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Trauma Studies Moving Forward: Interdisciplinary Perspectives

E. Ann Kaplan

Trauma Studies is alive and well today—and its reach is expanding, as evidenced by the special section of this journal on “Witnessing and Performance.” Scholars in more fields find the lens of trauma illuminating for understanding art about catastrophe. Partly because global disasters dominate our mediated worlds as never before, such art is more visible than in the past. And along with it, scholars continue to analyze not only the impact of art about atrocities on audiences, but also the ethical imperative *to create witnesses to disaster* through art. Dori Laub’s insistence, years ago, on the importance of bearing witness to catastrophe where there was no witness before, has been taken to heart by artists in recent years as they turned to make works about disasters worldwide.¹

While I will briefly return to debates about exactly which kind of art best offers the position of the ethical witness, I do not intend to pursue arguments I have made elsewhere about differences between a viewer experiencing vicarious trauma or empty empathy in responding to different media representations of catastrophe.² Rather, I will first comment on the interdisciplinary development of theories dealing with collective or cultural trauma, incited by sociologists such as Wulf Kansteiner and Jeffrey Alexander, themselves sometimes inspired by reading humanities trauma studies.³ I will then address my new interest in what I call “future-tense trauma” (for short),⁴ as it relates to a specific kind of witnessing. That is, in this case, viewers witness probable futurist dystopian worlds, as they are imagined on film, *before* they happen. Some media images proliferating through a society create what I have called “cultural trauma,” when people live in fear of imminent disaster, and affects of future threat dominate consciousness.⁵ But other films offer a position of being witness *avant la lettre* to the challenges that face humans worldwide in regard to disastrous human impact on the planet leading to infrastructure collapse.

E. Ann Kaplan, Distinguished Professor of English and Cultural Analysis and Theory at Stony Brook University, founded and directs The Humanities Institute. Past President of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Kaplan has published widely in cultural studies, media, and women’s studies, from theoretical perspectives including psychoanalysis, feminism, postmodernism, and post-colonialism. Kaplan’s pioneering research on women in film (*Women in Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, *Women in Film Noir* and *Motherhood and Representation*) is influential in the United States and abroad. Her *Feminism and Film* (2000) brings together major feminist film theories from 1980 to 2000. Kaplan’s recent research focuses on trauma, as evident in her *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations* co-edited with Ban Wang, 2004, and her 2005 monograph, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*. She is working on two book projects, *Future-Tense Trauma: Dystopian Discourses in Visual Culture, Literature and Life*; and *The Unconscious of Age: Screening Older Women*. Essays anticipating both books were published in 2010, 2011, and 2012, or are presently in press.

Witnessing in the ethical sense has to address not just the individual but the social collectivity as well. It involves taking responsibility for injustices in the past, and, as I will argue, preventing future human-based catastrophe. It is a position in which one acts as a member of a collectivity or culture. Understanding this kind of cultural witnessing and its implications requires theorizing how cultural trauma functions and how we can generalize for a collectivity. Humanists have had trouble doing this. From a Freudian and specifically clinical point of view, trauma can only be known by its belated return in symptoms—nightmares, phobias, hallucinations, and panic attacks. No event, then, is inherently traumatic; it only becomes so in its later symptomatic return. Yet we talk of events themselves as “traumatic.” Focusing heavily on a specific event as the origin of trauma phenomena runs the danger of rejecting the psychoanalytic understanding of memory “as the outcome of complex processes of revision,” as Susannah Radstone (following Freud) put it, in favor of a linear registration of events as they happen.⁶

Nevertheless, to abandon the word “trauma” is to lose the resonance and aura, if you like, that the word carries. We know we are talking about something atrocious, almost beyond understanding, if we call an event “traumatic.” When I use the term “trauma culture,” as in the title for my 2005 book, I mean a culture in which discourses, and especially images, about catastrophic events proliferate, often “managed” by government; these discourses overtake public discussion of other things, dominating the social atmosphere. Like Jeffrey Alexander, a sociologist, I agree that “trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society,”⁷ and I would add especially constructed through the media. When I refer to people being “vicariously traumatized” by such proliferation of catastrophe discourse, I mean that people suffer effects similar to trauma by watching or experiencing the trauma of others. So I use the term loosely but I think effectively. Other words do not communicate what the term “trauma” does.

However, the leap from describing traumatic symptoms, clarified in clinical research with individual subjects in therapy, to applying such “symptoms” to national discourse has, as noted, long plagued humanists. While we may be intuitively right about nations “forgetting” for generations events too traumatic to confront directly, making a viable argument—or at least one that scholars in other disciplines will accept—has not been easy. As Ross Poole, a sociologist, reminds us, “Memory requires a bearer: If there are social or cultural memories (I use these terms interchangeably) there must be groups, that is collective subjects, to which the memories belong.”⁸ In addition, we must better clarify the difference between a national, public discourse such as that pronounced and debated by prominent officials (the President, governors, elected officials) and circulated broadly via various media, and minority discourses produced by small collectives whose knowledge does not get widely disseminated.⁹ Secondly, we need to better differentiate perpetrators and victims: Criminal acts performed in the name of the

nation state are the ones that elected officials work to render absent, “forgotten” in public discourse. This is an effort that the majority of the people, those not affected by the crimes, concede to either because they are partly implicated in those crimes (see Wulf Kansteiner’s research on memory in Germany¹⁰), or, as humanities scholars might argue, because they themselves are and have been vicariously traumatized by what the nation has done.

Traumatic memory, in its belatedness, involves a kind of forgetting. Victim-collectives too may “forget” through the same process of traumatic amnesia as happens to perpetrators. Meanwhile the discourse of those who do remember is stifled, until a time arrives when the nation state can no longer suppress its crimes. As Poole notes, when rediscovered knowledge of organized brutality is addressed to us, as citizens of the state, this knowledge falls within “the ‘horizon’ of our collective memory and it places the events described on our moral agenda.”¹¹ Poole’s comments capture what humanities scholars have had in mind in talking about nations also showing effects similar to traumatic symptoms in individuals.

But humanists’ objects of study differ from those of sociologists to the extent that our specific “data” is at one remove from lived reality, namely the worlds of literature, film/media and other arts. We come close to the sociological object, however, in that such imaginary worlds emerge from the society and culture that sociologists study—they are closely linked to it. But humanists’ focus on the cultural role of genre and its importance is often overlooked by sociologists. The genre of trauma cinema, like others, offers “a powerful dynamic of repetition and expectation” that is the ground, as Christine Gledhill puts it, of “all our imaginings and thinkings.”¹² Thinking about the role of society and trauma, we can conclude that genre analysis tells us not just about kinds of films, but about the cultural work of producing and knowing them. By definition, then, genres change as the social context changes. In that case, part of the critic’s job is to lay bare such dual contexts of society and genre: Genres shape how we think about our lived worlds through establishing certain kinds of story, certain repeated narratives and situations, leading to well-defined expectations.

Through genres, literature and the arts showcase symptoms of social processes, cultural energies and cultural change. They provide us with a barometer that tells us what is going on. In the case of Trauma Studies, arguably, humanist scholars produce new knowledge about trauma and its cultural ramifications through studying the contribution of art about atrocity in processes of memory, witnessing, healing, and the working through of national and international catastrophes.

In terms of the impact of imaginary worlds and humanities analyses of them on society, let me suggest the following: Works enter the cultural sphere, where they are reviewed, commented on in widely-circulating blogs, internet sites, television entertainment channels, journals, newspapers, and seep into public consciousness in these ways. We may turn to the popularity of films and literature about trauma

as partial evidence for impact. As Jeffrey Alexander has argued, certain events get circulated in symbolic form (he gives the example of the Holocaust and the circulation of emotionally-moving literature such as Anne Frank's *Diary* or the increasing Holocaust cinema in the last decade or so) and come into public consciousness. In related work studying the global impact of catastrophic memories, Michael Rothberg argues that one result of such public consciousness is that a group that has suffered a traumatic event might come to recognize its meanings when through visual media or written texts the group learns about another catastrophe.¹³ People might come to view their particular tragedy through the lens of, say, the Holocaust, hopefully generating less competitive memory than solidarity and understanding across cultures in regard to trauma. Further, new neuroscience research demonstrates not only that fictions stimulate the brain, but as Annie Murphy Paul put it in her article, "Your Brain on Fiction," may "even change how we act in life." Paul notes that "the brain, it seems, does not make much of a distinction between reading about an experience and encountering it in real life."¹⁴ This is obviously highly debatable, but it seems that humanists may not be so far out of line. We can show that humanists contribute to knowledge using their specific data and drawing on social processes linked to that data.

But we do more than that because we also use frameworks (such as psychoanalysis) not so visible, normally, in sociological studies: Alexander, for example, argues that the failure to recognize collective traumas results not from the intrinsic nature of the original suffering (which humanists usually focus on) but from the failure to carry through on the gap between the event and its representation, what he calls "the trauma process."¹⁵ This process has several stages, but at each stage, from defining painful injury to the collectivity, and distributing ideal and material consequences, signifying chains of language, sound, images—i.e., representation—are the medium (and not only in the aesthetic realm but also in legal, scientific, mass media, and state bureaucratic worlds).

But where Alexander talks of social "process" in this way, humanists talk about a different process, namely that of "witnessing" and what we believe is its ethical imperative. While I dealt at some length with this imperative in *Trauma Culture*, I have been expanding my earlier trauma work and the concept of witnessing: In addition to seeing witnessing in art as part of the cultural working through of *past catastrophes*, I now also consider traumatic visions of *the future*. Inspired by the proliferation of dystopian futurist imaginaries across a range of media (my focus is particularly in film), I began to study such futurist fictions as partly displacements from the past and present, but also looking at them as constructions of the future which, in turn, shape the present and past. I am particularly interested in a select group of films, which I call "Future-Tense Trauma Cinema." A subset of the Science Fiction genre, these films focus on human and natural causes of complete

social collapse instead of, as in standard Sci-Fi, displacing cultural anxieties into allegories of, for instance, aliens invading the planet. What interests me now is the phenomenon of increasing numbers of films and television series asking viewers to watch catastrophes and their disastrous consequences *before* they have happened.

The quickest way to provide an idea of future-tense trauma (and memory for the future) is by brief reference to a 2011 American film, *Take Shelter* (director, Jeff Nichols).¹⁶ The protagonist of this film suffers from *pretraumatic* stress disorder instead of the usual *posttraumatic* disorder. Curtis LaForche (Michael Shannon) suffers from hallucinations of violent climate change:



Fig. 1. Shot from Jeff Nichols's movie *Take Shelter*, 2011.

The hero's life is all but destroyed because of his case of future-tense trauma, that is, his vivid hallucinations and dreams of violent climate events that destroy the natural world. That the narrative accepts Curtis's dreams as reflecting a psychic disorder is evident in his being treated by psychologists and finally a psychiatrist. Meanwhile, through identification with Curtis, audiences apprehend what drastic and fatal climate events would mean. We vicariously experience the future as probable catastrophe.



Fig. 2. Shot from Jeff Nichols's movie *Take Shelter*, 2011

The subgenre of dystopian films is a genre, then, which serves as a future-oriented memory for audiences watching: We are invited to live for two hours in desolated environments, experiencing desperate humans who seek to survive the total collapse of infrastructures on which humans depend. This offers spectators a way to remember what we have now and what we should not lose. The invitation aims to mitigate future tragedies. But too often the apparently inevitable oscillation between dystopian and utopian fantasies lets viewers off the hook, so to speak, by opening up a hopeful ending for the main characters.

Let me briefly explain, and at the same time, show how suggestive psychoanalysis can be in this kind of research—a suggestiveness that we cannot find in sociological studies. Freud inspired my analysis of the way many films embody an oscillation between utopia and dystopia. His theories suggest that there is a dark psychological side to the interest in future disaster not often addressed by Sci-Fi scholars, and certainly not by sociologists. I began to link Freud's idea of the "death drive" (*Todestrieb*) and the contemporary post 9/11 discourses envisaging the future collapse of social meaning, civility, democratic institutions, and ordinary human community. Freud's theories were occasioned by returning soldiers haunted belatedly by traumas of mass killings, often face to face, in World War I.¹⁷ But as seeds of World War II developed in 1930, Freud, partly as a result of his "new science" of psychoanalysis and what it showed about human nature, famously rejected the long Western tradition of utopian thought (from Plato to Thomas More onward) and wrote his dystopia, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, theorizing human civilization dominated by greed, aggression, and violence.¹⁸ Freud's interest, however, in the so-called life drives—that is, in the leaning toward human compassion, the desire for safety—suggests a pull towards utopian thinking.

Freud's theories intertwining the subjective psyche with culture, nation, and collectivities, are then useful in dealing with dystopia and its utopian underside. In his provocative 1915 essay, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," written in the full flush of WWI and in correspondence with Albert Einstein, Freud all but offers a theory of the ways in which utopian and dystopian thought are but two sides of the same psychological coin.¹⁹ He intimates that his despair about what humans are doing to humans may be due to his having held too high an expectation of humanity, suggesting that utopian thinking necessarily dissolves into dystopia. But instead of asking if utopian thinking leads to dystopian nightmares, one might ask if *dystopian* vision may inevitably produce *utopian* thought. If utopian thought in its impossibility of success leads via disappointment to dystopian imagery or models, conversely dystopian discourses seem inevitably to spiral upwards in search of hope, a beneficent future arising from the ruins of what had seemed to be the end of the world. But within the dialectical two-sided discourse, equally inevitably spiraling utopia spirals down again.²⁰ Such dystopian realities foster utopian hopes, only to have such hopes again dashed; after which the cycle starts again. It is a circularity that narrative (it seems) impels, and that, I argue, does not necessarily serve humankind.

This experience, largely in commercial genres, does not offer the possibility of ethical witnessing that is required if humans are to move forward and avoid such catastrophes. Following what Jacques Derrida long ago called "the law of genre" (in work that dovetails nicely with that of Gledhill), the genre repeats the same cycle, and audiences come to expect a utopian moment as they leave the theatre.²¹ But, in light of how I define bearing witness, it is clear that the explicit ethical element is missing in the futurist dystopian genre. A film like *Take Shelter* gives one pause, certainly, but it does not, per se, challenge us to take the position of responsibility and ethics that witnessing in its true sense involves. It may *prepare* us for ethical responsibility, but the genre as such cannot provide that position for viewers.

Once again one has to look to genres other than the commercial to find true witnessing to the future catastrophe the planet faces. In documentaries such as *Surviving Progress*, *Into Eternity*, or films by Jennifer Baichwal (*Manufactured Landscapes*, *Payback*), instead of bearing witness to past atrocities as in much Trauma Studies, we bear witness to a probable catastrophic future that has not yet taken place. In such films, we are witnesses to what must never take place, just as in (for example) art about the Holocaust or other genocides, we are witness to what must never happen *again*. As such, we are perhaps inspired to think through what needs to change for us to survive into the future, much as witnessing genocides from the past, that didn't happen to us, provides motivation to prevent them happening in the future.

Let me end with brief reference to a documentary, Michael Madsen's *Into Eternity* (2011) about future environmental catastrophe, and the ethical witnessing

it arguably offers. In this film, Madsen develops a remarkable strategy for actually producing what I have elsewhere theorized as the “witness position” in avant-garde films like Tracey Moffatt’s *Night Cries* or Maya Deren’s *Meshes of an Afternoon*.²² I argued that those films invited viewers to take up the witness position through strategic distancing from the narrative, and in a sense requiring that they pay attention to the screen so as to figure out meanings—a process that creates the witnessing stance. But in *Into Eternity* the narrator does much of the work for us in posing questions to the viewer as a future (human?) being.

Into Eternity is a remarkable documentary in this and other ways. First, its methods for telling its story are experimental and extremely effective; second, while its topic, the present and future dangers of nuclear waste, is specific, the warning about this particular twenty-first-century resource problem applies broadly; third, linked to this, the philosophical, ethical, and moral questions that the film raises illuminate much about what humans are doing to the planet today. Madsen’s career in performance art partly accounts for the experimental aspects that make the film so intriguing.

Into Eternity, like *Take Shelter*, illuminates my concept of future-tense trauma, albeit in a vastly different way. It deals with an ongoing project to take care of nuclear waste instead of, as in *Take Shelter*, projecting into the future a catastrophic climate event that wipes humans out. On one level the film follows standard documentary techniques: It has several sections dealing with diverse aspects of problems related to nuclear waste, and in each section the narrator (played by Madsen himself) interviews several scientists or philosophers who are experts on the topic. The interviewees mainly speak directly back to the narrator (facing the camera, that is); sometimes the narrator also speaks directly to the camera.

The film sets its tone before the credits emerge through shots of grey rocks, laden with ash or snow, lying beneath bare trees with stark leafless branches. In the distance we see electrical towers and power-lines barely visible in a milky white haze. We cut to the camera moving slowly into a tunnel as the credits emerge. A disembodied voice addresses the viewer: “I am taking you to a place where something is buried to protect you. We are taking great pains to be sure you are protected. This place should not be disturbed. It is not a place for you to come. Stay away or you will be hurt.”²³

As the narrator interpellates the viewer of the film as a future human being, the viewer is not only put in the position of witness to a future traumatic event but asked to take responsibility for it—to deal with many complex philosophical and ethical issues about nuclear waste from the perspective of 100,000 years in the future.

Madsen’s performance art is evident in this effective strategy. These sections basically *perform* a future-tense traumatic scenario, as Madsen continues to address the future human directly through a series of careful questions, gently articulated as if to future ghosts. The viewer is put in the position of occupying the place of

the ghostlike human being addressed: Through Madsen's questions, the viewer as future human confronts the fact of the waste having been hidden deep in rock in the North of Finland. Performing this being, the viewer has to imagine coming upon the repository, even opening it up.

Let me give some more brief examples of the way the viewer is interpellated, not as a present-day spectator as we are normally positioned, but as the future human finding the repository (called in Finnish "Onkalo" or "hiding place").²⁴ Outlining the time frame for the building of Onkalo, Madsen tells the future human that it was begun when he was a child, and will be finished when he is dead. "It must last 100,000 years: Nothing built by man so far has lasted that long. If we succeed, it will stay safe; if you find it, what will it tell you about us?" In what follows, Scientists discuss issues related to waste safety, after which once again, in his soft voice, Madsen gently asks the future human: "Did the waste get out? Did it happen? Are there forbidden zones with no life in your time?"

Madsen continues the creative strategy of interviewing scientists and philosophers about a number of issues related to nuclear waste followed by a shift in tone to these gently posed questions to the viewer as future human.²⁵ Some further questions that the viewer-as-future-human (VFH) has to think about include the question of the need for so much energy: "Our world depends totally on energy," Madsen says. "Is it the same for you? Does your way of life also depend on unlimited energy?" As the film follows the building of the huge repository deep in the rock in Northern Finland, the narrator takes his camera into the tunnel leading down to where the repository is being constructed, and he again addresses the VFH: "You are now in the tunnel; you are in a place where you should never go; what is there is dangerous, repulsive; danger for you, for all of us; nothing here for you. Turn around; go no further . . ." and at this point there are terrifying noises on the sound-track to emphasize the point.²⁶

Perhaps the most interesting section of the film is the discussion prompted by Madsen about how to communicate to the future human the dreadful danger the repository represents. The debate ultimately turns first on whether or not it is safer to leave markers that present-day humans hope future humans can understand, or to simply bury the waste, leave no sign, and just hope that no future beings think of drilling into this particular rock. Models of markers are offered, but none seem sufficient. One suggestion involved putting an image of Edvard Munch's "The Scream" near the site as a supposedly universal marker of something terrifying.

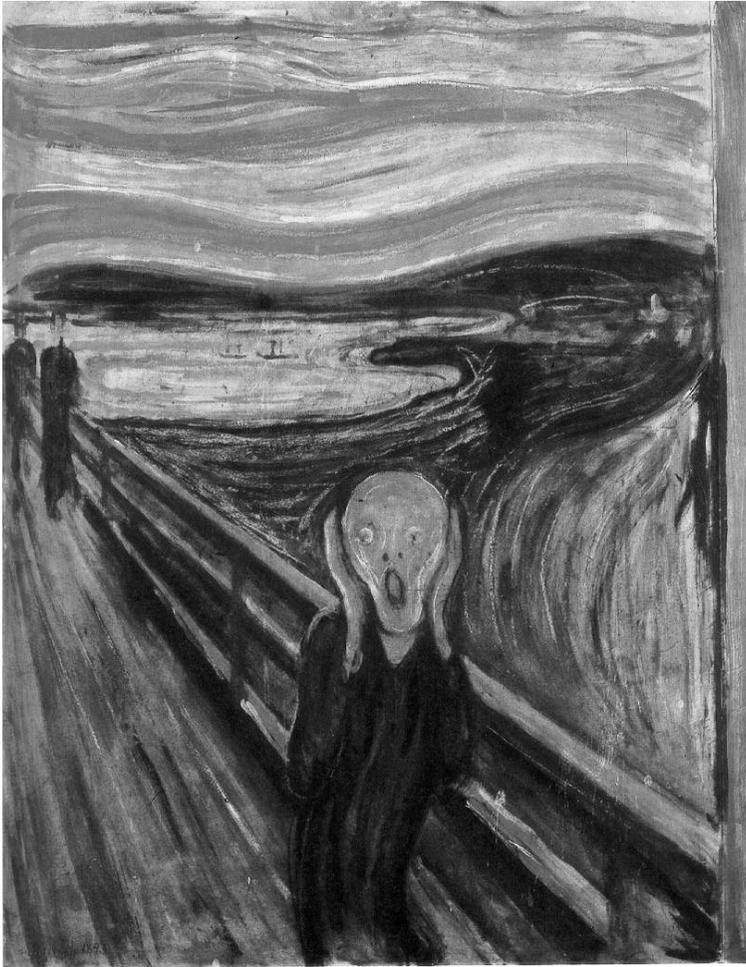


Fig. 3. *The Scream*, Edvard Munch, 1893. Public Domain.

Madsen himself suggests that humans rely on information being passed down from generation to generation. But scientists argue that the future beings may be curious, and may think there is wealth in the waste; they consider what the future human may do, based on what we as humans have done in the past, in our archeological digs for information about earlier humans and their cultures. Madsen softly addresses the VHF: “We will leave messages for you in different languages: Will you see them? Can you read?”

The interpellated viewer (i.e., the person watching the film), is thus pushed to take responsibility for the waste and the possibility of digging it up. She is situated as one who is finding it; she has to decide whether to open it up or not; she has to deal with her impulses to find treasure, with her desire for wealth, her greed for

energy, not knowing or not caring to take notice of the dangers that twenty-first-century humans are trying to communicate. Even in questioning that the being *is* human (and no one who speaks in the film is sure what kind of human it will be, or even sure that it would be recognizable to us), we are made to think differently, and to worry about leaving this dangerous waste to be misinterpreted, misused, and possibly destructive to whatever society is in place.

The issue of time as it is linked to danger is perhaps the film's major theme: And it is through the performance aspects of the film that this theme is developed. In a gesture that will be repeated three times during the documentary, Madsen strikes a long match, holds it up as it burns, and addresses the present-day viewer directly: the image shows him at shoulder height, in a darkened room, with just his face lit: He says: "Man mastered fire and conquered the universe," continuing to note that man felt powerful. Now, he says, there is a new fire that can destroy us: It is one that cannot be extinguished; it could burn a land but it is also inside the human, inside his children, his crops. "We need a hiding place for the fire to burn safely into eternity," he concludes.

The film's ending sharpens the point about the potential for disaster. Madsen's last address to the future human viewer assumes the future human did open Onkalo: "You have now come deep into the repository; radiation is everywhere; you do not know it, but something is happening to your body; something beyond your senses. You cannot feel it or see or smell it, but a light is in your body, it is shining through you. It is the last glow of the powers we have harvested from the universe."

The strong impact of the film arises from the unique position it constructs for the viewer as witness to the future. In addition, through the photography, visual techniques and editing, the viewer is brought into a pretraumatic scenario of a wasted land. The shots of the workers render them unworldly, strange beings involved in an overwhelming technical task. Even the scientists who talk to us are often shown in freeze-frame, as if already dead, or shocked by the seriousness of what they are telling us. There are warm, even humorous moments as well, as these personable interviewees share their expert knowledge. If the overall tone of the film is dark and suggests a doomed human species, Madsen has succeeded through his ingenious cinematic techniques in getting our attention about an issue too infrequently addressed. The film cannot offer solutions to such a complex issue of humanity's need for energy and the death-dealing results of the powers we harness for it. But in situating the viewer as this future-human witness to all the problems nuclear energy raises, the film insists on viewers taking responsibility and hopefully working towards answers regarding nuclear waste.

If the futurist dystopian fictions like *Take Shelter* can be seen as constructions of a future that emerge from the past and partly displace the present, the disasters have not yet happened. Documentaries like *Into Eternity*, while inevitably also constructions, warn us about dangerous environmental processes already underway.

They capture images from around the world that show what our future will be unless humans change. Yet both genres demand that viewers experience futurist traumatic scenarios. While trauma as such is only known belatedly through symptoms, I suggest that in watching dystopian fantasies viewers are invited to experience scenarios that may (at least for some) be vicariously traumatizing but lead to productive change. Such future-tense traumatic worlds show the contribution that art can make towards changing public consciousness through vicarious witnessing. In this case, hopefully narratives can help create community consensus about taking action to adapt to changes in the infrastructures on which humans depend.

Notes

1. Dr. Dori Laub, M.D. is a psychoanalyst and Holocaust survivor whose clinical work led to his theories on trauma and bearing witness to testimony. See his two influential essays, "Bearing Witness" and "An Event Without a Witness," *Testimony: Crises or Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, eds. Shoshanna Felman and Dori Laub (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 57-92.

2. E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 2005) 87-100. "Global Trauma: Viewing Images of Catastrophe," *Consumption, Markets, Culture* (Winter, 2007): 1-25.

3. Wulf Kansteiner, "Genealogy of a Category Mistake: A Critical Intellectual History of the Cultural Trauma Metaphor," *Rethinking History* 8.2 (June 2004): 193-221; Jeffrey Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. Jeffrey Alexander, John Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2004).

4. I develop this concept fully in my in-progress book on *Future-Tense Trauma: Dystopian Imaginaries in Visual Culture, Literature and Life*, under contract with Rutgers University Press. But briefly, I am interested in theorizing the impact on viewers of futurist traumatic scenarios. While trauma is always only known belatedly—through its symptoms—it is possible to be vicariously traumatized by watching terrifying scenarios on film (see Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*).

5. See Brian Massumi, "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat," *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Greg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010) 52-7.

6. Susannah Radstone, "Screening Trauma: *Forrest Gump*," *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000) 79-110.

7. Alexander 2.

8. Ross Poole, "Memory, History and the Claims of the Past," *Memory and the Future: Transnational Politics, Ethics and Society*, eds. Yifat Gutman, Adam D. Brown, and Amy Sadaro (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010) 33.

9. For example, abuses in regard to a local Native American tribe; abuses in an African American community known locally but not getting national notice; familial female sexual abuse that rarely makes the headlines but around which collectives develop.

10. Wulf Kansteiner studies Postwar German refusal to confront directly the Nazi past through his analysis of television shows from the 1960s to the 1980s. In his 2004 article, "Nazis, Viewers and Statistics," *Journal of Contemporary History* No. 39 (2004): 575-598, Kansteiner argues that 1960s television programs in West Germany more or less ignored the Holocaust because they were unable yet to fully address it, partly because many viewers had themselves lived through the Third Reich. A more complex view emerged in the 1980s when West Germany became more self-critical. Even then, however, direct confrontation of bystanders and perpetrators was avoided.

11. Poole 34.

12. Christine Gledhill, ed., *Gender Meets Genre in Postwar Cinemas* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012) Introduction, 11. See also her chapter, "Rethinking Genre," in *Re-Inventing Film Studies*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London and New York: Oxford UP, 2000).

13. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009).
14. Annie Murphy Paul, "Your Brain on Fiction." *New York Times* 18 March 2012: 6.
15. Alexander 17.
16. Jeff Nichols, Director and Writer, *Take Shelter*; Sony Picture Classics, 2011.
17. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (The Standard Edition) [*Jenseits des Lustprinzips* 1920], trans. James Strachey (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1961).
18. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929), trans. James Strachey (New York and London: Norton, 1961); also see Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York and London: Norton, 1959).
19. Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts on War and Death" (1915), *Collected Papers*, ed. Joan Riviere, Vol. IV (London: Hogarth Press, 1949) 307.
20. As Jane Elliott puts it in her *Popular Feminist Fiction as American Allegory: Representing National Time* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), "the creation of utopia through the achievement of freedom would lead directly to the creation of dystopia . . . in fact, there is almost no difference between utopia and dystopia" (29). And in his volume, *The Plot of the Future: Utopia and Dystopia in Modern Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), Dragon Klaic agrees, noting that "Even dystopian drama is in fact utopian; it involves utopian ambitions while describing their total collapse." Quoted in Review by Cynthia Wagner, "Theatrical Visions: Playwrights and the Future," *The Futurist* (July-August 1992): 45.
21. See Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Critical Inquiry* (Autumn 1980): 55-82.
22. Kaplan, *Trauma Culture* 122-135.
23. Michael Madsen, Director and Writer, *Into Eternity*, Films Transit International, 2010. Quotations are taken directly from the film.
24. I rely here on Louis Althusser's concept of "interpellation" as described in his essay "Ideology and State Apparatuses," in his volume, *On Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 2008). There Althusser shows how each subject is, as it were, "called into being" by the structures of State Institutions that "hail" us and in so doing produce us as subjects. The viewer in this film is similarly "hailed," called into being by the cinematic strategies, but for productive purposes, not to be subjected to the State Apparatus.
25. Issues discussed include: Interim Storage of waste; a Permanent Solution for it; dangers of Human Intrusion into Onkalo, and what to do about it; Human Law related to nuclear waste; and issues about future use in our time of nuclear energy.
26. The sound track deserves its own discussion. I undertake this in my upcoming book, *Future-Tense Trauma: Dystopian Imaginaries in Visual Culture, Literature and Life* where I deal with *Into Eternity* at length and also discuss other documentaries about environmental dangers.