six at the National Communication Association convention in San Diego in 2008. The script follows a mystery format using my personal memories from my travels, email correspondence with those who have loaded and unloaded my set pieces, and theory from performance ethnography scholars. Gregory Ulmer first developed the mystery as a concept in Teletheory: Grammatology in the

²¹ D. Soyini Madison describes the redressive act as one to “squench the crisis from further disruption of the social system” (156). I argue for the performance of “Hang It Out To Dry” as the “mediator” that “forces a coming together . . . to make amends” (156).

²² Della Pollock in Remembering Oral History Performance refers to Kelly Oliver’s notion of “response-ability” stating, “Beyond the particularities of interview practice or historical method . . . the sense that the ability to respond (response-ability) that inheres in the obligation (responsibility) to do so defines what it means to be a human self” (4).

Age of Video as a “translation (or transduction) process researching the equivalencies among the discourses of science, popular culture, everyday life, and private experience” (vii). Michael Bowman and Ruth Bowman furthered the concept of a mystory as a method of staging autoperformance:

More broadly, mystoriagraphy can be defined as an attempt to conduct and represent research in terms of three general domains of discourse: The professional (any branch of formal knowledge or expertise); the popular (including both contemporary pop culture forms, such as music or television, and more traditional resources such as family lore, community stories, oral histories, etc.); and the personal (individual memories, experiences). (165)

Using the personal, popular and professional discourses of “Hang It Out To Dry,” I developed “Performing Community: A Traveling Script,” as a “doing of remembrance.”²³

I compose my own story/script with feelings of nostalgia. Lucy Lippard in On The Beaten Track defines the term “nostalgia” as a “severe homesickness,” or a “return home” (153). “Performing Community: A Traveling Script,” offers the reader my “process of memory,” which resists a “uniform” path of nostalgia, connecting the many bodies that pushed the vehicle of “Hang It Out To Dry” forward.²⁴ “Performing Community: A Traveling Script,” questions the redefining and reconstituting of community and home through performance. By making

²³ Sarah Dykins Callahan’s performative paper at NCA in San Diego 2008, “Materializing a Re/membered Past” calls for a commandment of performance in stating, “this do in remembrance.”

²⁴ Lucy Lippard argues against nostalgia as a “sentimental inauthenticity, and an evil ‘construction’ that seems distant from its original meaning” (153). Rachel Hall in “Patty and Me: Performative Encounters Between an Historical Body and the History of Images,” resists “the postmodern knowledge that nostalgia is uniform” (347). Hall offers an “interventional option” by performing memories of old pictures in reference to the Patty Hearst Archive (347). Likewise, I create a script of my own memories, the memories of others who assisted in the touring of “Hang It Out To Dry,” and the formal knowledge of performance scholars.

performance “go,” I attest to remembering as forward making.²⁵ “Performing Community: A Traveling Script,” offers a response to the question “So what do we do now?”

The significance of this research speaks to the timeliness of generating new forms of Katrina narratives. Hurricane Katrina consumed our Gulf Coast only four years ago but already the stories are beginning to evaporate. This dissertation traces the many events and the stories of those who bore witness. Teller and listener engage the story and enrich the possibility of the stories being transmitted by others. The story is ever-changing, never-ending.

²⁵ In Della Pollock’s “Introduction: Making History Go,” she states, “performance makes history go” (27). I use her call to “create a representation as itself a form of action” (27).

CHAPTER TWO PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAGHY AS METHOD

In this chapter, I begin by outlining the definitions, goals and principles of performance ethnography. Next, I situate myself in the scholarly narrative of performance ethnography. Finally, I develop my method of performance ethnography.

Before I discuss my ethnographic method for “Hang It Out To Dry,” I turn to the literature of fellow artists, scholars, and colleagues to outline the definitions, goals, and principles of performance ethnography. I begin by providing several useful definitions of performance ethnography. Olorisa Omi O. Olomo in “Performance and Ethnography, Performing Ethnography, Performance Ethnography,” explains that:

Performance and ethnography meaningfully come together as performance ethnography, which is ethnographic research embodied by the ethnographer, the fieldwork community, an audience, or any combination of these participants. Performance ethnography rests on the idea that bodies harbor knowledge about culture, and that performance allows for the exchange of that knowledge across bodies. (339)

In Olomo’s definition, performers’ embodiment of cultural texts yields unique knowledge. One aspect that of that knowledge may be a richer understanding of the relationship between researcher and researched. Bryant Keith Alexander in “Performance Ethnography: The Reenacting and Inciting of Culture,” defines performance ethnography as, “literally, the staged re-enactment of ethnographically derived notes. This approach to studying and staging culture works toward lessening the gap between a perceived and actualized sense of self and other” (411). Yet performance ethnography also highlights the ongoing meaning-making of ethnography. In “Introduction: Performance Ethnography: A TPQ Symposium,” John T. Warren argues that performance ethnography, “gives life to people in context, makes embodied practice meaningful, and generates analysis for seeing the conditions that make the socially taken-for-granted visible as a process” (318). The power of performance ethnography as Warren states

“takes us into the moment, into the fibers of daily life, allowing us to see people in their performative contexts” (318). Therefore, performance ethnography draws out the specificities and particularities of our everyday experiences. Frederick Corey writes in “On Possibility”

performance ethnography is a cultural construction designed to counter the history of a body that is suspect, suspicious, suspended, and the performance ethnographer is invited to craft text that . . . offers the possibility of the understanding of a people through the analysis of cultural acts engaged in the context of audience; an understanding of audience, how we audience ourselves, audience each other, and audience cultural change; and an understanding of cultural change of lived experience. (331-332)

Using performance ethnography as a device for commentary and critique, the researcher can offer participants tools for enhancing and strengthening our understanding of the other. Finally, Dwight Conquergood in “Performance Studies: Interventions in Radical Research” refers to performance ethnography as “an ethnography of the ears and heart that reimagines participant-observation as co-performative witnessing” (149). Here, Conquergood emphasizes the empathetic nature of performance ethnography, where participants contribute to the construction of a shared experience.

As evidenced above, the term “performance ethnography” describes a host of practices and potential outcomes. It functions as an umbrella term. Scholars and practitioners use the term to label a variety of performance practices. Della Pollock refers to this phenomenon in “Marking New Directions in Performance Ethnography” as an “incorporative” direction where “one method is interrupted by others, especially anything that involves actually talking with people, it is at best eclectic; worse: diluted, a puddling mess” (326). In my own work, I associate performance ethnography with staged ethnography. While I realize performance ethnography takes other forms, for example, on the page, in everyday life, public forums, blogospheres and more, my Louisiana State University training in the Hopkins Black Box theatre has shaped me into a practitioner of staged or “audience centered” performance ethnographies. Particularly, I

am interested in what Norman Denzin describes in Interpretive Ethnography as “ethnographic and cultural texts turned into poems, scripts, short stories and dramas that are read and performed before audiences” (91). I believe, follow and practice what Jill Dolan in Utopia In Performance argues of performance:

Performance . . . offers a way to practice imagining new forms of social relationships. I believe in theater’s use value as a place to fantasize how peace and justice, equality and truly participatory democracy might take hold sometime in a near or distant future, as well as in theater’s value as a place in which to connect emotionally and spiritually with other people. (90)

I also believe we as scholars, practitioners, and participants of performance ethnography move beyond simply “imagining” and “fantasizing” the change Dolan describes by forming new relationships, building trust, considering our positionality and attending to the ethics of our practice. Therefore, when we add “ethnography” to Dolan’s performance, “performance offers a way to practice (omitting “imagining”) new forms of social relationships.” Joni Jones states in “Performance Ethnography: The Role of Embodiment in Cultural Authenticity” that performance ethnography reveals:

. . . how culture is done in the body. This method is built on two primary ideas: 1) that identity and daily interactions are a series of conscious and unconscious choices improvised within culturally and socially specific guidelines, and 2) that people learn through participation. If people are genuinely interested in understanding culture, they must put aspects of that culture on and into their bodies. (7)

I interpret “putting culture on and into the body” as staging a performance where the researcher, audience and actors can come together in an experimental space to understand better the implications and intentions of others. Jones continues,

Performance ethnography translates fieldwork experiences into performances among the researcher, artifacts from fieldwork, and audiences. While such performances may entertain, the aim of the work is to explore bodily knowing, to stretch the ways in which ethnography might share knowledge of a culture and to puzzle through the ethical and political dilemmas of fieldwork and of representation (7).

Like Jones, in my ethnographic performance, I translated my community's culture onto the stage but I also shared my community's experiences during and after Katrina to highlight their continuing plight. Like Jones, I follow Victor Turner's pronouncement that "if anthropologists are going to take ethnodramatics seriously . . . we will have to become performers ourselves" (101).

Jones follows six principles in creating an "audience centered" performance ethnography emphasizing "the personal nature of fieldwork and the bodily understanding that can be derived from performance" (8). Jones's six principles address context, accountability, subjectivity, multivocality, participation, and ethics. These principles outline an epistemology that informed my own work. In the following, I consider these guiding principles in depth.

Jones's begins addressing context. Jones suggests centering one's work on an idea or question rather than an attempted realistic representation of a culture. Establishing context through an idea or question allows the audience to construct their own opinions as opposed to forcing them to accept the performers. Jones incorporates referents from fieldwork to confront the ideas and questions posed by one's research. She includes artifacts, clothing, audio tapes and film footage in her staged adaptations to address the challenges present in her fieldwork. Her performance ethnography explored her cultural identity as an African American woman in Nigeria through an examination of the Nigerian deity of Yoruba, Osun. Participants experimented with their constructions of Yorubian identity using referents.

Similar to Jones' referents, I incorporated a photographic slide show to document the "real" culture of Saint Bernard Parish. I also used gestures, phrases and a set design symbolizing my community's experiences after the storm. I discuss these referents specifically in the following chapters, showing how they play with the ideas in the research. "Hang It Out To Dry"

does not answer the questions implicit in the narratives, but rather allows the audience to step into the constructed world of the performance, formulate questions for themselves, draw conclusions regarding those questions, and possibly take action.

Jones's second principle involves accountability. According to Jones, the very collaboration between researcher and the communities with which she has interacted creates accountability. In this way, the performer/researcher develops "a relationship of mutual influence with the fieldwork community members" (8). Chapter Four highlights Jones second principle by discussing the collaborative nature of my research project.

Jones's third principle addresses subjectivity not only in the fieldwork, but also in the performance. Jones argues that the ethnographer's subjectivity must be articulated in the performance, noting her position as an interpreter of the material collected and adapted for the stage. In this way the ethnographer becomes as integral a figure as her co-subjects in the performance. She is not separate from, but part of, the dialogue. The ethnographer's experiences are questioned, the positionality of researcher is featured, and the audience is made aware of where the ethnographer "fits into" the research.

However, the researcher's voice or experience should be integrated with others. Multivocality, Jones's fourth principle, is used "to mitigate the authority of the ethnographer and provide varied, even contradictory perspectives that the audience must synthesize" (9). Privileging collaboration, multivocality turns the audience into collaborators as they interpret and make sense of the bodily fieldwork presented on stage. By sharing multiple perspectives on stage either through actors, interviewees or audience, the range of perspectives within a culture prevail.

Of course, when an ethnographer emphasizes the interpretive role of the audience, participation, Jones's fifth principle, moves into focus. "Through participation, audience can contrast their own culturally inscribed bodies with those from the community being shared" (10). Jones explains participation through spatial relationships of audience and performers. She describes ways in which an audience can practice culture through an environment conducive to participation, where audience members can cross the line between participant and onlooker. Jones advocates a smaller, inviting, intimate space such as a black box, a community center or an interactive museum where the boundaries are not clearly marked. For example, I often performed "Hang It Out To Dry" followed by an audience discussion. In this way, my audience actively participated in the experience of "Hang It Out To Dry," particularly when the space was not ideal.

As an ethnographer shapes her work to require participation, ethics, Jones's sixth principle, become important. Jones admits the complexity of ethics as one balances the integrity of fieldwork with doing right by the subjects. Even when we give accountability its due diligence, we must consider ethical issues such as "Who gets to tell the story?", "Where is the story told?", "To whom is the story told?", and "Why?" All of these questions are factors in thinking about "commitment . . . respect . . . mutuality . . . (and) dialogue" with the subjects of fieldwork (11).

In my own performance practice, I approached my ethical responsibility by embracing Dwight Conquergood's metaphor of the caravan, of putting "culture into motion" (138). As Madison states, I had to "widen the door" for everyone to fit into the vehicle (321). My responsibility as an ethnographer of performance committed to maintaining dialogue meant I had to step on the gas and travel thousands of miles (mostly in my van) to high schools, community

colleges, performance studios, public theaters, black box spaces, hotel ballrooms, and community centers. Moving to and from a variety of settings, I hoped to reach a number of audiences, diverse in background and experience of Hurricane Katrina. I hoped to keep the conversation going. Jones six principles provide not only a road map of how to create “audience centered” performance ethnography, but also how to do it ethically.

Situating Myself

Now that I have addressed some of the definitions, goals, and principles of performance ethnography, I attempt to situate myself in this scholarly narrative. I do so by comparing and contrasting my work with two others known for their provocative “ethnographic” practices. Two of the most well-known names that come up when discussing performance ethnography are Dwight Conquergood and Anna Deavere Smith. While one might be tempted to characterize these two practitioners as polar opposites on a one-dimensional continuum with my work somewhere in between, a closer look at their work reveals a much more complex and multidimensional reality. In fact, Conquergood and Smith are more closely aligned in certain areas of methodology than not.

In the following, I compare and contrast my work with the critically-acclaimed research and/or performance of Dwight Conquergood and Anna Deavere Smith. I do so humbly. Because most readers of performance ethnography are familiar with the work of Smith and Conquergood, this exercise helps me position my own work for the reader as well as myself as a new scholar in the field of performance ethnography. I proceed by analyzing the subjects, sites, investments and aesthetics of our work. Before I continue, I want to make clear that I fully realize the ambition of comparing and contrasting my work with such notable, distinguished and

remarkable practitioners. I have learned by their example and I owe my approach to performance ethnography to such practitioners.

Subjects

Subjects are the real people participating in the actual experience, the location, and the situation that we as researchers want to investigate. Conquergood's subjects share a commonality of subjugation for whom he gives voice. Anna Deavere Smith draws her subjects from a particular event, storyline, or theme of American identity often revolving around issues of race. My subjects were involved in the event of Hurricane Katrina but also are deeply connected to me as fellow community members.

One fundamental element of Smith and Conquergood's work is a focus on a particular group of people. Conquergood's subjects included diverse populations of people, such as the Latin King street gang of Chicago, immigrant neighbors in Albany Park, refugees from Thailand, refugees from the Gaza Strip, and death row inmates. Shannon Jackson, in "Caravans Continued" describes Conquergood: "He focused on the individuals and groups, or more often liminally defined individuals and groups, whose marginal status on the peripheries of class, race, or national privilege made them the most important persons on whose behalf one could work" (30). In "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research," Conquergood described his subjects as having "subjugated knowledges," a term from Foucault, to include "all the local, regional, vernacular and naive knowledges at the bottom of the hierarchy" (146). To refer to the human subjects of Conquergood's fieldwork, I use his term "co-performative witnessing." D. Soyini Madison defines the term in her article, "Co-Performative Witnessing" as "to live in and spend time in the borderlands of contested identities where you speak 'with' not 'to' others and where your (and their) ethnographic interlocutors are as co-temporal in the report and on stage as

they were in the field” (828). Conquergood’s co-performative witnesses became his neighbors, his friends, his family, and his kin throughout his research.

Anna Devere Smith’s fieldwork subjects are vast in numbers. Kay Ellen Capo and Kristen M. Langellier interviewed Smith in 1994 about her show “Fires In The Mirror.” They state, “Smith’s project has led her to collect stories from more than 600 characters, performing them across the United States” (62). Smith has been cited in a video from the Technology Entertainment Design Conference of 2005 to have interviewed 2,000 people from all over the United States (“Speakers Anna Devere Smith: Actor, playwright, social critic”). She portrays Latinos, African Americans, Hasidic Jews, doctors, patients, and many more. Her work is well known for incorporating a range of ethnic and racial identities. Smith also acknowledges focusing on liminally defined individuals with marginal status, similar to Conquergood. In her interview with Capo and Langellier she discussed her privileging the spoken word over the written word in her performances. She also discusses how the written word defines us as individuals. She states:

ADS: *Clearly* the people *now*, who don’t have *access* to the written word, don’t make it in the *world*—like the *bad boy*. This is a *crime*: If you don’t learn the written word, you can’t make it in the world. But I value people who express themselves without respect or regard for the written word, and I only hope that by bringing them forward in my shows, we’ll see again the *resource* and the *gift*, you know that those people have to give and decide: well are we going to *adjust* the rules for the written word so that these people will want to participate? So that they *can* participate? Are we going to give them *access* to it, in a way that they can participate? Or *not*? What’s going to *happen*? (74)

Addressing whom the written word serves and whom it does not, Smith conveys her interest in the spoken word. Smith believes that by listening to others we come to understand their worlds.

While I have not interviewed the quantity of individuals of either Conquergood or Smith, I have emulated their practices in “Hang It Out To Dry.” In a twist on Conquergood’s move from subjects to friends, my subjects or co-performative witnesses are my family, neighbors and

friends whom I ask to be subjects. My subjects have been deeply affected by Hurricane Katrina in many ways and I consider their voices to be “subjugated knowledges” because they are individuals who feel as though their stories were not heard by those who mattered, such as political and social figures. While I do not perform a range of ethnic or racial identities, “Hang It Out To Dry” is multivocal. I juxtapose the narratives of the co-performative witnesses who decided to rebuild against those who decided to relocate.

Site

Site may be read as a specific locale and/or a larger concept of place for a community. Conquergood’s site is a place of conflict and struggle as he explores the global through the local. In exploring these contested sites, Conquergood becomes a member of the very communities involved in the struggle. Smith’s site is less a specific local place and more a theatrical space where she addresses the issues of American life. My site is highly localized and particular to my community’s experiences.

Whether overseas or in the United States, Conquergood was interested in both the local and the global. Conquergood traveled transnationally to research cultures, traveling from Thailand to his neighborhood streets of Chicago. He addressed the murkiness of location in “Interventions and Radical Research” stating, “It is no longer easy to sort out the local from the global: transnational circulations of images get reworked on the ground and redeployed for local, tactical struggles. And global flows simultaneously are encumbered and energized by these local makeovers” (145). Conquergood’s sites were located in contested spaces, those locations where conflict prevailed and stakes were high. Whether in Chicago’s Albany Park or in a Hmong Refugee Camp, Conquergood’s interests resided in borderlands, intersections, sites of struggle and conflict.

Smith focuses her sight/site on American life. While she has developed award winning works out of crises with “Fires in the Mirror” based on the Crown Heights Brooklyn Riots and “Twilight” based on the Los Angeles Riots, she has also developed several performances dealing with race, social and political issues. Her ongoing project “On The Road, A Search For American Character,” takes her across the country. Smith discusses her travels stating, “I’ve been going around America, interviewing people with the idea of trying to learn as much about this country as I could in my lifetime” (Martin and Smith). Jill Dolan characterizes Smith’s site by looking at her stage work, referring to the theater as her “no-place.” Dolan writes:

Smith chooses not to perform her presence as interlocutor, but to let it haunt the characters she mimes, letting the audience imagine the prior moments of preperformance, the metaframe in which Smith enters people’s lives with notebook and tape recorder, then edits their conversations together across her own body, modeling what they might sound like if they were in the same room. Theater becomes her utopia, a no-place where such intercommunity dialogue is possible. (85)

Smith does not make her own political stance visible, rather she makes herself invisible, allowing her interviewed communities to speak through her. Her characters question the political, racial, and social issues at hand.

Unlike Conquergood and Smith, my site of research is my hometown community. I am interested in the murkiness of the local and, especially with the event of Hurricane Katrina, issues of borderlands and intersections are still relevant years later. Hamera and Madison remind us in “Performance Studies at the Intersections” that “performing the local is enmeshed in what it means to be a U.S. citizen and that is enmeshed in the facts of U.S. foreign policy, world trade, civil society, and war” (xx). I performed the stories of my hometown community, exposing the many difficulties and intricacies of everyday life within the local. By addressing the nation with the communities affected by Hurricane Katrina, I wanted to capture their attention in realizing Katrina is not just a local issue, but a national problem. Hamera and Madison address the local

versus global stating “we are who we are in our nations because of our placement—for better and worse—among other nations of the world and that literarily spills into the microstructures of our neighborhood, families, and lives” (xx). We come to know who we are because of the influence of symbolic interactions with our global, national, and local worlds, each filled with traditions, rituals, and stories.

Investment

Investment is the time spent in the labor, practice, and development of our research. Conquergood’s investment overflows the role as researcher into a site of near total immersion in a particular community. The bulk of Smith’s investment takes place at a later stage of the process in time spent developing, rehearsing, and performing her articulation of her subjects and their stories. My investment is similar to both practitioners. I use my immersion in this community of which I am already a member to articulate my understandings of their experiences in the staging of their stories.

Conquergood’s fieldwork far exceeds the expectations of deep hanging out in order to build trust and rapport with individuals. Della Pollock in a “Making Legacies: Remembering Dwight Conquergood” states “As he studied and wrote cultures, he became in body and word an exemplar of the ethic of ‘being with’ he so vigorously taught” (803). Conquergood spent a year in the Hmong refugee camp. In addition, while in Chicago, he lived in a dilapidated tenement building, which he referred to as “Big Red,” shared by Hmong immigrants and a Chicago gang for two years. His investment included not only years of work but encompassed his very existence and exposed him to great danger. As Madison explains: “coevalness is the temporality of a shared experience in which bodies are present together in time. Bodies are bonded by the experience of a common time, and to negate the commonality of shared time is to negate the

reality that particular bodies shared a particular space” (167). Conquergood lived his research, with those who shared his research. He embodied coevalness.

Smith focuses on the interview for the purpose of social change but also for aesthetic production. Because of the limited time she spent on interviews and at times, interviews over the phone, she has been accused of “cultural poaching” in certain circles. However, Smith acknowledges her time spent in the field as well as her limitations as an artist. In a New York Times article “What Does Grace Mean To You,” Smith admits to the little time spent with interviewees stating:

When you first start to decide to listen in a way that is more than just listening in a conversation, it’s probably a good idea not to expect yourself to listen for very long. Practice keeping your own inner monologue out of the way of what is being said to you, so that you can hear not just what somebody is saying to you, but also what they’re trying to say. (Chen)

She also often mentions how little she asks of her subjects when interviewing them. In a New York Times article, “The Fine Art of Listening,” Smith’s style of gathering materials is addressed for “Rounding It Out,” a performance about doctor and nurse rotations:

‘The most remarkable part of what took place was how little probing it took for her to hear stories from patients that we almost never hear,’ Dr. Horwitz says. ‘We are very focused on illness, on the physical content of the illness. We’re disease-oriented. She’s very people-oriented.’ Ms. Smith asked patients one simple question: ‘What happened to you?’ They would let loose, she says, talking about the impact of illness on their lives. ‘People showed me everything,’ she remembers. ‘I thought, my God, you could have access to all of this.’ (Arenson)

Her investment on stage overshadows her investment with her subjects in the field. She has been described by Jill Dolan as the “invisible interlocutor” of her characters (85). She provides the frame of racial and social injustices for the portraits of her characters where she serves as the glass centered in her work. Her well-crafted performance proves that she invests her time settling “in the shoes” of those she interviews.

My investment with my co-performative witnesses contrasts with that of Smith and Conquergood. My co-performative witnesses are my family, friends and neighbors. Coevalness with my community was an easy task because I was a community member before the storm. I embodied community practice as I cleaned with my family and neighbors after Hurricane Katrina. Their experience of the storm was my experience of the storm. Walking alongside and behind them as they entered their devastated homes, I witnessed the pain of losing their home and their community. My friends and neighbors are not merely subjects. We share our experience of the storm with one another through time, while maintaining our bond as community in this long road to recovery.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics are the artistic and ethical framing we apply to our research. Conquergood's aesthetic involvement ranges from participant, collaborator, and creator of specific cultural rites and rituals, to producer and director of aesthetic texts promoting advocacy for the communities he studies. Smith's aesthetics are played out in her virtuosic representations of her subjects as well as her masterful framing of those stories within the social and political sites of her research. Although I both embody my interviewees verbally and gesturally in my staging, I also take great care in the ethical implications of representing my subjects' stories. Furthermore, I mark my own narrative within the larger tale as I highlight my labor through the stylization of staging.

Conquergood created a multitude of varied performances throughout his years as a researcher. His performances ranged from directing parades and health theatre in a Hmong refugee camp to closely working with the Albany Park Theatre Project. Pollock describes his style as a mediator or activist:

In turn he became a cultural mediator, making the award winning films with Taggart Siegel, Between Two Worlds: The Hmong Shaman in America (1985) and Heart Broken

in Half: Chicago's Street Gangs (1991); an activist and defender, performing and interpreting oral histories in courtrooms where judges would otherwise condemn, for instance, Hmong ritual practice; a stalwart protester of the rites of state execution he studied with such meticulous care; and a beloved mentor to innumerable urban youth and refugees. (803)

Performance is always entangled in moral matters, according to Conquergood. Because the performance of a culture is a representation of a culture, the positioning of ethnographer and audience are crucial in ensuring a “dialogical stance” for performance ethnography (4).

Conquergood's iconic “Performing as Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance” names the “dialogical stance” as the valued perspective, allowing for the conversation between researcher and researched to be open and ongoing, negotiating between boundaries and seeking understanding between all sides involved, rather than performing to potentially “four ethical pitfalls, performative stances toward the other that are morally problematic” such as the custodian's rip-off, the skeptic's cop out, the enthusiast's infatuation, and the curator's exhibitionism (4). Judith Hamera writes of Conquergood's aesthetic work:

Dwight viewed performance as both aesthetic and social work, and he took this literally. He began his work on the Hmong community in Chicago, which would later lead him to his examinations of gang life, by teaching English as a Second Language in his neighborhood. This led him to explore Hmong textiles, and then to the semiotics of gang graffiti and, toward the end of his life, to his admiration for the Albany Park Theatre Project. For him, the aesthetics of performance were central to their social force, and the social force of performance animated specific aesthetic choices. (807)

Throughout his career, Conquergood created aesthetics varying in form but remained sound in his ethical direction and moral concern for representing a people through the act of performance.

Smith is noted as a “virtuoso” at performing multiple characters in her solo performances. In “Review/Interview: Anna Deveare Smith” Kay Ellen Capo writes of Smith's craft: “Characters speak with eloquent authority, meeting the mythic demands of her ‘inter-view’ with a verbal beauty that emerges from the intense need to be understood” (58). Smith typically performs

dozens of characters in her performances, all of whom she has interviewed. She performed 29 individuals for “Fires in The Mirror,” along with other multiple character solo performances such as “Twilight: Los Angeles 1992,” “Let Me Down Easy,” and “House Arrest.” Her style of performance is also referred to as “documentary theatre,” combining aspects of performance and journalism. In the field of performance studies, Smith enacts performance ethnography where she wholly embodies the individuals she interviews by embracing them verbally, gesturally, and through costume and props, in order to question the political, social, and moral dilemmas of her fieldwork. She performs the spoken word of her interviewees, incorporating all the “ers” and “uhms” in her performance. She typically chooses to perform her characters in the gestural act they were engaged in at the time of the interview. In a performance for the Technology Entertainment Design conference of 2005, she begins:

So my grandfather told me when I was a little girl, ‘If you say a word often enough, it becomes you.’ And having grown up in a segregated city, Baltimore, Maryland, I sort of use that idea to go around America with a tape recorder—thank God for technology—to interview people, thinking that if I walked in their words—which is also why I don’t wear shoes when I perform—if I walked in their words, that I could sort of absorb America. I was also inspired by Walt Whitman, who wanted to absorb America and have it absorb him. (“Talks Anna Deavere Smith’s American character”)

In Capo and Langellier’s interview, Smith defines herself as “a playwright and an actress and a teacher” who explores “the intersection of language and character” (67). Exploring the intersection of language and character requires active listening from Smith:

Listening, is not just hearing what someone tells you word for word. You have to listen with a heart. I don’t want that to sound touchy-feely; it is not. It is very hard work. If I do three interviews in a day, I can be exhausted, because the process of hearing everyone requires that I empty out myself. While I’m listening, my own judgments and prejudices certainly come up. But I know I won’t get anything unless I get those things out of the way. (Arenson)

Smith says she finds room for her work in the spaces and gaps between conflict and struggle. Her performances translate into social commentary about social and political issues of race,

poverty, and injustice in America. Smith, in an interview with David Brancaccio, states, “It’s my experience that when things are upside down, there is an opening for a person like me. I think when things fall apart, [as an artist] you can see more and you can even be part of indicating new ways that things can be put together” (Brancaccio and Smith). Smith’s aesthetic of wholly embodying her subjects, paired with her American social and political commentary, defines her as a remarkable practitioner of performance ethnography.

In my own aesthetic performance, I pull from both practitioners’ methods to create my work. Similar to Smith, I perform the narratives from my fieldwork wholly, embodying the interviews verbally and gesturally on stage. However, I am not a virtuoso at performing narrative; as a matter of fact, I opt to show my work. David Terry, in his review of “Hang It Out To Dry,” notes my laboring through the performance with “sweaty brow and heavy breath” (367). I am what Terry calls a “good Brecht student,” leaving costumes and props behind to expose the construction of my performance and my interpretations of the interviews. I also include my own perspective by incorporating autoethnographic writings in order to situate myself as researcher in the fieldwork and as performer on stage.

I pursued the ethical methods of Dwight Conquergood by creating a “dialogical stance” and a shared experience or “coevalness” with the “co-performative witnesses” in my research. My commitment to collaboration and creating communities in performance are mentioned throughout this document. Bryant Keith Alexander writes:

In the case of using empirical materials gathered from ethnographic interviews, the language that informants speak *speaks the logic of their desire*. Their processed and re-articulated voice must be shaped and placed in context, signaling both the actuality of location in the utterance and the regenerated conditions of its use in performance—bridging space, time and the channeled embodiment of cultural experience. (429)

I understand the ethical implications of representing another on stage while maintaining the integrity of their original words and sentiments. I also realize in this comparative analysis that I am a far cry from the likes of Conquergood and Smith. I have only just begun my travels as a performance ethnographer. Their work inspires me to be a better scholar, artist, and practitioner of performance ethnography. I strive to walk in the shoes of the other with whole heart and mind allowing the questions, struggles, and conflict to surface.

Now that I have situated myself as a performance ethnographer, I provide the creation of my method. Della Pollock argues for multiple methods of performance ethnography. She states, “All too often, scholarly rigor is identified with the consistent application of a single method” (326). Keeping with Pollock’s call for an incorporative method, I draw from two contemporary scholars on ethnography Bud Goodall and D. Soyini Madison, to create my own method.

Developing a Method

In Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics and Performance, Madison defines method as “a set of procedures or a process for achieving an end, a goal, or a purpose (19).” In this section I outline a series of steps I took to collect materials for my ethnographic project, “Hang It Out To Dry.” Guided by theories and practices of performance research, these steps facilitated my collecting of stories from Chalmette, Louisiana, as well as my set and music choices for “Hang It Out To Dry.”¹ Madison acknowledges that, “representing others is always going to be a complicated and contentious undertaking” (4). Knowing the possible repercussions of my actions as an ethnographer, I turned to the expertise of ethnographers Madison and Goodall in

¹ In collecting my fieldwork, I am always contemplating adapting the material for the stage. Staging and scripting techniques of editing, body movement, and visual aesthetics drive my ethnographic research.

the creation of this plan. As one who has been “in the field” before, I knew I wanted to be equipped with a plan, a guide, a set of tools to keep on task.

Madison’s set of procedures includes eight steps of the ethnographic process. The eight steps as outlined by Madison for critical ethnography are as follows:

1. “Who Am I?": Starting Where You Are
2. “Who Else Has Written About My Topic?": Being a Part of an Interpretive Community
3. The Power of Purpose: Bracketing Your Subject
4. Preparing for the Field: The Research Design and Lay Summary
5. Interviewing and Field Techniques
6. Formulating Questions
7. Attributes of the Interviewer and Building Rapport
8. Coding and Logging Data (19-36)

Beginning with the seeds of positionality, Madison’s first step asks the ethnographer to figure out where she stands—recognizing interests, experiences, and knowledge she may have regarding her subject of interest. She must then see what research previously exists on the subject, so she can bracket her research in terms of purpose and question. By specifically asking a research question or stating a purpose one creates an “identifiable question or problem, not simply a subject of interests that is general and amorphous” (20). Once a purpose is stated, Madison suggests setting out a plan for or design of study that will create an initial map for the research. This plan assists in creating a lay summary for the participants. Being able to explain the research to the studied subjects is key to understanding the responsibilities of all parties. Through the process of interviewing, the ethnographer must remember that “the interviewee is

not an object, but a subject with agency, history, and his or her own idiosyncratic command of a story” (25). Asking appropriate questions that deepen the research while maintaining the integrity of the subjects is integral in building rapport with interviewees. Madison’s final step includes coding and logging data. Organizing and ordering data into clusters of topics of interest from subjects helps organization in later steps. Once the ethnographer identifies themes that have emerged from subjects, choices for a staged performance or scholarly document may come into focus.

I used Madison’s step of “starting where you are” as a foundation to create my own notions of establishing positionality. I also used a combination of her steps “building rapport” and “creating a lay summary” in thinking about the relationships I established throughout my research. All of Madison’s steps attend to ethics, which I will lay out further in this chapter as a separate step within the process. Madison’s insight regarding the responsibility of the ethnographer is echoed throughout my own process of ethnography and will be noted throughout this document.

Goodall in Writing the New Ethnography proposes a similar but different set of steps. In his informal style, he lists the practices of the new ethnographer:

- Hanging out with others in their local contexts
- Engaging in verbal exchanges with them
- Sharing and learning about their everyday practices
- Digging back into our own—and their own—memories for likely antecedents to current practices
- Jotting down notes, or tape recording interviews, when possible

- Returning to our offices/homes/rented rooms to write our representations of field experiences
- Engaging in armchair, after the fact self-reflection, analysis, and editing of the fieldnotes into a narrative. (84-85)

Goodall's contributions to method helped me formulate my process in realizing my steps followed a different path. For instance, I was "digging back" before the ethnography began. Having familiarity with my subject matter, I was able to formulate my positionality with the interviewees earlier in the project. "Engaging in verbal exchanges" and "hanging out with others" happened almost simultaneously in my experience with interviewees. "Writing our experiences" and "engaging in armchair reflection" also coexisted when it was time to collect materials for composing a script leading to performance. Synthesizing Goodall's steps with my own created a condensed process of methods for my own research.

Both Madison and Goodall gave me a solid foundation for approaching my research. I took aspects from each in order to create my own approach to ethnographic research, and created a five step procedure for gathering my materials.

Methods: An Easy Ethnographic Recipe

The following provides a rationale for a five step method of performance ethnography based on the content of my research. Simply, the five steps are: establishing positionality, locating experts, building relationships and trust, collecting materials, and attending to ethical responsibility.

Establishing Positionality

Due to the nature of conversations about Hurricane Katrina a year after the storm, establishing my positionality was a crucial initial step in my process for this research. In fact,

the goals of this research addressed positionality itself. Madison writes, “Ethnographic positionality requires that we direct our attention beyond our individual or subjective selves. Instead, we attend to how our subjectivity in relation to the Other informs and is informed by our engagement and representation of the Other. We are not simply subjects but we are subjects in dialogue with the Other” (9). As a woman who grew up in the locale of my research, I had an array of questions about my positionality and its relationship to the research. As my subjects recounted their experiences, were they telling their story or mine? Was I collecting a culture’s stories? As a member of the culture, how would I retell these stories? What do we do with stories once we witness the tellings? These are but a few questions I asked myself in reference to positionality. Throughout the research, I answer the questions for myself and at times, leave the questions open for discussion.

My research began by making sense of my own participant observation. Whether “digging back to our own” to use Goodall’s terms or using Madison’s initial step of claiming stance, I realized this project started over ten years ago. My research and performances of Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana in the past led me to this document and my one-person show, “Hang It Out To Dry.”² As a first step, establishing my positionality seemed important. I was born and raised in Chalmette and left home to attend college while my parents and sister remained living in my childhood home until Hurricane Katrina. I have also lived in the city of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, more than eighty miles away from my hometown for more than fifteen years. I have been a participant observing from the outside for quite a while. However, I was never too far away; I remained a complete participant by frequenting my hometown of Chalmette and New

² “Chalmette A Promised Land” performed in 1999; “A Tribute to Storytellers: Isleno Decima Singers of Saint Bernard Parish” performed in 2000; “Isleno Decima Singers of Louisiana: An Interpretation of Performance and Event” Master’s thesis Louisiana State University, 2002.

Orleans on a weekly basis to participate in family and community events. Complete participants, as Lindlof and Taylor note, are “fully functioning members of the scene, but they are not known by others to be acting as researchers” (144). I was also immersed in the daily activities of the community following Katrina. As a daughter, sister, niece, grandchild and community member, my daily life was consumed with the subject of Hurricane Katrina. Of course, my roles as researcher and performer remained intact as I engaged in dialogue and collected stories with those around me.

As I began to imagine a research project about the survivors of Hurricane Katrina, my ethnography began to shape itself into the show “Hang It Out To Dry.” I realized I was not only a complete participant in terms of Saint Bernard Parish, but I was also a complete participant in Louisiana State University’s academic culture. My interviewees, informants, co-performative witnesses and partners in research also became the fall 2006 sophomore class of interior design who designed my set as well as the musicians who accompanied me along my travels with the show. Immersed in the activity of performing “Hang It Out To Dry,” my complete participation created an intimate relationship among all players, representing all of our stories.

My complete participation in both of these worlds gave me a privileged perspective. I constantly crossed the boundaries from one world to another. As I made this journey, I tried to remember my positionality and why I first became interested in researching my topic. Also with the privilege of access to multiple worlds, I asked myself how I could make a difference in both worlds. By contributing my research to academe and spreading awareness of the struggles of a community in our nation, I felt I could use my resources productively. In Critical Ethnography, D. Soyini Madison expresses her notion of positionality by stating:

Critical Ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain. It means she will use the

resources, skills, and privileges available to her to make accessible—to penetrate the borders and break through the confines in defense of—the voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach. (5)

Critical ethnography stands on the pillar of ethics. If creating change and bettering the Other's world is not part of the researcher's intentions, then why perform ethnography?

Locating Experts

Complete participation allowed me to move to my second step in the process and locate “experts in the field,” both in Saint Bernard Parish and in the university setting. In the beginning stages of this second phase of my research, locating experts began with my family as they recounted their trials of Hurricane Katrina. Having lost their homes, their livelihoods, and their community, my starting point began with those closest to me. My parents lived with me for a year after the storm where I began the interview process with my father. Following my father's interview, I visited Saint Bernard Parish and surrounding areas trying to help my family locate friends and neighbors. As we traveled back and forth to reconnect with others, many individuals also told me their stories. The year after Hurricane Katrina was filled with reunions and searches for neighbors and family who shared similar stories and experiences. I was a complete participant in the search for my neighbors and family; therefore, locating experts was an easy task.

D. Soyini Madison's October 2006 Text and Performance Quarterly essay “The Dialogic Performative in Critical Ethnography” stresses that “Our caravan is not as interesting or as enlivening without Others to perform with and to help us name the different symbols, alliterations, and possibilities within the landscape of our journey” (321). We must allow room for Others to ride with us to expand our knowledge of the dialogic between worlds. Riding along as a passenger in this voyage, I knew from the beginning of this project that I was not equipped

to tell the story alone. I was not going to try to tell the story of Hurricane Katrina in Saint Bernard Parish by myself. I was not going to fall into the trap of this story becoming some solipsistic reflection of myself. I needed other perspectives. I needed to speak with those who lost their homes in the storm. I needed to speak to those who were struggling with the decision of rebuilding or relocating their homes. I needed to speak to government officials in the area. I needed the standpoint of those in my academic community. I wanted to know their responses to the outcomes of Hurricane Katrina. I valued the viewpoints of these multiple communities. I felt it was the only way to approach such a topic of magnanimous proportions.

Madison continues in her article by citing Craig Gingrich Philbrook's essay "Autoethnography's Family Values: Easy Access to Compulsory Experiences" where he calls for the dialogic performative to take the shape of a "rhizomatically spreading architecture of multiple possibilities" (306). My aim for the research then was to extend the boundaries of Saint Bernard Parish and Louisiana to a broader community within Communication Studies as my academic community as well as other disciplines within the university community. I sought to gain the interest of my discipline as well as other disciplines. I considered the ideas and thoughts of my colleagues and professors in thinking about the staging of "Hang It Out To Dry." I also turned to the interior design department for a semester long project in order to create set pieces for the show. I also looked toward the Music Education discipline to bring in percussionist Jonathan Alcon as a voice in the project, and later Ben Powell would collaborate with his digital composition. I also conversed with audience members in regard to their responses to "Hang It Out To Dry," in post show discussions and talkback sessions. The contributions of each individual will be discussed in a later chapter concerning collaboration.

Della Pollock states in her book Remembering Oral History Performance, “Oral history performance aims to distribute the great wealth of any one or anyone’s story/history: enriching each teller along the way” (5). The communities represented in this research unite to create what Pollock calls a “dialogical imprint” on the stories of Hurricane Karina (5). Multiple perspectives within this research lend a polyvocal, multiplicity of voices to the project which promotes the rhizomatic spread Gingrich-Philbrook discusses.

Building Relationships and Trust

After reckoning with my positionality and locating experts for both the research and performance, I worked to build trust and relationships within the multiple communities shaping this project. The informants of “Hang It Out To Dry” were given explanations of the project through oral discussions and consent forms. All agreed to the terms. I explained the purpose of the interview was for written research as well as performance. The informants were informed of their right to end the taping if they felt it necessary during the interview. I explained the nature of the performance and gave them the initial date for the first show in Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana on October 26, 2006. Throughout its run, the interviewees were invited to all local performances of the show. Out of the eight informants performed in “Hang It Out To Dry,” four witnessed the show. Mr. Irvan Perez sang *decimas* on stage the night of October 26, 2006 after my performance. My father, Kenneth Sears Sr., witnessed several shows locally and in Bloomington, Indiana at the “Putting Memory in Place Conference” of 2007.³ Shannon Sanders and Kenny Sigsworth witnessed the show at the Manship Studio in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in May 2007. Chad Alfonso was contacted for the shows but with a chuckle in his throat replied, “Why I need to see the show Danielle, I lived it!” Jason McFeters, Gene Alonzo and Charles

³ Phaedra Pezzullo invited me to Bloomington, Indiana for the international conference of “Putting Memory in Place.” See Appendix D for her formal response to “Hang It Out To Dry.”

“Pete” Savoie were also contacted but were unable to attend. I also informed my informants of the possibility of publication, which would include their words from the interviews. Every member of the project agreed to the terms.

Building trust with Louisiana State University’s academic community was a process that took a semester for the interior design department and over two years for the musicians and artists who contributed during the travels of “Hang It Out To Dry.” Professors of interior design Phillip Tebbutt and TL Ritchie, along with the HopKins Black Box theatre manager Lisa Flanagan, fueled a cross-disciplinary interest in joining the project of “Hang It Out To Dry.” Music Education major Jonathan Alcon and later Benjamin Powell, a recent PhD in Communication Studies, provided a soundscape for the show that would become an ever-changing element of the performance. Fellow artists and scholars assisted in reshaping the show throughout the developments of “Hang It Out To Dry.” I am fortunate to be part of such an academic and artistic community.

Collecting Materials

Once relationships were formed and trust was built, the fourth step in the ethnographic process was to collect materials. This project began as research that would culminate in a performance. However, before it was a performance, this project was a long couple of years experiencing and coping with a national tragedy. Yet again, before Hurricane Katrina, my passion for my hometown community, culture, and heritage had invigorated my research for many years. I began collecting materials from my family’s experiences. As my family would tell and retell the extraordinary encounters of their post-Katrina lives, I began to record the stories. I was also reminded of past research I had covered on the *decimas* of Saint Bernard Parish and the city of Chalmette, Louisiana joked about as “The Promised Land.” A series of

encounters, memories, and research led to the overall collection of sources gathered for this project. As H.L. Goodall states, “The goal of fieldwork is to recognize patterns. The goal of writing ethnography is to express them” (8). I would like to take Goodall’s statement a step further in stating that performance is a spatial event where we encounter the visceral experience of our patterned expressions. Performance opens the possibility for collected materials of encounters, memories and research to take a form that is accessible to a larger audience, an audience outside of academe. Performance gives our communities the opportunity to speak to and with one another.

I also want to make apparent the fact that the collected materials for this research came from the thoughts and voices of those surrounding me, both family members and fellow academics. I am not the sole subject or creator of this research. D. Soyini Madison in Critical Ethnography states, “We are not simply subjects but we are subjects in dialogue with the Other” (9). Those interested in performance, whether communication majors, design majors, music majors, or fisherman from southern Louisiana, assisted in the compilation of materials. More specifically, the feedback I received in gathering materials during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina one year later drove my intent to offer multiple perspectives in this research. My colleagues’ opinions on the state of affairs and the politics of Katrina needed to be represented on stage. The collaborations of the interior design students and music folks adding their voices and efforts through set design and soundscape allowed me to highlight the collection of voices I was seeking in this research. Madison argues “that critical ethnography is always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among the Other(s), one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the Other’s world” (9).

Attending to Ethical Responsibility

Ethical responsibility reigns as the last and final step in my ethnographic process. My research took many forms: interviews, classroom lectures, performances, conference papers, and published articles. In each transformation, ethical measures were taken to ensure a dialogic performative outcome. This approach, as Norman K. Denzin states in Interpretive Ethnography, “works to avoid those morally problematic ethical stances (custodian, curator, enthusiast, and skeptic) identified by Conquergood” (247).⁴ In following Conquergood’s dialogical stance, Denzin states, “Ethnographies will not attempt to capture the totality of a group’s way of life. The focus will be interpreted in slices, glimpses, and specimens of interaction that display how cultural practices, connected to structural formations and narrative texts, are experienced at a particular time and place by interacting individuals” (247). These slices, glimpses or specimens are developed not only for a document, but for many other genres of interaction. The research has taken the form of a one person show that has traveled the nation in the past three years. Each time the show is performed a talkback or audience discussion is included where witnesses of the performance can give immediate feedback and engage in dialogue with me. Audience response and witnessing will be discussed later in this document. Written responses will be included in the appendix. I have also chosen to represent this research as an alternative publication. This research has taken the form of a script accompanied by a framing article in Text and Performance Quarterly in the summer of 2008 in the “Performance in Review” section. Justin Trudeau from the University of North Texas and David Terry from the University of North

⁴ Conquergood (1985, p. 4-8) outlined four problematic stances when thinking about the representation of others ethically. The Custodian’ Rip Off performs a culture for a fee while disparaging the sacredness of the community. The Enthusiast’s Infatuation occurs when the researcher/performer does not engage in activities with the culture, creating an artificial relationship. The Skeptic’s Cop Out regards separation of differences by avoiding sensitive cultural material. The Curator’s Exhibitionism exoticizes difference creating a gaze for tourists.

Carolina Chapel Hill responded to the performance and script with published reviews. Both respondents saw the show throughout the two years of touring and facilitated talkback sessions after the performances. I have also volunteered excerpts of the show to be videotaped as a supplementary DVD to accompany an introduction to performance textbook, Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts. The excerpts in the DVD of performed oral histories serve as a guide for undergraduates who are interested in everyday life performance or personal narratives. I am always actively seeking dialogue about the stories represented in this research. The transactional model of communication, the ongoing process of sending and receiving messages, is where dialogism exists; however, I also understand the limits of a dialogic community.

“Hang It Out to Dry” is a small ripple in the overwhelming waves of Hurricane Katrina. The performance is a small pocket of specific case stories, many my own family’s, about the trials of recovering after the storm. I did not and do not intend to represent the entire picture of Hurricane Katrina or the entire parish of Saint Bernard or New Orleans for that matter. Clearly, many other voices and cultures have experienced similar storm stories. From the scripting and staging to the collaborative efforts of the design students, and different musicians, artists, and audiences to the communities involved in this research, the many seams contributing to the woven tapestry of “Hang It Out To Dry” are reinforced.

The five step ethnographic recipe on the previous pages serves not as a prescriptive methodology but as one example in which ethnography can work to serve our world through writing and performance. As Goodall suggests of ethnography, “Thus, the challenge is to create a way of understanding and being in that situation that transforms it and us” (41). I offer the five steps as method of possibility and potential. The five step recipe serves not as a “how to” guide

but as an enactment and incitement of “what’s possible.” Through this method and others like it, one can see the potential for multiple participants to engage, extend, and query the possibilities enacted and incited in the process of creating oral history research and performance.

The following chapter will provide a further treatment of research in terms of moving ethnography from the page to the stage. Once the material is collected, the editing process begins. Scripting oral histories for the stage takes careful consideration of the role of the researcher/performer. I am always reminded of my ethical responsibility when representing others. Representing others on the page and on the stage asks performers to cross temporal and spatial relationships in order to enhance and perpetuate dialogue. Madison writes, “Dialogue moves from ethnographic presence by opening the passageways for readers and audiences to experience and grasp the partial presence of a temporal conversation constituted by the other, voice, body, history, and yearnings” (10). Chapter Three offers the scripting and staging process of “Hang It Out To Dry” in an effort to show how I attempted to create the dialogue we hold dear.

CHAPTER THREE SCRIPTING AND STAGING “HANG IT OUT TO DRY”

As a performance ethnographer moves her collected stories to the stage, she begins to understand better the perspectives of those represented in her research through the careful scripting and staging of the narratives. However, once the performance takes shape, the rigorous work of scripting and staging falls away and is often forgotten. In an effort to value the multiple sites of knowledge informing and emerging from performance ethnography, I return to that process to mine its treasures. Simply put, this chapter attempts to move through my scripting and staging process to draw out the methods and/or theories I used when creating “Hang It Out To Dry.” By supplying a thick description of the choices made within the context of the staged production, I mark the kind of intellectual effort that goes into the aesthetic act. Clifford Geertz explains in The Interpretation of Cultures:

From one point of view, that of the textbook, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures, that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, “thick description.” (6)

The process of thick description serves an ethnography of performance such as “Hang It Out To Dry,” because a production moves through the stages of invention, rehearsal, performance, and revision for many different audiences and spaces. For example, I have adapted the performance for individual audiences based on the different political and social issues each face.

Retrospectively, I now attempt to reveal how performance theories inspired the choices I made in those stages. Therefore, this chapter is an ethnography of the scripting and staging process of “Hang It Out To Dry.”

The quote above represents the anthropological perspective of Clifford Geertz. Like the fieldwork of anthropology, the theories and methods used to create a staged adaptation often

become secondary as the finished performance becomes the highlighted body of work. Even as I write this chapter, I must remind myself of the theories and methods that inspired the creation of my performance. Theory is often taken for granted in performance because it hides behind the finished product. Yet theory powers the performance vehicle and opens the door for scripting and staging possibilities. By analyzing the theories hiding in a script, the significance of the structure of the composition emerges. In addition, this analysis reveals ethnographic performance to be a valuable source of information. Through aesthetic communication, particularly ethnographic performances, we are able to explore different cultures in rich ways, allowing the performer and audience to enter each other's world. In doing so, we learn more about how each feels and thinks. As Clifford Geertz explains, "Analysis, then, is sorting out the structures of signification" (9). That is, the analysis teaches us what is important to both sides.

The following is a thick description of the scripting process for "Hang It Out To Dry." The ethnographer according to Geertz is faced with "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render"(10). The thick description of the scripting process of "Hang It Out To Dry" includes a wide range of aesthetic, theoretical and literary analyses of the composition of the show. More specifically, I examine staging imagery, the creation of subtexts, the adaptation of personal stories, and the framing of collected narratives. The following analysis follows the progression of "Hang It Out To Dry: A Performance Script," published in Text and Performance Quarterly in July 2008.

Like this dissertation, I began the show with a personal story. I called the first narrative "Scrubbing and Rinsing, Part 1," or "The Turtle."

(Performer walks into the door frame of box center stage)

Scrubbing and Rinsing, Part 1

When we pulled up to the house, we all got out of the car and put our gear on, our Tyvek suits, boots, gloves, masks and goggles. We duct taped our gloves and boots to our suits. We just stood there huddled together crying in disbelief. As we made our way to the front porch, there on the front stoop was a little box turtle covered in black ash. “Oh my God! What has happened?” His legs and neck were stretched out as if it was trying to get its last breath. That poor little turtle. My mom wondered if it was Thomas, a turtle that lived in her back yard under the oak tree. My husband finally bent down to pick it up. “Huh! It’s so light. It hardly weights anything.” Oh no! I can’t believe it! Just then, my sister grabbed it out of his hands, turned the turtle over and said “Look at this. There’s a water spout and hose connector coming out of his mouth and tail. Gee, I wonder how that got there!” **(Hysterical laughter/ crying)** “Ok, let’s get started!” (352).

The idea to include the turtle in the performance came out of the everyday stories I would tell others when asked how my family was doing. I often told the story to break the somber tone of the conversation; it became a “classic” in my repertoire. As Kristen Langellier and Eric Peterson state, “In distinction from ‘it’s not talked about,’ family classics are told and retold. They are the sedimentation of remembered information and negotiated meaning as a family narrates itself. Family classics assume the cultural work of ordering content and its transmission most often within but also outside family” (51-52). As I returned to this story over time, it eventually became what I remembered when I first returned home. I polished and tweaked the story, lending to the surprise discovery of the water spout. The story allowed me to cope with the loss, disaster, and emotional distress present in my actual experience. So when asked how my family was doing, I told this story of when we first pulled up to my family’s home and saw the aftermath of Katrina for the first time. The little black ashen turtle revealed later as a hose connector was a powerful image for me.

As we traveled back into Saint Bernard Parish after the storm, dead carcasses of cats, dogs, fish, snakes, alligators, and deer stuck in fences, trees, bushes and balconies were a common sight. The turtle was perched on my front porch with its legs and neck stretched out as

if it were trying to catch its last breath. “Oh my God, what has happened?” My immediate reaction to this sight also turned into one of the images (and phrases) I used throughout the compilation of the show. The following analysis of “The Turtle” shows how the image works in multiple ways. First and foremost, it regulates the momentum of the performance and functions as a transition, but it also functions in the way of Brecht’s notion of the *gestus*, providing me with a tool of reflexivity, positionality, and history. Finally, the turtle is a symbol of the liminal space between comedy and tragedy. Being personally overwhelmed after Katrina, I wondered how much of the story I needed to or could tell, and this image allowed me to communicate my point of view.

We often use nonverbal gestures as symbols to communicate and regulate conversation. According to Ronald B. Adler and George Rodman in Understanding Communication, regulating occurs because “nonverbal behaviors can control the flow of verbal communication” (164). For example, when I am finished with what I have to say in everyday conversation, I lean back and shift my eye focus, allowing the receiver to claim the space of the conversation so she feels free to respond. Likewise, I used the silent frozen image of the stretched out turtle staring at the crowd as a way to engage in symbolic turn taking with the audience, giving them time to participate in the conversation happening on stage. By creating this nonverbal image, I signal my desire for dialogue in this act of performance. The image is not a literal cue to engage in verbal dialogue in the moment, but rather the image allows the audience time to assess their sentiments, creating a moment of process.

In addition to making space for the audience, Brecht’s *gestus* further explains the utility of the turtle image. Brecht’s notion of *gestus* expresses basic human attitudes and all social relations such as deportment, intonation and facial expression. Not merely a “gesture,” Brecht’s

gestus is performed in a stylized way. Brecht wished to embody the “gestus” in dialogue-as if to compel the right stance, movement and intonation. As the story is told, the gestic language of the turtle emerges. I assume the position of the turtle while the following lines are delivered: “Its legs and neck are stretched as if to catch its last breath. Oh my God, what has happened?”

Throughout the performance, the gestus of the turtle reemerges during my transitions while delivering the line, “Oh my God, what has happened?” Brecht’s staging device of the gestus allows actors to summarize the emotions within the scene, and typically occurs at a heightened or crucial moment in performance in order to offer commentary that may not be expressed verbally. John Willet, editor and translator of Brecht on Theatre, defines gestus as “both gist and gesture; an attitude or a single aspect of an attitude, expressible in words or actions” (42).

As a repeated gestus in the performance, the turtle position is also a reflexive figure. During the initial story, and when the gestus is repeated during transitions, my neck is stretched out as I peer back at the slide show of rebuilding efforts, community members, and messages for family and friends spray painted on the front of homes. When I deliver the line, “Oh my God, what has happened?” I turn my gaze toward the audience. I want to make them aware that I am not the turtle, but I am also not-not the turtle. I am a co-subject, a creator, a community member, a performer, an informant, and an immersed researcher. Stretching my neck up and out with a reflexive, double gaze, I perform the uncertainty of perspective. As Della Pollock explains in “Marking New Directions in Performance Ethnography,”

Rethinking the subject and object of research as cosubjects could mean that the pleasure of the fetishistic gaze is just doubled. I would argue for an immersive ethnography in which, contrary to the hidden ‘I’ of allegedly objective recording; or the deferential ‘I’ apparently standing fixed, or maybe it’s just paralyzed, at the convergence of discourses marked in reflective perspectivalism by those long, often apologetic lists: I am white, female, sub/posturban. . . .; or, on the one hand, the representational/

foundational or, on the other, the hyperreflexive ‘I’ of much autoethnography: the self-subject of the researcher is immersed in the cosubject, entangled with, even ravished by the cocreative process such that the subjectivity of the researcher is diffused within, even to the point of disappearing into, the field’s body. Accordingly, we no longer see the scholar ‘I’ at work but we certainly feel her passion, his grace (326).

To use Pollock’s immersive direction for performance ethnography, when I perform the turtle, I represent the shifting relationship of subject/object. The act of stretching out my neck and gazing at the destruction behind me in the slide show and turning my gaze to the audience while asking the question “Oh my God, what has happened?” marks the copperformative nature of the transformed subject/object relationship of the audience, my field subjects, and myself. The turtle gestus serves as the double gaze, the reconfigured subject-object relationship, what Pollock calls “reciprocal intervention of each on the other, transforming each in turn” (325).

The turtle gestus is performed throughout the show as a symbol of shared involvement, accounting for the shifting subjectivities within performance ethnography. Yet the turtle gestus can also be read as a positionality statement. It creates an encounter for these multiple perspectives to come together. Soyini Madison in Critical Ethnography states, “Subjectivity is certainly within the domain of positionality, but positionality requires that we direct our attention beyond our individual or subjective selves. Instead, we attend to how our subjectivity in relation to the Other informs and is informed by our engagement and representation of the Other” (9). As the performer in the turtle pose, I look outside of my own self image, my own “exclusive experience.” Madison contends positionality is the shared experience that creates dialogue with the Other and activates change in the Other’s world. The turtle gest is one way to attend to positionality in this performed ethnography. Specifically, throughout the show, I changed directions of the turtle gest. I stretched my body in the turtle gest outward, upward, downward, sideward, and even twisted at moments. I also performed the gest in between the performed

narratives scripted from the multiple interviews. For example, when I moved from the performed interview of Shannon Sanders to the performed interview of Gene Alonzo, I bend over and look back slowly. I positioned myself for five seconds before freezing in the image of the turtle, marking Shannon's "turning back" on her decision to leave her hometown and marking my reflexive "turn back" to acknowledge the repercussions of representing her decision on stage to a larger community.

The turtle gest of stretching out and gazing at the audience, the stage, and the slide show can also be placed in historical terms. As I gaze back at the slide show to see the past flashing and scrolling upward before my eyes, I am reminded of Walter Benjamin's angel of history, constructed from Paul Klee's painting "Angelus Novus." Benjamin states:

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (257-258)

Throughout the show, the turtle gest eventually stands alone, without the pairing of the line, "Oh my God, what has happened?" The turtle gest stands in for the words, as a substitute of "Oh my God, what has happened?" The turtle is much like Benjamin's angel of history in his 1940 essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Like the angel of history, the fixed turtle pose with arms and legs stretched out and eyes on the past stands in the middle of destruction and progress. As the performer, I am able to see the devastation of Katrina on the projected surface, and I can look toward the rebuilding process represented by the set structures simultaneously.

The pose symbolizes what will never be the same, what can never be made whole again. The city will rebuild but catastrophe has left its mark on the soil, the people, and the community.

Within the turtle story, my sister, Reine, uncovers the truth about the animal by turning it over to reveal its function as a hose connector. In fact, the plastic green turtle became black after the storm due to the deposit of river silt and crude oil on my parents' property. In the staging of the turtle story, I perform my sister holding the object and laughing. After I deliver her statement, "Well look at this. A water spout and hose connector coming out of its tail. Gee, I wonder how that got there!" I fall into hysterical laughter. The hysteria of the laugh transforms into a cry. I perform both expressions simultaneously, until breaking into a transition sequence. The simultaneity of expressing both emotions highlights a moment of liminality, a betwixt and between moment of discovery. Victor Turner describes liminal phenomena as "crises in social processes" and adds that . . . they appear at what may be called 'natural breaks,' natural disjunctions in the flow of natural and social processes" (208). Revisiting the day my family discovered the turtle, I remember watching them react in multiple ways. My parents cried, while my sister and I stood there dumbfounded and our husbands laughed at the experience. The discovery of the turtle was a critical moment in our understanding of Katrina. The realization of the tragedy impacted my family at that moment of discovery. It was the beginning of their Katrina story and so naturally, the turtle story became the starting point for the show. Turner says the liminal creates "freedom and potentiality of new ideas" to take shape, thus relying on the "reversals, inversions, disguises, negations, antitheses of quotidian, 'positive' and 'profane' collective representations" (208). The liminal experience of discovering the turtle on my front porch step created "freedom and potentiality" to perform the liminal phenomena of polarized expressions on stage, allowing me to shape the collective representations included in the script.

Incorporating the simultaneity of laughter and cries highlighted the multiplicity of perspectives, providing a cue for the diverse narratives to follow.

After the laughter and crying subside, I point to the audience stating, “Ok. Let’s get started.” I use this statement to signal movement into the repetitive transition sequence which leads into the first interview. The stage cue for moving into the first interview appears in the script as:

(Performer moves box stage left into place, hangs into the window frame, and delivers the narrative) (352).

I performed the collected and edited ethnographic narratives in the open frames of the set pieces. The mise-en-scene of each narrative alluded to hanging out of a window, leaning on a door frame, sitting behind a desk, or swinging in a swing. I chose the movement and position of the performed narratives as they characterized the interviewees’ nonverbals and placement during the interview process. I juxtaposed the narratives based on content and sentiment, placing each ethnographic narrative in dialogue with the others. This juxtaposition represented the community at large.

Narratives concerning issues of rebuilding verses relocating created tension and conflict within the script. As Shannon Jackson states in “Ethnography and the Audition: Performance as Ideological Critique,” “the juxtaposition of different stories transversally effects and determines the interpretations of each” (34). The scripted ethnographic narratives gave voice to the common public of Saint Bernard Parish. The disparity in the collected narratives is highlighted through scripting, and as Jackson describes, “gives that lived experience a multi-sensuality and immediacy difficult to reproduce on the page” (41). While I am aware of the bias placed on the scripted narratives, particularly the decisions to edit portions of the interviews, my aim was to provide a subjective bird’s eye view evoking the multiplicity of voices present in this research.

The first interview I perform in the script is Mr. Charles “Pete” Savoie. Mr. Savoie was the seismographic inspector for the parish and discussed his longtime advocacy for the closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet since its development. I included this discussion in the script because it so deeply rooted the larger issues dealing with our geographical placement, our water, and our land. Saint Bernard Parish is primarily swamplands with two thirds of the parish being water. In Mr. Savoie’s interview he discusses how the topography of the land has changed through the years so noticeably that he can remember when there were dry islands in the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). My father sat with me during this interview, and he too told of when he worked on the MRGO Bridge when the piling they formed was on dry land. Now those same pilings are surrounded by water.

I chose to perform Mr. Pete’s interview because it was a foreshadowing device in the script. According to Donald Clive Stuart’s “Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Euripidean Prolog,” “One of the most difficult tasks which face a dramatist is to convey to the audience the facts of the past and the present necessary for an understanding of the plot of the play, and, at the same time, to arouse interest in the plot as quickly as possible by creating suspense as to the outcome of the situation” (295). Mr. Savoie states in his interview that he tried to get state and federal officials and the Corps of Engineers’ attention for years, knowing that if a major hurricane hit Saint Bernard Parish that the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet could become a hurricane highway. To foreshadow, according to Stuart, serves “to give information, in a more or less vague manner, but in a way to arouse curiosity, as to what *may* happen in the future” (295). By placing the narrative of Mr. Charles “Pete” Savoie early in the script of “Hang It Out To Dry,” his story supplies the audience with the verbal and dramatic hints of what is to come.

Mr. Charles “Pete” Savoie’s placement in the script is also a framing device for the story of “Hang It Out To Dry.” His story is one we have heard for several decades. His story is not new. Colin Counsell and Laurie Wolf in Performance Analysis: An Introductory Coursebook explain the frame stating “it describes the perceptual mechanism by which actions are recognized as other than functional or literal” (25). The frame then offers a way for audiences to be cued into or keyed into a performance. In Frame Analysis, Erving Goffman discusses the frame as a way to key the audience into understanding symbolic behavior. Goffman states, “A systematic transformation is involved across materials already meaningful in accordance with a schema of interpretation, and without which the keying would be meaningless” (45). As a community surrounded by water, Saint Bernard Parish has experienced catastrophic storms in the past, almost every forty years: the flood of 1927, Hurricane Betsy in 1965, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. As Robbie Ethridge states in “Bearing Witness: Assumptions, Realities, and the Othering of Katrina,” “Growing up in the South, I had heard since childhood the predictions of chaos and disaster if New Orleans ever took a direct blow from a large and forceful hurricane. The predictions were so well known and regular that they had taken on the proportions of an urban myth” (800). The placement of Mr. Charles Pete Savoie’s narrative in the beginning of the script informs the audience of the experience of community members struggling with living in a hurricane alley and informs the audience of the fatalism of a people who lived in the shadow of a disaster so inevitable and so vast that there was no way to prepare. His narrative frames, or provides instructions, for how to interpret the messages later within “Hang It Out To Dry.”

According to Richard Bauman in Verbal Art As Performance:

All framing, then, including performance, is accomplished through the employment of culturally conventionalized metacommunication. In empirical terms, this means that each speech community will make use of a structured set of distinctive communicative means from among its resources in culturally conventionalized and culture-specific ways to key

the performance frame, such that all communication that takes place within that frame is to be understood as performance within that community. (16)

The performance of Mr. Charles “Pete” Savoie’s narrative highlights the frame of an old story resurfaced. His narrative is an ‘appeal to tradition’ or what Bauman explains as “the acceptance of past practices as a standard of reference” (21). While Mr. Savoie’s narrative never accepts the conditions of the eroding wetlands and natural ridges due to petroleum drilling and the infiltration of brackish water, his narrative is one with which the community is all too familiar. In “Putting the Ninth Ward on the Map: Race, Place and Transformation in Desire, New Orleans,” Rachel Breunlin and Helen Regis state,

For years, ‘MR-GO’ has been denounced as a ‘hurricane superhighway,’ which funnels storm surges cutting through Plaquemines and Saint Bernard Parishes into the New Orleans area. The critique was demonstrated to be true when the Industrial Canal levees were breached during Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and again during Katrina in 2005. (749)

The longstanding narrative of the battle to close the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet frames the expected aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Savoie’s narrative is proven to be not urban myth but the reality of a distressed community surrounded by inadequate levee systems.

The second ethnographic narrative I perform is the interview of Gene Alonzo. I transition into this interview through the repetitive line “Oh my God, what has happened?” Mr. Gene Alonzo’s interview contained information about the actual event of surviving Hurricane Katrina. Through analyzing the choices I made regarding this narrative, I highlight performance ethics, stage composition, and theories of haunting.

Gene Alonzo is a survivor of the flooding of Saint Rita’s Nursing Home where 35 nursing home residents perished in the floodwaters. Although his telling of the story was remarkably stoic and void of almost any emotion, I had no such stoicism and was filled with emotion when transcribing or retelling his story:

Then they start hollering, “Put everybody on the mattresses!” So that’s what we did and the doors bust man and shit. I ran to Carlos and in no time the water had us jammed. A big cedar robe fell against the door. I had him on a mattress and I finally got the cedar robe you know away from the door and got him out. And people floatin around. They had such a current going through that place it was unbelievable. It would take you like you know . . . just take you through there like that. So I got kinda out and they had this other guy there who helped me get Carlos back on the mattress and the other man . . . I don’t know. (356)

While I knew Mr. Alonzo’s story was important, I was afraid it would be too graphic for the stage. I did not want to sensationalize the event or create a shock value with the show. Through conversations with my colleagues Lisa Flanagan and Ruth Bowman, I decided to keep the interview in the performance. Both colleagues pleaded with me to keep Alonzo’s narrative, saying if the story of Katrina was going on stage, then the audience needed to hear an account of what actually happened to the citizens of Saint Bernard Parish. I also decided to position the performed narrative center stage. I also chose to position the narrative in a window because Mr. Gene states in the interview how he ran to the window to see the water rising. Molly Bang in Picture This states, “The center of the page is the most effective “center of attention.” It is the greatest point of attraction” (84). Bang’s theory is related to picture structure for the page but we can also use picture theory for the stage in thinking about composition and placement of action on stage. Bang discusses the position of center as a site of meditation, “Visual aids to meditation, whether they be Tantric or Christian or nonspecifically religious, tend to show the object of meditation in the center of the page, so as to better enable the viewer to “center the mind” (90). Gene Alonzo’s story is the story we cannot and should not forget. It is the actual nightmare turned reality which occurred in Saint Bernard Parish, August 2005. Center position spatially provides the audience with a cue, reminding them of the suffering endured by residents in Hurricane Katrina.

In the initial rehearsals of this narrative, I struggled to detach myself from the emotional content of the story. Gene Alonzo's narrative tells of the exact moment the nursing home became flooded. Worried about sensationalizing the story as well it being one that was hard to perform, I opted to split the narrative into smaller sections. Alonzo's story was also split because it was much lengthier in relation to the other interviews. I did not want to sacrifice the facts of the story and if the account of a survivor was going to be included, then I wanted to respect the details and specificities of his experience. I divided Gene Alonzo's story of Saint Rita's flooding into four sections and interwove the sections throughout the script. Gene Alonzo's narrative emerges and then disappears and emerges and disappears again and again. The continuity of the bubbling force in Gene's narrative confronts the issues of Katrina on stage.

Gene Alonzo's narrative is the haunting reminder of what happened in Saint Bernard Parish. The narrative emerges from the flooded images of Katrina. Because it resurfaces throughout the show, Gene Alonzo's narrative can also be understood as a ghost reminding the audience of what has been forgotten. According to Avery Gordon in her book Ghostly Matters, "Following the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located. It is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look" (22). Reckoning with the forgotten accounts of survival brings us closer to what Gordon states as "transforming a troubled situation" (22). The performance of Gene Alonzo's narrative might be described by Gordon as:

a case of haunting, a story about what happens when we admit the ghost—that special instance of merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present—into the making of worldly relations and into the making of our accounts of the world. It is a case of the difference it makes to start with the marginal, with what we normally exclude or banish, or more commonly, with what we never even notice. (24-25)

By including this narrative, I hoped to make the audience aware of the ghosts of the voices of those who cannot speak for themselves, the voices of those who perished in the storm, and the voices of those who were not heard before, during, or after the storm.

My physical representation of Gene Alonzo in “Hang It Out To Dry” may also be read through the theories of a haunting. My advisor, Tracy Stephenson Shaffer assisted in creating a physical staged presence for each narrative, and we experimented with making the narrative of Gene Alonzo drown on stage. To do so, I situated myself in the center set piece and peered out of the window frame of the box structure. As each section of his narrative was delivered, I slowly descended into the box. By the final section of the narrative, the audience could see only my forehead and my hands as I hung onto the window frame and squatted behind the structure. In Justin Trudeau’s review of the performance, “The Low Down Here,” he describes his experience with the scenes of Gene Alonzo stating:

The repetitive scenes with Alonzo’s cut-off face are so evocative, the audience can feel the water climbing, ready to take him and the other victims that surround him. Vignes’ aesthetic choice makes the otherwise straight telling of the narrative altogether strange, which once again supplies a projective screen for audience members to respond as if it were happening to them. Vignes’ continual signification of the body becomes uncanny, a repetitive theme here and throughout the performance. (371)

While Trudeau works through Alonzo’s gesture in terms of Freud’s notion of the uncanny, I on the other hand was not thinking of Freud when I composed this gestural sequence with Tracy. I wanted to use gesture to represent the drowning of the narrative, particularly the drowning of a survivor’s narrative not being told by mass media circuits. I wanted to create a reoccurring presence of a survivor’s story, one that bobbed and resurfaced in the experience of the show. I chose to mark visibly my presence, as well as the narrative’s presence, through gestural repetition. But in retrospect, in following Trudeau’s lead in understanding Alonzo’s narrative as a ghost which haunts the audience, I turn to Freud’s “The Uncanny”:

The factor of the repetition of the same thing will perhaps not appeal to everyone as a source of uncanny feeling. From what I have observed, this phenomenon does undoubtedly, subject to certain conditions and combined with certain circumstances, arouse an uncanny feeling, which, furthermore, recalls the sense of helplessness experienced in some dream states. (236-237)

The aesthetic choice to repeatedly lower Gene Alonzo's narrative while clenching to the window frame is a comment on the fragility or helplessness of the 'hard to tell' story, but also remarks on the fragile survivor of Hurricane Katrina. Just as Gene resurfaced to escape death, so to resurfaces the narrative, fleeing from the forgotten.

After the performance of a few adapted interviews, I returned to personal narrative. Sprinkling multiple personal narratives between ethnographic interviews allowed me to explore and claim my positionality within the script. Writing the personal narratives "Scrubbing and Rinsing, Part 2" and "Scrubbing and Rinsing Part 3" marks my "reflexive positionality," to use Madison's term, and was my way of "turning back" on myself (14). The personal narratives present in this script are my own eyewitness accounts of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath. To the best of my ability, the narratives resist what Madison calls "the trap of gratuitous self-centeredness" (8). Rather, my personal narratives place my actions and living body into the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina where they coexist with the narratives of the interviewees, creating a dialogue within the script.

The second personal narrative delivered in "Hang It Out To Dry" concerns the retrieval of material goods from my parents home after the storm ravaged my neighborhood. The narrative tells of the objects that were salvaged, particularly several pieces of my mom's china. The narrative also tells of the cleaning process of the objects as they were transported from my parent's home in Chalmette to my home in Baton Rouge. The lengthy process of sterilizing the china and scrubbing and rinsing each artifact in order to remove the remnants of Hurricane

Katrina, mud and oil, was a lengthy process. For a full year and afterwards, the mounds of china consumed my backyard and every spare moment of my time.

It's amazing how long it takes to scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse a single pitcher or scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse one butter dish or scrubbin and rinsin, scrubbin and rinsin, scrubbin and rinsin, scrubbin and rinsin a delicate cross and successfully wash away all of the residue of that black water. We scrub and rinse. Scrub and rinse. Scrub and rinse until it's all gone. Who's to tell when we'll eventually complete this washing process? But until then, we'll just continue the cycle. Scrub and rinse. Scrub and rinse. Scrub and rinse. Until we clean the last piece and then . . . and then . . . (354)

Washing dishes outside of the house over and over again seemed to speak to my background in performance theory in terms of repetition, performing everyday life, and how the everyday gesture can be represented theatrically on stage.

When I wrote this personal narrative, I knew I would include the repetition of the act of washing china. Repeating the phrase “scrubbing and rinsing” works as a metonym in the performance. The repetition of the lines “scrubbing and rinsing” creates the act of “scrubbing and rinsing” simultaneously and implies the months of arduous cleaning after Hurricane Katrina. Both the verbal cues and repetitive actions of scrubbing china demonstrate the recovery of everyday life. The repetition accelerates and builds into an exhaustive state which is strange in relation to the basic task of washing the dishes. Much like in Brecht's essay, “Alienation Effects of Chinese Acting,” the repetition of washing causes an “acceptance or rejection of . . . actions and utterances . . . meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, as hitherto, in the audience's subconscious” (91). The metonym then becomes a Brechtian alienation device used to make the familiar strange. Marking the everyday activity as strange forces the audience to be active participants rather than complacent theatre goers.

In Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts, Ronald J. Pelias and Tracy Stephenson Shaffer state, “In simple terms, repetition establishes rhythm, which is the result of a

repeated pattern over time. Rhythm is so central to our daily lives, in fact, that we could assert that human life is a rhythmic life” (122). Repeating the act and utterance of “scrubbing and rinsing,” mirrors the rhythms of our everyday life. Washing dishes is a repeated act for most in our society. The staged repetition of scrubbing and rinsing removes the audience from their everyday worlds and places them in the world of expression. The act of scrubbing china repeatedly on stage then becomes a trope to comment on the rhythms of the body, serving then a double purpose. Pelias and Shaffer continue, “The story . . . encourages listeners to escape from the rhythms of their everyday worlds and to become engaged in the rhythms of an aesthetic utterance. In short, speakers often structure their expressive language so as to captivate listeners through their use of rhythm” (122). In this case, repetition creates a certain rhythm but it also points out the aesthetic construction of the overall theme of the story. The mundane act of washing has new meaning in the lives of those who experienced Hurricane Katrina.

Michael Bowman and Della Pollock in “This Spectacular Visible Body”: Politics and Postmodernism in Pina Bausch’s Tanztheater” discuss the theatricality of the performed body, particularly in Pina Bausch’s work on Tanztheater. They state, “ By theatricalizing its inscriptions, the performed body declares its re-inscriptive potential, shows its irrepressible vitality, and insists on a “democracy of mortality”—on the leveling, anti-hierarchical force of, in effect, shared subjugation” (113). They discuss Pina Bausch’s notion of the spectacular body, one that can observe itself in performance as well as resist its own subjugation. The doubleness of repeating gestures on stage creates a postmodern notion of memory, one that can critique the actual gesture of “scrubbing and rinsing” as well as expose the performer’s control or lack thereof. Bowman and Pollock state:

More often than not, this theatricalization involves the incessant repetition of a single gesture (or series of gestures). What emerges from the performance of those repeated

gestures is a double code, a double signification: on the one hand, the master code is typified in the single *gest*; on the other hand, the repetition of that *gest* encodes critical memory of its content: the performed text signifies on and through and in the face of the master text, revealing simultaneously its dominance and its inadequacy. (116)

The performed text of washing comments on the master text of washing and critiques the altered repetition of the mundane act turned alien in the aftermath of Katrina. Thus, I questioned the subjugated gesture when stating “Who’s to tell when we will eventually finish this washing cycle? Scrubbing and rinsing, scrubbin and rinsin, scrub and rinse.” Through the means of the unfinalizable ellipses the audience gets a peek at the critical memory of the washing process. Memory will never end, because memory will always be recovered with the process of labor performed or reperformed, just as the china is recovered through washing.

I included the personal narrative “Money Laundering” in the script of “Hang It Out To Dry” due to witnessing my parents’ social exclusion as consumers after Hurricane Katrina. As banks and automated teller machines became unavailable after the storm, alternative means of purchasing everyday items became a necessity. Both the American Red Cross and FEMA distributed store value cards to evacuees of the devastated areas soon after Hurricane Katrina. Over distribution of cards and unprepared businesses produced immediate problems. The cards caused long lines and furious consumers who needed to purchase necessary items after the storm. It was a mess. Some of my worst experiences after Hurricane Katrina were watching my parents on several occasions being pointed out of a grocery line as “New Orleans people,” or “Katrina people with FEMA cards.” The social exclusion my parents experienced extended beyond the grocery store line. They were also alienated by a bank teller who refused to take money that was recovered from their flooded safety deposit boxes because as the teller stated, “We can’t take this money! It’s contaminated! It’s not any good! We can’t accept it. You’ll have to go somewhere else. I can’t handle this money” (360). Later, the bank took my parents money, but there was

heated debate between my parents and the bank teller over whether she should accept their money or not.

You want to see a bunch of Chalmatians get angry?!? My parents started to raise their hands and said, “We’ve been customers with this bank for over thirty years. You’re gonna take this money and send it to the Federal Reserve and then you’re going to credit our account and give us a receipt or we’ll go somewhere else.” (360)

The bank experience was one that helped mark the days after Katrina. Marking the events of Katrina can also be viewed as keying the events of Katrina. Erving Goffman describes keying in Frame Analysis as “the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else” (43-44). The bank story is one of many stories where Katrina evacuees experienced the social exclusion and marginalization due to their diasporic state. Through such Katrina stories, evacuees became familiar with the frames in which they were being positioned. Everyday activities such as grocery shopping or banking became foreign. Easily performed tasks were now expected hassles and struggles after experiencing such circumstances time and again.

Mike Lloyd in his article, “Rear Gunners and Troubled Privates: Wordplay in a Dick Joke Competition,” discusses the framing of Goffman in terms of the “Adventures of Naked Man,” a cartoon drawing competition where the joke lies in the context in which the drawn naked man is positioned. Lloyd states:

In the NM competition the primary framework is that ‘in reality’ the drawn settings portray acts of indecent exposure. That is, in general, to be naked amongst clothed others in public places is prohibited and morally censured behaviour. Thus, the keying the competition establishes is to move from the frame of the seriousness of indecent exposure, to the frame of light-hearted wordplay and other forms of humour. (8)

Placing the narrative of “money laundering” in context with other performed interviews privileges the audience to the exact keying of the performed task of washing money, moving

from a frame of an everyday task to a frame of a double entendre, creating humor out of a serious topic.

The personal narrative of “Money Laundering” depended on the double entendre. The misapplication of the phrase “money laundering” used in the script refers to the literal washing of dollar bills, a practice we were keyed into performing after Hurricane Katrina. Money laundering in the performed narrative context is understood as a joke of literally washing money, instead of the true meaning of the term, to conceal the source of illegally gotten money. As Lowry states in his article, “And double entendres will continue their ever-widening sway, with their dismaying suggestion that whatever we say, we're really thinking of something else” (6). The double entendre also highlights the continual trials of ridiculous incidents Katrina evacuees experienced in the aftermath of the storm.

Mirroring the animosity and polarization that I felt between those deciding to stay and rebuild and those deciding to leave and build elsewhere, I performed from the following two summarized narratives.

Chad Alphonso: I'm too young to have seen Betsy and um so I couldn't have even tell you what a storm was like but uhm its definitely a devastating blow to me and my family but ah you can pick up you can pick up after anything you know and it's just something you gotta do pick up and move on you know. I think the parish is coming back and I'm gonna help whatever I can do to help the parish to come back anything for my family, my friends, we'll be here. We ain't going nowhere. (358)

Shannon Sanders: So my Chalmette days are over um. I'm not saying I won't go visit or I'm not saying I won't support those who are trying to put it back together. But as far as me living there, I will never . . . I will never live there again. I won't raise my baby in the middle of all that devastation, because that's not what I remember. (359)

Chad Alphonso and Shannon Sanders were both residents of Saint Bernard Parish before Hurricane Katrina. In the aftermath, Chad opted to rebuild his home and resettle his family in Saint Bernard Parish whereas Shannon Sanders relocated to another area of Louisiana that was

not affected by Hurricane Katrina. Both residents gave powerful interviews about their choices made after the storm. Their conflicting viewpoints of staying and leaving in the area in which they lived before the storm compelled me as the composer of the script to juxtapose these narratives as a way to facilitate the multiple voices or, to use Bakhtin, dialogism within the script. By positioning the two narratives of conflicting viewpoints, the narratives are then in dialogue with one another. According to Bakhtin's The Dialogic Imagination:

Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole—there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. (426)

Dialogism, as Bakhtin explains, creates an orchestrated view of multiple languages within a text creating a “refracted (indirect) expression of his intentions and values” (292). As creative composer, I situated Chad and Shannon’s narratives against each other to create a dialogue between each viewpoint and also to comment on my own viewpoint concerning the issue of relocating or rebuilding in the devastated area. The decision for residents to move away or stay is a difficult one. Is your family moving away? Are your children almost finished school? Do you have one more year until you retire? Were you fully covered with both flood and home insurance? These are just a few of the deciding factors weighed by residents of Saint Bernard Parish. Like a novelist, I wanted to demonstrate the complexities of such decisions within a community, all the while positioning myself not as a unifier of the composed work, but as a subject among subjects, privileging the social heteroglossia at work. In Bakhtin’s essay “Discourse in the Novel,” he states:

In actual fact, however, there does exist a common place that methodologically justifies our juxtaposing them: all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own

objects, meanings and values. As such, they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically. (292)

“Hang It Out To Dry” presents eight interviews as well as my own narratives equally distributed throughout the script in order to distribute the multiplicity of voices representing a large range of people within a community. Chad Alphonso and Shannon Sander’s performed interviews demonstrate such multiplicity within an aesthetic script.

(The performer moves to the stage down right box, and moves it so that its wide side is facing the audience, and hums “scrubbing and rinsing” tune. The performer stands in door frame with hands positioned above her head as if in a closet, or in a picture frame, or in a)

Lost Arts

A portrait of a woman standing in a colorized blue green landscape was found in the top of my mother’s closet. The portrait was in a convex bubble frame, now covered in dry earth. A ghostly portrait, pressed up against the frame, mud and oil clouding her image. She had washed away from the paper and transferred on the surface of the glass. The paper peeled away only to reveal her as a transparent figure. You could hold her up to the light and she becomes a slide of film, a study fully in tact except a few details. A stout, strong, dark skinned woman. Black shoes to match her black hair. Her dress is violet or mauve or a light pink or khaki. She has an intense expression on her face as if she knows what happened, because she has seen it before. Taken off of many walls and traveled to many places for safe refuge. I ask about her and find out her name is Christine Campo Guerra. She died at about 53. Mom says we don’t know much about her. A woman who witnessed WWI, the great influenza, experienced grief, buried three of her children; the other three survived, Phinia, TT Ben, and Tilia, which is the reason why we can see her now. My great great grandmother of who my father says, “Poor dawlin’, we can’t even remember her now.” (362)

The personal narrative entitled, “Lost Art,” is a piece I developed in response to the process of cleaning out our boxes of salvaged household items from our home in Chalmette. A collection of old photographs all in their original frames was found in one box. Later I found out that my mom placed them all in a cardboard box on a shelf at the top of her bedroom closet because she could not fit them in her car the day she evacuated from her home. All of the photographs were of my grandparents, great grandparents, and their parents. The photographs

were in convex bubble frames and were stuck together, glued by the mud and oil that overcame the bedroom. It was a great loss.

The purpose of including this narrative in the script was largely due to the comment my father gave to me when I showed him the photograph of my great great grandmother Christina Campo. He took a look at the portrait and said, “Poor dawlin’, we can’t even remember her now.” His comment struck me as a way to represent the stories of Hurricane Katrina’s effects on Saint Bernard Parish. The portrait that can hardly be remembered is a metonymic device used to represent the lost stories of a community, pre and post Katrina. Michal Ben-Horin, in “Memory Metonymies: Music and Photography in Ingeborg Bachmann and Monika Maron,” states that the metonymic mode can serve as an alternative form to memory. He writes, “Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a part implicitly represents the whole, thus not constituting the ‘thing’ but rather hinting at it” (233). Ben-Horin’s article argues on behalf of the metonymic mode in order to establish a partial, fragmented frame of memory. The narrative of the photograph found at the top of my mother’s closet is a metonym for the memory of Katrina, Saint Bernard Parish culture, and the stories of a community struggling to sustain itself. The metonym of the ‘lost art’ then becomes a way to reconsider a revived past. Recalling a blurred image in the medium of the photograph points out the labor of recovering memory only in pieces of the whole, the metonymic aesthetic. Ben-Horin continues:

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an attribute of a thing or a contiguous object implies the thing itself. In metonymy, therefore, the part hints at the whole. Through the strategy of contiguous association, a context is constituted from which the central object is absent. To put it more accurately, the object is referred to only in terms of marginal features or related contiguous objects. Bearing in mind that the referent of metonymic discourse is always by definition missing from this discourse, it becomes clear that the concept of metonymy has analytical potential for the assessment of literary works that attempt to reconstruct a sense of the lost past. Metonymy can be compared to allegory as defined by Walter Benjamin, a mode of representation that talks about a thing by referring only to its remnants. The structural features of allegory can be likened to the

fragment that resists an ultimate and fixed construction of a context in its entirety. By presenting us only with the fragments or remnants of contexts, metonymy demonstrates a similar resistance to the signification of complete and whole contexts. Metonymy would seem, therefore, to provide an excellent aesthetic medium for expressing the fragmentary and partial form of past experience. (237)

The “Lost Art” narrative represents everything and everyone you cannot see. More specifically, the narrative of “Lost Art” activates memory by providing the audience with frames, both in a literal sense as I stand in the set piece downstage right as if in my mother’s closet and then as the portrait itself. The figurative frame represents the experience of Katrina. “Lost Art” is a reminder of struggling communities members, still picking up the pieces from their daily life after a hurricane. “Poor Dawlin, we can’t even remember her now” becomes a call to memory, a way to activate the audience to revisit our nation’s worst natural disaster.

(“Pick up and move on” is delivered as the performer moves to the center box and turns it so its wide side facing the audience, then stands in the frame with an elbow in the window.)

Kenny Sigsworth: Personal Interview, November 12, 2006

They say life goes on and life does go on. For me my life was in Chalmette. I just miss it so much it’s unbelievable. It was a very large part of my life. Uh they keep telling me to let go and I could let go but I don’t want to. I like it. It was something I liked. You know I saved little things. Just anything. Something to hold on to the past. (362-363)

The final performed interview of the production includes the words of Kenneth Sigsworth. I collected his interview, hoping to capture stories of the rescue efforts occurring days and weeks after Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Sigsworth spoke briefly about his rescue efforts and more extensively on how much he missed home. His narrative covers his longing for home and community yet with a realization of the inevitability of change. He says, “Things just won’t be the same.” In this statement, he comes to terms with the disappearance of his community. In The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau states, “A place inhabited by the same person for a certain duration draws a portrait that resembles this person based on objects (present or

absent) and the habits that they imply” (145). With only a bare fraction of his home surviving the flood waters, the parish forced Mr. Sigsworth to raze the structure. The remaining concrete foundation makes de Certeau’s implicit stage explicit. As Mr. Sigsworth’s “portrait” disappears, one can imagine a stage where the performance of everyday life once took place: birthday parties, sleepovers, and Sunday dinners. As de Certeau states, “The home becomes a theater of operation. The gesture sequences that are indispensable to the rhythms of daily activity are repeated here in indefinite number through their minute variations” (146). Mr. Sigsworth performed actions or daily gestures in his house and when his action was disrupted, he longed for his rhythm of operation.

This narrative also echoes the beginning personal narrative of the turtle. The return home in the beginning of the script is echoed later with Mr. Sigsworth’s interview where he discusses his longing to return home. Throughout the script, the relevance of home is always at the forefront. Home is the place of comfort. Home is also a feeling of familiarity and safety where one can be completely understood and appreciated because of shared experience and shared space. Home is companionship, being part of; home is community. As de Certeau states, “Our successive living spaces never disappear completely; we leave them without leaving them because they live in turn, invisible and present, in our memories and in our dreams. They journey with us” (148). “It just won’t be the same,” represents how community members have reinterpreted their sense of home in and out of Saint Bernard Parish.

We did agree however that there is one song that can be used in thinking about the loss of our community. “The Edge of the Palms,” that *decima* about a young orphan girl found living in the palm trees who, when asked where she came from, responds, “I have no father or mother, no friend to console me. I move with the waves of the sea.” When I think about this song I think about all the residents of my community moving with the waves of the sea, with the waves of Lake Borgne, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Industrial Canal. I think about all those folks who are still moving with the waves without family or friends, someone to console them. I think about our land. **(Bends down into Irvan Perez stance)** A land that is soaked deep with histories and stories that you can tell “for the rest of your life”. **(Comes back up into wave movements)** I think about my family, my ancestors and the palm trees, the refuge we all seek to call home.

(The performer sings *decima* with closed eyes and rocking back and forth.) (364)

In the closing of “Hang It Out To Dry” I offer a historical explanation on the *Isleno* community of Saint Bernard Parish. I also explain the *decima*, the verbal art form of the *Islenos* and provide a translation of the Spanish version performed in the beginning and end of the show. The *decima* sung is used as a bookend or an anchor in the beginning and end of “Hang It Out To Dry.” Erving Goffman explains the activity of anchoring in terms of brackets. He states, “Bracketing becomes an obvious matter when the activity that is to occur is itself fragile or vulnerable in regard to definition and likely to produce framework tension” (255). The fragility lies in the nature of live performance as well as the content of the show. Brackets are useful signifiers for the audience. The concluding bracket of the performance is a repetition of the *decima* originally sung at the beginning of the performance bringing the script full circle to its conclusion. The content of the show includes collected interviews, personal narratives and created imagery inspired by the survival of the Saint Bernard Parish community after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Brackets, such as the sung *decima*, also frame the delicate content of representing real people dealing with disaster on stage.

A la orilla de un palmar

Y a l’orilla de un palmar,

Yo visto una joven beya,

*Su boquita decorada
Sus ojito dos estreya.
Al pasar, le pregunte
De quien vivia con eya.
Y me contesto yorando:
-Solo vivo en el palmar.
Soy huerfanita,
No tengo padre ni madre,
Ni un amiguito,
Que me quiera consolar.
Solita vivo,
En este mundo esperando,
Y solita voy y vengo,
Como las ola del mar. (365)*

The *decima* serves to anchor the beginning and ending of the show, however there are many bracketing devices used throughout the show. Stories are linked together through commonalities as well as differences. The script is designed to create an overall dialogue within each of the texts. The pieces comment, critique and respond to one another through the relational placement of each text in the script.

I designed “Hang it Out To Dry” as a collage with no official beginning, middle and end as in a formal narrative structure. The *decima* serves then as a bookend or external bracket which explains and supports the internal brackets within the script. Goffman distinguishes between internal and external brackets, stating “External brackets which begin and end matters must themselves be seen to be of two kinds; those pertaining to the spectacle and those pertaining to the inner official events. And internal brackets, as we must now come to see, can

have an even greater complexity” (255-266). With the actual song serving as the external brackets, the internal brackets are located in the echoes of the return home, particularly in the first personal narrative of the turtle and last performed interview of Kenny Sigsworth.

Transitions also serve as internal brackets as I delivered the reoccurring spoken lines, “Oh my God, what has happened,” “Pick up and move on,” and “scrubbing and rinsing” along with their coordinating nonverbal gestures. The collaged phrases and gestures of the transitions serve as internal brackets when I repeat the trope and a pattern forms. Goffman explains the internal bracket:

Internal brackets themselves vary considerably in structure. There are brackets that are built into an ongoing activity in advance, scheduled to mark a temporary pause—a temporary time-out—for all but a specialized few participants And in contrast, there are unscheduled brackets that particular individuals may be allowed to employ, demonstrating a right to hold up the proceedings momentarily to accommodate what is defined as a sudden personal need. (260)

The three part transitions are key fragments from the narrative material which create what Goffman refers to as a “temporary time-out.” During this scheduled break, the transitions lead the audience from one mood, section, or idea to another. The transitions as internal brackets also allow me to comment on and embody the past, present and future state of affairs within my Saint Bernard community.

Other bracketing devices include using the internal brackets of the set pieces, creating physical brackets every time I step into a box structure to perform an interview. Also, the frozen gesture of the performed interviews offering my own commentary of the difficulty in performing the story may serve as an internal bracket. Internal brackets then complement and parallel the work of the external bracket, offering a set of interpretative tools for the audience. The performer taps audience members into the structure of collage through the use of internal and external brackets. The external and internal brackets work together to create a seamless script.

The audience then understands the overall frame of the show to which the individual narratives contribute.

I have performed “Hang It Out To Dry” for two and a half years. In this time, I have discussed my scripting and staging choices with multiple audiences, I have published the script in an academic journal and I have watched an undergraduate perform excerpts from the script for an oral interpretation competition. I no longer perform “Hang It Out To Dry” for audiences; however, I aim to make the fieldwork present in this script accessible. As Peggy Phelan argues in *Unmarked*, “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation” (146). The script of “Hang It Out To Dry” is the material that remains. While it doesn’t fully represent the live performance of “Hang It Out To Dry,” it is a remnant or trace of the actual performance.

The script then serves as memorabilia, a momento, or souvenir. The word souvenir according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is French for “the act of remembering” and its Latin form means “to come up or come to mind” (“Souvenir”). Lisa Love and Nathaniel Kohn in their article “This That and the Other: Fraught Possibilities of the Souvenir,” claim the souvenir:

holds the possibility of immense power—a magical talisman that might propel us to reinscribe the mundane narratives of everyday life as unique and often unsettling stories of personal and political import. The souvenir marks the locus of selfhood brushing against desire, a tangible reminder of material possibility found in a foreign milieu that can be rewritten and renegotiated in performance to make our home spaces strange and lively. It is the dynamic interplay between humans and their souvenirs that we seek to explore and unravel. (48)

While I no longer perform “Hang It Out To Dry,” the published script, as souvenir of the performance holds possibility. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s article, “Objects of

Ethnography,” discusses the ethnographic object or fragment stating, “Ethnographic artifacts are objects of ethnography. They are artifacts created by ethnographers. They are ethnographic, not because they were found . . . but by the virtue of the manner in which they have detached, for disciplines make their objects and in the process make themselves” (18). I have created and published the script as object for the purpose of being reused and renegotiated by others, to “make myself” and offer my object to others for “making themselves.” Reinscribing the everyday narratives within the script is necessity in the ethnographer’s commitment to social change and justice. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett continues:

It is one thing when ethnography is inscribed in books, or displayed behind glass, at a remove in space, time and language from the site described. It is quite another when people are themselves the medium of ethnographic representation, when they perform themselves . . . when they become living signs of themselves. (18)

So the story continues on and finds voice in other realms. The performance is not the means to an end but only the beginning in activating the audience.

My goal of creating the script has always been to create action, to activate the audience into a response and exploration of Hurricane Katrina. Also, by supplying this audience with the theoretical, aesthetic and literary devices used to conceptualize the framework of the show, my ethnographic fieldwork continues to travel forward, but it also argues for the power of performance in understanding and communicating culture. The analysis keeps the doors of dialogue as Madison states “open and ongoing” (9). I realize that not all audiences, especially the audiences of my script or this study, were along for the entire journey of “Hang It Out To Dry.” Audiences traveled with the show at different stages. In fact, some may be privy only to this script and the analysis of scripting and staging choices made throughout the performance process. As such, I hope this mere souvenir inspires the reader to her own creative work: to

interpret and unravel the stories of Saint Bernard Parish, to imagine her own staging of an ethnographic performance, and to utilize the theories hidden behind the script in her own ways.

CHAPTER FOUR COLLABORATING ON “HANG IT OUT TO DRY”

Ideally, we think of the “work” of a story, the “work” of conversation or dialogue, as a *collaboration*, or joint activity. The meanings of texts are arrived at through ongoing interpretations, conversations, negotiations, co-constructions. The writer does whatever she or he can to tell the story; the reader brings to the reading all of the available means of interpreting it.

-H.L. “Bud” Goodall, Writing The New Ethnography (134)

Chapter Four explores the dynamics of the collaborative process of performing ethnography. I will discuss the process of performing “Hang It Out To Dry” during a span of two years in terms of the co-creators involved in the interviews, design, composition and expression of the performance. Goodall explains the interaction between the writer and the reader stating, “They meet on the page, warm up gradually, and do a workout together. This collaborative text-production principle—because it guides all reading—also guides our understanding of how interpretations of character are *co-created*” (134). By revealing this process, we can better understand how performance furthers Goodall’s ideal notions of a “working” collaboration on the page to a “working” collaboration on the stage, producing a co-created performance. Specifically, the collaborative nature of this performed ethnography is traced beginning with the contributions of interviewees, followed by the involvement of artists, mentors, and musicians to co-create the performance within the many phases of production. Finally, this chapter explores the participation of audience members in providing feedback during post show discussions.

Interview Collaborations

Kristen M. Langellier and Eric E. Peterson’s chapter, “Breast Cancer Storytelling: The Limits of Narrative Closure in Survivor Discourse” in Storytelling in Daily Life discusses breast cancer narratives of women and the master narrative of survival. They feature an interview

between Kristin (interviewer) and Jane (interviewee), Eric's cousin, as an example of collaboration of narrative between interviewer and interviewee. Jane is described as narrating "her illness as a series of decisions she herself makes, in consultation with health professionals, her mentor Gillian, a small circle of friends, and a wider network of acquaintances" (193). However, through the process of sharing her experience in an interview situation the collaboration of the story is co-produced. The story is told to the interviewer who is actively listening with "all ears":

The interview is an oral, face-to-face, collaborative form. Throughout the interview, Jane states a preference for talk over writing about breast cancer . . . She talks especially with friends, and perhaps the interview extends that circle, in Jane's preferred mode of communication, as an opportunity to share her experience and show her body in illness. As collaboration, the interview is co-produced by Jane and Kristen. (203)

Langellier and Peterson use examples of collaboration in talking to their interviewee on hair loss and the fear of the cancer coming back. In the face-to-face exchange where serious topics are discussed through laughter, an understanding of the extent to which participants can discuss cancer without crossing the emotional boundaries of each other emerge. The collaboration of participants is demonstrated through their empathetic presence.

Similar to Langellier and Peterson, the collaboration of the interview process with the eight interviewees of "Hang It Out To Dry" was evident in their willingness to share their stories with me. Gene Alonzo and Kenny Sigsworth, both survivors of the floods of Hurricane Katrina, told the most traumatic stories with such candor that I was astounded to witness the telling in the interview situation. I discuss the following participants of the collaborative interviews through the biographies of each interviewee, the connection I had with each participant, and the content of our discussions on their experiences with Hurricane Katrina. I include the descriptions of interviewees to highlight the connection I have made with each individual. I have personal ties

to each informant in this study. They are my family members and dear friends. Even though I am an insider as a member of the community, I am also simultaneously an outsider as an academic ethnographer. My positionality within the community helped me build trust and rapport with my interviewees. The level of trust between my informants and me was always cushioned by the fact that they knew me, my family and where I once lived. The following descriptions also reveal the informant's age, gender and occupation at the time of Hurricane Katrina. The descriptions serve as a method to translate the experience of the interview to the page, allowing readers to capture a clear sense of character for each individual. The descriptions also enable readers to take on the role of viewer, enabling them to see what they could not in the staged adaptation of the following interviews. Each individual on stage was represented through posture and movement, vocal quality, language choices and focal points. In order for the reader/viewer to have access to the real people involved in this study and not simply a one dimensional character profile, I supply a rich description of character.

Kenneth William Sears, Sr.

Kenneth William Sears, Sr., known as Ken Sears, is my father. He is 62 years old and grew up in Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Orphaned at age ten, he moved in with his aunt and uncle in Orange Grove, an area in lower Saint Bernard Parish. He attended Saint Bernard High School and graduated in May, 1965. He married Linda Campo, my mother, later that year on December 11, 1965. As a young man he worked as a carpenter's apprentice and as a fisherman on Delacroix Island. He and my mother lived in a FEMA trailer given to them by my grandparents after Hurricane Betsy in 1965. Ten years later, my parents moved to a home in Chalmette, Louisiana on 2809 Rosetta Drive. In this house, he raised our family and retired from the Carpenter's Union as an International Representative.

Almost thirty years after Hurricane Betsy, Hurricane Katrina struck Saint Bernard Parish. Due to the floods of Katrina, our home in Chalmette sustained approximately ten feet of water. Our home was also located in the neighborhood where a Murphy Oil storage tank slipped off its base two weeks after the storm and spilled almost a million gallons of oil on Louisiana soil and waters.

My parents evacuated the Saturday before Hurricane Katrina made landfall on Monday, August 29, 2005. As media coverage focused on the city of New Orleans, no news emerged from Saint Bernard Parish for weeks after the storm. In the days following the storm, my dad knew something was terribly wrong. He and my mother joined the Governor's Hotline in Baton Rouge in order to assist in the efforts of locating family and friends as well as gaining information on Hurricane Katrina's effects on their neighborhood. Later, they joined FEMA, working in the recovery effort in Baton Rouge for nine months.

Two months after Hurricane Katrina, we were finally able to go back home and assess the property damage. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) had quarantined the property until safety was no longer an issue. Our home was a total loss. When we arrived on site, we were confronted with black sludge from silt and oil that was deposited in the home up to two feet deep. Days followed where we joined together to make our way down to Saint Bernard Parish and attempted to excavate any salvageable objects from the wreckage. My dad rented a storage facility in Baton Rouge and began to load his household items into storage units. This continued for a few months until they were satisfied with what they retrieved from the house.

My Dad and Mom along with their Shih Tzu, Rudy lived with me in my one bathroom shotgun home in downtown Baton Rouge. I gave them my spare bedroom as their home for an unlimited amount of time. My parents always say I was their angel of rescue during their stay

with me. I have to say they were pretty angelic people for handling such tight quarters with such grace and style. My parents lived with me for almost a year short of fifteen days when they moved into their newly constructed home in Geismar, Louisiana, over seventy miles from their home in Chalmette.

I chose my father as one of my informants because I always think of him as an incredible storyteller. He has a memory for particulars and can spout off names, relatives, connections from one family to the next with very little effort at any moment in time. He's a man who pays attention. He's a good listener and an even better observer. His stories of working on the boats with my Spanish-speaking grandfather and great grandfather are the stuff of legends. I grew up with him telling me stories of our family and our community.

While he was living with me, afflicted with insomnia, he would pace the hall. As he would pace, I would wake to him talking to himself. A man in distress, he would sleepwalk and tell stories about who he talked to that day through the hotline or through FEMA. He would tell stories about their families and how everyone was connected to each other some kind of way through blood relation or through experience. Watching him every night was one of the reasons why I wanted to do the show. People were not seeing this image. As I watched my father, a retired, tired man pacing my halls dreaming about his home and his community, worried about what tomorrow may bring, I knew this was the story I had to tell.

I sat my father down one evening after dinner and video recorded him talking about Saint Bernard Parish. I gave him prompts such as "What do you miss most about home?" or "Tell me about the historical places and people of Saint Bernard Parish?" I did not have to give my father much encouragement for him to begin storytelling. I taped him while he sat at my dining room table. I positioned the camera in the kitchen and sat on the floor next to him during the

interview. Knowing my work for many years now, he was comfortable being taped and interviewed. He has a running joke with my family about my interviewing. He'll say, "Be careful what you say in front of Danielle. It's liable to go into one of her shows! I'm serious!"

Charles "Pete" Savoie

In the fall of 2006, I met Mr. Pete Savoie in Ashley Furniture in Gonzales, Louisiana. I was shopping for bedroom furniture with my parents. As everyone in Saint Bernard Parish lost all of their furniture, to see others in the same situation was commonplace. As I walked through the store, I realized that furniture shopping became a way to reunite and reconnect with neighbors and friends from Saint Bernard Parish. I remember walking through the dining room sets as this little man tapped me on the shoulder and said "What are you doing following that old man? You need to be following me!" I was caught by surprise and turned around to give the man a polite smile when my father turned around and immediately recognized him. Wearing a Saint Bernard Sportsmen's League hat, he began a conversation with my family. We sat and talked for a few minutes and then he suggested that we take advantage of being in the furniture store and find a nice sofa to sit and reconnect. He knew my father because they both worked for Kaiser Aluminum for many years.

Mr. Pete has also been an advocate for closing the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), a shipping channel that has been a major concern for Saint Bernard Parish for over forty years due to it causing massive coastal erosion which allowed the inundation of Saint Bernard Parish during Hurricanes Katrina and Betsy. MRGO is also known as "hurricane highway." According to the Saint Bernard Parish Government website, "On March 21, members of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation presented plaques honoring Pete Savoie, a member of the St. Bernard Sportsmen's League, and Dan Arceneaux, of the parish's Coastal Zone

Advisory Committee, for their efforts to close the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. Carlton Dufrechou, executive director of the Foundation, said the men had demonstrated "tenacity and courageous leadership in pressing to get (the ship channel) closed" (Cannizaro).

Mr. Pete Savoie was also one of the first residents in August of 2006 to file a federal lawsuit against the Corps of Engineers in the hopes that the MRGO would be closed down. Mr. Pete is a driving force in protecting our Gulf Coast. He was also a major contributor to the document "Coast 2050: Toward a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana," a report by the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force and the Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Authority. In December 2007 it was announced that the MRGO will close sooner than later with an earthen dam building project across Bayou La Loutre to begin two to three months after the announcement. According to Saint Bernard Parish Government's website on Tuesday, April 21, 2009, "The Mississippi River Gulf Outlet permanently will be closed to all ships and boats at Bayou La Loutre near Hopedale on Wednesday, April 22, according to the Army Corps of Engineers. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is spending about \$25 million to build the structure at the Bayou La Loutre Ridge that is meant to close the channel to saltwater intrusion. The expectation is that this effort will increase the ecosystem's viability that will assist in restoring the coastal marshes and local cypress forests. The work started late February and will be finished July 26 of this year" ("Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet Closed to Vessels as of Wednesday, April 22").

While we were in the furniture store, Mr. Pete discussed his class action suit and the meetings he was attending to close the MRGO. As we were saying our goodbyes we exchanged phone numbers and I asked him if I could interview him for my research. He gladly obliged, and on September 1, 2006 I interviewed Mr. Pete in his FEMA trailer parked right outside of his

home on Fenelon Street in Chalmette, Louisiana. My father accompanied me on the visit and we sat and talked about the MRGO for about an hour. He was so passionate about his advocacy; he would at times get enraged, his voice accelerating and his face turning red. He sat on his FEMA sofa and I positioned myself across the tiny room with the camera while sitting on the dining chair.

The second part of the interview consisted of discussing his plans to rebuild, what to do with his waterlogged possessions, and where he was going to relocate. He toured us through his home he had gutted and was trying to rebuild in order to sell. He took us into his garage where he showed us his enormous collection of baby food jars filled with nuts, bolts, nails and any other carpentry item that would fit into the small containers. We walked through his vegetable garden that once was on the side of his garage and he showed us all of his new yard art he purchased for his new home. We left the interview telling jokes as in our first encounter at the furniture store. He ended the interview by saying, “And I found out the other day I have enough money to last me the rest of my life, yeah! I’m gonna die Sunday!” He laughed and waved good-bye from his front porch.

Chad Alphonso

I interviewed Chad on September 12, 2006. I have known Chad Alphonso since I was an undergraduate. We worked together during the summers of my undergraduate years for the American Red Cross Swim Program in Saint Bernard Parish. Chad is one you can depend on for a good laugh and a good story. He has always had a jovial personality, taking everything with “a grain of salt.” He and his wife Jennifer lived in Chalmette when Hurricane Katrina hit. They evacuated to Breaux Bridge where they stayed for a short period of time and soon moved back home to Braithwaite, Louisiana. Chad’s parents live on a street called Saro Lane in Braithwaite

that backs up against Bayou Terre Bouef. Their family rebuilt their parents and grandmother's home first followed by each son who purchased a home on the same street for their families. Now grandmother, mom and dad, and three Alphonso boys and their families live on Saro Lane. The backyard of their homes is Bayou Terre Bouef, and from Chad's swing hanging from his oak tree, you can see the visible crevasse where the levees were blown in 1927 to save the city of New Orleans. I wanted to interview Chad because I knew he was going to rebuild and move back to Saint Bernard Parish as soon as possible. He works for one of the oil refineries in Saint Bernard and was working in the Parish shortly after the storm.

During the interview, he sat on his backyard swing and held his baby boy Chad Jr. Chad has a thick Saint Bernard accent, much like my own. He was very willing to sit down and share his story with me. His interview was collected outside on a beautiful day.

Chad was interviewed by Becky Bohrer of The Dallas News in November of 2006 where he made a statement in regard to enjoying the Christmas holidays despite being displaced from his home. The Dallas News says, "Chad Alfonso plans to do so for his son, Chad. It is, after all, the child's first Christmas, and Alfonso considers his family luckier than many since they're back at their home in the St. Bernard Parish community of Poydras. Katrina was 'a life-changing event, something terrible that happened,' Alfonso said. However, 'we're going to enjoy Christmas, just like any other year.'" Chad's easygoing way of life was attractive to me as I thought of informants for my research. I knew Chad had a strong sense of home and a hurricane could not pry him out of Saint Bernard Parish.

Jason MacFetters

Jason MacFetters is a 34-year-old attorney for The Young Firm in New Orleans, Louisiana. At the time of the interview in September 2006, Jason worked with the Louisiana

Recovery Authority helping Louisianans affected by Hurricane Katrina rebuild their homes. We share a common background as natives of Chalmette. Our parents lived in the same house since they were married over thirty years ago. We both lived in Chalmette from the time we were babies until college. We were educated in the Catholic school systems of the area. Both of our extended families lived in Chalmette before Katrina.

I actually met Jason through my sister. They worked for a real estate company in New Orleans and became friends. Knowing Jason's whereabouts after the storm, I knew he would be a valuable source of information. His position as a Road Home housing counselor, first liaison for the public, allowed him to gain a larger perspective on the problems with the rebuilding efforts simply by consulting multiple families throughout his workday.

At the time of Katrina, Jason lived in his grandmother's garage apartment. He evacuated with his parents to Houston where they stayed with his brother. When Jason moved back home, properties were shuffled around due to the Murphy oil spill, and he moved to his uncle's lot on Delille Street, Chalmette where he and his grandmother lived in a FEMA trailer. In asking about his FEMA trailer living conditions, he replied "It gave us a really nice view of the refinery, orange sodium lights and steam."

I first interviewed Jason in his FEMA trailer. He was getting ready for work and he was dressed in business attire. As he sat at the dining table, his grandmother and I sat on the sofa during the video recorded interview. He told stories about the residents who were coming in for counseling. He gave a very specific account of the housing concerns and urban development soon to come in Chalmette and surrounding areas. Our interview lasted about an hour, until it was time to say goodbye and head back to Baton Rouge.

Jason worked for the Road Home Program for about three months. In a phone interview, he explained how he thought the program was successful in the beginning. Residents who were moving back home and rebuilding were getting their money and successfully resettling into the area. The program was also paying high wages for liaisons at the time. He expressed how the Road Home Program gave him an open door opportunity to apply to several law firm positions later on in the year.

Jason eventually moved out of his FEMA trailer and moved in with his parents for six months, who relocated to Covington, Louisiana for reasons of comfort and space. He then moved to New Orleans where he currently lives in Mid City. Jason explained to me in a phone interview that he enjoys living in Mid City because “it’s a real neighborhood with a diverse community.” He said, “The neighborhood is the same as Chalmette but without the kids and not as close knit as Saint Bernard Parish.”

Shannon Sanders

Shannon Sanders, age 34, was a resident and business owner in Saint Bernard Parish. She owned The Shannon Leigh School of Dance in Chalmette for five years before Hurricane Katrina, and she was also living in Arabi, which is the community bordering Chalmette. Her home and her business were a total loss, and she relocated to Houma, Louisiana where she now lives with her husband and family.

I wanted to interview Shannon for several reasons. First, she is a dear friend of mine who I have known since first grade. Also, I wanted to get a perspective on the economic status of commerce in Saint Bernard Parish, particularly due to Shannon’s high number of clients as a business owner. Finally, I knew Shannon’s connections with the community and the area were

deeply rooted. Chalmette was a place where Shannon lived and worked, rarely leaving Saint Bernard Parish throughout her life.

I contacted Shannon over the telephone and we decided to meet in a restaurant in Prairieville, Louisiana which was an easy drive for both of us. Prairieville is twenty minutes away from my home, and her parents moved to Ascension Parish after the storm. Shannon planned to visit with her parents before meeting with me for dinner and an interview. After dinner at Sno's Restaurant, we moved the interview into the empty bar area. We sat across a bar table and I set up the video camera and began the interview. Shannon became incredibly emotional at the beginning of the interview. I told her we could stop any time she wanted. She insisted we keep the camera rolling, so the interview progressed. When I asked her what she missed most about Chalmette, she asked me to turn the camera off. She said she just needed to collect herself. I told her the interview could end, so we talked off camera for a while about our friends' and neighbors' decisions to move back home or relocate, and during this conversation she said, "Danielle, put this on tape." At this point, she expressed her disappointment with our local, state and federal government. She also stated why she was not going back home at this point in the interview. We ended the interview, said our goodbyes in the parking lot and went our separate ways.

Irvan Perez

The night I performed the first twenty minute version of "Hang It Out To Dry" at Elaine P. Nunez Community College in October of 2006, Mr. Irvan Perez sang his *decimas* to close the performance night. It would be my last time to hear him sing. He died on June 8, 2008.

According to Bob Warren of [The Times Picayune](#):

Irvan J. Perez, a cultural icon known for his intricate wildlife carvings and beautiful singing of *Isleno decimas*, died Tuesday at Tulane Medical Center. He was 85. A native

of Delacroix Island, Mr. Perez sang the traditional a capella folk songs in an archaic and fast-disappearing Spanish dialect at venues ranging from Carnegie Hall to the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. In 1991 he received a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment of the Arts and his art has been profiled in many state, national and international publications and documentary programs. (Warren)

Mr. Perez's songs and wood carvings have also been recognized by National Geographic, National Public Radio, and The Smithsonian Institute. I can't remember when I first met Mr. Irvan Perez. My parents participated in the *Islenos* Cultural Society and then the Canary Island Descendant Association, both of which were started by Mr. Irvan Perez. I was always in attendance at festivals to see my parents along with other *Isleno* descendants perform everyday life activities of the *Isleno* culture such as weaving cast nets, carving wooden decoys, dancing or singing. What I can remember and always will is the impression he made on me and on this world.

When I was an undergraduate I became interested in studying my family history, so I enrolled in a folk life class with Frank DeCaro, an English professor at Louisiana State University. I decided to use my final presentation to introduce the *Isleno decima* singers to the class. I interviewed my great great uncle Joseph "Chelito" Campo and Mr. Irvan Perez for the project. Later, in my masters program, I took a history of performance class with Dr. Michael Bowman and researched the *decimas* once again. I interviewed both my uncle and Mr. Irvan Perez several times. That research eventually led to my solo performance titled, "A Tribute to Storytellers: *Isleno Decima* Singers of Louisiana" and then my thesis, "*Isleno Decima* Singers of Louisiana: An Interpretation of Performance and Event." For all of these projects, Mr. Irvan Perez was always more than willing to give his time, knowledge, and energy to me. He was a man of generosity and humility; he was a face of Saint Bernard Parish.

After Katrina, Mr. Irvan and his family evacuated to North Carolina and later to Oak Mountain, Alabama where they lived in a FEMA park for six months. When his FEMA trailer was delivered to his front yard, he moved back home. His daughter and granddaughter's FEMA trailers were also delivered to his property in Poydras. At the time of the interview, he was still living in his FEMA trailer while his house was being gutted and rebuilt by his son-in-law.

I first interviewed Mr. Irvan Perez for "Hang It Out to Dry" on November 11, 2006. My family and I drove down to Poydras, Louisiana where he lived. My mother toured the rebuilding efforts with his daughter while my father and I sat in his trailer and spoke about the storm. He was tired and looked worn down, and he was not interested in speaking to me about Hurricane Katrina. However, when I asked him about what would be lost in terms of our culture and traditions due to the storm, he sparked up a conversation. He spoke of the *decimas* and his mother and father's experiences with storms. He spoke of the superstitions, legends, and lore of our community. He also spoke in great detail about the flora and fauna of the area.

Mr. Irvan Perez's ability to share his wealth of knowledge with others around the world has given Louisianans a better sense of who we are as swampland natives of Saint Bernard Parish. Our Spanish traditions live now in the retelling and reperforming of Mr. Irvan's stories. He has succeeded in passing agency on to others who are willing to tell the tale. Irvan Perez is survived by four daughters and several grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Gene Alonzo

Mr. Gene Alonzo, age 59, contacted my father the evening of Mr. Irvan Perez's interview. My family knows Mr. Gene Alonzo because his brother and my grandfather were placed in the same nursing home after the storm in Harvey, Louisiana. Mr. Gene Alonzo, a retired fisherman, lived in Ycloskey, where he took care of his brother Carlos who lived at Saint

Rita's Nursing Home in Saint Bernard Parish. My father told Mr. Gene that I was interviewing Irvan Perez for research and Mr. Gene asked if he could come over and tell his story.

Mr. Gene Alonzo arrived at Mr. Irvan Perez's trailer around 4pm. He sat in a chair across from Mr. Irvan and me. My father sat on the bed. I began the interview by explaining my intentions for the research to Mr. Gene. He agreed and I continued asking him about his process of rebuilding in lower Saint Bernard Parish. He said, "Do you want me to tell you what happened at Saint Rita's?" I said that I did not want him to if it was going to cause him distress. I could tell he wanted to speak to me. He didn't want to talk about the rebuilding efforts. He wanted to share his experience of Saint Rita's with me. I documented his story on video and we sat and listened. We all cried and did not say a word until he finished his story. Mr. Gene told us in detail what he experienced at Saint Rita's when the floodwaters came into the area. He then shared his rebuilding efforts in Ycloskey. He spoke of the destruction of the landscape and the fishing industry. When we told each other goodbye, I thanked him for this time and generosity. He said, "No baby, thank you."

Mr. Gene Alonzo was interviewed by USA Today, and is cited in the book The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast by Thomas Brinkley. His testimony of his experience at Saint Rita's Nursing Home helped Sal and Mabel Mangano's not guilty plea in their case where, according to Mary Foster of The Associated Press, "They were accused of 35 counts of negligent homicide and 24 counts of cruelty to the elderly or infirm after floodwaters inundated the St. Rita's Nursing Home in suburban St. Bernard Parish. After a 2 1/2-week trial, a jury took less than four hours to find the couple not guilty" (Foster).

Kenny Sigsworth

My friend, Shannon Sanders, suggested I interview Mr. Kenny Sigsworth, her father. Mr. Kenny Sigsworth was a long time resident of Saint Bernard Parish who worked in the fire and safety supply industry. He decided to stay behind for Hurricane Katrina because he was scared of the prospect of looting. While his family evacuated to Prairieville, Kenny Sigsworth waited out the storm. When the wind became too much to bear, he drove to his office building in Chalmette. He met another resident, Lonnie Robin, who carried a generator to Mr. Kenny's second floor office. He reported the number of people who immediately started to evacuate to his building, knowing it was higher ground and a large safe structure.

From that point Mr. Kenny's story became a horrible scene of almost being sucked out of a window and holding on to his desk for dear life. He told of the rushing water that came into the city and swirled cars like a toilet flushing toys. The water level reached the second floor of his building and he described as being able to walk out of his blown out window and step right into the flood waters. He described his rescue efforts of stealing boats and traveling from house to house. His travels spanned from the Lower Ninth Ward to Chalmette. He told of cries from rooftops to children wading in the water next to dead bodies. In total, Mr. Kenny rescued over 200 people from the flood waters, along with Lonnie Robin and Jerry Ruiz. Because of their generator, Mr. Kenny was able to keep medicine and formula cold in his office refrigerator the week after Katrina. His rescue attempts were further aided by the National Guard and parish officials. Mr. Kenny was reunited with his family two weeks after the storm.

I met Mr. Kenny at his newly built home in Prairieville, Louisiana. There, we sat on his back porch and he told me about his experience while drinking a cocktail and smoking a cigarette. Mr. Kenny was emotional while telling his experience, but he wanted to tell his story

and insisted I keep rolling the video. Our interview lasted about an hour. When we concluded, I was given a tour of their new home by his wife, Patricia.

I chose the above eight interviewees to represent a range of community members from Saint Bernard Parish. In literary and theatrical terms, I have discussed the character of each informant to provide a multidimensional perspective for the reader and viewer. My connection to the informants of this study lies in my membership of the community of Saint Bernard Parish. My relationship with other co-creators of “Hang It Out To Dry” have similar ties that bind.

My community involvement expands outside of Saint Bernard Parish. I am also an academic who heavily depended on my colleagues and mentors for advice and support. My colleagues pointed me in directions outside of our “safe zone” of the Hopkins Black Box Theatre. The following traces through the academic and artistic collaborations that went into “Hang It Out To Dry.” I describe my work with the Interior Design Department at Louisiana State University, the feedback and advice provided by mentors and colleagues in my department, the musical contributions of local friends and artists, and the integral collaborations created with the diverse audiences in which I came into contact.

Interior Design Collaboration

Collaborations occurred throughout the process of creating “Hang It Out To Dry.” What began as a simple twenty minute performance of four interviews and two narratives that premiered at a Saint Bernard Parish Celebration for the Arts and the Patti Pace Performance Festival in New Orleans in 2006, grew to become an hour long show with original light, sets, and music.

Once I had the interviews and a preliminary script I began conversations with the Interior Design Department at Louisiana State University. I credit to Bauhaus enthusiast and fellow

scholar Lisa Flanagan whose notions of the Bauhaus institution fueled the initial collaborations of this performance. According to Roselee Goldberg in Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present, the Bauhaus' 1919 Stage workshop began a very different approach to art. "Unlike the rebellious Futurist or Dada provocations, Gropius's Romantic Bauhaus manifesto had called for the unification of all the arts in a 'cathedral of Socialism'" (97). According to Lisa Flanagan in her thesis "Bauhaus Performs":

The Bauhaus was a German art and architecture school founded in 1919 by Walter Gropius and dissolved in 1933 by the National Socialist government. Informed by democratic socialism, the mission of the school was to reunite traditional craftsmanship and artistic expression as one in the same endeavor, thereby eliminating elitist class assumptions implicit in their separation. The main focus of the school was architecture or "living spaces" that combined formal design and modern technology and formal design for the betterment of all people. In both pedagogy and practice, the Bauhaus emphasized form as an expression of function in design. Formal aesthetics were stressed as a means of creating highly functional and visually appealing works, which could be used and enjoyed by all. The school's embrace of modern technology was aimed at helping the artist-craftsman create products efficiently and cheaply. (12)

Lisa Flanagan, Manager of the Hopkins Black Theatre 2006 -2009 and the Communication Across the Curriculum (CXC) Studio Coordinator 2006-2007, began the spark in "thinking outside the box," meaning outside of our departmental space, the Hopkins Black Box, literally.

In the CXC studio, Lisa offered communication skills to art and design students as well as arts and sciences students. Depending on the need, the CXC studio assists students in the four prong approach of visual, technical, oral and written skills within communication. For example, CXC assists in the development of artists, knowing that in order to be an effective artist, one has to be a skilled presenter able to reach multiple audiences. CXC assists students in creating artist statements, lectures, and communicating to clients, allowing them the ability to share their vision and designs with others.

As an artist, I expressed my concern for the visual set of “Hang It Out To Dry” to Lisa and she immediately knew who to ask for help. As the CXC studio is situated in the Design Department, she was in close proximity to the interior design folks on the fourth floor of the building. I needed help articulating my visual ideas for the set, and when we proposed the idea to the interior design department, they wanted to take what the CXC studio offered and use the tools in a real situation. They chose to connect my project with a sophomore design class. The sophomore students had to articulate their visual expressions through verbal and written presentations and proposals to their client (me). Goldberg describes several artists and artisans gathered at the Bauhaus institution to form the first ever workshop of performance art, “A stage workshop, the first ever course on performance in an art school, had been discussed from the first months as an essential aspect of the interdisciplinary curriculum” (97). In keeping with the spirit of the Bauhaus, Flanagan connected my performance skills with other artists skilled in design, creating a multi-collaborative project.

Through a conversation she had with Interior Design Professors Phillip Tebbutt and T. L. Ritchie, we formed a semester-long project of creating set pieces for “Hang It Out To Dry.” We began the process with a few initial meetings to describe the performance in its initial stages. For me, those initial meetings quickly solidified the potential of an interdisciplinary relationship. We seemed to be speaking the same language when discussing artistic expression and creating multiple meanings for an audience to read in a performance. I became a client of sorts and we worked together to combine our own crafts toward common goals. The show became a site we could gather around, a site where we could share ourselves. As Flanagan explains, “the stage is where the Bauhaus experimented with the human dynamics involved in their democratization of spatial composition and expression” (13).

Once we all agreed on the project, the next step was to pitch the ideas to the sophomore class of interior design students to get a feel for how they would accept such an undertaking. The professors stressed the roles of designer and client. We also discussed the set design as a created environment for the Hopkins Black Box Theatre, complete with set pieces, narrator, and projection surfaces. The initial discussion with the students included fellow artists and friends Nick Slie and Lisa Flanagan and myself. T.L. Ritchie asked the class if they would be interested in this project. After the students agreed on the project by a unanimous show of hands, I followed with a few more lectures in their class about performance art, performing ethnography and Hurricane Katrina. A video and slide show of the twenty minute performance was supplied to the students.

The students' first project was to create two dimensional objects, silhouettes made from cut boards of three to four images from the initial performance that made an impression on them. The images could represent an actual object we discussed in the show or it could be an interpretation of a story present in the script. The students placed cut boards in a negative positive relationship; images out of one color (white) were placed on the opposing color's background (black or red). The cut boards included a laundry list of images: footprints, marsh grass, houses, steps, china, fish, mail, etc.

The students' second assignment was to create a three dimensional model of the HopKins Black Box space, using the material chosen for the set design, a ten millimeter white signboard material. The students represented the white signboard material using white poster board for the miniature representation of the set. The three dimensional models were four-sided boxes (bottom, right, left and back sides) all one foot cubed. The models represented a wide range of possibilities. Proposals included laundry lines across the stage with hanging sheets of silhouette

bodies, which the actor could pull across the stage. Other students presented miniatures of giant china plates that rolled in and out to reveal a door step and photo frame, which could also serve as a projection surface and frame for the performer. Tiny china cabinets, washtubs, and clothes pins spun to reveal images of Madonna statues and giant mailboxes in several presentations. Three different students presented collapsible set pieces separate from each other, set pieces that folded into one another and set pieces that fit together like jigsaw puzzles. In total, forty students from two sections of the interior design studio worked on creating a set environment for “Hang It Out To Dry” in the Hopkins Black Box.

After the first two projects were completed, the class displayed the projects against the wall of the fourth floor in the design building. Each student presented their work to me, their peers, and their professors. At this stage, the designs remained displayed for two weeks for anyone to view as they passed down the halls of the fourth floor in the design building at Louisiana State University. I enlisted anyone I could find on campus to walk up to the fourth floor to view the structures. I asked individuals to view not only the proposals but also vote on their top three picks. I asked my fellow graduate students as well as my professors to tour the fourth floor of the design building and then provide me with feedback on their favorite compositions.

Throughout the two-week period, the design students began working on their third project of creating a computer animation of the model they proposed in the three dimensional project. The students worked with a program called “Autodesk Viz” where they were able to create my body in relation to the theatre as well as their proposed set pieces situated in the computerized space. The program allowed the students to run the animation and move my body in the computerized space, rendering the choreography of the performance. I visited the class in

the computer labs and talked to the students individually about their concepts for the set design. The computer program allowed the students to explore light design in their composition as well. Eventually, I narrowed my design choice to one student's work. His creation supplied multiple meanings and left the architectural design open for interpretation while sustaining the integrity of the design department in form and structure and providing the dimensions and magnitude suited to the space. The design consisted of seven box structures that were eight foot high, four feet wide and three feet deep. The students constructed the boxes out of 10mm plastic white signboard material. The widest sides resembled door frames. The narrow sides of the box provided various window heights. High windows, middle frame windows, low frame windows and full length windows were on one narrow side of the box while the other side remained as a solid sheet. The box, as a tab and slot box, provided easy assembly and disassembly. They were lightweight which made them easy to maneuver on stage. (The boxes were also created with the dimensions of my van in mind for traveling from show to show.) I could pick them up, walk with them, haul them on my back, push them down, sit, or pose in them. They enabled me to demonstrate a body working in space, a body working in the stories told on stage. As D. Soyini Madison states in discussing the performance script of "Staging Fieldwork/ Performing Human Rights," "If ethnography is about anything it is about putting your body on the line. It is about being in a particular space for a particular period of time" (401). Performing my ethnography, I used the boxes as a tool to show and tell the story. The boxes activated my body on stage. Carrying large set pieces and stories are weighty work; my body was put on the line.

Robert Breen discusses the use of scenery in Chamber Theatre as a tool to privilege the text. He states, "The skillful management of words will conjure up images more satisfactorily

than the stage or the film studio with all its sophisticated resources“(77). Bertolt Brecht also addresses the art of the stage designer:

when it comes to architecture—i.e. when he builds interiors or exteriors—he is content to give indications, poetic and artistic representations of a hut or a locality which do honour as much to his imagination as to his power of observing. They display a lovely mixture of his own handwriting and that of the playwright. And there is no building of his, no yard or workshop or garden, that does not also bear the fingerprints, as if it were, of the people who built it or who lived there. He makes visible the manual skills and knowledge of the builders and the ways of living of the inhabitants. (231)

The boxes represented New Orleans, the magnitude of damage, and the problems citizens face there and in surrounding parishes. The structures confront the bulk of the city, the houses, and the exposed rafters of stability and instability. The design maintained dialogism between designer, performer, audience, and citizens of Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana. I felt the design would work best in our experimental laboratory, our Hopkins Black Box space.

I also chose a design from another student from the interior design class for the Hopkins Black Box production. The design included several large three foot clothes pins that doubled as objects on one side and clothes pin on the other. D. Soyini Madison remarks, “You can’t do ethnography without embodied attention to the symbols and practices of a lived space” (401). The symbols on two sides of the clothes pins were representative of my experience and Saint Bernard Parish: a Madonna, a fish, a letter, a bridge, swamp reeds, a tea cup, and a turtle. Again with a tab and slot method, the objects would slide into the clothes pins to create a four sided structure made out of the ten millimeter signboard material. The clothes pins were chosen to hang on a clothesline above the audience risers in a crisscross pattern. They would turn and spin throughout the production as the air circulated around the space.

While the above collaborations occurred with the design department, I cannot forget the collaborations within my own discipline. The design students stretched my boundaries from

without, while my colleagues in the performance studies department challenged me from within my own comfort zone.

Colleague Collaborations

If “ethnography is about putting your body on the line,” as Madison states, then my doctoral advisor Tracy Stephenson Shaffer played an important role in creating the “bodily attention” within the production of “Hang It Out To Dry” (401). Every performance season, a faculty member is paired with a graduate student director to assist with the upcoming shows in the space. Tracy was assigned to be my faculty advisor for “Hang It Out To Dry.” Through many discussions, Tracy was the driving force in convincing me to take the show on the road. Knowing the content of the show and its timeliness, she encouraged me to travel with this production as a way to activate different communities’ responses to Hurricane Katrina. In terms of production needs, Tracy also sat with me through the rehearsal process and advised my staging decisions. The two most important staging discussions concerned the slide show and the manipulation of the boxes.

Originally, the twenty minute performance of “Hang It Out To Dry” had a slide show of flashing photographic images taken one year after the storm combined with several lists of businesses that had reopened, emergency numbers, insurance claims, and local superstitions. Later, I collected the design students’ animations from their work on “Auto Viz” along with other lists of objects, definitions of “hang it out to dry,” and Saint Bernard Parish information from different public forums such as www.sbp.net and www.stbernardparish.net. The original script for the Hopkins Black Box included projecting the animation from “Auto Viz” on the back wall, upstage of the performance space while projecting the photographs on the stage right wall and projecting the lists on the stage left wall.

After viewing a technical rehearsal, Tracy suggested pulling the animations out of the show and placing the animations in the lobby to be displayed as people waited to enter the space. We decided to project the texts of the laundry lists on the side walls simultaneously and project the photographic images on the rear upstage wall. I made the choice to clear up some of the visual clutter, so the audience could focus more on the stories. In Brecht's discussion of "Stage Design for the Epic Theatre," the purpose of the stage set is to "further the acting and help to tell the evening's story fluently" (232). The animations did not read as the reflexive tool I originally imagined, rather they moved in directions that contradicted my own actions on stage. Choosing to project the lists on either wall scrolling simultaneously gave the audience a better chance to catch glimpses of the material being projected. My fellow graduate student David Pye altered the slide show to simulate a scrolling effect, or rising water, along with the lists on either side of the stage.

Tracy also encouraged me to manipulate my set pieces more on stage. In the rehearsal process, I worked through the narratives and the interviews without the structures because the design students were still in the process of constructing the set pieces for show. When they arrived in the space, Tracy viewed a rehearsal and gave me the comment, "Danielle, you have to work those boxes more." I knew that was my original intent, to have a body on stage, performing a working body in space, a body that could resituate, relocate and rebuild itself in the different spaces of the theatre, but the late addition of the boxes was overwhelming and I neglected my body as text on stage. Tracy's fresh perspective helped me create distinct images of the interviewees within the manipulation of the boxes. She assisted in the metaphoric language of my active body on stage. As Luce Irigaray in "I Love to You: A Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History" states:

If we are to reregulate and cultivate energy between human beings, we need language, but not just denotative language, language that names, declares the reality or truth of things and transmits information; we also and especially need language that facilitates and maintains communication. And it is not just the lexicon we are talking about but a syntax appropriate to intersubjectivity. (100)

For example, the embodiment of Chad Alfonso and Shannon Sanders' interviews created distinct voices on stage. In Chad's performed interview, I rocked back and forth in the set piece. I then stopped the rocking movement where I emerged from the frame and looked back as if I was unfamiliar with the space from which I just emerged. The simple glance back as I transition helped distinguish movement from one interviewee to another. A turn towards the audience, foot on window frame and arm on belly to deliver lines keyed the audience into a newly performed interview. D. Soyini Madison states, "Ethnography is as much, or more about bodily attention—performing in and against a circumscribed space—as it is about what is told to you in an interview" (401). Tracy's guidance is also evident in Gene Alonzo's performed interview. Within this narrative, he tells of Saint Rita's, the nursing home in Saint Bernard Parish that received national attention when the two owners Sal and Mabel Mangano failed to evacuate the residents and 35 patients died in the flood. Mr. Gene Alonzo witnessed the flood at Saint Rita's and was generous in sharing his story with me as an ethnographer. I perform his story on stage in the center box with a chest high window cut out of the signboard structure. Tracy helped me intensify his narrative through movement and manipulation of the window. We decided to tell his story as if he was slowly slipping into the water. His narrative was broken up into four parts, and each time I performed it, I situated myself a little bit lower in the frame. For example, in the first section the audience saw my full face, then for the second part of the narrative, the audience saw only half of my face. The third part of the narrative revealed only my eyes, and in the last section, the audience saw only my hands and forehead. Tracy's contribution allowed the

audience to interpret Gene's struggle of survival as well as my struggle to tell Gene's story as a performer.

Ruth Laurion Bowman was also a driving force in the project. I have worked for many years under Ruth as a cast member in her performances as well as being her student for both my master and doctoral programs. Ruth helped me think about the scripting process as well as how the body moves throughout the space between performed narratives. As a director famous for keeping a show sharp and moving along, Ruth's feedback during the rehearsal process was appreciated. Ruth helped me formulate a transition sequence between the interviewees' stories and my own personal narratives. The product became a transition sequence that enforced a dialectic of repetition and deconstructing metaphor. Brecht's "Masterful Treatment of a Model," suggests

The act of creation has become a collective creative process, a continuum of a dialectical sort in which the original invention, taken on its own, has lost much of its importance. The initial invention of a model truly need not count for all that much, for the actor who uses it immediately makes his own personal contribution. He is free to invent variations on the model, that is to say such variations as it will make the image of reality which he has to give truer and richer in its implications, or more satisfying artistically. (211)

By creating a repetitive phrase, similar to common phrases built in the community of Saint Bernard Parish, I invented my own variations of language, allowing possibilities of discussing the state of affairs. The deconstructing metaphor within the transition sequence was representative of the voices in the community. By choosing three specific lines from either the interviewees or my own personal narratives: "Oh my God, what has happened?," "scrubbing and rinsing," and "pick up and move on," and creating three different corresponding frozen images, I employed these tropes as commentaries on the conditions within the community of Saint Bernard Parish. To be more specific, "Oh my God, what has happened?" was paired with the gesture of the turtle and used in the personal narrative that opened the show. The gaze of the turtle would

Effect,” “The aim of this technique, known as the alienation effect, was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident. The means were artistic” (136). An alteration such as a Brechtian alienation and interruption of the transitions assisted in keeping the danger in the show and avoiding the polished aesthetic of delivery. The performance retains the interruptions of life and quotes the gestures of those living after the storm. The interruption, as a technique of epic theatre, is discussed by Walter Benjamin in his essay “What is Epic Theatre?”

The task of epic theater, according to Brecht, is not so much the development of actions as the representation of conditions. This presentation does not mean reproduction as the theoreticians of Naturalism understood it. Rather, the truly important thing is to discover the conditions of life. (One might say just as well: to alienate [*verfremden*] them.) This discovery (alienation) of conditions takes place through the interruption of happenings. (150)

As a performer, it was critical for me to represent the conditions of Saint Bernard Parish while informing my audience of the difficulties in telling the story. By interrupting and alienating the transitions, I revealed the construction of labor, and the multiplicity of voices in the telling of the story, thereby offering criticism or a new form of expression in dealing with Hurricane Katrina.

Once I performed the show several times, Ruth commented on the characterization of interviewees reaching the same intensity of emotion. All seemed too emotional and it was too much sometimes for the audience to accept. As a performer, I needed to resist that level of intensity. I recalled Ruth Bowman, Melanie Kitchens and Linda Shkreli’s article “FEMAture Evacuation: A Parade.” In the article the authors explore the performance of the 2006 Spanish Town Mardi Gras parade through the cipher of photographic lenses and concepts acknowledging that the whole picture not present because experience is individual. Certain aspects of the experience are never grasped by the audience and the reader. Recounting stories of trauma and disaster is a difficult task. To express this difficulty, we played with the body as frozen at times,

like a deer in head lights, not able to move and only speak the words. Vera Zolberg states in Creating a Sociology of the Arts, “reflexivity makes life hard” (ix). Difficulty lies in going into the past and dredging up the memory. As a performer, I decided to show that difficulty. I demonstrated reflexivity in my body through chance operation and defamiliarizing gestures. Gestures simulating the involuntary response to the content of the narrative addressed reflexivity. For instance, I delivered a stutter in the voice of one of the narratives and then restored my speech to normal. Also a freeze in a gesture of one of the narratives expressed reflexivity. Both the stutter and the frozen pose would appear to linger within my body long enough to be noticed and then disappear. The challenge of incorporating reflexive responses or gestures in a performance is to make it look like an involuntary response and not like a planned gesture.

During the show’s production, my mentors continuously reminded me of my training and praxis in performance studies’ theories. I am so fortunate to be surrounded by folks who see my vision and are willing to lend their hands in telling the story. Because of my mentors, the show traveled for more than two years. Another integral component of the show is the collaboration of music. Both live musicians and sound technicians aided in creating the coexistence of sound and live action on stage. Similar to the other collaborations of “Hang It Out To Dry,” I did not have to travel far to find the music.

Music Collaborations

One of the major contributors to the show was Jonathan Alcon, a senior in the Music Education Department during the composition of “Hang It Out To Dry.” In developing the show, I was trying to figure out if music was something I wanted to incorporate in the production and if so, what kind: live, recorded, soundscape, soundtrack? In a serendipitous passing in Coates Hall at Louisiana State University, I ran into Jonathan and stopped to visit for a short

while. In discussing what we were up to that semester I mentioned the show I was composing for November. He immediately expressed interest in performance and the content of the show. He too was from Saint Bernard Parish, where his family lost their homes as well. A percussionist, he told me that every time he thinks of home (St. Bernard Parish) he thinks of playing the vibraphone. In that conversation we set up a meeting in LSU's band room for Jonathan to play the vibraphone for me. That evening he played several percussive instruments, including the marimba, the drums, cymbals, but the vibraphone promised a chill factor that would be reminiscent of cold water, festivals, and good times once had by a community long gone. Once we agreed on the vibraphone as our instrument of choice, we began to collaborate on sounds, beginning with readings of the script while he played the instrument. Jonathan was interested in exploring how to create different sounds using the vibraphone keys and a variety of tools, not just the typical mallets. He experimented with violin bows moving in and out of the keys, rakes on top of the keys, and cymbals coexisting with the pounds of the vibraphone keys.

John Cage discusses experimental music in Silence:

Percussion music is revolution. At the present of revolution, a healthy lawlessness is warranted. Experiment must necessarily be carried on by hitting anything—tin pans, rice bowls, iron pipes—anything we can lay our hands on. Not only hitting, but rubbing, smashing, making sound in every possible way. We must explore the materials of music. (87)

What resulted was an experimental soundscape played throughout the performance. Once Jonathan established a repeated tune, he then incorporated ways to manipulate the sound of the repeated tune. We discussed when to play the vibraphone, during what narratives, and when the narratives should stand alone. Fellow graduate student David Pye also assisted by sitting in on a jam session and giving his feedback of when to play and when not to play the vibraphone.

Jonathan's work on the vibraphone was integral in keeping the flow of the show. To be

more specific it allowed for the sound to speak with the narratives, creating a call and response between the happenings on stage and Jonathan's music.

Jonathan performed with me in November of 2006 for the show's original run in the HopKins Black Box and in the following spring at the Shaw Center for the Arts in Baton Rouge. When the show hit the road, the musical creations were modified. Due to Jonathan's academic and professional career, traveling with the show was not an option. I had to consider alternatives. When traveling, I used an IPOD and speakers playing avant garde percussionist, William Winant's "Still and Moving Lines of Silence in Families of Hyperbolas." The album is a collection of experimental percussive beats using multiple percussive instruments. I was comfortable with the musical choice because of its striking similarities to Jonathans' work in the show.

After performing with Jonathan and using Winant's percussive beats, I met with Benjamin Powell, then a PhD candidate in Performance Studies, who commented on the changes in the musical creations. Jonathan's played as though he was riffing off the performance, using an improvisational call and response, whereas, the musical work of Winant looped on the IPOD played during the entire show and threatened to drown out the narratives at times. The volume of Winant's recording at moments also interfered with the delivery of the narratives, creating an unnecessary challenge for the performance. John Cage discusses the balance between timed arts and live performance in terms of grace and clarity:

With clarity of rhythmic structure, *grace* forms a duality. Together they have a relation like that of body and soul. Clarity is cold, mathematical, inhuman, but basic and earthy. Grace is warm, incalculable, human, opposed to clarity, and like the air. Grace is not here used to mean prettiness; it is used to mean the play with and against the clarity of the rhythmic structure. The two are always present together in the best works of the timed arts, endlessly, and life givingly, opposed to each other. (92)

Ben commented that the music sounded as though the call and response was compromised, that the music had transformed into a determined experience with the use of Winant's album. His desires for an impromptu experience led to him volunteering to manipulate the soundscape through his computer to create a more controlled range of levels, or grace and clarity working in the performance.

Powell played a synthesized version of William Winant's "Still and Moving Lines of Silence in Families of Hyperbolas" for the show in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. His sound program allowed him to manipulate the score by timing a mix of beats and blends that gave an overall quality of radio waves, sirens, water, wind, bubbles, raindrops, and static. Ben was concerned with not overpowering the show with music. There was an integral presence, an aural element that would fill or flow into the gaps of the performance without flooding the piece with volume and unnecessary competition between performer and soundscape. In Cage's statements on modern dance and music, he writes:

clarity of rhythmic structure with grace are essential to the timed arts, that together, they constitute an aesthetic, . . . in order for it to become strong and useful in society, mature in itself, the modern dance must clarify its rhythmic structure, then enliven it with grace, and so get itself a theory, the common, universal one about what is beautiful in a timed art. (93)

Ben's return to the clarity and grace of Jonathan's musical collaborations revived the aural layer of "Hang It Out To Dry." The show traveled to several destinations with a recording of Ben's synthesized work. I used his recorded synthesized music for every performance thereafter.

Both Jonathan and Ben's contributions to the show were significant in creating a multiplicity of efforts and voices on stage. John Cage was not interested in telling a story, rather the activity of movement, light and sound. However, I would argue Cage's interest in the collaborations of music and dance is not mutually exclusive with the collaborations of music and

performing ethnography. “Hang It Out To Dry” builds upon Cage’s notions of collaboration, expanding the partnership of music, movement, and stories. Cage states, “Here, however, we are in the presence of a dance which utilizes the entire body, requiring for its enjoyment the use of your faculty of kinesthetic sympathy. It is this faculty we employ when, seeing the flight of birds, we ourselves, by identification, fly up, glide, and soar” (95). To take Cage’s idea a step further, Jonathan and Ben’s work created a sensual aural empathy by identification, a perspective taking of sounding fear, devastation, rebuilding efforts, and questions. The audience identification through empathy led to activating the witnesses of “Hang It Out To Dry.” The audience response to the show proved the role of spectator as a co-creator experiencing “Hang It Out To Dry.”

Audience Collaborations

Walter Benjamin, Augusto Boal, and Bertolt Brecht share a common philosophy for the role of an audience. Benjamin, in his essay “What Is Epic Theater?” discusses Brecht:

Epic theatre appeals to an interest group who “do not think without reason.” Brecht does not lose sight of the masses, whose limited practice of thinking is probably described by this phrase. In the endeavor to interest the audience in the theater expertly, but definitely not by way of mere cultural involvement, a political will has prevailed. (148)

In discussing rehearsal-theater, Boal states, “Popular audiences are interested in experimenting, in rehearsing, and they abhor the “closed” spectacles. Contrary to the bourgeois code of manners, the people’s code allows and encourages the spectator to ask questions, to dialogue, to participate” (142). The common notion of Boal and Brecht’s audience is in the creation of a stage where performer and audience can connect with one another through a dialogic experience. The audience is a critical one, able to analyze and make interpretations in order to respond immediately to what is presented on stage. The collaboration of an audience involves the voices of those who experience or witness the act of performance and are involved both culturally and

politically in order to participate fully in the communication situation, during and after the act of performance. The following traces several audience responses to “Hang It Out To Dry.” The responses are examples of the collaboration of audience members and their further contributions to my knowledge on Hurricane Katrina, the community of Saint Bernard Parish, and staging a performed ethnography.

The audience makeup varied within the sixteen different sites of performance. Different disciplines, undergraduates, graduate students, communication studies scholars, and community members composed the audience for several shows on university and college campuses. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, people wanted to know about the loss of Saint Bernard Parish and one New Orleanian in the audience even went so far as to explain the cultural makeup of the Greater New Orleans area as an attempt to explain why Katrina did not discriminate, destroying neighborhoods of all socioeconomic statuses. Olorisa Omi Osun Olomo states in “Performance and Ethnography, Performing Ethnography, Performance Ethnography”:

Theorizing culture and democracy can surely help us to shape these realities, but the doing of culture and democracy has an immediate impact on our lives. When an audience collaborates in performance ethnography, they are enacting the rights of citizenship. To join in, to have your position heard, is to participate in society as a fully endowed citizen with both social and political rights. (344)

The post show discussions at Chapel Hill were particularly collaborative, with feedback ranging from the political and social to performative and theoretical. Others wanted to discuss the nature of this show in relation to collective memory. A question addressed included, “What does this show do to help create collective memory?” I discussed how the drops of everydayness are like droplets of water accumulated to form a greater body which is a larger force of water to be reckoned with when thinking of multiple stories of coming together to form a greater experience of Hurricane Katrina. I address issues of collective and cultural memory further in Chapter Five.

Many audience members were also interested in the repetition within the piece, particularly the repetition of the body movement and the repeated gestures of “scrubbing and rinsing,” the turtle pose of “Oh my God, what has happened?”, and the upright posturing for “pick up and move on.” A woman in the audience at Chapel Hill stated that she was very unsettled and anxious watching the repetition. She said she thought the repetition would ease her, but in the repetitive gestures she sees the body still working to put it all back together. She mentioned that the body is the problem. The larger body is not going away. Olomo reminds, “Performance ethnography embraces the muddiness of multiple perspectives, idiosyncrasy, and competing truths, and pushes everyone present into an immediate confrontation with our beliefs and behavior” (344).

Other comments contained negative reviews of “scrubbing and rinsing.” A fellow resident of Saint Bernard Parish experienced the movements and gestures present on stage as seeing her body reflecting back at her. The resident responded to the show by stating, “Why should I have to watch someone scrub and rinse hurricane leftovers, when I do that every day of my life!” Olomo states, “the sense of accountability and ideological authenticity is shifted when those who lived the stories are not also performing in those stories or acting as witness to the performance” (342). The discomfort in the repetition of the show also proves that Brecht’s alienation device works. The labor is visible and audible from the stage. Labor informs the audience that witnesses are not allowed to be complacent. Repetition wears on an audience, creating an experience of the toil and labor involved in experiencing Hurricane Katrina. Olomo continues to stress the relationship between body to body present in each other’s worlds, “We have to acknowledge the validity of another viewpoint, because it is living right there in front of us” (344). Audience members, whether part of the community interviewed or part of the

community witnessing the performance, were collaborators. Audience members are active spectators of the struggles of Saint Bernard Parish residents when witnessing “Hang It Out To Dry.”

Cindy Spurlock, PhD candidate from the University of Chapel Hill North Carolina, in her written response to the show¹, discusses the dis-ease of the mundane at which “Hang It Out To Dry” challenges a sense of closure in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She writes,

I want to offer one brief insight regarding the rhetorical power and force of one of Vignes' performative choices in HIOTD that directly and radically challenges these official narratives. Repetition—often a feature of everyday life and of the mundane—takes on a new and deeply affective level of salience in HIOTD as the mundane, in this case, is the fact that so many people were left behind to fend for themselves. In this case, the mundane is the everyday reality of post-disaster apathy, neglect, and mismanagement by the federal government. The mundane is cost-cutting, social stratification, and the refusal of government to make infrastructure improvements—to listen to scientific expertise and local, situated knowledges. The mundane here is profane, indecorous, and a national embarrassment of epic proportions. The mundane is to be ignored, to be silenced, to have one's story codified as a statistic. As these mundane official discourses suggest that the rational thing to do is to "pick up and move on", Vignes' dis-closures open a place of opposition and function as a "public hearing" of a different sort where the questions of justice and neoliberal rationality are confronted in waist-high water.

Responses to the performances of “Hang It Out To Dry” included questions such as “Should we enjoy a show such as “Hang It Out To Dry”? What is the intent for audiences to walk away with after witnessing the show? Is the audience supposed to walk away from the show with an unnerved sense of unfinalizability?” Spurlock continues, ““Hang It Out To Dry” is not simply about a region of Louisiana. It is a mirror that confronts us with our own image” (see appendix). The mirror in Spurlock’s response, the mirror confronting me performs. Practicing the methods of performing ethnography creates an aesthetic product and more importantly creates a better awareness of the world through the genre of live performance. Activating the communities who

¹ See Appendix C for Spurlock’s response to “Hang It Out To Dry” performed at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, September, 2007.

witnessed and collaborated in the telling and sharing of the stories of Saint Bernard Parish, we are steps closer to understanding the impact the Louisiana coast has on our nation and our world.

I am not alone in this project. Our duty is to give the story to you. The story is yours now.

What are you going to do with it?

Lisa Flanagan introduced and responded to “Hang It Out To Dry” in the fall of 2007 at the National Communication Association Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Flanagan’s response demonstrates the work of story.²

Much of Chalmette, New Orleans, South LA and Mississippi cannot be preserved in the traditional sense, but “Hang It Out To Dry” is one way to preserve part of the cultural landscape in the art of performance, the re-enactment of stories, the creation of the work. In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger expresses the importance of such preservation:

Preserving the work does not reduce people to their private experiences, but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work. Thus it grounds being for and with one another as the historical standing-out of human existence in reference to unconcealedness. Most of all, knowledge in the manner of preserving is far removed from that merely aestheticizing connoisseurship of the work’s formal aspects, its qualities and charms. Knowing as having seen is a being resolved; it is standing within the conflict that the work has fitted into the rift. (66)

You are now a part of the stories, the acts of dwelling and preserving. The areas and people affected by Katrina and Rita, like those affected by other large scale natural disasters—fires in southern California, tsunamis in South East Asia—need for others to dwell with them on the issues surrounding their plights; to help preserve their stories, cultures, places and dwellings; and to understand that the process requires time.

The process in which we as interpreters, creators and co-producers must view the stories of our landscape to understand who we are can be a difficult one; however, we are not alone. The process doesn’t happen as an individual private experience, but as a conversation. The dialogue of “Hang It Out To Dry” occurred between landscape, artists, colleagues, interviewees and audience members.

² See Appendix B for Lisa Flanagan’s response “Can You Deny.”

When I first started this project, I knew that I could not tell the story on my own. I am simply one droplet of water in the grand body of Hurricane Katrina. The collaboration of multiple audiences and witnesses throughout the travels of the show created more than a series of dialogue. We interacted with one another, taking into account each other's responses and making changes in our own actions. My performance echoed the audience response as I traveled from site to site. The audience served as co-creators in the many manifestations of "Hang It Out to Dry." My audiences throughout my two year travels rippled into communities of "Hang It Out To Dry." They are communities that I still keep in contact and interact with in my daily life. Collaboration "works" a story, "works" the performance of a story and worked in "Hang It Out To Dry." I thank all who were willing to get their hands dirty.

CHAPTER FIVE THE COMMUNITIES OF “HANG IT OUT TO DRY”

The multiple communities involved in “Hang It Out To Dry” are scattered throughout the country. Comprised of persons diverse in age, race, ethnicity, and economic status, these communities range from groups of hometown friends and acquaintances to colleagues in various academic disciplines met at regional and national conferences. The performance of this “one-person show” demonstrates the power of the aesthetic to bring communities together by merging various interests and public domains and creating a voice for each through the process of performing ethnography. Judith Hamera states in Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City:

Aesthetics are inherently social. The formal properties and presumptions intrinsic to the production and consumption of art are communicative currency developed by and circulating between artists, audiences and critics, binding them together in interpretive communities, serving as bases for exchange in the public and private conversations that constitute art’s relational, political and affective lives. (3)

The web of communities spun by “Hang It Out To Dry” makes itself most evident when I track my body, along with the set pieces and equipment for the show, from location to location. The material body of “Hang It Out to Dry” is a communal laboring body, connecting seemingly disparate groups of people. Hamera supports my claim arguing, “The social work of aesthetics is especially central to performance, where labors of creation are explicitly communal and corporeal, and where corporeality and sociality are remade as surely as a formal event is produced” (3). In this study, the theme of labor resounds, from the stories of the interviewees of Saint Bernard Parish who rushed to help neighbor and stranger alike to the volunteer efforts of theater practitioners who assisted with the installation and technical operations of my show as it traveled across the country to the thoughtful feedback and commentary of audiences and critics.

When considering the many communities involved in “Hang It Out to Dry,” one discovers the potential of performance to sustain, reinvent, and rearrange the relationship of one group with another. In this chapter, I illustrate how ethnographic performance creates new intimacies which bring communities together. Hamera describes the transformative nature of performance:

As individuals and communities labor in service of the true, the good or the beautiful in performance, performers remake themselves, often literally, corporeally. But more than this, they reshape possibilities for intimacy. They alter time and space, regulate or reconceive gender norms, fashion ways of entering or evading personal and cultural history. They tactically deploy the transcendent and the ineffable to act out the contingencies of the here and now. (4)

In the immediacy of performance, participants work toward common goals. As they do so, the walls that often thwart interpersonal connections are replaced by bridges built in the name of performance. In the following, I explore a few of the communities built, sustained, reinvented, or rearranged by “Hang It Out To Dry.” First, I focus on my hometown community of Saint Bernard Parish where I explore the value of “Hang It Out To Dry” in regard to documenting narrative, social advocacy and cultural memory. Second, I move to my disciplinary home where I trace my involvement in performance festivals and communication conferences. Third, I turn my focus toward the performance communities of audience, artists and witnesses who actively participated in the workshop experience of “Hang It Out To Dry.” To conclude, I use Victor Turner’s theory of the social drama to analyze the redressive performative acts of communities associated with “Hang It Out To Dry.”

Hometown Community

Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana, my family’s residence for over two hundred years, will never be the same after Hurricane Katrina. According to Habitat for Humanity, “St. Bernard Parish remains one of the most devastated communities in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina

and Rita. Located just southeast of New Orleans (below the Lower Ninth), St. Bernard suffered significant structural damage to 100% of its residential and commercial units” (“Saint Bernard”). The residents of Saint Bernard have struggled to sustain and rebuild their personal and cultural homes and way of life with only about a third of the residents returning to the area. According to www.sbp.org, in January 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau updated their population estimates of Saint Bernard Parish from 19,826 to 33,439. The article states:

Taffaro said the increase estimate is significant, symbolically and financially. "It sends the message of momentum," he said. The new number also means the parish is eligible for approximately \$13 million more in federal funding this year and in years to come. (“U.S. Census Bureau increases St. Bernard Parish 2007 population estimate”)

Now four years after Hurricane Katrina, help outside of federal assistance is still available to the community with projects like Camp Hope of Habitat for Humanity, a project allowing volunteers to assist in cleanups and rebuilding efforts. According to Habitat’s website in April 2009:

New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity has a large presence in St. Bernard Parish. Between 200 and 900 volunteers a week stays at our volunteer camp. Camp Hope volunteers have the opportunity to meet with area residents who donate their time and knowledge to share local history and explain what the recovery process has entailed. Many volunteers have a special place in their hearts for St. Bernard, and have returned two and three times (or more!) to Camp Hope. By shopping in St. Bernard stores, frequenting local restaurants, and even just being available to listen to the stories of the residents, the spiritual and economic impact of the volunteers has made a major difference in many peoples' lives. (“Saint Bernard”)

Other private and nonprofit organizations aiding in the rebuilding of Saint Bernard Parish include, City of Hope, the Pastors United in Prayer, Operation Blessing, the National Relief Network, Americorps, the Meraux Foundation, Assisting Hands.org, the Franciscan Ministries, and the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

While these reports testify to the progress made in neighborhoods around the parish, more troubling issues concern the cultures that once resided in the parish, particularly the *Isleno* culture. The *Isleno* culture, one that has resided in the community since the late eighteenth

century, is under the most threat in Saint Bernard Parish. According to an NPR feature in December of 2005:

The descendants of Spanish-speaking Canary Islanders who settled St. Bernard Parish more than 200 years ago are now struggling to restore a community that was dispersed by Katrina's winds and floods. For the last two centuries, they survived hurricanes and epidemics, and became expert shrimpers, crabbers, oystermen, muskrat trappers and bootleggers. Now there's almost nothing left of the oldest *Isleno* communities. Katrina's 20-foot storm surge and high winds destroyed nearly every structure. The hurricane tore new lakes in the marsh. Truck bumpers and boat sterns poke out of the dark waters of Bayou Terre aux Boeufs. Dead marsh grass hangs on everything, giving the appearance of the palmetto huts the *Islenos* built when they first arrived. (Burnett)

Unfortunately, the number of Spanish speaking *Islenos* remaining in Saint Bernard Parish since Hurricane Katrina is unclear; however, efforts are in progress to rebuild the cultural sites of the *Islenos*. According to The Times Picayune on June 16, 2009, local, state and federal officials along with *Islenos* Cultural Society members gathered to break ground on the repairs of the Los *Islenos* Museum on Bayou Road. According to the article, "The reconstruction is being financed with \$1.7 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and is expected to be finished in January 2010, parish officials said" ("Ground Broken on Reconstruction of Islenos Museum Complex in St. Bernard Parish"). The heritage and cultural societies of Saint Bernard, particularly The *Los Islenos* Heritage and Cultural Society and the Canary Island Descendants Association are dedicated to preserving the traditions of the *Isleno* people, and rebuilding the *Los Islenos* Museum complex is a tremendous step in the path of progress.

Preserving *Islenos* tradition means safeguarding its oral traditions of folklore and song, specifically the *decimas*. *Decimas* are ten to twelve stanza folk narrative songs embodying themes of sarcasm, humor, irony, personal inspiration and local events. Because the oral traditions of the *Islenos* are both archived in texts but also passed down as a repertoire of the community's identity, the historical memories of the *Isleno* culture has been preserved to some

extent. However, the repertoire of the community is dangerously disappearing with the older generations of the community. Only a few *decima* singers remain in the community, including myself, who can still perform the ancient songs of our past. Diana Taylor in The Archive and the Repertoire discusses the Mexican *cantares* and *aeritos*, like the *decimas*, stating that “Dance/song (*areitos* and *cantares*) functioned as a way of telling history and communicating the past glories . . . The telling is as important as the writing, the doing as central as the recording, the memory passed down through bodies and mnemonic practices” (35). With the passing of the last old time *decimero*, Mr. Irvan Perez in January of 2008, the disappearance of the *decima*’s repertoire is as clear as ever. How does the *decima* function as a way of telling without the *decimero*?

Currently, I perform a *decima* in “Hang It Out To Dry.” The NORD/NOBA Dance Company, choreographed by Maritza Mercado-Narcisse, also incorporates the *decima* in a contemporary dance piece “A Few Things Left Unsaid.” One can also witness the *decima* online through sound sources as well as through video recordings, and *decimas* live in the memories of those who have witnessed and have knowledge of the songs. Performances of the *decima* retain what might otherwise be forgotten, the story of a Spanish tradition in Louisiana. Diane Taylor states:

Memory paths and documented records might retain what the other ‘forgot.’ These systems sustain and mutually produce each other; neither is outside or antithetical to the logic of the other. (35-36)

Historically, the *decima* thrived as repertoire with no need for documentation as part of everyday life. Presently, the *decima* has adapted to changing times, sung out of context by those who have learned the *decima* second hand and witnessed by those who have never seen the *decimas*

performed and know nothing of the *Isleno* culture. Documentation and memory paths supply the performer and the audience with what history has left behind.

Memory paths, documented records, and adapted performances are what remain of the oral tradition of the *decima*. The death of Mr. Irvan Perez, the last old time *decimero* of our community, caught the attention of not just regional but national news. His life work on the *decima* and his obituary made the Post-Gazette Pittsburgh News, The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times. Archived as Taylor states in “a permanent and tangible resource of materials available over time for revision and reinterpretation” Mr. Irvan Perez’s work is available for future research (191). The repertoire of the performed *decima* by the *decimero* is transformed into other modes of transmission. The *decima* is recreated as performance, as event for different audiences in multiple locations on the local and national levels. The performance of the *decima* is in what Diane Taylor calls “thought /memory” and mixed within dance, song and performance art. “There is a continuum of ways of sorting and transmitting memory that spans from the archival to the embodied, or what I have been calling a repertoire of embodied thought/memory, with all sorts of mediated and mixed modes in between” (192). “Hang It Out To Dry” is a means to transmit the stories of the *Islenos* and the histories of the *decima*, yet the *decima* is one example of the stories preserved through the “Hang It Out To Dry.” The show also includes the voices of eight individuals from Saint Bernard Parish, functioning as advocacy in the public forum.

In Hannah Harvey Blevins’ dissertation, Mines-Bodies: A Performance Ethnography of Appalachian Coal Mining, she asserts, “Public performance has the power to contest dominant ideologies and transform consciousness, working outward from the biographies and locations of specific individuals to advocate for social justice and change” (398). “Hang It Out To Dry”

provides power to the voiceless by supplying a stage for individual voices to be heard, voices of impotent and marginalized community members. Blevins continues “Ethnographic performance offers a means to humbly re-present—and through kinesis—break and remake these narratives into embodied enactments that give voice to the voiceless . . .” (398). The unknown stories of Saint Bernard Parish community members are reinvented for the public eye on stage. The staged stories represent a range of sentiments regarding Saint Bernard Parish after Hurricane Katrina. The voices of individuals intertwined in the script create a dialogic tension which acts as a public forum or hearing, allowing those voices to speak to and against one another.

The ethical issue of advocating for the presence of community members’ voices on stage is the fundamental core of performance ethnography. The ethical focus of performance ethnography, according to Olorisa Omi Osun Olomo’s article “Performance and Ethnography, Performing Ethnography, Performance Ethnography,” is credited to Dwight Conquergood. His contribution to performance studies and performing ethnography “was equally concerned with the ethical practices of the ethnographer and the participation of fieldwork community members in shaping the representations performed of them” (340). Conquergood focused on the veracity of the voices represented on stage. In “Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance” Conquergood states, “the conspicuous artifice of performance is a vivid reminder that each voice has its own integrity” (10). Both delivery and dialogism provide accountability when I represent others on stage. My accountability depends not only on revealing the artifice when I show my construction of character, but my accountability also relies on dialogism. The dialogism of the narratives in “Hang It Out To Dry” occur through the placement of competing voices in the script. The tensions and conflicts created through contested narratives form what is representative of a community in public performance.

In part, I created the show with the intention for community members to see and witness their narratives on stage. Community members witnessed the show on several occasions, once in Saint Bernard Parish at Elaine P. Nunez Community College, at Louisiana State University in the HopKins Black Box theatre, at the Shaw Center for the Arts in downtown Baton Rouge, at Lusher Charter School in New Orleans, and at Baton Rouge Community College. In all locations, Saint Bernard Parish citizens were present in the audience and in three locations, (Elaine P. Nunez Community College, HopKins Black Box theatre and the Shaw Center for the Arts) interviewees watched their words played out on stage. As once a fellow community member and now researcher, I am responsible for the integrity of the narratives. Their voices are my voice and mine is theirs. I placed “my body on the line,” thereby representing the interviewees’ bodies which, as Olomo argues, are highly political.

When the fieldwork community members are incorporated into the performance, the potential for politicization and advocacy becomes apparent. Unlike conceptions of ethnography that espouse neutrality and objectivity, performance ethnography’s attention to embodiment (and the attendant politics of embodiment) situate the practice deeply in a political frame. Embodiment is political, a stance is already implied through the sociopolitical narratives embedded in bodies. (343)

While I do not claim to represent an entire parish, the embodiment of juxtaposing narratives in “Hang It Out To Dry” represented the multiplicity of difficulties faced by citizens. In Norman K. Denzin’s Interpretive Ethnography, the “sixth moment” of ethnography is where the ethnographer acts as a public journalist. She, “is a moral advocate for the public” (284).

I performed “Hang It Out To Dry” for hundreds of audience members who have their own voice and opinion of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. If an audience member was not aware of her opinion before the show, she was aware after. In “Staging Fieldwork/Performing Human Rights,” D. Soyini Madison discusses her intent to position the audience into asking the question, “Where am I in this debate?” (402). Similar to Madison’s intent, after witnessing

“Hang It Out To Dry,” I wanted my audience to ask the question, “Where do I stand?” or “What is my position?” When the audience questions their own positionality, they are activated as witnesses into the political realm of the situation. My advocacy resides in getting my hometown community’s voice/s heard. My intent was to expose the everyday struggles and concerns of my neighbors, family, and friends with the hope of creating awareness, support and change in Saint Bernard Parish.

In keeping with the exploration of “Hang It Out To Dry” as a political vehicle for my hometown community, I want to address the notion of cultural memory. While this dissertation does not fully concern cultural memory, this new and exciting field supplies significance to the discussion of my hometown community. Marita Sturken defines cultural memory in Tangled

Memories:

The process of cultural memory is bound up in complex political stakes and meanings. It both defines culture and is the means by which its divisions and conflicting agendas are revealed. To define memory as cultural is, in effect, to enter into a debate about what that memory means. This process does not efface the individual but rather involves the interaction of individuals in the creation of cultural meaning. Cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history. (1)

As a community constantly confronted with the threat of hurricanes, we use our past experiences as reference points when dealing with impending storms. Since Hurricane Katrina, we have continued to use our experience with the storms of 2005 to evaluate our status after the passing of a hurricane. Hurricane Katrina has been and always will be a benchmark against which to gauge all hurricanes. To go a step further, a performance such as “Hang It Out To Dry” becomes incorporated into my hometown community’s memory of their Hurricane Katrina experience. Using the stories of “Hang It Out To Dry,” hometown community members from Saint Bernard Parish and the Baton Rouge area have absorbed the stories of the show into their own memories

of Katrina and hurricanes that have impacted their lives in the past and will do so in the future. Therefore, “Hang It Out To Dry” stands as an example of cultural memory.

In her article “The Image as Memorial: Personal Photographs in Cultural Memory,” Sturken differentiates cultural memory from personal and historical memory:

If we regard personal memory as the memories that remain solely within personal and familial contexts, separate from a public sharing of memory, and history as a form of sanctioned narratives of the past, cultural memory can be seen as memory that is shared outside of formal historical discourse, yet imbued with cultural memory. (178)

Hurricane Gustav hit Baton Rouge in September 2008. Much like the after affects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, a network of messages occurred the two weeks following the storm. I received the following email from Patricia Suchy, my fellow colleague and mentor, inquiring about my family’s safety.

Patricia Suchy to Danielle
9/8/08 Reply

Hi Danielle,

Have been thinking of you & your family. Read your script & David and Justin's essays in TPQ a few days ago (by flashlight) and since then have been hoping Gustav didn't re-open too many wounds. I know it can't have been easy.

We've got power back & are trying to clean up--no major damage, but stuck in my head while raking and hauling branches around is the line, "Oh my god, what has happened?" It reminds me of several things, but mainly two: how lucky we are to have had not anywhere near 1/100 as much to be dumbfounded by, and how the stories we hear and tell, as you say and demonstrate so eloquently, move through us and sustain us in all kinds of ways one cannot foresee. I am cleaning up to the rhythms of your stories. It's helping.

I hear BRCC is still having power issues and not opening this week. I hope the outcome of your application there hasn't been put in limbo, but do let us know how that is going, if you just want to talk, don't have power & would like a cool place to sleep, etc. Haven't forgot we still want to get you & Andy here for a dinner as well. Soon?

xoTrish

In the message, Trish mentions her act of cleaning up to the rhythms of my stories, referring to the rhythms of the public performance of “Hang It Out To Dry.” The stories of the show, the memories shared outside of formal historical discourse, generated for Trish a means of coping with debris removal in the aftermath of a hurricane.

In a similar way, I visited the Perez family after Hurricane Gustav, and as I sat with Mr. Irvan Perez’s daughter, Jeannette Alphonso, she discussed her efforts to clean up the debris. She told me, “Well, here we go again, scrubbing and rinsing!” As she laughed and patted me on the shoulder, I was reminded of Trish’s email. The stories told in a performance like “Hang It Out To Dry” participate in the negotiations of what stories find a home in cultural memory. Diana Taylor states in The Archive and The Repertoire, “Cultural memory is, among other things a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection” (82). When community members connect with their neighbors in their travels from Baton Rouge to New Orleans to Saint Bernard Parish, a brief “hello, how are you?” is an act of pre Katrina status. Whether connecting with neighbors in a drugstore or a casino, the stories of Hurricane Katrina are still conversational stock. I have heard my interviewees reference the stories from “Hang It Out To Dry” on many occasions. Specifically, I have witnessed Shannon Sanders, the dance school owner, tell the story of Gene Alonzo, the Saint Rita’s Nursing Home survivor, as her worst memory of Hurricane Katrina. Other than Shannon Sanders witnessing the performance of “Hang It Out To Dry,” she does not have a relationship with and has never met Gene Alonzo. She learns the story of Gene Alonzo through the performance, and his stories influence Shannon, defining her experience of her hometown through the performance of her hometown’s stories in “Hang It Out To Dry.”

While I realize fully the limitations of performance as not all of Saint Bernard Parish witnessed the show, “Hang It Out To Dry” has developed into a means for individuals to interact

with their community's story. The community members from Saint Bernard Parish who have seen and witnessed the show have expressed an overwhelming amount of thankfulness for the transmission of their community's stories around the nation. To me, their gratitude demonstrates the performance not as therapeutic but as political. As Sturken in Tangled Memories states:

Cultural memory is not in and of itself a healing process. It is unstable and unreliable. Its authenticity is derived not from its revelation of any original experience but from its role in providing continuity to a culture, the stakes in creating values in that culture, and the fundamental materiality by which that culture is defined. (259)

The stories and rhythms of "Hang It Out to Dry" are part of our cultural memory, when community members express, "Thank you. Our voices are finally heard. Now the rest of the nation knows what we've been through," community members acknowledge their stories' placement in the history of Katrina. Jeannette Rodriguez and Ted Fortier state in Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith and Identity, "The power of cultural memory rests in the conscious decision to choose particular memories, and to give those memories precedence in communal remembrance" (12). In this respect, "Hang It Out To Dry" begins to provide continuity, value the voiceless, and embed our memories of Katrina with "Oh my God, what has happened?" However moving past preservation, advocacy and cultural memory focused on my hometown community, I would like to now focus on the disciplinary circles that have both influenced and been influenced by "Hang It Out To Dry."

Disciplinary Community

The disciplinary community of performance studies sits at a crossroads. We as performance studies scholars live in the intersection of, but not limited to, art, literature, culture, media, pedagogy, praxis and theory. As performance studies scholars, performance is our object of analysis, the object that shapes social life and in which we find meaning. Turning this lens on ourselves, performance also shapes the social life of our disciplinary community through the

sharing of research at conferences and festivals. The performance studies community both influences and is influenced by “Hang It Out To Dry,” and the research of others in the field through conventions such as the National Communication Association, the Southern States Communication Association and festivals such as the Patti Pace Performance Festival and the Petit Jean Performance Festival, have created what Victor Turner would refer to as *communitas*. *Communitas* is a moment in time that results in “the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses” (44). In performance studies, we often experience the bond of *communitas* at conventions and festivals. When I travel to share my research, I unite in fellowship with my colleagues. The *communitas* of performance studies scholars at the above mentioned events produces what Turner might call a “kind of institutional capsule or pocket which contains the germ of future social developments, of societal change” (45). Because we are able to express ourselves in a free and liberating environment, our thoughts and ideas are able to expand into something larger than originally conceived.

Touring “Hang It Out To Dry” since October 2006, I witnessed how a performance production can serve as a model, as Mindy Fenske states in “Interdisciplinary Terrains of Performance Studies,” “illustrating the material shifts, rifts, and (re)combinations that characterize the inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary terrain of performance studies” (352). For example, at the Southern States Communication Association conference in Savannah, Georgia in 2008, “Hang It Out To Dry” was the centerpiece of a round table discussion entitled, “Performing Networks, Expanding Communities.” Issues addressed in this panel included the interdisciplinary possibilities of scholarly work in performance studies. The participants discussed the opportunities available for interdisciplinary experiences and exchanges through

performance. This roundtable brought together participants from multiple institutions and various academic fields who have enacted their own versions of cross-institutional, cross-disciplinary work throughout the many manifestations of “Hang It Out To Dry.” The roundtable aimed to stimulate further conversation on the practical elements of forming cross-disciplinary collaborations, and to highlight ways to expand the reach and audience for such “community theater” through networking with other institutions and community groups.

The panelists of the roundtable discussion at the Southern States Communication conference in Savannah, Georgia included Lisa M. Flanagan, T.L. Ritchie, Philip Tebbutt, and Tracy Stephenson Shaffer from Louisiana State University, Gary D. Reeves from Baton Rouge Community College, and David Terry and Stacey Treat from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Lisa Flanagan discussed her work with the Across the Curriculum (or CXC) program at LSU in which she assisted with connecting performance studies and interior design on HopKins Black Box productions. T.L. Ritchie and Philip Tebbutt are professors of interior design at LSU and led their students of interior design in these collaborations. They discussed the process in which their students created the set design for the performance. Tracy Stephenson Shaffer discussed her experience in collaborating with the interior design department for her ensemble show “The Life and Times of King Kong” one year after the inaugural collaboration of “Hang It Out To Dry.” Gary Reeves, a professor at Baton Rouge Community College, discussed the efforts to bring “Hang It Out To Dry” to the college as an activity for “One Book One Community,” a community wide reading program designed to engage a diverse population of community members in open dialogue about the issues surrounding the selected text. Jed Horne’s Breach of Faith: Hurricane Katrina and the Near Death of a Great American City. David Terry and Stacey Treat discussed allocating funds with The Center for the Study of the

American South to bring “Hang It Out To Dry” to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. All of the participants, albeit with different goals and insights, found common ground through performance. As Diana Taylor states in The Archive and the Repertoire:

Similarly, performance studies challenges the disciplinary compartmentalization of the arts—with dance assigned to one department, music to another, dramatic performance to yet another—as though many forms of artistic production have anything to do with those divides. This compartmentalization also reinforces the notion that the arts are separable from the social constructs within which they participate—either for the first or nth time. Performances, even those with almost purely aesthetic pretensions, move in all sorts of circuits, including national and transnational spaces and economies. (26-27)

“Hang It Out To Dry” begins to preserve not only those stories told by a displaced community of Saint Bernard Parish but also to weave the stories of communities within academe at LSU and beyond. Taylor continues, “Because of its interdisciplinary character, performance studies can bring disciplines that had previously been kept separate into direct contact with each other and with their historical, intellectual and sociopolitical context” (27). The networks of “Hang It Out Dry” extend beyond the southern states, reaching to national communities of performance studies scholars as well.

I performed “Hang it Out To Dry” in 2007 in Chicago, Illinois at the 93rd National Communication Association convention, and at the 94th NCA convention in 2008 in San Diego, I participated in a panel that focused on Della Pollock’s Remembering: Oral History Performance. The panel participants engaged, extended, and queried the possibilities enacted by and incited in Pollock's collection. Following the authors in the text, panelists engaged the many-layered voices—including their own—in their projects, and “co-witnessed” the voices at work in “Remembering.” As a whole, the panel performed a metacommentary about the generative force

“Remembering” can have when used in the classroom and/or as a "research partner" to performance studies teacher/scholars.¹

My participation in this panel included a scripted mystery of the two-year performance tour of “Hang It Out To Dry.” The script included the three components of a mystery: the personal, the professional, and the popular voices that assisted in contextualizing the show as a mode of cultural transmission. I included experiences of being on the road and installing communities within different spaces as I traveled from site to site, as well as the experience of others as they participated in the installation and breakdown of the show at each site. The script also included quotations from performance theorists, which allowed for the professional voice of authority and expertise to balance the script. As the touring of the show continued throughout the years, and the number of individuals who installed, workshopped with or responded to the show grew, their connection to the community of Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana increased through dialogue. Saint Bernard Parish still struggles with decisions to rebuild, relocate, and sustain life after Hurricane Katrina. My script attempted what Della Pollock calls the “promise and practice of making history in dialogue.” I am always seeking dialogue through slices, glimpses and specimens of performance, from respondent talkbacks to publications. We are reminded of our response-ability of agency, our answer to the question “What do we do with stories once we witness the tellings?” This performative paper discussed oral history performance as a preferred way of knowing and as a method of community building. The script follows this chapter in my conclusion.

However, before this most recent manifestation of this performed research, “Hang It Out To Dry” was performed for several local and not-so-local audiences. I performed a twenty-

¹ Paraphrased from the 2008 National Communication Association program.

minute version of “Hang It Out To Dry” at the Patti Pace Performance Festival in the fall of 2006 in New Orleans. After the collaborations with the interior design department and traveling to conferences, I brought the full performance to the Petit Jean Performance Festival in Petit Jean, Arkansas. Both festivals, which feature non-competitive performances, occur annually and are hosted by Performance Studies programs to celebrate the field of performance studies. These festivals also provide students with the opportunity to make connections with other universities and explore the field of performance in a relaxed atmosphere. Erik W. Rothenbuhler in

Communication and Community emphasizes:

communities are social constructions: The fact that community cannot always, perhaps not even usually, be taken for granted, is evidence enough that even when it can be, it is because community is sustained by intentionality. Community exists where people choose to make it so; making it so is work. That work of community constructs a relation between person and people, and between people and environment. (169)

The festivals and conferences that fuel the creative impulse of the field of performance studies create intentional communities, social constructions for ideas and art to be shared by and through our academic society. In turn, the social constructions fashioned by the academic communities have the potential to turn outward to larger communities and reach the public outside of an academic setting.

Performance Community

As performance builds and extends fractured communities like Saint Bernard Parish, it also connects outside populations such as disciplinary and performance communities to one another. Empathy works as a tie that binds others together. As Pelias and Shaffer write, “Empathy is a qualitative process in which individuals understand and share the feelings of others” (99). The process of perspective-taking engendered by performance involves active listening, sharing, and sometimes even identifying and adopting others’ worldviews, and in this

way, we are able to understand each other's experience better. Often, the performer uses empathy as a tool for interpreting and adapting the stories of others for the stage. An empathetic approach provides the performer with a rich perspective of the other's story. For many, empathy is at the core of performance and particularly at the core of performance communities where participants activate their bodies on stage in exercises that delve into the world in which they live. I have used "Hang It Out To Dry" to explore staged empathy through workshop processes within multiple performance communities. The following discussion tracks the workshop process I used when touring "Hang It Out To Dry." I used a method called the story circle. In the following, I trace my first encounters with the process, providing the history of the story circle, and discuss my use of the story circle as a visiting artist.

I first encountered the process of the story circle through an ensemble performance piece called "Story Power," developed by Bruce France and Nick Slie of the theatre company Mondo Bizarro out of New Orleans. "Story Power: The Pitch of Post-Katrina Narratives" premiered in the Hopkins Black Box theatre on Saturday, September 16, 2006 for one night only. The process of composing Story Power included "Mondo Bizarro conducting workshops with students in which they investigated questions of authority, personal and collective identity, and artistic license in the myriad stories told in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. The group shared their discoveries with the audience in a public performance with open discussion" (Mondo Bizarro).

The workshop conducted for Story Power included the process of story circling. Story circling was originally developed by civil rights activist and founder of New Orleans based Junebug Productions, John O'Neal. As John O'Neal states, "The rules of the story circle are the rules of civil participation in society. You agree to listen. You agree to respect" (racematters.org). John O'Neal developed story circling in order to "create opportunities for

African Americans in the black belt south to engage in art and social change activities to improve their quality of life” (leadershipforchange.org). Through their main program, the Color Line Project, founder John O’Neal and longtime colleague Theresa Holden use approaches such as collecting stories of those who lived through the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950’s and 60’s. John O’Neal also builds partnerships where those who use the story circle process can come together to better understand how communities work. He is also integral in his community where The Color Line Project focuses on collaborations between communities in order to create a vehicle for social change. His story circles are also archived in order to preserve the historical significance of the Civil Rights Movement at the Armistead Research Center at Tulane University in New Orleans. O’Neal’s story circling is a way to generate ideas, to create new paths of thinking and to teach our fellow community members the important issues surrounding us in this historic time. The following explains how I used the story circle to unite voices and communities through performance.

I facilitated story circle workshops at both Purchase College State University of New York and Lake Superior State University of Sault Saint Marie, Michigan. On the advice of both John O’Neal and Mondo Bizarro, I warmed up the participants with both body movement and vocal exercises. I used the introductory exercise of “check in/check out.” This exercise allows individuals to share their name and their feelings at the beginning of the process as each stands around a large circle. Then, at the end of the story circle process, within the larger circle, individuals are asked to check out by sharing with the group thoughts of what was learned through the process. “Checking in and out” is also an efficient method of framing the workshop. Warming up the participants vocally is important because sharing narratives and group performance work may include sound. Song is a method to bring participants together and is

also an effective icebreaker. I used Louis Armstrong's "When the Saints Go Marching In" as an icebreaker in one of my workshops as a way to connect with the participants.

I also used listening exercises as a way to introduce image work for later performances. The name game is an exemplary example of a listening exercise and a great warm up for the participants. My variation applies an everyday sound and gesture to one's name by adding onto the circle where the last person has to recite and perform the sound, gesture and name of everyone who has come before her. Other warm up exercises vary between listening activities of rhythm and movement from Augusto Boal's Games for Actors and Non Actors. As Boal states, "The goal of the exercise is a better awareness of the body and its mechanisms, its atrophies and hyperatrophies, its capacities for recuperation, restructuring, reharmonisation" (60). Boal further explains how exercises of respiratory, motor and vocal muscular movement are a reflection of our ability to communicate with others.

O'Neal's story circling begins with a facilitator and a time keeper. The facilitator first makes sure everyone is comfortable with the process, the space, and each other. O'Neal suggests the facilitator allows time for warm up exercises, or introductions in order to initiate the story circling. A theme or central idea is introduced to the participants as a way to invite experience. O'Neal addresses issues of race and discrimination. Mondo Bizarro has used themes of disaster, diaspora, and trauma. I facilitated the story circle process using themes of home and community in my travels to Purchase College and Lake Superior State. Once the facilitator explains the topic or theme, participants are divided into smaller circles of four to six people depending on the amount of individuals participating in the process. As individuals sit in circles, they must be reminded of the equity in a circle. A circle is rounded without corners and so in the story circle, no one individual is privileged. When participants sit

in their circles they must be equal distance from each other, making sure that everyone can be seen and heard. The facilitator should remind the participants that conversations can be polemic; thus, the story circle should not be a back and forth conversation between individuals.

Participants must try to subvert the natural desire to give feedback and attempt to allow equal time for each member of the circle to tell her story.

Other rules of the story circle include keeping the time for sharing stories relatively brief and moving clockwise in the circle. Three minutes is usually ample time for someone to tell her story within the group. The facilitator should also make a statement lessening the pressure of sharing stories. Participants have the option to share a story, to forego telling on the first time around, to tell their story after everyone has shared their stories, or to refrain from telling a story completely. Facilitators should remind participants not to anticipate what is going to be said before it is told in the circle. Story circling promotes active listening. The others in the circle will prompt the participants in the group by generating stories to tell. One person's story will remind another person of her own personal story through a thread or nugget of information shared by the person(s) before. Facilitators should encourage participants to be active listeners and to think of the process in terms of the body and remind the participants that most people have two ears and only one mouth. The timekeeper cues each story beginning the round and keeps everyone on track by announcing the beginning and end of each three minute session.

After the stories have passed around the circle, the facilitator leads the groups into a discussion of snapshots or images that came to mind when remembering or recalling each story. Each group discusses the snapshots described as photographs, allowing the group members to interpret the stories of others through a visual framework, yet articulating the vignettes through crosstalk, as in "That story reminded me of _____" or "When I heard that story I thought it

would look like _____” or “That image reminds me of a photograph of _____.”

Ideally, people find common threads in these descriptions. The facilitator should allow enough time for crosstalk, typically allowing equal time for discussing images and telling individual stories. For example, if the story circles last a total of twenty minutes, the discussions should last fifteen to twenty minutes.

According to O’Neal, the facilitator should include a follow up activity which should be accessible to all participants. Bruce France and Nick Slie of Mondo Bizarro Productions have created their own follow up activities to generate performances of story circling. The process continues, according to Mondo Bizarro, with each group creating a mini performance of snapshots and physical impressions of the stories. The facilitator asks each group to get up on their feet and compose a short group performance which includes one still or frozen image, four moving repetitive sequences and two soundscapes which can include but are not limited to a song, a sound, a part of your group’s story, or your interpretation of a group member’s story. Groups can also think about combining, intertwining, or collapsing stories together to create frozen, repetitive, or sound images. The facilitator should insert an explanation and provide examples of frozen and repetitive images. Each group takes ten to fifteen minutes for a brief rehearsal. The facilitator should encourage the groups to trust their impulses and their improvisory skills when composing and rehearsing the group performances. The facilitator should maintain a strict time frame and be sure to end the rehearsal process within the allotted time frame.

The facilitators then bring all the groups together to form a large circle where each smaller group delivers their short performance. After each group performs, the facilitator prompts the larger circle to discuss the performances. The facilitator prompts the participants

with questions based on the theme of each group's story circle. The facilitator might also prompt the large circle to consider the possibilities of combining or pairing different group performances in order to comment, contrast or critique the themes present in smaller group work. Patricia Suchy and I applied that possibility as described below.

Patricia Suchy and I workshopped a group of students at Lake Superior University. We added to Mondo Bizarro's process and encouraged the participants of our story circles to fuse their smaller performances into larger performances through the techniques of collage and montage. According to David Michalski in "Cities Memory Voices Collage," "The word *collage* comes from the French *coller*, "to paste." It is an art form with diverse origins. The idea of fastening pieces together, of mixing theme and variation, to stir the imagination and evoke the presence of objects, is as old as culture itself"(106). By fusing together elements of each performance in order to create a larger collective commentary either through movement or discourse, soundscape or frozen imagery, students experimented with storied collage. Thomas Brockelman refers to collage in The Frame and the Mirror: On Collage and the Postmodern as "the gathering of materials from *different* worlds into a single composition demanding a geometrically multiplying double reading of each element" (10).

We discussed the second technique of montage using the lens of film. We informed our participants of the montage using Anne Bogart's explanation, "Montage is a way of putting images together that incorporates juxtaposition, contrast, rhythm, and story. It creates a through line by assembling, overlaying and overlapping different materials collected from different sources" (141). We continued Bogart's discussion of the montage as a filmic device developed by D.W. Griffith and later refined by Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. Eisenstein refined the technique to create a subjective story line using close ups, long shots, slow motion, staccato

movement and other rhythmic tools to create an entirely new form of storytelling. We discussed the use of the montage in terms of the stage. Explanations of both collage and montage were vital to the story circling process and the synthesis of performance as discussion.

Discussion of the combined efforts of performers creates a representation of one body. Speaking about the process as a larger community within the workshop event brings the individual participants to a collective frame of meaning making. In synthesizing the story, the larger group discusses what to retain and what the group deems as important to the collective. Also, the group addresses the choices made to keep or discard elements of the group's stories. Whether the theme addressed is racism, trauma, disaster, hurricanes, memory, home or community, through the story circling process, participants can better understand each other. Understanding activates empathy and creates an opportunity to step into another's story and embody and practice the other's perspective. Workshopping empathy through the story circle creates a powerful narrative within a performance community.

Performance As Redressive Community Action

The act of performance connects the hometown, disciplinary and performance communities featured in this chapter. These communities display the generative power of performance for us, what Victor Turner addressed in his theories of drama and universals of performance. Dwight Conquergood's "Of Caravans and Carnivals: Performance in Motion" credits Turner's theories as those which "foregrounded the culture-creating capacities of performance" (138). When the above-mentioned communities perform, they do so in reaction to their lived experience. Their reaction is not a faking of lived experience but a making sense of lived experience, which is processed through performative means. To conclude this chapter, I address Turner's social drama and how it applies to the communities presented above.

Hurricane Katrina devastated not only the community of Saint Bernard Parish and surrounding areas, but it also devastated the spirit of all who witnessed the wrath of Mother Nature and the mistakes of man. According to Victor Turner, a social drama is defined as “units of aharmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations” (37). Turner’s process of the social drama includes the breach, crisis, redress, reintergration, or schism. In “Are there universals of performance in myth, ritual, and dramas?” he explains:

the world of theatre, as we know it both in Asia and America, and the immense variety of theatrical sub-genres derive not from imitation, conscious or unconscious, of the processual form of the complete or “satiated” social drama-breach, crisis, redress, reintegration, or schism-but specifically from its third phase, the one I call redress, especially from redress as ritual process. (9-11)

When the stages of a social drama occur, such as the events of Hurricane Katrina, performance as the primary redressive act is community building.

Turner’s first stage of a social drama is ironically called a breach. We witnessed the many breaches that occurred in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Of course, the literal breaches of the levees, more than fifty levee failures, were some primary conflicts within the drama of Hurricane Katrina. But we also witnessed the breach/es of our local government, particularly concerning evacuation efforts, and the Corps of Engineers breached the trust of Louisiana citizens with inadequate levees and flood control. The breach should also include every citizen of our nation who ignored the significance of coastal erosion and desperate attempts to save our US wetlands, which in turn save our coastal communities.

The breaches of Hurricane Katrina widened the floodgates for the second phase of Turner’s social drama, the crisis. The crisis includes conflict within groups that reveal hidden motives, ambitions and interests. Crisis occurred when our president at the time of Hurricane Katrina, George W. Bush, delayed addressing the situation until three days after the storm made

landfall. Crisis also included the local, state and national governments' inadequacies to support the troubled parishes such as the pitfalls of Mayor Ray Naquin's absence, the corrupt handlings of Saint Bernard Parish, the blaming of Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, and the shocking mismanagement of The Federal Emergency Management System. Crisis also includes the enormous amounts of people, primarily African American and poor, who were exploited through media and news coverage. The crisis of race and class in Southern Louisiana was played out before our nation's eyes. Crisis may also include clashes of character as we saw the Coast Guard, Canadian Mounties and citizens of drowning parishes superseding government protocol in order to press on with rescue efforts while areas were still underwater. Turner states:

Problems and obstacles (the 'crisis' stage of social dramas) challenge our brain neurobiology into full arousal, and culture supplies that aroused activity with a store of preserved social experiences which can be 'heated up' to supply the current hunger for meaning with reliable nutrients. (13)

At the point of crisis, where painful conflicts are at heightened levels, society begins to pull meaning out of its hardship. A third phase of social drama evolves within the meaning making of crisis, the redressive act.

The redressive phase is a threshold of the social drama and the less stable phase of the process. Turner describes this phase:

But ritual and its progeny, the performance arts among them, derive from the subjunctive, liminal, reflexive, exploratory heart of the social drama, its third, redressive phase, where the contents of group experiences are replicated, dismembered, remembered, refashioned, and mutely or vocally made meaningful. (13)

In the redressive act, the events leading up to the current phase are questioned, addressed, and commented on typically in a ritualized act. The redress of Hurricane Katrina takes many forms.

Whether the redress is Spike Lee's When The Levees Broke, or MacGillivray Freeman's Hurricane On The Bayou, Mondo Bizarro's "Story Power: Narratives of Hurricane Katrina," a

memorial service for those lives lost in the storm, or the unveiling of a monument in the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet near Ycloskey or in the lower Ninth Ward, these acts lead to reintegration or social change. Theatrical staged drama as a redressive act is the point at which society looks back at the previous two phases, assesses the situation and decides on an outcome:

True theatre “at its height signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events.” When this happens in a performance, there may be produced in audience and actors alike what d’Aquili and Laughlin (1979:177) call in reference both to ritual and meditation a “brief ecstatic state and sense of union (often lasting a few seconds) and may often be described as no more than a shiver running down the back at a certain point.” A sense of harmony with the universe is made evident, and the whole planet is felt to be *communitas*. This shiver has to be won, achieved, though, to be a consummation, after working through a tangle of conflicts and disharmonies. (Turner 13)

The “redress” of Hurricane Katrina is liminal; the phase is situated in the threshold of not knowing what’s to come. What do audience members do with the information provided in a show like “Hang It Out To Dry?” Is it a call to take social action, to volunteer with rebuilding efforts, to transmit the stories of hardship and struggle of survivors to others around the world? Or, is it an opportunity to go through a staged process and engage in the empathetic witnessing of performed collected narratives? Whether the threshold is defined as the outcome of “Hang It Out To Dry” or the many spaces and places in which the narratives have been installed or the many formed and reformed communities who witnessed “Hang It Out To Dry,” I am confident performance is a threshold worth the labor of standing in, betwixt and between. The fundamental act of sharing stories with others, stories such as Hurricane Katrina, after audience members have left the theatrical space demonstrates the power of storytelling within community.

Turner writes:

Life itself now becomes a mirror held up to art, and the living now *perform* their lives, for the protagonist of a social drama, a ‘drama of living,’ have been equipped by aesthetic drama with some of their most salient opinions, imageries, tropes, and ideological perspectives. Neither mutual mirroring, life by art, art by life, is exact, for each is not a planar mirror but matricial mirror; at each exchange something new is added and

something old is lost or discarded. Human beings learn through experience, though all too often they repress painful experience, and perhaps the deepest experience is through drama; not through social drama, or stage drama (or its equivalent) alone, but in the circulatory or oscillatory process of their mutual and incessant modification. (17)

The many communities that have witnessed “Hang it Out To Dry” “redress” Hurricane Katrina. Through the interview process in my hometown community, sharing my work with my disciplinary community at festivals and conferences, and leading performance communities to engage the social drama of Katrina through story circling, each community modifies notions of home and community. As I facilitate, participate in, and audience this process, I become confident that we do eventually “pick up and move on.”

The final phase of Turner’s social drama, the reintegration phase, involves restoring the status quo to a state of harmony or recognizing the irreparability of the event. Within the communities of “Hang It Out To Dry,” reintegration progresses slowly. The Corps of Engineers has raised floodwalls and built floodgates in the Saint Bernard Parish area. The community is also rebuilding not just homes, but museums and cultural practices, including festivals and public celebrations. Advocacy of nonprofit organizations recognizes where there is still work to be done in rebuilding the parish. Cultural memory of Hurricane Katrina is also strengthening through the construction of hurricane memorials, commemorative services, and performance practices.

Reintegration in my disciplinary community after “Hang It Out To Dry” includes new networks created through conferencing and attending festivals. The community is now able to take the information provided from “Hang It Out To Dry” and progress their own understandings of the multiple facets of performance studies and associated disciplines. As I complete this study, the Hopkins Black Box plans its fourth collaboration with the Interior Design Department. My hope is for scholars to use the interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary efforts of “Hang It Out

to Dry” in order to revise, rework and reinvent my example in the name of performance. In doing so, my disciplinary community will continue breaking ground at the intersections of fieldwork, theory, practice, and community building. Also, workshopping with performance communities generated new communities within unconventional spaces. In the workshop, we united in space and time through the telling of stories. Workshopping with performance communities even produced *communitas* with those willing to put their own bodies on the line.

Reintegration in the above communities seem reasonable in the moment of performance, and yet I fully recognize the shortcomings of community building as well. In my hometown community, the completion of the levee repairs is indefinite, and engineers have reported several levee leaks and poorly rebuilt levees in lower Saint Bernard Parish. Residents are concerned with inadequate floodgates in the bayous despite the closure of the MRGO. The completion of the job before another storm remains everpresent. I realize the social dramas of Saint Bernard Parish in certain cases will never reach reintegration. Moreover, I am also aware of the blind eye some citizens and public officials turn toward social matters of race, poverty and marginalization. In those cases, I am not certain if the blind eye equates to the irreparability of the event. Furthermore, outside of my hometown, I am conscious of my disciplinary and performance communities as advantaged communities, most situated within a university space.

Hamera reminds us:

In such corporeal, contextual specificity, aesthetics can never be mistaken for transcendent or timeless. It is always already entangled ‘in systems of power, repression, and exclusion’ (Matthews and McWhirter, 2003: xxvi). It exposes questions of who gets to create, to consume, to judge, and the social contingencies undergirding all these privileges. (3)

Again, staging stories is political. I engaged in the above communities because they directly affected my research and performance practices. While some may debate the romanticizing of

the above communities, within the context of the staged drama of “Hang It Out To Dry,” the sustainability of community perseveres in the redressive act, the act of performance. My romanticizing of communities is due wholly to the performance of community, the activation of others to make and create change within a group. The effort is evident in what Turner describes as the “working through a tangle of conflicts and disharmonies” (13). In moving through the redressive act, in terms of performance Hamera reminds us that, “performance has the potential to remake the world and our abilities to know and theorize it” (208). Though it will never be the same as it was before the storm, we are witnesses of communities reinforced by both the social and staged dramas of Hurricane Katrina, and we can remake the world by performing community.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: A LISTENING BACKWARD IS A LISTENING FORWARD

As Della Pollock stated in her response to the panel “Performative Research and Response: In Conversation with Pollock’s (ed) Remembering: Oral History Performance” at the National Communication Association convention of 2008 in San Diego, California, “A listening backward is a listening forward.” That is, by playing/performing the role of listener, one is then response-able for also performing the role of teller and producer. Through collecting stories, we cobble together our own life stories. As one listens to other stories she writes her own story. She is able to pick up and move on. She is able to haul and install stories in new spaces and with new communities. Remaking stories creates a matrix of connective tissue between those co/reproducing stories. Below I summarize key points in prior chapters, addressing each chapter as another story in the connective tissue of the research project “Hang It Out To Dry.”

After I introduced the study with my own academic story, Chapter Two provided the ethnographic methods used in constructing this research. I provide a literature review of performance ethnography in order to place or categorize “Hang It Out To Dry” as a staged critical ethnography. In this chapter, I concoct my own recipe for conducting ethnographic research. Drawing upon the work of D. Soyini Madison and Bud Goodall, I created my own five step process: establishing positionality, locating experts, building relationships and trust, collecting materials and attending to ethical responsibility.

Chapter Three provided a thick description of the scripting and staging of “Hang It Out To Dry.” Moving through the scripting and staging process, I described the methods and theories I used in creating “Hang It Out To Dry.” The chapter then serves as an ethnography of the scripting and staging process of “Hang It Out To Dry.” The chapter covered a wide range of

aesthetic, theoretical and literary analyses of the composition of the show. Theory powers the performance vehicle and opens the door for scripting and staging possibilities. Specifically, the chapter focused on examining the staging of imagery, the creation of subtexts, the adaptation of personal stories and the framing of collected narratives. Using excerpts from the script, I applied a number of theorists and practitioners' works. Some who are mentioned include Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Richard Bauman, Mikhail Bakhtin, Erving Goffman, Shannon Jackson, Della Pollock, D. Soyini Madison, Avery Gordon and Michel de Certeau. In the conclusion of Chapter Three, I discuss the script as the material remains of an ephemeral performance. The script is discussed as a souvenir, a material embracing memories used to reinscribe our everyday lives. The script as souvenir argues for the power of performance in understanding and communicating culture. I hope the script work in Chapter Three can inspire my fellow ethnographers interested in exploring the Other by means of staged performance.

Chapter Four explores the dynamics of the collaborative process of performing ethnography in the production of "Hang It Out to Dry." I traced the collaborative nature of this performance beginning with the contributions of the interviewees, followed by the involvement of artists, mentors, and musicians. Each collaboration is subdivided beginning with the interviewee collaborations where I supply the reader with a character depiction of each individual performed in the show, allowing for a rich description of the eight interviewees, giving the reader access to what she cannot see on stage. Next, I discuss the collaborations with the interior design department beginning with the Communication Across the Curriculum program and ending with the chosen set design for the show. I also discuss collegial collaborations with fellow academics and artists who assisted in the many manifestations of the project. I discuss the music collaborations, developing a call and response system which I

analyze using the work of John Cage and his discussions on “grace and clarity.” Finally, I end with the collaborations of audience members through post show discussions, letters and feedback arguing for collaboration and the “working” of a story.

Chapter Five considers the communities of “Hang It Out To Dry.” I begin the chapter using Judith Hamera’s claim of “aesthetics as inherently social,” created and influenced by labored bodies at work within a community (3). I divide the chapter into three of the communities which have influenced and have been influenced by “Hang It Out To Dry.” Each community has sustained, reinvented and/or rearranged itself through the power of performance. First, I describe my hometown community in terms of the struggle to rebuild homes and social life. I also focus on the cultural traditions of the area, particularly the Isleno community and their world renowned art of the *decima*. I outline the preservation efforts taking place and the transformations of cultural practices such as the *decima* in dealing with the loss of community. I address the advocacy of performing “Hang It Out To Dry” as a call to change and voice my desire for the audience to think critically about the struggles of Hurricane Katrina survivors. I also consider the role the performance plays in the cultural memory of my hometown community of Saint Bernard Parish. Second, I turn to the disciplinary community of performance studies, stressing the significance of the working networks within the Southern States Communication Association and the National Communication Association. I also discuss Victor Turner’s “communitas” in reference to conferences and festivals such as the Patti Pace Performance Festival and the Petit Jean Performance Festival. Third, I analyze the performance community made out of “Hang It Out To Dry” focusing on the workshops I offered when touring the show. I offer John O’Neil’s “story circle” as a means to discuss and perform notions of home and community. I conclude Chapter Five with a discussion of Victor Turner’s social and staged

dramas in regard to Hurricane Katrina and the performance of “Hang It Out To Dry.” Using Turner’s redressive phase, I explore the potential of performance to make sense of lived experience, access the situation, and determine a possible outcome. The listening backward of the previous Chapters’ stories demonstrates the possibilities of performance ethnography when the connective tissue takes to the road and listens forward.

Mobile Matrix

The remaking of the story is always driven by notions of nostalgia. When we leave home, when we pack up and move on, there is always a desire to get back to home, to get back to what once was. Performance challenges nostalgia. We do feel sick for home, but as we reconstitute homes, redefine communities, we question what it is about home we miss. Is home a site or a border? Can home be a mobile matrix that has the ability to be unstable and move back and forth, side to side and in and out?

The following script tracks one mobile matrix of “Hang it Out to Dry.” In traveling the show, many hands have been involved in the transport of the show from city to city. The global positioning system I suctioned to my dashboard mapped the virtual location of each community intertwined in the project of “Hang It Out To Dry.” The mapping of networks and communities that have created a web of collective efforts exist because of performance. Performance maps the intangible points of communal intention. In looking back, being mobile truly made performance go. I can honestly say remembering is forward-making. The question Della Pollock enjoys asking when commenting on a performed ethnography is, “So what do we do now?” As Sarah Dykins Callahan’s performative paper at NCA in San Diego 2008, “Materializing a Re/membered Past” states, “This do in remembrance.” Switching the object-verb position, the statement becomes a commandment of performance. Performance does in

remembrance. The following script is a doing of remembrance. The following script represents the matrix, or at least one thread of the web involved in the project of “Hang It Out To Dry.” So, what do we do now? The previous chapters of this document and the following script answer the question with a one word response, “perform.”

Performing Community: A Traveling Script

As Laurie Lathem states in Remembering, “Telling stories has always been a way to join people together, a way of humanizing that which is in danger of becoming dehumanized, of bearing witness and keeping history alive” (83).

David Pye

I helped to load the boxes into your van because . . . well, because why not? I was there, and I didn’t see it as a big deal. Anytime I help out with a performance, I feel that I am part of a community of . . . well, of “performance folks.” The kind of people who *could* be doing something else, but instead choose to spend time and energy developing and staging interesting, creative, thought-provoking experiences to share with other people. I’d say that I felt this when I helped to load the boxes into your van. But I also just felt like a friend.

Stage Set

The Toyota Sienna van is packed with the same items for every trip: a weekend bag of clothes, my laptop, an ice chest of snacks and my five white plastic boxes constructed from signboard material each measuring 8’ by 4’. Stacked across the back of the van, the boxes take up so much room that a seat must be removed and the front passenger chair is pushed up against the dashboard. There is always room for two to three passengers and their luggage. A global positioning system is suctioned to the front windshield and plugged into the dashboard. Cell phone is plugged into the charger which is plugged into the dashboard. Trip meter A is set to

zero. Tank is full of unleaded gas, still under \$3.00 a gallon and classic rock plays on the radio.

A collection of cds is stored in the driver's door.

(The performer enters the van from the driver's seat door, checks rear view window, adjusts seat, steps on the brake and shifts gears from park to drive. Moves right foot from brake to gas pedal and gently pushes foot forward. Van is in motion.)

Passage of Promise

I have driven my van across country for the past two years, traveling to festivals, to conferences and universities performing my show, "Hang It Out To Dry." These trips have occurred solo, with friends, with colleagues and with family. I have driven a couple of hours from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. I have driven from Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Bloomington, Indiana, to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to Chicago, Illinois, to Petit Jean, Arkansas, to Louisville, Kentucky, and back to Chicago again. Total, I think I can guesstimate driving close to 10,000 miles in my van to perform my show "Hang It Out To Dry" in a two-year period. The landscape of my journey has helped me understand this sensory experience of creating networks and building communities. My passage connects destination to destination, community to community, and story to story in order to create one big passage of promise.

Interview question #1

Did you feel like you were part of a community when you were carrying the boxes or riding in the van?

Rebecca Kennerly

The only time I carried boxes was when I helped "clean up" after one of your performances. I think it was at SSCA. It was easy to do for you, I wanted to be involved somehow because I was so touched by the work and by witnessing the progression of the work. I remember responding after your performance with the boxes that I recalled one of your very early performances about your grandmother. You wrote and performed it in our performative writing class and the images

are still so strong—you peeking into your grandmother's bedroom watching her hair hang down her back. I had a similar feeling and experience witnessing some of the most intimate sections of your post-Katrina performance with the boxes. The boxes helped frame different audience positioning, ways to peek, stare, witness, co-produce the performance text.

(Performer stops at a gas station to fill up on gas, diet cola and sweet treats. She asks a nice woman behind the counter for directions. The woman redirects the performer out of the cornfields and silos of Iowa and back onto the road.)

Dialogic Performative

Soyini Madison in Critical Ethnography calls for a “dialogic performative not to perpetuate ideologues of Otherness or assembly line clones for coperformative practitioners. I call upon the dialogical performative in order to widen the door of our caravan and to clear more space for Others to enter and ride. Somewhere on our journey we have been leaving Others behind and taking up too much space for ourselves. We are leaving little space for Others to ride. Our caravan is not as interesting or as enlivening without Others to perform with and to help us name the different symbols, alliterations, and possibilities within the landscape of our journey” (321).

Interview Question #2

If so, what community? How so? Why? Why not?

Stace Treat

I always feel like part of a community when I become involved in performance projects. This one in particular felt more "diasporic" of sorts, knowing that many people in other places were performing the same work for the same purpose, and really believed in the show.

(The performer and passengers play games in the van to pass the time. The game “A to Z,” “Three Deadly Choices” and “Name that Tune” lasts for a good hour or two until they reach a firework store that doubles as a gift shop where the game “push the quarters” entices the passengers enough to empty their pockets and purses.)

Interview Question #3

If applicable: How was driving with me across the country? Remember we did it with eight foot signboard squeezed in the van on top of luggage, ice chests and other presentational equipment for ten to eighteen hours depending on the trip!

Tracy Stephenson Shaffer

Driving across country was a blast. We did it three times in 6 months—Arkansas, Kentucky, Chicago. Only once did I feel like I had been overwhelmed by too much travel, talk, etc. In fact, I think all three trips become rolled into one fabulous memory. I'll never forget the year of "Hang It Out To Dry."

Lisa Flanagan

I only rode with you for the Chicago trip to NCA. The boxes wore the scuffs and scabs of dust, dirt, and everyday wear and tear. They could still leave a mark in the flesh for the rider trying to find a comfortable position in the backseat next to the stack. They also were prone to static cling, holding dust bunnies and bits of hair to them to be passed on to the next person to come into contact. I found a nice nook to hide my purse in as we travelled north.

(Performer shares the view with the other passengers of the caravan. She checks the GPS, zooms in, and pinpoints the nearness of the location. She follows the gridded compass to estimate how much further till destination. GPS voice says that arrival time is three hours away. GPS voice says destination is two hours away. One hour away. In the city. Around the corner. We can see the finish line flag on the map. We're there! But where to park? And where do we unload? Where do we install?)

Making Space Place

According to Erika Suderburg in Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art, "to install is a process that must take place each time an exhibition is mounted; 'installation' is the art form that takes note of the perimeters of that space and reconfigures it. The ideological impossibility of the neutrality of any site contributes to the expansion and application of installation, where

sculptural forms occupy and reconfigure not just institutional space but the space of objecthood as well” (4).

Interview Question #4

How did you feel about carrying the boxes? Was it easy? Difficult? A pain in the ass? A pleasure? Why or Why not?

Tracy Stephenson Shaffer

The boxes are so cool and so important to the show, but right away, I thought they were a pain in the butt. Their edges scraped me a lot, and I hated how they'd get stuck and not slide together perfectly. When they did, it was awesome. I'm a go-getter, so I would always try to knock out the task as quickly as possible. They weren't always easy to manipulate alone. We needed two people on each one, and I found myself teaching the other person how to do it. I always felt rushed and stressed. Once we got them up, I was relieved and excited for the audience. They were in for a treat!

Stace Treat

Yes, those boxes were a pain in the ass, especially carrying them across campus when a close loading area was unavailable. I didn't mind it, though, as they made such an important aesthetic impact on the experience of the show. So also a pleasure.

(Movement continues out of the van out in the landscape. There is a call to action. Hands are needed, bodies in motion. Community forms and reforms to get the job done. Time is limited. We must move fast.)

Brianne Waychoff

I was happy to carry the boxes. It actually was a pleasure to be able to help my friend, because I knew that it was helping you out and you were representing the work we do here at LSU. It wasn't the easiest thing, snaking the boxes through the entrails of the conference hotel, cutting my hand along the way, but I was just glad that you weren't alone.

Lisa Flanagan

Carrying the boxes through the labyrinthine backstage areas of the Chicago Hilton, I feel like both an intruder and an adventurer. Service elevators, concrete hallways, racks of trays filled with dirty dishes, desserts, and daily specials pop up like some hospitality industry obstacle course. The workers are so accommodating and kind. One gives us a cart to haul the boxes up a ramp; another loads them back into the car with us; and all along, people hold elevators and doors and shout to their fellow workers to move aside for our party. The boxes are still a bitch to move, but I am now a pro at putting them together and can expedite that process once we are in the convention room.

Helping Hands

I think about how many folks helped me load and unload those large cumbersome set pieces in and out of the van. Those boxes and my van have seen lots of new spaces. Once set up and arranged within a theatre, black box, classroom, school gymnasium, or hotel ballroom, the set pieces create place. Movement through people and places and disciplines always adapting to the space creating new places is a testament to the kinesis of the show and of performing ethnography. As Pollock describes the dynamic exchange of oral history, “shifting relationships between tellers and listeners (and listeners who become tellers to tellers who become listeners) near and far,” my hope was to create a vehicle for change, a passenger van or caravan of performance (3). Shifting from space to space, the conversation of Hurricane Katrina and the mess it left behind in Saint Bernard Parish continued through the performance of oral history from community to community.

Interview Question #5

Did you feel like you were part of a community when you were carrying the boxes or riding in the van? If so, what community? How so? If not, why?

Rebecca Kennerly

In New York, it felt that you, via your work and taking it out into the world had gone far beyond "picking up" and "moving on"—made the move into something else altogether, and this is a wonderful thing to behold and, I think from my perspective, to have played a tiny part in helping that happen.

The Caravan

To use Conquergood's metaphor in a very literal sense, my Toyota Sienna has been my vehicle for my community activism. My set pieces for "Hang It Out To Dry" have also become my vehicles of representation. The aim of traveling "Hang It Out To Dry" was to spread the experience of my hometown community of Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana to other communities such as my academic communities, my artist communities and the national communities to which I am linked. I wanted to tell the stories of my family and my community members, their trials and everyday struggles in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, to outside audiences. I felt like it was the least I could do. It would be my "promise" of "response-ability" to my community members. Performing the oral histories of Saint Bernard Parish residents gave the stories mobility. It put "culture into motion" (Conquergood 138).

Lisa Flanagan

I feel like I have been a part of or intersected with many communities while hauling boxes: design, performance studies, service industry, conventioners, and friends. The work feels good, despite the imprints and scratches left behind. Easing your stress was part of my commitment to this labor. Just as important though, was sharing the stories that were framed, in a literal and metaphorical way by and through the boxes, using them as community building blocks towards empathy and catharsis.

(Pass through state lines. Insert Tab A into Tab B, slide into place, repeat. Pass through loading docks. Insert Tab A into Tab B, slide into place, repeat. Pass through doorways.

Insert Tab A into Tab B, slide into place, repeat. Arrange boxes just so. Insert asymmetry into created space, slide into place, repeat.)

Traveling Paths

In traveling these intersubjective paths, making known the multiple voices and bodies that are represented in this project, I hear Conquergood's words very clearly. "Performance Studies is a border discipline, an interdiscipline, that cultivates the capacity to move between structures, to forge connections, to see together, to speak with instead of simply speaking about or for others" (138). Della Pollock in Remembering, also reminds us that "no one person 'owns' a story. Oral History aims to distribute the great wealth of any one or anyone's story/history: enriching each teller along the way" (5).

(Break it down, pack up and keep moving. So, where do we perform next?)

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**APPENDIX A
“HANG IT OUT TO DRY” SCRIPT**

“Hang It Out To Dry” A Performance Script¹

Written and Compiled by Danielle Sears Vignes

Percussionist on vibraphone: Jonathan Alcon

Digital audio manipulation: Benjamin Powell

Set Design: Interior Design Department: T.L. Ritchie, Department Head; Phillip Tebbut,
Associate Professor; Sophomore Class Students

The stage is set with five white plastic sign board boxes with measurements of 8’ by 4’. The boxes have door frames cut out of its widest sides (4’) and window frames cut out of its most narrow sides (3’). The boxes cover the entire performance space and are positioned at different angles around the stage. The vibraphone and percussionist are positioned upstage left on an angle. When the percussionist is not present, a musician is digitally manipulating the audio rear of audience. When neither live musician is present, an IPOD and docking station are used to play William Winant’s “Still and Moving Lines of Silence in Families of Hyperbolas.” Slide projections are scrolling upwards slowly every 15 seconds. Slides include images of Saint Bernard, homes, businesses, messages, interviewees, salvaged items, emergency numbers, insurance list of contents, now open lists, laundry lists of objects, and “hang it out to dry” definitions.

¹ A version of this academic script was published in Text and Performance Quarterly, 2008 (copyright Taylor and Francis); Text and Performance Quarterly is available online at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a794917969?words=hang,out,dry>

(The performer enters from behind the audience singing “The Edge of the Palms.” The performer moves in and out of the five boxes on stage throughout the song.)

A la orilla de un palmar

Y a l’orilla de un palmar,

Yo visto una joven beya,

Su boquita decorada

Sus ojito dos estreya.

Al pasar, le pregunte

De quien vivia con eya.

Y me contesto yorando:

-Solo vivo en el palmar.

Soy huerfanita,

No tengo padre ni madre,

Ni un amiguito,

Que me quiera consolar.

Solita vivo,

En este mundo esperando,

Y solita voy y vengo,

Como las ola del mar.

(Performer walks into the door frame of box center stage)

Scrubbing and Rinsing, Part 1

When we pulled up to the house, we all got out of the car and put our gear on, our Tyvek suits, boots, gloves, masks and goggles. We duct taped our gloves and boots to our suits. We just stood there huddled together crying in disbelief. As we made our way to the front porch, there

on the front stoop was a little box turtle covered in black ash. “Oh my god! What has happened?” His legs and neck were stretched out as if it was trying to get its last breath. That poor little turtle. My mom wondered if it was Thomas, a turtle that lived in her back yard under the oak tree. My husband finally bent down to pick it up. “Huh! It’s so light. It hardly weights any thing.” Oh no! I can’t believe it! Just then, My sister grabbed it out of his hands, turned the turtle over and said “Look at this. There’s a water spout and hose connector coming out of his mouth and tail. Gee, I wonder how that got there!” **(Hysterical Laughter/Crying occur.)** “Ok, let’s get started!”

(Movement sequence occurs in and out of boxes. “Scrubbing and Rinsing,” “Oh my God, what has happened?” and “Pick up and move on” get repeated through transitions with corresponding movements. Performer moves box stage left into place. Hangs into window frame and delivers the narrative.)

Charles “Pete” Savoie: Personal interview, September 1, 2006

They didn’t try hard enough really. It was Junior Rodriguez and I who would meet with the Corps of Engineers. Then in the last four or five years Dan Arcenaux, he got involved and he attends more meetings than I do now. And uh none of the council or anybody would go to these meetings and so we’d walk in and they would say, “Here comes these three old guys again, you know same three.” Nobody else in Saint Bernard was concerned and now everybody’s concerned. Okay. We been eating more money on that thing. Now the truth of it is, most people don’t realize, but originally we had four natural ridges out there okay– we had one in Bayou La Loutre, one in Yscloskey, one in Bayou Dupree, and one in Bayou Bievenue. Okay. For the water to come in from the Gulf of Mexico, it would have to go over each of those ridges and then over all that marsh. And now that all the ridges are cut out so the water just comes right in and this marsh that used to protect us is no longer there because of the salt water intrusion killed all the marsh, you see. Now it used to be like 600 feet wide at one time. Okay. Now its

over 3000 feet wide. And it doesn't stop there cause there's all these little canals and tributaries that just run for miles back in there and so that's why it killed everything. If you get on top the bridge right now and you coming from this way (**Reach out arm and freeze**) and you look down, you don't see nothing but water. No land anywhere, all water cause all the salt water intrusion that got in there and killed everything. All from the MRGO, you know. And ah, I was, ah, an inspector, the seismographic inspector for the parish for three years, and I was out there everyday, everyday, seven days a week and I said I gotta be nuts you know but what I was trying to do was to get somebody out there to close it to stop destroying the marsh. And I was out there I saw it happen. People don't realize but today you pass and you see this little island here you know and then a week later you pass and you looking for that little island and its gone. It just got sucked away. The water just sucked it away and . . . that MRGO just sucks everything away!

(Movement and vocal sequence of "Oh my God, what has happened?" occurs as box center stage gets turned around for performer to use high window frame to deliver narrative.)

Gene Alonzo: Personal interview, November 11, 2006

We picked up everything. I didn't think it was going to be as bad as it was you know. As bad as what it was you know. I told Eloise, I said you don't have to run to Texas. You know she was thinking about going to Texas. I said you'll just stay right there at Saint Rita's with me. It ain't gonna be that bad. "No. I gotta get out of here." I said fine then, go get killed on the road, you know. You stupid to go all the way out there to Texas, you know. Saint Bernard is high right there. Well I thought it was pretty high, you know. I didn't think it was gonna be bad like that. So she took off and all of that and I went over to Saint Rita's with a couple of clothes to stay with Carlos, my brother, because he . . . he don't know nothing, you know. And we got there and everything was . . . was . . . it was nice, you know, the day before. And at night it started blowing real hard and Carlos was calling and I said, "It's alright. It's just blowing," looking at

the television. And that damn storm! And I mean it looked bad. And I started thinking maybe we should get out, but then you heard the roads were jammed. Well, it looked like the storm was passing its worst over to Slidell and the wind was out the northwest and like in the morning the guys started hollering about “the water coming, the water was coming man!” I looked and I saw animals crossing the road and I said, “Son of a gun!” And they had water coming you know and through the yard but it was still low. But Lord, in five minutes I’m standing by the glass door at Saint Rita’s and the water is half way up the door it wasn’t even leaking in. And that’s how fast it came. It never leaked in the place I’m looking at it coming up the door like that halfway. I said my God!

(Movement and vocal sequence of “Scr. Scru. Scrub. Scrubbing. Scrubbing and. Scrubbing and Rin. Scrubbing and Rins. Scrubbing and Rinsing” occur as performer moves through boxes to move upstage box forward for use of a low window pane. Performer places box stage right, squats down and delivers personal text.)

Scrubbing and Rinsing, Part 2

I’ve scrubbed a heck of a lot of china in the past year. My parents moved out of my house a little over _____ months ago and as we were unpacking, I opened a few Rubbermaid containers full of dirty Katrina china. My family classifies our storm leftovers as dirty Katrina or clean Katrina depending on what has been appropriately cleaned and disinfected and what was just packed “as is” from our house in Chalmette. The only objects that were salvageable were pieces of my mom’s china that she had collected apparently with the hopes that she would live at least three life spans in order to paint all the china that she had acquired over the years. My husband set up a trough with a filtered water pump to clean the china under our carport in Baton Rouge. It’s amazing how long it takes to scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse a single pitcher or scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse one butter dish or scrubbin and rinsin, scrubbin and rinsin, scrubbin and rinsin, scrubbin and rinsin a delicate cross and

successfully wash away all of the residue of that black water. We scrub and rinse. Scrub and rinse. Scrub and rinse until it's all gone. Who's to tell when we'll eventually complete this washing process? But until then, we'll just continue the cycle. Scrub and rinse. Scrub and rinse. Scrub and rinse. Until we clean the last piece and then . . . and then

(Performer stands and yawns in box. Turns box around to reveal the door frame. Hands are holding the top of the frame. Lays box door frame down, bends over to deliver the narrative.)

Kenny Sears Sr.: Personal interview, August 28, 2006

Now as a young man, what I remember of the two families, they actually worked in Angelo's restaurant, serving food, cooking food and uh they were very industrious people, so uh they actually took in other uh ways of life, uh. **(Stand in fallen box)** They would take in ironing from residents of the parish you know back in the fifties and all. They had no perma-press clothes so what they did was everything was starch and iron. The Gio family and the Tomacio family would actually take in ironing, so you go and order a plate meatballs and spaghetti and have your laundry done on the side at Angelo's restaurant and it was a common place thing. So these two industrious families saved their money and eventually opened their own restaurant, broke away from their cousin. **(Move to box frame down right of stage)** And which is now the famous Rocky and Carlo's on Saint Bernard Highway. So I thought that was interesting. And you . . . during that time what I remember most about being in contact with them was as a young man with that family and times was hard and when construction work was slow, so I went fishing with my wife's grandfather and we actually caught, on one given day, like uh sixty or seventy big bull redfish. Big. **(Tilt box downstage and hold tilted box through out narrative)** I'm talking like four foot high and uh we didn't have a dealer to buy the fish and so the old man asked me to go up to Chalmette and sell the fish one by one in the neighborhoods of Chalmette. So one of the first things I did, I used a little ingenuity and I knew the Italian families

the Tomacios and Gios who owned the restaurant and I went in the restaurant and talked to Rocky and Carlo and asked them if they would be interested in buying some of my redfish and uh man they were thrilled to death. They were so happy cause Italians love to cook fish. And uh I brought two of the red fish in and uh I held them up like this **(look up at hands holding the box)** and the tails were hitting the ground you know. Well their eyes like to pop out of their heads when they seen how big they were and in uh broken English you know they said “Uh how mucha you fish?” And I told them, I said one dollar a piece. And man that was it! Those two guys, their cousins, their relatives, all of them bought my fish in the restaurant that day and then they asked me . . . I told them what I was going to do, go down and sell them in the streets, and they said “No, no, you don’t have to go any further then here.” I sold them to every Italian family on Dellile Street and they were thrilled to death. So Rocky and Carlo helped me as a young man and actually never forgot about that. They still question me. Phillip DiChristina asked if I remember that the other day.

(Set box down and move to the fallen box downstage right. Open it up and walk hands and body into box reciting “Pick up and move on.” The box is moved into place down on the floor angled right center stage. Performer kneels into the door frame to deliver the narrative as if it was a desk, or a boat, or a . . .)

Jason Mc Fetters: Personal interview, September 6th, 2006

Um, maybe fifteen years from now it will be as populated as it was before the storm but I don’t think it will be fast and there is no way of knowing what’s going to happen yet you know because if they do . . . do redevelop the area, because there is a chance for redevelopment, and if we had a levee protection system that we thought would be relatively safe. Right now with no traffic, we are ten minutes from downtown New Orleans. You know to me that that to me is a real estate gold mine. But when you drive around and look you just wanna get the hell out! So it’s . . . who knows what’s gonna happen in ten years or so. In an area like down the road, where

it is more rural and people you . . . people do for themselves and take care of themselves and are fine and are able to fix up their properties. And there's more land out there, whereas here in Chalmette you fix up your house and in every ten feet of direction you're surrounded by empty shells. Then we're gonna have to look at if you wanna fix up your house and you're on the Forty Arpent canal but no one else on your street are back, are we the public paying sewerage, your sewerage, to get to your one house way over there (**Reach out arm and freeze**)? So its just going to be a number of years when all of that is up in the air. I don't know what's gonna happen. Another question is with the program from the state, and I should probably say the lawyer in me, I'm not speaking on behalf of the program here, but it seems that if the state ends up buying a lot of this property and owns this land you're gonna see changes you know, with buffer zones around the refineries, and green spaces in the heavily flooded areas, and then big out of state developers coming in to redevelop the property. And do we want that? I really really doubt that it will ever look like it did before. Not necessarily in terms of the architecture, because that will change with fashion but just the type of place it will be. Houston? Atlanta? I don't know. Where every third house is the same and every other brick color house is the same and there's restrictions. (**Release freeze**) You can't put anything on the lawns, which I don't know how that would affect the people down here. So, it just wouldn't have the personality that it had before. I would like to see what happens in areas where you have a sort of a mass of evacuees because I wanna know if there's a cul-de-sac in whatnot county Georgia that now has Mary statues in front of every house in Baptist country and all the people are out in their front yards drinking in public and having a good time, because that stuff just doesn't happen in other places. It will be interesting to see if our culture survives in other places. I mean there's a subdivision in Covington called Normandy Oaks and I know every person on that one street is

from the parish. So it's like a little miniature Saint Bernard right there. And then you have Hammond, and Picayune, and Prairieville. Denham Springs, and a lot folks in Donaldsonville. And I know folks who moved to Mississippi and they call the area Carrier which is pronounced "Career." So what happens when a bunch of Louisianans move to those areas?

("Oh my God, what has happened?" is repeated through vocals and gestures to move from the box on the floor stage center right to the center stage box where performer is bent down only to reveal eyes and nose. Narrative is delivered.)

Gene Alonzo: Personal interview, November 11, 2006, cont.

Then they start hollering, "Put everybody on the mattresses!" So that's what we did and the doors bust man and shit. I ran to Carlos and in no time the water had us jammed. A big cedar robe fell against the door. I had him on a mattress and I finally got the cedar robe you know away from the door and got him out. And people floatin around. They had such a current going through that place it was unbelievable. It would take you like you know . . . just take you through there like that. So I got kinda out and they had this other guy there who helped me get Carlos back on the mattress and the other man . . . I don't know. He was still floating in Carlos' room on his mattress when we were out. I figured maybe I could go back there and get him you know but when we got out when I got the building the water was like getting us like where your head would be hitting the top. And I couldn't touch no more. So I got outside the building and the current was bad there too. And it was like coming from Lake Borne going out to Saint Bernard Highway. Taking everything. So I was hanging on and I said if I let go I'm gonna be gone you know. And you going with current bro. It was unbelievable. It was taking cars and everything was floating. Carlos' mattress was starting to get water logged and he started to sink again and I said, "Shoot, man."

(At a quick pace, the boxes are arranged in a three door framed configuration. Box on floor is picked up and others not in use are turned to reveal the window frames. "Pick up

and move on” is repeated while this is happening. Begins story in door frame center stage. Figure eights are created through movement within the personal text.)

Three Neighbors

Somewhere in Picayune, Mississippi my neighbors Mr. Marshall Knight and his wife Edda moved out to Picayune soon after Katrina on an acre of land in a ranch style house. When his neighbor Bobby Norton contacted him, Mr. Marshall persuaded Mr. Bobby to come out and take a look at the ranch house for sale next door to him. **(Move to the box door frame stage left.)**

The Nortons took one look at the house in Picayune and bought right away. **(Move to the center box door frame.)** Later, they contacted Mrs. Madeline Deano, a widow on my street who lived two doors down from Mr. Bobby Norton in Chalmette. When Mrs. Madeline was told about another ranch house next to Mr. Bobby Norton for sale in Picayune, **(Move to box door frame stage right)** she didn't hesitate. **(Move to center box door frame and walk down stage to deliver last lines.)** And so, three neighbors who lived on Rosetta Drive, Chalmette, Louisiana for more thirty years now can still walk out of their ranches in the morning, and they may have to walk a little further to their mailbox and they may have to walk a little further to get their papers in the morning but they can still turn to their left and turn to their right to say good morning to the same faces they are so familiar with.

(“Pick up and move on” movement and vocal sequence occurs as performer moves to box stage center left. Stands in door frame on angle and rocks box back and forth as if it was a rocker, or a cradle, or a . . . Narrative is delivered.)

Chad Alfonso: Personal interview, September 12, 2006

Things happen for a reason. This got me closer to my parents and got me where I really want to be so it really did. A lot of people say different things. I know people who lived here thirty years and say “Ah, I'd never go back to that place,” but you have people here like my mom and dad, my grandparents that been here they whole life. I stayed on a barge um when I had to come to work right after Katrina. I had to stay on a barge uh down in Shell beach by Blackie Campo's

launch and I got a chance to meet Mr. Black and ah you know if you want to see history and see how . . . how the spirit of Saint Bernard is in people, you go talk to Mr. Black Campo and he's ah . . . shoot . . . in his eighties, maybe nineties. I forget how old he was. He had a birthday actually when we was down there and I mean he . . . he's been through everything. He's been through the flood of '27. He's been through ah Camille, Betsy, Katrina, you know. He's lost houses. He's lost family. And he came back and he . . . he told me on the boat, he said he was born and raised here and he said his steps, and I quote him, he said, "My first steps were in Saint Bernard and my last steps are gonna be in Saint Bernard." So ah he's . . . he was really, really good to talk to you know. He brought my spirits up. And it brings my spirits up to talk to the older people down here who have been through storms before because it's our first time going through something like this. I'm too young to have seen Betsy and um so I couldn't have even tell you what a storm was like but uhm its definitely a devastating blow to me and my family but ah you can pick up you can pick up after anything you know and its just something you gotta do pick up and move on you know. I think the parish is coming back and I'm gonna help whatever I can do to help the parish to come back anything for my family, my friends, we'll be here. We ain't going nowhere.

(Freeze in rocking position. Set box down and wiggle out of window frame for narrative. Positioned right outside of left center box with hand on hip and foot still in the door frame.)

Shannon Sanders: Personal interview, October 17, 2006

The parish was a wonderful place to grow up. It really was. And all my closest friends were all from there but uh the parish is not what it was when we grew up, and in my opinion will never be like that because it's a new influx of people and for me, I guess it means something different for everyone, but for me, everyone that meant something to me is no longer there, so for me to even consider going back to Chalmette or doing anything in Chalmette it's not the same because it's

not the landmarks that made it Chalmette, it's the people. And my friends are gone from there and so is my family. And so its just very painful for me to go back and see all of that, you know, because it's depressing to see your people living in trailers, and the corner store where you grew up is not there, and to me its an entirely different place now. It's not safe. I have a friend that works through FEMA and she feels that in so many words, they are discouraging people from moving back to Chalmette because its too dangerous between the oil spill and just the unknown. She thinks they are trying to make it an industrial city. With just the oil there it's not really inhabitable to live. That's just her opinion and that's just my opinion also and by no means is this what they say in the news or anything but just our opinions. People who have gone back, they may wanna take that chance, but me personally I don't need to take that chance because there is nobody there that I know or that I'm close to or I love is back there with the exception of maybe one or two people. It's not a place I'd put my future child in. I don't want to take the chance for myself or anyone I love. You . . . it's not a place where you can stroll your baby. You can't do that. There may be two houses on a street that are functioning on the block and then the ones that are not haven't been gutted yet. No grass. Rats running around. Debris everywhere still. No backyard. No environment. Where's my kid going to play? I don't wanna go there and have to raise a kid. There's nowhere for the kid to play! And for those who are die hard Chalmatians, as they say, they may just wanna get back in Chalmette in spite of those things because they wanna go home, but its more than that for me I wouldn't want to endanger my kid. It not well lit at night. There's a lot of crime. They've only lighted the streets where people are living on them. And I've heard stories where people are scared to death to go to sleep at night because they hear all kinds of things. No police force. The security is very minimal. So there's a lot of potential for a lot of things to go wrong in Chalmette. And I have to give it to the people.

They are trying . . . trying to make it come back, but at some point for the sake of your children and for your loved ones, you just gonna have to throw in the towel. And maybe I'm wrong but nobody can say for sure and I feel better not knowing and I don't wanna know because it no longer involves me or my family and its . . . you know You'll never know the truth because you got so many people trying to cover up stuff and that's enough for me. I don't want to put anybody I care about at risk. So my Chalmette days are over um. I'm not saying I won't go visit or I'm not saying I won't support those who are trying to put it back together. But as far as me living there, I will never . . . I will never live there again. I won't raise my baby in the middle of all that devastation, because that's not what I remember.

(Movement of “Oh my God, what has happened?” occurs. Center stage box is lifted and spins three times before it is set down. Performer peaks out of window frame with only her eyes and forehead showing through the frame.)

Gene Alonzo: Personal interview, November 11, 2006, cont.

So I'm hanging on I don't know how long and somebody . . . Sal's son come with a boat and he put us on the roof. We spent a long time on the roof. Wind hitting us and rain. We stood there for a long time and they had this boat brought us to Sal's daughter's house and from there to Beaugard school right there. But it was critical there. People needed their medicine and they didn't have none of that. Then they went somewhere and got into a drug store. And they got insulin this and that. Got some seizure medicine for Carlos. Wasn't the kind he took but I just started giving him some you know. That way he wouldn't have no seizure. And they brought us up there and an Air Port brought us to ah Parish Road. And ah man I even felt like crying bro when I seen like up the road and just the tips of the houses sticking out and Kmart and all over. You could barely see sign of the Kmart up there you know, and everything was gone. And they brought us to the jailhouse. There's no electricity. It was so hot. People looked like they were

dying right there. Them ladies from the nursing home were in bad shape to begin with. Little water. Little food there.

(“Scrubbing and Rinsing” movement and “Ssssss . . .” vocals are repeated to move next to left stage box. Personal text is delivered.)

Scrubbing and Rinsing, Part 3

You never know what you will be doing in a day’s work. I took a trip to New Orleans with my father to pick up a couple of safety deposit boxes from a bank branch in the heart of the CBD. The safety deposit boxes from Saint Bernard were sent to New Orleans where they were pried open and the owner would be able to retrieve the valuables. When we arrived we were taken into a little visquined room where we were then escorted into the sealed-off area containing the boxes from Saint Bernard Parish. My father thought for sure the water didn’t reach all the way to the top row of the unit where his and my grandfather’s boxes were stored. When the escort suited up with gloves and mask he climbed up the ladder and pulled the water logged boxes out from the unit and drained them into a plastic garbage can. The boxes were then brought back to the area where we discovered that all of the contents were sitting in water for about three months. We packed up what we could and were given specific instructions as to how to clean the currency in order to return them to the bank and receive full credit for them. So we went home and started the process. **(Move inside box to lower window frame to use scrubbing movements.)** A solution of antibacterial soap, bleach and water in buckets, in my bathtub were used to gently scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse, scrub and rinse the currency. To dry them out my mother set up a clothesline in my spare bedroom where she lived in the year following Katrina and she hung each bill up with a clothespin. A spider web of clams criss-crossed the 10 by 10 space. She turned on the ceiling fan, plugged in a blow dryer and dried each bill by hand. She turned out all the lights because she was afraid the neighbors would see us. “Shh! Don’t talk.

Nobody needs to know we have this money in the house.” Little dollar bills were flapping in my spare bedroom back and forth, back and forth until they were dry to the touch. **(Move out of box and stand left of box.)** Well, when all the bills were dry, we brought them to the Baton Rouge branch and approached the teller. We explained the situation and the teller started to throw up her hands and she said, “We can’t take this money! It’s contaminated! It’s not any good! We can’t accept it. You’ll have to go somewhere else. I can’t handle this money.” You want to see a bunch of Chalmatians get angry?!? My parents started to raise their hands and said, “We’ve been customers with this bank for over thirty years. You’re gonna take this money and send it to the Federal Reserve and then you’re going to credit our account and give us a receipt or we’ll go somewhere else.” The teller had to call at least three managers, when the final authority told her to take the money and follow procedure. The teller said that if she was going to handle our money, she would have to put gloves on because that’s “dirty money.” You never know what you’ll be doing in a days work. Money laundering, literally, was not on our laundry list of things to do.

(Three part movement sequence and whispered vocals are used to travel to left of stage where box is moved to reveal the door frame. Performer leans over to deliver the narrative.)

Irvan Perez: Personal interview, November 11, 2006

You hope those old stories get passed down now cause we have a rich history you know. What happens to those witch stories? And the loogalaga that monster that ran through the marshes from one end of the bayou to the other? No, it wasn’t the marsh gases. I saw the loogalaga with my own eyes. One day it was in the middle of the road there and they had a fire came up and down three times like that and then it just disappeared in the woods. And them witches? Well, I knew a couple of them you know. This old lady knew the date the kid was born, how old you were and they always said she was a witch because she knew too much. She knew when the

seasons would change, the exact date. That was my daddy's cousin. She recorded all that in memory. She didn't write anything down. You know. And everybody down here always talked about the witches and people said they told the kids that to scare them, but down here, you couldn't scare a kid if you tried you know. And they have buried treasure that the pirates left in the Indian mounds back in the trees there. Built up the land near Bayou Lamaix, and you could never dig there, but they have buried treasure in there. Yes, it's true. Would you believe Larry Gonzales, Uncle Benito, and the old lady Tanta Irena found some of that gold? They started to bring it to New Orleans and when they got there, they got scared and came back home. Scared of the ghost that would take it away from you. So they kept it hidden under the bed. And they had all them old customs that you don't see no more. Well like the Saree Aree, the second time marriage, you know. If you were a widow or if you lost you wife and got married again, they wouldn't let you sleep. They didn't want you to sleep on your wedding night so everyone stayed up all night and bang on their pots and pans to keep them from going to bed. And kids and teenagers used to walk the roads all day long. I remember Latoria. She was like the, what you would call the instigator and I was so scared of her. I would never walk in front of her. But it was a good life and fisherman were always outside and if they caught a lot, they would always share with everybody, families and neighbors. But every person had the patience to teach you what they had to teach you to work, you know. The old trappers would show you how to take the old broken traps and make new ones out of them and fix them you know. Grandpa would do that. But they teach you everything they know. And they wouldn't bull you or lie to you. But ah, you could tell stories like that for the rest of your life you know.

(“Oh my God, what has happened?” is repeated as performer throws box down. Runs around the stage and knocks all but two boxes down as vocals continue as performer lowers body into window frame. Only eyes are visible for narrative.)

Gene Alonzo: Personal interview, November 11, 2006, cont.

Me and Carlos sat under a tree. There was no shade. You couldn't get in the jail. It was just unbearable. It must have been a hundred and ten, a hundred and fifteen degrees. It was just like a mug of heat. But look I got Carlos out there in the sun, there ain't no shade. I don't know if this was a couple of days after or what but he had shorts on and he got second degree burns on his legs from being out in the sun so long and that was critical. And they put us on a barge, still out in the sun. Took us around the river. People were out there with no place to go to the bathroom or nothing. One person said go down to the river; you gonna get everything, you know. They got water, food, medicine. Well we got down there, they didn't have none. They stuck us in an old school bus brought us up to I-10 somewhere and it looked like they had thousands of people and we had to get out of the bus. No water or nothing again. And you know you got people there with you that you trying to half carry and by the time you get to the door of another bus, the bus is full. So we went to the airport and sat in that bus. There was supposed to have something at the airport. Water and food. They didn't have nothing. They wouldn't even let us out the bus. It was hot! But anyway we sat in the bus and two bus drivers got in a fight. One wanted to go a different . . . stay there or go, and the other wanted to go somewhere. And I said man we gotta go. These people are gonna die in this bus. Go somewhere! So they took off to Lafayette. To the Cajun Dome there. That's where we got people to help us with food, water and medicine. Help the people that I had. They took that man and lady off somewhere and I gave a man forty dollars to use his cell phone to call my daughter. She came and got us. That's my experi . . . what I went through with Saint Rita's you know.

(Performer moves to stage down right box and moves it where the wide side is facing the audience. Hums "Scrubbing and Rinsing" tune. Stands in door frame with hands positioned above head as if in a closet, or in a picture frame, or in a . . .)

Lost Arts

A portrait of a woman standing in a colorized blue green landscape was found in the top of my mother's closet. The portrait was in a convex bubble frame, now covered in dry earth. A ghostly portrait, pressed up against the frame, mud and oil clouding her image. She had washed away from the paper and transferred on the surface of the glass. The paper peeled away only to reveal her as a transparent figure. You could hold her up to the light and she becomes a slide of film, a study fully in tact except a few details. A stout, strong, dark skinned woman. Black shoes to match her black hair. Her dress is violet or mauve or a light pink or khaki. She has an intense expression on her face as if she knows what happened, because she has seen it before. Taken off of many walls and traveled to many places for safe refuge. I ask about her and find out her name is Christine Campo Guerra. She died at about 53. Mom says we don't know much about her. A woman who witnessed WWI, the great influenza, experienced grief, buried three of her children; the other three survived, Phinia, TT Ben, and Tilia, which is the reason why we can see her now. My great great grandmother of who my father says, "Poor dawlin', we can't even remember her now."

("Pick up and move on" is delivered as the performer moves to the center box and turns it to the wide side facing the audience. Stands in the frame with elbow in the window.)

Kenny Sigsworth: Personal interview, November 12, 2006

They say life goes on and life does go on. For me my life was in Chalmette. I just miss it so much it's unbelievable. It was a very large part of my life. Uh they keep telling me to let go and I could let go but I don't want to. I like it. It was something I liked. You know I saved little things. Just anything. Something to hold on to the past. **(Reach arm up and freeze)** I think about, we lost all our pictures, all the pictures of my daughters growing up and as strange as it may be, as luck would have it, when I brought my wife to see the house, there was our wedding album just standing there straight up like that in the foyer. The only pictures I had of my mother,

lost. And you worry about all that water getting into the graveyards and I just can't . . . it's just those things you think about that wouldn't be there normally (**Release freeze**).

I guess to . . . to bring closure to this whole thing, for it's so emotional obviously There's an old saying, "Don't cry with two loaves of bread under your arm." And that's the situation I'm in. Ah, I'm living in a nice area. I'm living close to one of my children. I got a home that's paid for. I don't owe a nickel on it. I work for a company that has taken very good care of me, um, and it's ah, it means a lot. But like I mentioned earlier, it's just not home. I miss the closeness. I miss the people. I never thought in my life that I could love a people. I know I'm generalizing but I love the people of Saint Bernard Parish. I love everything about them. And it's things that you take for granted you know but you never really miss something until you don't have it. That . . . that's hard to deal with. Ah, it's like eating candy. You can eat all the candy in the world after Halloween but if I told you "no," now you can't have it. Well from a human nature standpoint, you gonna want it. So knowing that I can't go back, the word can't, it's hard for me to accept that word. Accepting that word just makes me more determined but in this situation, it's the right decision. Ah, you know I have an obligation to my wife to make her as happy as I can, as I promised her on our wedding day. I mean I haven't done it yet but . . . but ah I owe it to her too. I would love to have my life back but you can't get it back. Katrina took all that from us and you just can't get it back. You wish Katrina was human cause then you could do something about it. You know what I mean? But she wasn't. She came in and left, never to be forgotten, never to be forgotten, not in a life time. She's changed so many lives. She really has and I don't know . . . But like I said I'm crying with two loaves of bread under my arm. For me, I had to quit feeling sorry for myself because I should be thankful. I'm a lot more fortunate than so many others, but let me tell you what I can't let it go. If I could just let it go. I can't. So ah . .

. but I've seen people at their absolute worst, absolute worst. I've watched people with limited water cut in front of children to get water before the children were able to drink. And then I watched a man swim more than a hundred yards to get a dog and swim back to the boat to put the dog in the boat to save a dog's life. So you see one aspect of it and then the other half of it. And I'm telling you, when the word got out that I was in trouble, people from all parts of the country rallied to my assistance which is just amazing. It's unbelievable. I can honestly say this, from first hand experience, there is a lot more good in this world than there is bad. We as people dwell on such badness and it's such a shame because there are just so many good people, not religious good, just solid good people in this world. And I gave you a fast rendition of what I saw. I don't know if I can tell you everything. I don't know if I will ever be able to talk about it. But you selected me to give this interview because of my rescue efforts in the hurricane and Lonnie Robin saved me so many times during those days. I know I owe Lonnie Robin my life, but there were hundreds of people like us. Hundreds. Jerry Ruiz was another example. I don't know how many people that boy got out. But he worked non-stop. He got out a heck of a lot more than we got out. I never hear his name mentioned or Lonnie's people who were involved in the rescue efforts. And I think people need to remember those boys cause I saw them. They were glad to do it and they worked non-stop. There's a lot of good out there. A lot of good. And it was happening in Saint Bernard Parish. And I guess life goes on for me. It just won't be the same. I guess that's all I have to say hun.

(“Scrubbing and Rinsing,” “Oh my God, what has happened?,” “Pick up and move on” is repeated one more time as performer moves to the down stage left area and stands in the middle of the fallen box. Slow motion wave gestures in and out with hands.)

The Edge of the Palms

The *Islenos* are a Spanish speaking community in Saint Bernard Parish whose origins in Louisiana date from the late 18th century as colonists from the Canary Islands. Their most preserved folk art form is the *decima*. *Decimas* are ten to twelve stanza narrative songs embodying themes of sarcasm, humor, irony, local events, mishaps and personal inspiration. In conversing with Mr. Irvan Perez, one of the last old time *decimeros* of the community, we talked about the *decimas* and if there were ever any sung about hurricanes in the past. He said no, that themes of tragedy and disaster just weren't worth singing about. He said he doesn't like to talk about the storm because he wasn't there. Having evacuated, he didn't experience it like other people who rode out the storm. We did agree however that there is one song that can be used in thinking about the loss of our community, "The Edge of the Palms," that *decima* about a young orphan girl found living in the palm trees who, when asked where she came from, responds, "I have no father or mother, no friend to console me. I move with the waves of the sea." When I think about this song I think about all the residents of my community moving with the waves of the sea, with the waves of Lake Borgne, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Industrial Canal. I think about all those folks who are still moving with the waves without family or friends, someone to console them. I think about our land. **(Bend down into Irvan Perez stance)** A land that is soaked deep with histories and stories that you can tell "for the rest of your life". **(Back up into wave movements)** I think about my family, my ancestors and the palm trees, the refuge we all seek to call home.

(Sing *Decima*. Close eyes and rock back and forth.)

A la orilla de un palmar
Y a l'orilla de un palmar,

Yo visto una joven beya,

Su boquita decorada

Sus ojito dos estreya.

Al pasar, le pregunte

De quien vivia con eya.

Y me contesto yorando:

-Solo vivo en el palmar.

Soy huerfanita,

No tengo padre ni madre,

Ni un amiguito,

Que me quiera consolar.

Solita vivo,

En este mundo esperando,

Y solita voy y vengo,

Como las ola del mar.

(Lights down. Move to center for a bow. The End.)

APPENDIX B
PHAEDRA C. PEZZULLO'S RESPONSE

Water, Paper, Music: Reflections on New Orleans and *Hang It Out To Dry*

Abstract:

On February 22, 2007, I witnessed Danielle Vignes perform *Hang It Out to Dry* in Bloomington, Indiana, as part of a small international conference in which we both were participating called, "Putting Memory in Place." Vignes seemed a particularly apt choice for the conference theme, since she was born and raised in Chalmette, a community in St. Bernard Parish in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana, and was a graduate student in nearby Baton Rouge when Hurricane Katrina came in 2005. This review offers a series of reflections on that performance animated around three themes: water, paper, and music.

To stretch one's neck slowly forward and then off to the side is an awkward gesture. The movement doubles itself, at once performing a curious desire to connect with another person or event beyond one's normal line of sight and also to remain stationary, observing from a distance. In research on tourism, we sometimes call this movement "rubber-necking," a motion animated by the desire to slow down one's car to peer at an accident on the side of the road.ⁱ Some find this gesture grotesque, exploitative, and impolite. ("It's rude to stare!") Some find this gesture a sign of our sense of interconnectedness with others, an opportunity for engagement, and a productively awkward—potentially risky—act of witnessing (*spect-actors*, as Diana Taylor writes).

In *Hang It Out to Dry*, Danielle Vignes first evokes this movement in the second scene while telling the story of a dead box turtle her family found when they arrived at her parents' house after the storm had subsided in Saint Bernard Parish. The turtle was covered in black ash. Its arms and legs and neck were stretched out, apparently because during the flood and winds, a waterspout had become jammed into its small body. Intermittently in *Hang It Out to Dry*, Vignes mimics the turtle, lunging her body forward, stretching her arms out and her neck off to the side, and asking with wide-open eyes, "Oh, my God! *What has happened?*" The turtle, normally known for moving at a more leisurely pace, still seems awkward frozen in this gesture—*shell-shocked*, a friend remarked.ⁱⁱ Not a tourist, but a resident nonetheless caught in a seemingly unimaginable position.

I do not believe we—nonresidential witnesses or residential survivors—will ever fully comprehend *what has happened* in the Gulfport Region since Hurricane Katrina

touched its soil. To expect to do so is to miss the point. Luckily, transparency is not a prerequisite for action.

Water

During *Hang It Out to Dry*, I wept. I sat gratefully next to a wall painted black, mostly in the absence of lighting, and wiped my slowing falling tears as quietly as I could. With no one sitting in front of me, I was scared for Vignes' eyes to lock with my own. Scared she might not feel I—a non-resident of the region who did not lose friends, family, or property—deserved to cry. Scared she might confirm that I did.

The way the federal, state, and municipal government act in southern Louisiana long has broken my heart. Coupled with my adoration of individual people whom I have met from the region and of the local culture (the music, food, architecture, irreverent sense of humor, et cetera) is my ongoing sorrow over how the petrochemical industry long has exploited the workers and the residents of the Gulfport—with the blessing of the government. In response, I have published academic writings on institutional patterns of environmental racism and classism, as well as local movements to resist these oppressive legacies. I had a letter published in the *Times Picayune* in April 2005 expressing my outrage at how policies of Homeland Security were being used to justify shutting down public access to information about polluting industries, rather than shutting down the pollution itself. I have signed petitions, donated money to non-profits, shared stories with anyone who would listen, spread the word of local activists in newsletters, visited multiple times, and participated in advocacy tours of the region. And, yet, in the comfort

of my home hundreds of miles away, aware of all the warning signs, I was not prepared for the storm.

I came to Vignes' performance on February 22, 2007 in my landlocked city of residence, Bloomington, Indiana, as part of a small international conference in which we both were participating called, "Putting Memory in Place." The audience was less than the size of the conference itself. The organizers had wanted to prompt discussion throughout the week about the relationship between memory and place, especially how new technologies might negotiate those relations. Vignes seemed a particularly apt choice for the conference theme, since she was born and raised in Chalmette, a primarily European American community on the east bank of the Mississippi River in St. Bernard Parish in the Ninth Ward, and was now a graduate student in nearby Baton Rouge. Despite the backdrop of images and text projected on the back wall and the deceptively simple, tall, white props that Vignes moved throughout (as metaphorical windows, homes caught up in winds, rubbish from the storm, and so forth), *Hang It Out to Dry* would not qualify as a story about "new technology." If anything, her performance palpably reminded us of the uncertainties posed by the storm, including the potential uselessness of cell phones, electricity, and automobiles when a city is flooded.

Still, southern Louisiana is no stranger to industry. As Vignes shares in one of the stories she retells, some residents of Chalmette do not want to return because of the oil spill. Intermingled with the floodwaters in St. Bernard Parish was over a million gallons of oil that leaked from the Murphy Oil USA, Inc. refinery over an area of one square mile. It is arguably the worst environmental disaster that occurred as a result of Katrina. Health impacts include skin rashes, an increased risk of cancer, and potential respiratory

complications. Approximately one year later, the oil company agreed to a \$330 million settlement to pay homeowners and business owners for their property and the community to help pay clean up costs. The Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the company are taking joint responsibility to notify the public. Adults were cautioned to cover their bodies to avoid contact and to keep their children and pets away. Water, they warned, is not enough to wash away oil.

Vignes' performance chooses not to point fingers of blame at individuals, industry, or the government. She does not explicitly provide information about the oil spill, the flood, the hurricanes, the wetlands, or how racism and classism played roles in this social drama. Instead, dressed in plain black cotton clothes with her hair pulled back, Vignes embodies the stories of her family and those of the neighbors with whom she grew up, inviting us to bear witness to the memories and the choices they face(d) when returning to what is left of their homes, community, and culture. The stories express shock, incredulity, surprise, sorrow, uncertainty, anger, defiance, exhaustion, humor, love, and much more. Though "soaked deep with histories," *Hang It Out to Dry* is a performance that begins after the waters have subsided. In the end, Vignes chooses to frame the performance not as something to be forgotten like "water under the bridge," but as *waves*, an apt metaphor that speaks to the accumulation of wind, geology, gravitational pull, and human impact that builds in energy and momentum to create small ripples or powerful tsunamis.

Paper

Vignes is generous to her audiences, gifting us with opportunities to mourn, to

learn, and to laugh—even if our amusement often quickly turned into groans of disbelief. To be fair, the performance’s multivocality is reflected in not just one but three memorable choruses interwoven throughout. Another involves Vignes walking quickly and steadily with long strides as she moves her fists up and down, in a washboard motion, cheerfully singing, “scrubbin’ and rinsin’, scrubbin’ and rinsin’, scrubbin’ and rinsin’!” She boldly and skillfully embodies various positions, attitudes, and accents on stage as she shares the stories she has collected.

The story of Vignes’ performance that I have retold the most often in subsequent conversations is of what her family spent so much time scrubbing, rinsing, and hanging out to dry: money. Her family’s savings, she tells us, was stored, at least in part, as dollar bills left in a safety deposit box at a local bank. The bank’s walls and security technologies did not stop the flood from drowning the boxes. The fact that the boxes were high enough in the room that it took a ladder to bring them down did not stop the flood from drowning the boxes. After the waters subsided, assuming the boxes were secure, her family went to retrieve the money from the bank. They discovered the boxes were left flooded for three months, and they were given careful instructions to bring the money home to be cleaned (with antibacterial soap, bleach, and water), dried by a fan in a room with the door shut, and then returned to the bank. When they did all of this, the bank teller still initially claimed the money was “contaminated” and, therefore, she could not accept it. Contaminated by a flood, which compromised that same bank, which had promised to provide safe keeping of their money to begin with, is the irony of the story, of course. Why couldn’t the bank merely keep the money in the first place and declare it unusable, like old currency? Dollars are a fiction anyway. Why couldn’t the story simply

be rewritten, as it has been before? Her parents insisted the manager become involved and, eventually, the bank accepted the carefully cleaned bills.

This story reminds me of another I have heard from the city. Although federal funds have been allocated, one of the main reasons they have not been fully distributed into the hands of local residents over a year after the storm has been that they didn't have the paperwork to prove their ownership. They could tell you everything about their lives in their homes and neighbors could vouch for each other, but the paperwork was missing. Even those who evacuated often left titles, deeds, family photographs, and other identifying legal documents behind. They did not realize they would be gone for so long. They did not realize that everything would be flooded. So, people were/are living in FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) trailers because the government was/is at a loss of what to do without the paperwork. The irony of the story, of course, is that even if residents could provide paperwork, paperwork merely is the verification that, at some point in time, people agreed upon something enough to write it down. The paper does not matter without the people. Why couldn't the paper simply be recreated, as it has been before?

Vignes makes the absurd limits of a scriptocentric culture palpable. In the face of her gripping performance and the injustices that continue, I feel the spirit of Dwight Conquergood calling for us to resist and to move beyond colonial "powers to see, to search, and to seize."ⁱⁱⁱ This is not a desire for a neo-Luddite movement. I first heard of the storm through media, accepted Vignes' email invitation to write this review, received the conference organizer's copy of the performance recorded on DVD, and now am translating (a necessarily imperfect act) my memories of her performance on stage into

words that I hope will find their way to paper so that you can read my reflections. Yet, vital to these linguistic choices is a reflexive recognition of what Gayatri Spivak calls “the rhetoricity of the original.”^{iv} The paper has no significance without the people. And the people do not exist in isolation.

Music

In an essay called “A Necessary Music,” while observing the value of “speech and silence” and “proximities and solitudes” in city landscapes, Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard write:

The most obvious trait of communication is its extreme necessity: it alone makes possible the life of an individual, that is, the apprenticeship of human nature and the insertion of the living being in these multiple systems of interaction that give to groups, as well as to the totality of the social body, a means of acquiring form and identity (emphasis added).^v

At times, it is easy to forget how our patterns of alienation and connection are invented. Disasters remind us that performance is a necessary music.

The third chorus of *Hang It Out to Dry* is a declarative statement that haunts the performance space, as Vignes circles in and out of the props on stage stating: “Pick up and move on.” For anyone who did follow the news about the storm, I’m sure you have heard someone—perhaps even yourself—say this. It is a complicated charge, however: pick up what? Our/their bootstraps? Our/their tears? Our/their belongings, at least what’s left? With or without each other? And move on towards where? From what?

Will their/our movement gain us anything? And what is wrong with *not* moving on? Is there nothing left to mourn? No one left of worth?

An important point left out of many mainstream media accounts of Chalmette is that residents of this neighborhood mostly own their homes. To some, this may not seem like headline news. But, for the residents of the Ninth Ward, home ownership has meant something. It hasn't just symbolized individual wealth (as is often glamorized today), but owning a home has been a hard fought commitment to planting roots.

Hang It Out to Dry begins and ends with Vignes singing *Isleno Decima*, a local art form within the Spanish traditions of southern Louisiana.^{vi} This is not Vignes' first performance of the region. As the performance program states, the first was a series of jokes she collected and the second was of this tradition of song. I found out from one of her teachers afterwards that Vignes is the only known apprentice of this tradition. Hers is a heavy responsibility. To be the one who must carry on. To survive. To embody the weight of an entire community's history. To reinvent one's identity once again.

Both overlapping with these previous performances and offering something new, *Hang It Out to Dry* shoulders the weight of an entire community—one that can never stay the same and, yet, remains recognizable as a community nevertheless. It is not the only story that could be told, but it is one that goads us to bear witness and to act. Vignes tells us some neighbors have moved elsewhere, and some of those have remained neighbors in other places. She also tells us many are left undecided or undeterred, trying to hold on to the place they long have called home, because despite the disaster that occurred, the land and the community remain significant.

Hang It Out to Dry is a performance that begins after the waters have subsided, one that suggests Vignes' gesture, the turtle's gesture, and our own gestures remain significant. To stretch our necks out and off to the side—however awkwardly, tentatively, and perhaps daringly—to keep asking: “*What has happened?*”

Notes

ⁱ Lippard, 2.

ⁱⁱ I first heard of *Hang It Out to Dry* through a professor at Louisiana State University, Rachel Hall, my friend and colleague. This review has benefited from our conversations.

ⁱⁱⁱ Conquergood, 150.

^{iv} Spivak, 181.

^v de Certeau, 99, 97.

^{vi} In the Bloomington performance, Vignes sang *a capella*.

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APPENDIX C CINDY SPURLOCK'S RESPONSE

Danielle Vignes is a careful, gifted, and generous performer. "Hang It Out to Dry" (HIOTD) re-presents the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and its effects on the lives, culture, and landscapes of St. Bernard Parish in a way that deeply challenges any easy sense of "closure". Vignes' performance troubles the discourses of therapy and the distanced, mediated forms of "witnessing" that permeate contemporary media culture by drawing our attention to the dis-ease at which everyday life must go on after a catastrophic tragedy. I read HIOTD as a powerful challenge to privatization and neoliberalism. Before I am accused of being too theoretical or abstract, let me explain. Its reliance on "collective memory" to publicly retell tales of individual, communal, regional, and national loss highlights the impossibility of "owning" the story. The scale of the events and the numbers generated ex post facto by statisticians, FEMA, and DHS can do no justice to the preventable tragedies that unfolded in late August 2005 – nor do they seek to. Instead, they seek to quantify pain and they erase the human presence from the scene, effectively transforming a lived, loved place where hope and perseverance are possible into an empty, sterile, used-up space.

I want to offer one brief insight regarding the rhetorical power and force of one of Vignes' performative choices in HIOTD that directly and radically challenges these official narratives. Repetition – often a feature of everyday life and of the mundane – takes on a new and deeply affective level of salience in HIOTD as the mundane, in this case, is the fact that so many people were left behind to fend for themselves. In this case, the mundane is the everyday reality of post-disaster apathy, neglect, and mismanagement by the federal government. The mundane is cost-cutting, social stratification, and the refusal of government to make infrastructure

improvements – to listen to scientific expertise and local, situated knowledges. The mundane here is profane, indecorous, and a national embarrassment of epic proportions. The mundane is to be ignored, to be silenced, to have one's story codified as a statistic. As these mundane official discourses suggest that the rational thing to do is to "pick up and move on", Vignes' disclosures open a place of opposition and function as a "public hearing" of a different sort where the questions of justice and neoliberal rationality are confronted in waist-high water.

And it is precisely through Vignes' strategic and careful choices as a performer to viscerally embody multivocality such that the stories of each and the stories of all are held in dialectical tension is precisely what DOES JUSTICE each time HIOTD is performed before an audience. Through its numbing deployment of excess and multitextuality (the photos, the names of the dead, the timelines, and the chilling "nothingness" of the accompanying soundtrack), HIOTD conveys the incommensurability of environmental and social injustices precisely because it cannot contain the scale of devastation, (nor does it seek to). Instead, it offers a complicated simplicity, a commentary on human perseverance and on the political demands that collective memory makes on the nation-state in the hope of radical possibility, of contingency, and of alternative futures that it offers. HIOTD is not simply about a region of Louisiana. It is a mirror that confronts us with our own image.

APPENDIX D
LISA FLANAGAN'S RESPONSE

*Can you deny, there's nothing greater
Nothing more than the traveling hands of time?
Sainte Genevieve can hold back the water
But saints don't bother with a tear stained eye*

St Genevieve is the patron saint of disasters, drought and excessive rain. She often prayed through a stream of tears; was almost drowned by enemies who believed her a false prophet and hypocrite; and devout in her beliefs and steadfast in her courage and generosity for her people. She is also a town in Southern Missouri, near St Louis—the first known permanent settlement on the West bank of the Mississippi. St Genevieve and New Orleans were established by French missionaries in the early 1700s. In 1993 St Genevieve was flooded, threatening its large number of French Creole vernacular architecture. When Jay Farrar of Son Volt wrote the song *Tear Stained Eye* he was living in New Orleans and traveling back to St Louis to record with his band.

These connections seem more than coincidence. I am asked to introduce my friend's NCA performance about a community, her community in south Louisiana and how they were and are affected by Hurricane Katrina. While I ponder what to say, I have on music in the background and Son Volt plays. The next thing I know, I “know” all of these details, about the song, the musician, the saint, the town . . . What to make of it According to our performer, Danielle Vignes: **(quote)** “*Stories of home are how and where I make sense of my own life and the importance of the human experience. I know who I am through the stories of my family and my native region.*” Originally inspired by Errol Morris' film, Vernon Florida, Danielle began to apply her scholarly understanding of ethnography, natural narratives, mystory, oral histories, visual communication and performative writing to express the personal, familial and cultural stories she experienced and heard told as a resident of Chalmette, Louisiana. She has studied, documented and created works based on the folktales, folk art, poetic and lyrical styles, official and personal histories, social and economic practices, and forms of expression of the people of Chalmette. Her research topic and methods reflect the sentiments of a favorite professor of ours, geography & anthropology professor Miles Richardson, who states in his essay “Looking at a World that Speaks”:

Inscribed on the landscape, places communicate our implicit understanding of what we are about; they also are the texts that we as observers read to interpret that understanding. How places become inscribed, how the cultural landscape emerges, on the other hand, requires that we look for process. We inscribe places, we author them, even the most ‘anonymous’ vernacular dwelling, but we are also flesh-and-blood creatures, occupying the earth's surface, subject to natural and social forces magnified or generated by that very human sequent occupancy of the planet. Consequently, we authors who inscribe places do so shadowed by the continuing presence of the past and within the swirl of contemporary events. We not infrequently are caught in situations of our own making that paradoxically, we only partially comprehend and over which we have relatively little control. A looking that extends beyond particular places on a

distinctive landscape permits us to elucidate the processes, both temporal and regional, that inscribe the landscape. (161-162)

Dr. Richardson teaches a “Poetics of Place” class that many people in our department have been influenced by in terms of our individual studies of particular places, communities, and cultures.

Danielle has progressed through three installments of her Chalmette research and performances. The third piece presented today, “Hang It Out To Dry,” addresses the post-Katrina stories of her community and allows her to explore the process of their continued inscription despite the loss of place the culture once occupied. Her family home is gone and her hometown struggles to rebuild/ even remain, but according to Heidegger, in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* Danielle dwells there nonetheless in her work by (quote) “*staying with things*” (149) and “*sparing and preserving*” the stories of her culture, her family, herself.

By continuing to dwell on the subject of Chalmette using the praxis and theory of performance studies she creates a work in need of telling and sharing. Much of Chalmette, New Orleans, South LA and Mississippi cannot be preserved in the traditional sense, but “Hang It Out To Dry” is one way to preserve part of the cultural landscape in the art of performance, the re-enactment of stories, the creation of the work. In *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger expresses the importance of such preservation:

Preserving the work does not reduce people to their private experiences, but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work. Thus it grounds being for and with one another as the historical standing-out of human existence in reference to unconcealedness. Most of all, knowledge in the manner of preserving is far removed from that merely aestheticizing connoisseurship of the work’s formal aspects, its qualities and charms. Knowing as having seen is a being resolved; it is standing within the conflict that the work has fitted into the rift. (66)

You are now a part of the stories, the acts of dwelling and preserving. The areas and people affected by Katrina and Rita, like those affected by other large scale natural disasters-fires in southern California, tsunamis in South East Asia- need for others to dwell with them on the issues surrounding their plights; to help preserve their stories, cultures, places and dwellings; and to understand that the process requires time.

*Seeing traces of the scars that came before
Hitting the pavement still asking for more
When the hours don't move along,
Worn-out wood and familiar songs
To hear your voice is not enough*

*It's more than a shame
Can you deny, there's nothing greater*

*Nothing more than the traveling hands of time?
Sainte Genevieve can hold back the water
But saints don't bother with a tear stained eye*

VITA

In July 1974, Danielle Sears Vignes was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. She graduated from The Academy of the Holy Angels in 1992 and subsequently entered Louisiana State University where she found home. She graduated with a Bachelor of General Studies in 1996 and Master of Arts in communication studies with an emphasis in performance studies in 2002. Her career as a graduate assistant included teaching classes in public speaking, interpersonal communication, small group communication, and performance of literature. She recently joined the faculty at Baton Rouge Community College as an instructor in communication studies. She will graduate with her Doctor of Philosophy in communication studies from Louisiana State University in December 2009.