ON THE MOURNING OF 9/11: THE POLITICS OF MEMORIALIZATION

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THE POLITICS OF MEMORIALIZATION

By

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ABSTRACT

This study considers the political significance of the cultural work of public mourning. While "mourning work" has been largely dismissed or distanced from political discourse and overlooked as an object of sustained reflection and query, the sanctioned modes of remembering and honouring the victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States have greatly stimulated a philosophical rethinking of this dismissal. Addressing in particular the ways in which the public memorial establishes and sustains a spectatorship of individuals who feel themselves part of or belonging to a community of fellow mourners grieving a common anguished past, this study explores how mourning work is, in fact, intricately and significantly bound up with what is considered the "political," in that mourning work provides the very conditions that are necessary for social relationships—and thus, such notions as "community," "nationhood," and the "public" sphere—to emerge. Chapter 1 ("Beyond Remembrance: (Re)Animating the Living Dead and the Dead Living") explores the ways in which various media that have "9/11" as their focus simultaneously produce and police a "public" sphere made to mourn the deaths that have been rendered "grievable" and worthy of remembrance. Chapter 2 ("Ground Zero's (Im)Possible Voids") considers how the preservation of the bases or "footprints" of the Twin Towers for New York City's "officially sanctioned" public memorial to "9/11" proves instrumental in maintaining the cohesion of the "public" sphere, and also enables us to unpack the torsions at work in the practice of collective remembrance.

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1.   A Candle in the Window

The site is called "Earth Plaza,"[1] a place and space constructed for visitors,

mourners and mere passers-by. Enshrouded in, and exuding utter darkness, this site

heightens the anonymity of the visitors at the same time as it draws together every

person under the umbrella of one memory, of one event: September 11, 2001.

One lone candle is situated in the middle of the site. One lone candle,

adorned with a ribbon of red, white and blue, flickers in honour and remembrance of

the dead. One lone candle incites us never to forget what happened on that day. One

lone candle, its bright flame standing in stark contrast to the encompassing darkness

that surrounds it.

Certainly, it is a sight to behold and indeed, the very simplicity of this

memorial site is enough to give pause in this high-speed world… a pause long enough

to remember.

One candle, one ribbon, one reference to a historic event—a historic moment,

never to be forgotten, must never be forgotten…

"Earth Plaza" is not—and never has been—a proposed design for the World

Trade Center memorial site in Lower Manhattan. Though still a memorial site, it can

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[1] To visit "Earth Plaza," go to <http://www.worldtradecenter.com>. I was intrigued to find that the events of 9/11—of which the collapse of the WTC towers, though the most palpably "memorable," was only one—was conflated with the World Trade Center ("worldtradecenter.com"), without so much as acknowledging those who also died in the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania; this, amidst a staggering number of memorial websites that insist on the joint mourning and remembrance of the victims, regardless of their flight number or the location of their deaths. It also struck me as particularly significant that this website, in foregoing the slightest reference to the people who died in the attacks, seems to be mourning the collapse of the WTC towers themselves—not those who worked within its respective 110 floors. If this is so, then what exactly about Towers One and Two have we lost and are now grieving?

only be found in the digital world, for it is a page on the World Wide Web, designed

as a cyber monument to the victims of 9/11—specifically those who perished in the

collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

It shouldn't be *that* surprising to find the equivalent of a steel-and-concrete

memorial online. After all, isn't the digital world modeled after "the real world," with

its "Internet *traffic*," "web *communities*," and "*home* pages?" Is it truly surprising

that while one cruises the "Information Super-highway," one may—accidentally or

not—breeze by a website that does not require constant updates[2] and upgrades, simply

because its "creation" or "existence" relies on its very *in-ability* to move on and forget

its history, its past?

The candle that illuminates "Earth Plaza" is not a candle, but an animated,

graphic image of one. Though its flame flickers to and fro, perpetually caressed by an

invisible breeze, this candle has never been lit. But does it truly matter whether a

"real" person had lighted the candle—is it not the act of mourning or commemoration

that counts, rather than the mode in which this act of mourning takes? Can the act and

the mode of mourning even be distinguished, one from the other, as separate

"entities?"

In many ways, "Earth Plaza" is a silent memorial. Not only did its designer

forego the insertion of audio files to accompany the site, but a black background—

with a solitary animated candle in the foreground—indicates, too, that here, in this

place, in this space, one can mourn without speaking, communicate sorrow without

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[2] Interestingly enough, a recent visit to the site (15 August 2004) revealed that "Earth Plaza" has now become a "lead-in" page for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) website—that is, the "Earth Plaza" page now appears on the computer screen and after a few seconds is automatically replaced by the LMDC's home page. The LMDC is in charge of the redevelopment project in Lower Manhattan's Ground Zero, the site of the Towers' collapse.
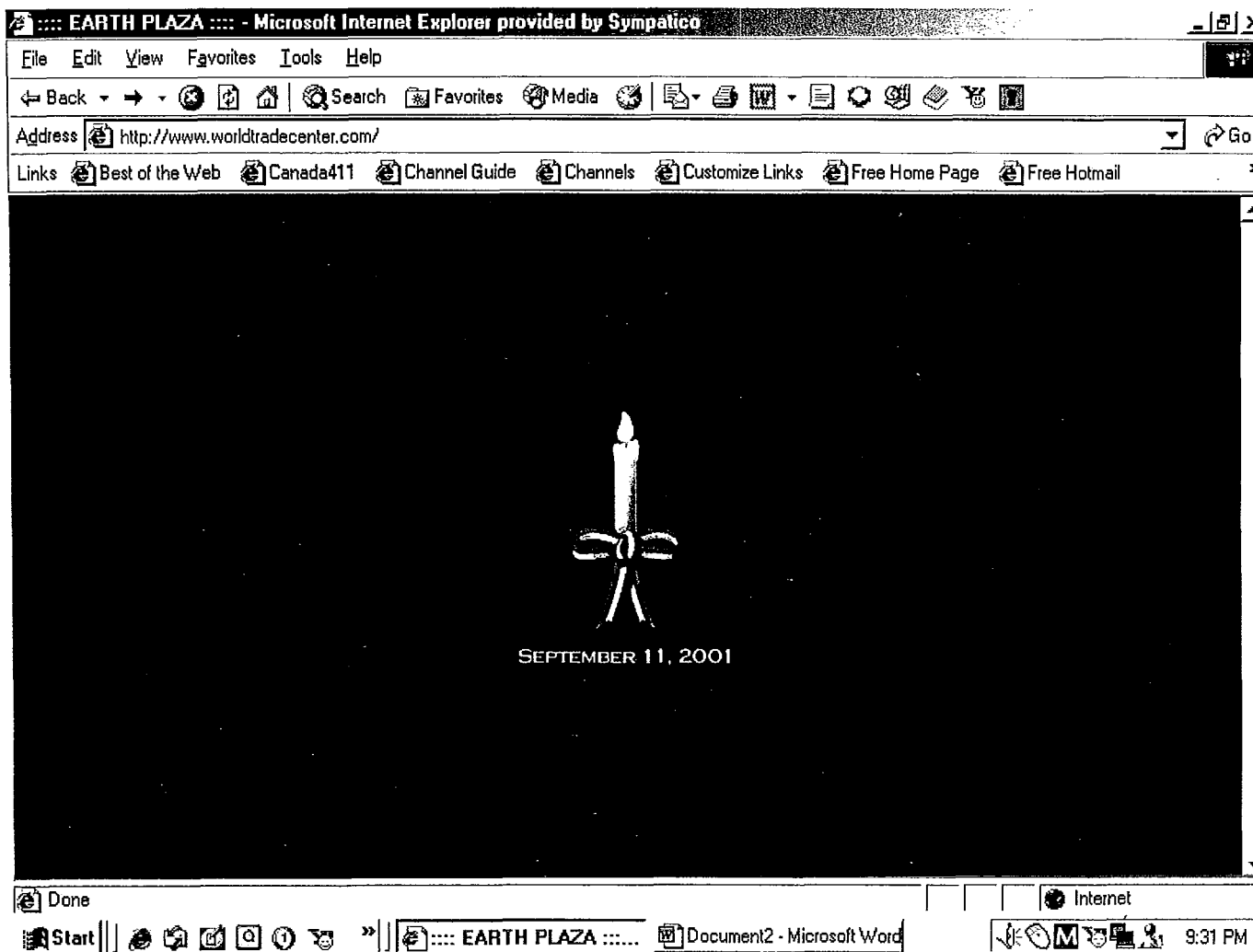
A screen capture of the "Earth Plaza" webpage <http://www.worldtradecenter.com>.

uttering words. In a sense, "Earth Plaza" assumes visitors can or already *do*

understand one another, at least where the tragedy of 9/11 is concerned. For are not

the only words needed already there, on the screen? *"September 11, 2001..."*

But is it also the case that "Earth Plaza" is not only a silent memorial, but a

silencing one as well? What, in merely evoking the date, "September 11, 2001," does

the site intend to remember and mourn? Those who suffered horrific deaths from the

attacks? Those who perished trying to stop the hijackers from crashing the planes?

By simply *evoking* the date of the attack, does this website also tempt visitors into

retrieving the memory of the terror and fear that were engendered in them after they

"witnessed" the "actual" footage played out on their television screens?

Simultaneous narratives of chaos and destruction and death vied for media

coverage on that day. Is it possible that the memory of that event could fail to render

an "accurate" account of what happened? Can the memory of "September 11, 2001"

mean or be the same thing for a person who had been stranded that day in an airport

halfway across the world, as it does for a web-surfer who, at the time of the attacks,

was tracking the news from an Internet connection in Asia? Europe? The Middle

East? Does "September 11, 2001" even mean the same thing for me as it does for my

next-door neighbour? Can *I* even claim to know what "September 11, 2001" means?

Perhaps most important, what is this business of "knowing" what 9/11 "means" in the

first place? Can one ever "know" what happened that day, and does what one claims

to be "knowledge" concerning "September 11, 2001" enable or—better yet, *entitle*—

one to endow or imbue this event with "meaning?" These questions hearken back to

my initial reaction upon encountering this memorial website for the first time: despite

the muted solemnity it imposes, is there something overtly sentimentalizing,

pretentious, and even mass-produced about "Earth Plaza?" Is this website a memorial... or is this kitsch? Could one, in all rigour, keep one from contaminating the other? This particular question is nothing short of unsettling.

2.   Simulations

Why is it that we cannot and will not look away from video footage trained on the Twin Towers on the morning of September 11, 2001? Is it disbelief that keeps us from looking away?

We have heard—and perhaps voiced ourselves—the impression that watching the attacks on the WTC Towers is like sitting through a scene "from a Hollywood movie." So why do we still look on, even though we did not pay any money to see such a "show?" Is it that the show, with its third anniversary fast approaching, is free? Is that why we are so willing to watch it over and over and, yes, over again?

In *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Jean Baudrillard claims that "the fascination with the attack [on the World Trade Center] is primarily a fascination with the image" (28-29). Thus our fascination with the image(s) of the attacks—according to Baudrillard—results in "[t]he spectacle of terrorism forc[ing] the terrorism of spectacle upon us" (30). Having watched others with their eyes glued in horrific shock to CNN, and having watched myself watching the television for any and all available angles of the Towers' collapse... I cannot help but reflect further on Baudrillard's astute observation. When or at what point does the act of terrorism become spectacle, and the act of spectacle terrorism? Why make these two terms interchangeable, as though "spectacle" automatically calls to mind and heralds "terrorism," and *vice versa*? Baudrillard invites us to consider the degree to which *we*

allow ourselves to be terrorized by images of the attacks *well after* the actual attacks

have ceased. What else would explain this fetishistic obsession with watching

American Airlines Flight 11 strike the North Tower at 8:45 am, to be followed shortly

by United Airlines Flight 175 crashing into the South Tower at 9:03 am, only to be

followed once again by "rewound" footage of that first plane hitting the first tower,

and on, and on, and on, until we are bleary-eyed and drained of energy, until the only

words that form on our lips are stuck together in a whispered, "I still can't believe it"

that refuses to accept and acknowledge the "reality" of 9/11?

Can this reaction—this desire to watch the Towers destroyed repeatedly—also

be considered a work of mourning? By refusing to "have done" with the collapse of

the twin monoliths of the WTC, do we eventually acquire or obtain that sense of

"reality" we claimed was lost or inaccessible to us on the day of the attacks, when we

watched floor upon floor of each tower succumb to the infernal fires caused by the

thousands of litres of jet fuel from the two hijacked airplanes? Does our obsession

with images of the attacks enable us to accept and acknowledge what happened on

9/11? In a world of a hundred or so useless channels that never fully alleviate our

boredom and impatience with visual images that quickly congeal into something

"passé," has this repetitive destruction of something outside the television set

achieved what "reality TV" and "disaster movies" have not, and perhaps never will

achieve? Can we ever truly grasp the impact 9/11 has had on each and every one of

us? But what does it mean to grasp something "truly," and what is it about 9/11 that

has left its "impact" on us?

To complicate this question further, who do we intend to include—and, for

that matter, *exclude*—when we speak of an "us," a group who has been traumatically

affected by 9/11, and a "them," that mysteriously "other" collective of people who are assumed responsible for, cognizant of, or compliant with the attacks on Lower Manhattan and the Pentagon? To whom do we refer when we speak of a "public" that presumably understands America's collective grief, and thereby undergoes this specific instance of collective mourning? Despite borders redrawn and contested on maps in the name of national territory, can we still argue—in light of our burgeoning "global community"—that there is an "us" distinctly apart, separable and *indeed* separated, from a "them?" Baudrillard collapses the distinction between "terrorism" and "spectacle." In this way, can the binary division between "terrorist" and "victim"—a more specific variation of the "us" and "them" dichotomy—be similarly blurred? If this is the case, then media companies and "news providers" such as CNN, in their repeated airings of spectacular "eye witness" footage from the attacks prolong or even amplify the terror experienced that day. For does not "[t]he spectacle of terrorism force the terrorism of spectacle upon us," after all?

3.   Flag Fever: "We're all Americans Now!"

Flags, everywhere and on practically everything. *American* flags, to be more specific. In the days following September 11, 2001, my field of vision was varyingly dotted and bombarded by miniature and gigantic versions of "Old Glory," in a country that lies in close proximity to, but nevertheless *outside* the northern border of the United States of America. As a Canadian citizen, I was surprised to see the patriotic pride that fellow Canadians were willing to express in a country that was not their own. Even my local newspaper printed full-page replicas of the American flag for

readers to cut out and display wherever they pleased.[3] A set of instructions explaining

how flags ought to be displayed and flown was even included,[4] no doubt to prevent

Canadians eager to express their condolences and sympathies from inadvertently

insulting their neighbours south of the border. The following week, even university

vehicles that very rarely leave campus grounds had been adorned with the newsprint

versions of "The Stars and Stripes."[5]

How could people living in other countries relate to the tragedy that took place

on American soil? Better yet, how did people living in other "First-world" countries

view the attacks on America? To be sure, immediately following the attacks countries

such as Canada and England took extensive precautions just in case they found

themselves the next targets of whoever orchestrated the events of 9/11.[6] But why did

these particular countries automatically identify and align themselves with the

vulnerable predicament of the United States *in the first place*? As the smoke from

Ground Zero continued to rise and thicken well into the night of September 11, an

eerily confident assumption had transformed into a suspiciously self-evident

conclusion explaining the attacks in a manner that seemed—in the context of the

Twin Towers' destructive collapse—to brook no argument, no contestation and no

dissent. The United States of America—proponent, embodiment, symbol, and

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[3] See "Memorial Flag." *Hamilton Spectator* 14 September 2001: C1. A picture of an actual American flag—not a graphic rendition of one—was printed as a full-page spread.

[4] See "Flag Protocol in Canada." *Hamilton Spectator* 14 September 2001: A2. In case readers did not know what the American flag looks like, one of the protocols was keen to point out that the "American flag is displayed with stars at the upper left-hand corner and stripes horizontal."

[5] McMaster University campus grounds and maintenance personnel displayed the 14 September 2001 *Hamilton Spectator* newsprint versions of the American flag on the back of vans, similar to the manner in which some firefighters still display the American flag on the back of fire trucks, in honour of the lost firefighters from the Fire Department of New York (FDNY).

[6] For example, due to widespread anxiety and safety concerns, precautions were taken to secure the area around the CN Tower in Toronto, since the national landmark was deemed a potential and likely target of hijacked airplanes, in the event that Canada were also attacked.

supporter of democracy and freedom—was attacked by "evil terrorists;"[7] those who opposed the life offered and celebrated by the much-derided section of the world called "the West." George W. Bush, President of the United States, responded to the attacks by instigating a call to arms addressed to all the nations of the world. As Gore Vidal keenly recalls, Bush's call to arms was adamantly intolerant and allergic to grey areas: "'[e]ither you are with us or you are with the Terrorists'" (qtd. in Vidal 11). A calling that, by implication, translates to numerous other statements, the most pointed of which was the claim that citizens of other nations *ought* fervently to take up the struggle against the terrorists by identifying themselves as equally victimized by the 9/11 attacks as their American counterparts had been.

Can those of us who are not Americans sympathize and mourn the needless loss of innocent American civilians without adopting, putting on or taking up an "American" identity? By this I mean also to ask whether it is possible for us to sympathize and mourn the needless loss of innocent American civilians *at the same time* as we search for the causes and circumstances that brought about this attack, *even and especially* when some degree of culpability and criticism must be placed within the walls of the United States government offices. I do not condone or excuse acts of terrorism against the United States—or for that matter, against any nation or group—as acceptable means of communicating one's discontent or frustration with certain political situations. However, I refuse to be relegated to the status of

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[7] President George W. Bush's brief addresses to the people of the United States blatantly took on the rhetoric of good/evil and heroes/cowards, the more it was believed the attacks were perpetrated by Islamic "fundamentalists" and those who "opposed the West." In *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: How We Got to Be So Hated*, Gore Vidal sarcastically reminds us that "Bush himself... in an address to a joint session of Congress... shared... his profound knowledge of Islam's wiles and ways: 'They hate what they see right here in this Chamber' [and that] '*Their* leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms, our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.'" (Vidal 5, emphasis his).

"terrorist," "terrorist supporter" or "terrorist sympathizer" simply because I do not support the decisions of its President to "rid the world of evil" (Bellah 260), an expression which, by implication, absolves the United States from, and immunizes them against accusations of having themselves committed acts of terror around the world. Furthermore, I do not believe that refusing to fly an American flag and abstaining from wearing ribbons and pins of support and encouragement for American citizens in the wake of 9/11 equate to ignorance or indifference. Neither do they equate to tacit support for "the terrorists." Why then, are people who refuse to become "American now," people who insist on taking the time to pause and think critically about what has happened since 9/11, treated or viewed as though they do not grieve and mourn for those civilians who died that day?[8]

Do the gesture of flying a flag and the speech-act of vocally aligning oneself with the United States and "all it stands for" make up the only legitimate and acceptable ways of mourning the dead in America? By refusing to fly the American flag and refusing to agree that after 9/11, "we're all Americans now" do we, who do not *visibly* support and *visibly* sympathize with the grieving families, also terrorize those most affected by the attacks? What do we gain, exactly—and, perhaps more importantly—what do we *lose* by legitimizing only a handful of "proper and acceptable" ways to mourn? What do we lose by overlooking or devaluing other, "less patriotic" expressions of grief, collective and otherwise?

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[8] See Silberstein, Sandra. *War of Words: Language, Politics and 9/11*. New York: Routledge, 2002. In Chapter 6, "The New McCarthyism," Silberstein discusses how "post-9/11 saw attacks on those who questioned U.S. policy" (127). Silberstein's chapter primarily focuses on the November, 2001 report published by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), which claimed that there existed "a 'blame America first' attitude on America's campuses" (127).

4.   Grief in Numbers

2 752. Not tens of thousands, as was initially believed on the day of the attacks. Not 6 300, not 4 500, not 3 900, not 3 300, not 2 801. And surely not 2 792, despite the fact that 2 792 had been the official "number recorded in almanacs and history books" (Barry par. 2).[9]

2 752. And even now, 2 752 is *still* potentially subject to change from anywhere between 2 749 and 2 751. Investigations that have led to the elimination of forty names—which seem insufficiently to stand in for forty bodies, lives, and deaths—may eventually, finally determine the most accurate tally of 9/11-related deaths. This, after having sifted through cases of "finding people once thought dead; duplication; insufficient data; fraud… [and even cases in which] investigators could not prove a supposed victim had ever existed" (par. 4).

What is this business with numbers, anyway? Why is this particular decline of numbers, from 6 300 to the 2 700s, an object of significance, importance, curiosity and anxiety? As Dan Barry from *The New York Times* astutely asks, "what do we do with this information—this 2, 752, down from 2, 792? Do we grieve less? Are we happy? What does it mean?" (par. 6). As Barry points out, and as most—if not, all— of us are more than ready to concede, the events of 9/11 are no less tragic, nor are they also any less destructive or devastating because the death toll for that day has been reduced by forty. Of course, we must be as accurate as possible for the sake of history, for the sake of memory and remembrance. We ought to know—and by

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[9] Barry, Dan. "A New Account of Sept. 11 Loss, With 40 Fewer Souls to Mourn." *The New York Times* 29 Oct. 2003: 20 pars. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/29/nyregion/29ABOU.html>. In paragraph 4, Barry cites that officials called the task of confirming the total number of 9/11-related deaths "an exhaustive investigation that spanned the world," thereby accounting for the extensive amount of time it took for the death count to change from 2 792—the count that lasted for more than a year—to 2 752.

saying this I also mean to say that we ought to be *correct in knowing*—exactly how many people lost their lives on September 11, 2001. We owe it to the dead, it has been said, because they—all of them, each and every one of them—deserve to be remembered. But once again, with this response we seem to circle back to the questions of "so what?" and "now what?" How does erasing forty names from the death count allow us to remember the dead "properly" or more "faithfully?" It is not my intent here to dismiss what happened that day so callously. But—regrettably—at the risk of sounding crass, how does determining the exact number of deaths benefit those who have already died? Those who have died—those "confirmed" as having really existed before they died, that is—are *still* dead, and always will be, from now on. Is this obsession or need, then, to get the number "right" for our benefit? Is it for "our sake" that we ensure the number of people who died on that fateful day does not add up to *approximately* 3 000, but rather to *exactly* 2 752?

Certainly, determining the exact number of 9/11 victims consoles us with, knowledge that there were not as many deaths as had first been estimated immediately after the attacks. On the other hand, despite the gradual decline, the total number of deaths is *still* staggeringly large, thereby also serving as a profound reminder of "the singular horror of the trade center collapse, so thorough in its destruction that the exact number of victims remains elusive more than two years later" (par. 9). The exact number of victims *remains* elusive *more than two years later*. And yet, in addition to the almanacs and history books, numerous modes of memorializing and commemorating 9/11 had been fully established well before the total number of dead was determined. In fact, let's look at it this way: even as the investigators assigned to the grim task of tallying the total death count had yet to discover that forty names

from the list of missing persons should be removed for various reasons, proposals for

memorial competitions and impromptu memorials themselves—say, for example,

websites consisting of lists of the dead posted on the Internet—already undertook the

task of remembering these individuals, even when some of these individuals were

never alive, and hence had no "life" to celebrate and mourn (par. 5).[10]

Why are we so anxious to grieve? Why this eagerness to undertake the work

of mourning, to undergo the process of mourning? Does our desire to get the accurate

"number of dead" reflect our need for efficiency and haste, whenever addressing

traumatic events is concerned? Until October 2003, no one knew exactly how many

people had died on the morning of 9/11; yet by that time, detailed memorial plans and

proposals were already underway, and their designers seemed not to have minded this

slight, yet profound oversight. When we see it as "imperative" to mourn those we

have lost, whose imperatives do we follow? Those of the dead? Or is it our own

imperatives—because in the wake of our loss, we can do *nothing but* mourn?

Because in the wake of our loss, we cannot do anything else *until after* we mourn? Is

it truly the case that one ceases to mourn "at some point," in order to "move on" and

start or begin a life "after" mourning?

5.   Souvenirs of a Tragedy

Like Nike's "Just Do It" ad campaign, even 9/11 has obtained a slogan that

can be readily emblazoned on just about anything money can—and does—buy.

"Let's Roll," Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer's now famous words before helping

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[10] Ibid. par. 5. Barry cites the case of Paul Vanvelzer and his two sons, Barrett and Edward, to demonstrate the degree to which false, erroneous or misleading narratives regarding those suspected dead from the disaster have also, alongside "real" narratives of lives lost, been "embedded in the collective memory" (par. 4). In paragraph 5, Barry informs readers "that the Vanvelzers, reported missing by a California woman claiming to be a relative, may have died without ever having lived."

with the onboard struggle against the hijackers, have been employed not just by

manufacturers of patriotic memorabilia such as jacket patches[11] and key chains. As

Sandra Silberstein points out, even "car companies launched major media campaigns"

(Silberstein 124) that relied heavily on the appeal of Beamer's courageous attitude in

spite and in light of the direly compromised situation he and fellow passengers faced

before their deaths:

> In multicultural ads reminiscent of "I am an American," patriotic
> promotions offered Americans interest-free financing. Americans, so
> familiar with the phrase "Let's Roll"—the final words of Flight 93
> hero Todd Beamer—would see Saturn ads telling them to "visit your
> Saturn retailer and 'Keep America Rolling'." To buy a Chevy was to
> "Keep America Rolling Forward." Ford was more explicit in linking
> its TV ads to the events of 9/11… Ford was "help[ing] America" to
> "move forward" (to heal). Ford would help Americans do their
> patriotic duty. Patriotism had become consumerism. (124-25)

Patriotism had become, in effect, what it always already was. Conversely, consumers

of all things (pro-)American—as implied by such key phrases as "made in the

U.S.A.," "in honour of America" or "help the American economy"—would also ,

become patriots as a result of their modified shopping habits.[12] Is this push to "Keep

America Rolling Forward" a means by which collective mourning is put in the service

of national and economic interests?

"The irony of this strange war," Margaret Carlson writes, "is that just as we

see the limits of what money can buy, buying becomes our patriotic duty" (qtd. in

Silberstein 124). What is "ironic" and "strange" about this war, and the fact that

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[11] For more patriotic memorabilia, visit "The All-American Collection from U.S. Wings:"
<http://www.uswings.com/patriotic.asp>. The "Let's Roll!" jacket patch—made exclusively for the
U.S. Wings company— designates Beamer's overheard exclamation "America's newest battle cry in
the fight against terrorism."

[12] Jeff Rundles, who considers himself "[a]n American patriot," states that on Christmas he
"spent like there was no tomorrow so that [he] might be responsible for the recession ending earlier
than predicted, or the Taliban being defeated, or something else really important to the country" (qtd. in
Silberstein 125).

"buying becomes our patriotic duty?" Has not consumption been long identified and associated with patriotism? Have not "the country" and "the economy" been, for a long time, mutually dependent on one another for their sustenance?[13] War bonds, after all, were among the first instances in which one's "love for" and "pride in" one's country have been put in the service of (and exploited by) consumption—of the business of buying and selling. Several posters promoting and selling war bonds are now displayed in military museums. In a society swimming in the proliferation of gizmos, gadgets and collectibles—the focus is currently placed on trinkets and accessories like key chains and collectors' shot glasses. To be sure, there is nothing "new" or "strange" about the incitement to spend in the wake of 9/11.

One more thing to consider with regards to the ways in which commodity consumption is used not only as a means of economic recuperation, but also as a public, patriotic and monetary expression of remembering the dead: do individuals in countries ravaged day-to-day by war and suicide bombings employ tragic circumstances around them for the sake of "helping their economies?" Or is our commodification of 9/11 a peculiar "Western" trait in which we should take particular pride, because our continued obsession with commodities is just another way of indicating to "our enemies" that they, in fact, were not at all victorious nor successful in their goals?

6. Making An(other) American Quilt

They resemble and remember the AIDS Quilts. Only this time, red, white and

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[13] Charles E. Wilson, the president of General Motors in the 1950s, was once quoted as saying that "[w]hat's good for the country is good for General Motors, and vice versa" (Wilson online).

blue themes mostly dominate the 9/11 Memorial Quilts[14] that have been made by

various individuals around the United States in honour of those who died in the

attacks. Note that I said these quilts are sort of like the AIDS Quilts—meaning that

all they predominantly have in common is that they are both memorial quilts. Taking

after the AIDS NAMES Project, the 9/11 Memorial Quilts seek to honour the

individual lives of each victim who perished on September 11, 2001, at the same time

as they remember and mourn the loss of the victims' collective identity as Americans.

This project is a stark departure from the goals and the political work of its

more popular and widely recognized predecessor. As the model for the 9/11 Quilt

projects, the AIDS NAMES Project—which seeks to remember the thousands of

American citizens who died from AIDS-related complications—sought and continues

to seek national recognition of the lives lost to the epidemic. The AIDS quilts

however, unlike the 9/11 quilts, primarily remember those who were not considered

worthy of recognition—much less, government attention and medical aid—because of

such reasons as their sexual orientation.[15] In creating the AIDS quilts and laying them

down by the thousands on the National Mall, the NAMES Project succeeded in

showing to the world the lives that the US administration had carelessly and

seemingly willingly given over to the AIDS epidemic. Additionally, in claiming the

space of the National Mall, the NAMES Project *reclaims* the citizenship of the AIDS

victims, allowing them in their deaths to occupy a place in America, and thereby

prompting the administration to acknowledge the social and physical injury they have

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[14] See "America's 9/11 Memorial Quilts." Home Page. 3 June 2004 <http://www.911 memorialquilts.com/Page%201.html>. Also, for an example of quilt projects that focus on the WTC site and its victims, see "World Trade Center Quilt Project Home Page." Home Page. 3 June 2004 <http://www.wtcquilt.com>. For more quilt projects, see as well "The September 11th Memorial Quilt." Home Page. 17 September 2001. 24 September 2003. <http://www.memorialquilt.com>.

[15] HIV/AIDS was first detected in homosexual men, and was erroneously assumed to have originated from the gay community.

caused the specific minority groups in the country in whom HIV had been first detected.

To be sure, the 9/11 quilts do not recreate the political goals of the NAMES Project, namely that of calling or drawing attention to victims' identities as Americans, and thus people who have a right to be justly and sufficiently served by their government. In fact, it can even be said that the 9/11 quilts—although they chronologically or historically follow in the wake of the AIDS quilts—are imbued with political implications far different from the NAMES Project. For the 9/11 memorial quilts, in celebrating the victims' lives and deaths by strategically mounting individual patches to form a collective mosaic of the *American flag*, always already embrace these victims as American citizens—regardless of their personal narratives and specificities. By virtue of having died from the terrorist attacks on America, these victims are first and foremost embodiments of "America" and "American life"— whatever those terms may mean. They are considered individuals with peculiar characteristics and personal idiosyncrasies *only after* their identities as American citizens have been acknowledged. Thus the 9/11 Memorial quilts—most especially those that arrange individual quilt patches to form the topography of "The Stars and Stripes"—in a sense equate the work of quilt making with that of flag-waving.

What, then, do we make of this glaring difference between the AIDS NAMES Project and the 9/11 Quilt Project? The AIDS quilts passionately lobby for the recognition and acknowledgement of the dead who used to live as overlooked and neglected citizens, while the 9/11 quilts passionately recognize and acknowledge the deaths of *American* heroes and *American* victims. The 9/11 Project—with its flair for the patriotic—is more likely to be enthusiastically sanctioned by the United States

government, because those on the quilt died *for* America (regardless of whether or not they were cognizant of that piece of information at the time of their deaths). The NAMES Project, on the other hand, was reluctantly (or was it grudgingly?) acknowledged by the Reagan administration only after thousands upon thousands of gay men had already died *in* America (not *for* America) as a result of the epidemic.

Should there be a hierarchy that measures, values, and privileges different ways of living and dying courageously? All of us are vulnerable to terrorist attacks just as equally as we are all vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Why should one group of deaths be harrowingly reduced to lobbying for the *slightest* recognition and assistance, when another is used as the justification for several actions and budgetary modifications undertaken by the US government?

7.   Gruesome Aesthetics

> What happened there is—they all have to rearrange their brains now—
> is the greatest work of art ever.
>
> That characters can bring about in one act what we in music cannot
> dream of, that people practice madly for 10 years, completely,
> fanatically, for a concert and then die. That is the greatest work of art
> for the whole cosmos.
>
> I could not do that. Against that, we, composers, are nothing. (qtd. in
> Geerinck pars. 4-6)

Can destruction and murder be works of art? Is terrorism a seductive and worthwhile artistic muse to pursue? It seems to be the case, for according to the above quote from Karlheinz Stockhausen, the combined achievements of the 9/11 hijackers "is the greatest work of art for the whole cosmos." Even though the composer "retracted [his comment] at once and asked that it not be reported" (par. 1), the damage, so to speak, had already been done: Stockhausen's provocative words

disgusted and enraged Germany, resulting in the cancellation of two of his concerts as well as reports claiming the composer "left Hamburg in distress" (par. 7).

What moved Stockhausen about the terrorist attacks on 9/11, to the extent that he would momentarily overlook the "shock value" as well as the potential offensiveness of his remark? What *awed* him into forgetting—though very briefly— the ways in which his comment comes across as an insensitive reply or reaction to the immobilized and traumatized predicament of the United States, immediately and even days after the attacks?

Momentarily setting aside the questions probing the motivations behind Stockhausen's remark—taken blatantly out of context as it was by the media reporters who quoted him—it is important to ask first *why* Stockhausen regretted saying what he did, and *why* he left Hamburg in distress, as though he feared the masses would ostracize or condemn him for his remarks. But who are we to condemn his personal opinion? Do we not live in a society that anxiously fashions itself as "tolerant?" Is not "free speech" one of the privileges our society prides itself in granting us, however detrimental and hurtful that speech may be? Or must we draw the line somewhere? Must we be mindful of and sensitive to our responsibilities to one another, in order to prevent the next "*greatest* work of art"—most gruesome as it no doubt will be—from unravelling anywhere else in the future?

8.   The Cost of Grieving

In city morgues, toe tags are commonplace items found on dead bodies. But since when were price tags attached to dead bodies? Ever since the life of an office worker who died in the collapse of the WTC Towers was calculated to be worth more

than that of a New York City firefighter. And surely, ever since the lives of those

who died in New York on 9/11 were considered worth more than the lives of the 168

people who died in the Oklahoma City bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal

Building on April 19, 1995.

Who decides how much a life, or for that matter, a death, is worth? In the

language of money and insurance policies, who determines and decides how much

families and friends ought to measure the value of a loved one's death? How does

one calculate the figures that will represent the life of a deceased individual? When

rescue operations ceased at Ground Zero, why did 9/11 victims' families turn to the

pursuit of money, as though it were as equally important as recovering the bodies of

their loved ones?

Writing for *The New York Times Magazine*, Lisa Belkin explores these issues

and asks these same questions,[16] only to come up with a sobering and unsatisfying

conclusion:

> Tragedy, particularly American tragedy, is always and inevitably about
> the money. As much as we rail against this and insist that it is not true,
> as much as we would prefer to talk about love and honor and legacy, in
> the end we find our talk turning to dollars. We do this in part because
> we need to eat, and to pay the rent, and to continue on with our lives in
> the face of death. We also do this because cash is the only tangible
> way to measure infinite loss. (Belkin 93-4)

Money inevitably becomes an issue—a very important issue—for the sake of survival.

Food and housing and sustenance cannot be obtained by tears or grief, but can only be

bought by money. We cannot blame victims' families for seeking financial support in

light of their loss, most especially if their loved one had been the primary source of

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[16] For a detailed and thorough account of the issues and debates surrounding U.S. victim relief/compensation funds, see Belkin, Lisa. "Just Money." *The New York Times Magazine* 8 Dec. 2002: 92-7; 122; 148-9.

income for the family. But that is not the only reason why those "left behind" pursue money.

As Belkin keenly and painfully points out, "cash is the only tangible way to measure infinite loss." And, in the case of the World Trade Center tragedy, the money does, in a sense, stand in and act as surrogates for, or even non-bodily extensions of the irretrievable corpses that were buried and burned beyond recovery—much less recognition—beneath the twisted steel and concrete remains of the towers. Additionally, the money from the victim relief fund is, in a sense, also an acknowledgment of the deceased's worth in the eyes of others—an impersonal or disinterested eulogy of sorts, courtesy of the United States government, if you will.[17]

"It's not about the money" (92), a grieving mother from Belkin's article insists. "This is not ever about the money" (92). To which Belkin bluntly writes in reply: "But of course it is" (92). *But of course it is about the money.* Indeed; but the reasons *why* 9/11 has become for the victims' loved ones solely "about the money" is not as simple or straightforward as it seems. For it is not only for food or rent that loved ones are willing to wrangle with the Victim Compensation Fund, but perhaps also for the opportunity to assure and prove to themselves that the void or the loss left behind by the deceased can never be filled by money. Even and especially when the money is easily and readily available to do so.

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[17] Granted, Belkin's article demonstrates that the amount of compensation determined by the relief fund for some victims' families has been seen not as an homage or honour, but as an affront to the memory of the deceased. The same mother who insists her pursuit for compensation is "not about the money" (92) is also appealing "the government's offer of $500,000" because she protests, "her firefighter son's memory is being cheapened... [and that the offer is] far less than a bond broker's family will get" (92).

9.   On Virtual and Human Chains

I don't have much patience for forwarded e-mail messages. But one I received at 10:07:45 am on the morning of Friday, September 12, 2003 surely caught my attention: "9-11-02 (Keep it going)."[18] Chain mail in the cyber world. 9/11 chain mail: a concept that immediately triggered my memory of the human chains rescue workers formed at Ground Zero as they sifted through the debris in search of human remains, which they passed down from person to person, until whatever body part they held in their hands reached a bag that would be sent to the make-shift morgues in Lower Manhattan.

Chain mail in the cyber world. But unlike conventional chain mail advising recipients to send the message to a specified number of people in order to avoid "bad luck," this particular electronic chain mail begs readers to forward the message for the sake of continuity. This, to prolong the "life" of the e-mail: "Send this to at least 10 people to show your support / PLEASE DON'T BREAK IT!!!!!!" A poem of thirteen stanzas, entitled, "IF I KNEW," constitutes the bulk of the e-mail, while the short paragraph preceding the poem expresses the reasons why the message ought to be kept alive:

> This has not been broken since 9/11/01, please keep it going... This
> has been kept alive and moving since 9/11. In memory of all those
> who perished this morning; the passengers and the pilots on the United
> Air and AA [American Airlines] flights, the workers in the World
> Trade Center and the Pentagon, and all the innocent bystanders. Our
> prayers go out to the friends and families of the deceased.

To be sure, this e-mail is an unconventional memorial, one that "comes to you" in the form of a sent message: in being sent to you, you are specifically asked to take up a role or a part in this memorial process. By contrast to inert and immobile monuments

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[18] "Fw: 9-11-02 (Keep it going)." E-mail to Karen Espiritu. 12 Sept. 2003.

made of stone and steel, this electronic memorial does not merely attract visitors who,

by visiting, demonstrate that they *already* remember; nor does this electronic

memorial simply take up for us the responsibility of remembering those who died in

the attacks. Rather, in taking the form or genre of chain mail, this message not only

haunts us with memories of those trapped individuals who used their cellular phones

to speak to their loved ones for the last time, but it also prompts (and urges or coaxes)

us to acknowledge their lives and deaths as *worthy* of remembering. Uncannily

enough, stanzas 9 to 11 of "IF I KNEW" invite us to imagine what it must have been

like for the victims trapped in the building, as they contacted lovers, friends and

family for the last time. Conversely, stanzas 9 to 11 also remind us of the

helplessness and loss experienced by those whom the victims were able to contact

before their deaths:

> Tomorrow is not promised to anyone,
> young or old alike,
> And today may be the last chance
> you get to hold your loved one tight.
>
> So if you're waiting for tomorrow,
> why not do it today?
> For if tomorrow never comes,
> you'll surely regret the day,
>
> That you didn't take that extra time
> for a smile, a hug, or a kiss
> and you were too busy to grant someone,
> what turned out to be their one last wish.

By contrasting the ephemerality of "tomorrow" with the certainty and assurance of

"today," the poem also provides us with a means of avoiding the experience of regret

altogether: *carpe diem*, because "tomorrow" is always a gamble—the stakes of which

may be too high for us to endure, when (not if) we lose.

Why was I—who did not personally know anyone who died in the attacks—being prompted (and urged or coaxed) to keep this e-mail message alive? Why *did* I forward this message to over ten people on my mailing list? Was I backed into a corner—"bullied," so to speak—by this message? If I *don't* keep this message alive, I will be guilty of diminishing the memory of those who passed away that day... I'd like to think it wasn't out of guilt alone that I sent the message to my friends and family. I'd like to think I "forwarded" this e-mail for reasons in excess of my desire to be counted as one who remembers and mourns the tragedy of 9/11. There are lessons to be learned and some good advice to be taken from this message, I remember telling myself. Even now, nearly three years after the attacks, I am still struggling with what exactly those lessons and what that advice may be.

Again, I'm reminded of those human chains at Ground Zero, each worker grimly taking and passing along whatever physical remains of a person—a life, a death, a soul—they are given from the front of the line, at the heart of the wreckage. Perhaps I sent this electronic memorial to others simply because it was my turn. To take it. And pass it along.

10. Anniversary

Perhaps some people will not remember or care or realize what happened on 9/11/01. Perhaps those people are tired of the grief. Perhaps those people are fleeing their native countries in hopes of escaping severe persecution and political unrest. Perhaps those people are starving to death, or dying from fatal wounds caused by bombs being dropped with precision over their homes. Perhaps those people are mourning family and friends in *their own* communities, in *their own* circle of

INTRODUCTION

9/11 Public Memorials, Concrete and Otherwise

In an interview conducted shortly after the attacks of September 11, 2001, Jacques Derrida argued that "9/11" forcefully demanded a response, but not one involving the deployment of U.S. troops in the Middle East. Now was the time, he suggested, not for armed retaliation—much less vengeance—but for the interminable labour of *critique*, and thus for "call[ing] into question, at their most fundamental level, the most deep-seated conceptual presuppositions in philosophical discourse" (Derrida, *Philosophy* 100). For Derrida, 9/11 is a crisis for philosophy. And this crisis is not one among many, for the disruption of "philosophical discourse" means that 9/11 threatens thinking itself, and tests its limits as well as its social, political, and ethical consequences. Philosophy *must* respond to the attacks, Derrida says, but this obligation is complicated by the fact that philosophy is itself *implicated* by 9/11 and could even be said to be among its casualties in an age when military action is deemed to be the enemy of thought. The warring reactions of the Bush administration in particular are, for Derrida, symptomatic of "a 'dogmatic slumber' from which only a new philosophical reflection can awaken us" (100). But this reflection is, first of all, a "reflection *on* philosophy, most notably on political philosophy and its heritage" (100, emphasis his).

I seek here to take up Derrida's revolutionary and, to be sure, unorthodox "call to arms"—which engages in "a new reflection *on* philosophy" in light of, and as a response to the attacks that took place on the morning of September 11, 2001. But rather than initially or "notably addressing political philosophy and its heritage" as

Derrida suggests, this project takes great—as well as grateful—advantage of having

been roused from "'dogmatic slumber,'" and as a result, approaches the interrogation

and possible reconfiguration of "political philosophy" from the standpoint of grief and

mourning, phenomena which have been in the past, and to this day, considered only

an "after-effect" of "war," "conflict," and other particular engagements with

"politics." What, after all, is "political philosophy?" What makes a particular

philosophy "political?" When one speaks of "the political," what does one mean (not)

to address, and to what does one (not) refer? How does the notion of "political

philosophy," as opposed to other kinds of philosophy come about? Can other kinds of

"philosophy" even be said to exist—is "political philosophy," in fact, the only kind of

"philosophy" there is? By focusing on the cultural work of public memorialization—

more specifically speaking, on the "officially sanctioned" work of mourning currently

taking place in New York City's Ground Zero,[19] I seek to argue here that the

collective act of commemorating and mourning the loss of particular lives is not ,

simply a consequence of conflicting political beliefs. Rather, it is a practice that

paradoxically reproduces and (re)inscribes those beliefs *in the first place*: the work of

mourning—and even more so the work of *"public"* mourning—is intimately and

palpably bound up with "political philosophy and its heritage." Speaking to the

question(s) of "political philosophy"—that is, by defining, addressing and unsettling

the "foundational" views that have rendered both the term and the concept(s) to which

it refers too conveniently and irresponsibly ready to hand—must first of all begin by

speaking to (and about) the work of mourning, both "public" and otherwise.

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[19] The site of the attacks on Lower Manhattan, and primarily the site razed and devastated by the collapse of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers is now commonly referred to as "Ground Zero."

While the public modes of grieving the lives lost on 9/11 proceed dogmatically as though they seek merely and benignly to console the mourners, at the same time as they honour the dead through prescribed gestures and overtures enacting "national" remembrance, I argue that the very formation of a particular "public" sphere—whose (assumed or prescribed) burden it is to mourn the lives it has lost— takes place *through* the experience of collective trauma. The articulation and preservation of the narrative of collective trauma in the public memorial sustains or "breathes life" into the impression of notions of commonality among highly diverse individuals. It is not so much that the public memorial stands or serves as a mnemonic reminder of specific past events that have befallen a distinct community who suffers and endures great losses together, but rather that the public memorial maintains the *cohesion* of the "public" sphere. This, by appealing to the personal or "private" grief and suffering of particular individuals, binding that grief into those of others, and thereby establishing the illusory—but palpably effective, influential, and convincing—narrative of a community's existence or history, its shared experience and shared memory of an anguished past.

The central focus of this project, therefore, is to unsettle and problematize "public" engagement in the work of collective mourning, and to interrogate the motivations that lie in excess of the desire to commemorate the loss of particular lives through the creation or designation of public memorial sites and artefacts. Serving as the lens through which I approach this project, the cultural work of publicly mourning 9/11 is not simply the "event" that has most recently and prolifically captured the commemorative imaginary of architects, musical and visual artists, sculptors, and countless individuals who had never before been moved to express their grief in the

"public" sphere. More importantly, the proliferation of the different modes of collectively honouring the memory of those who died that day—as well as the various debates that have circulated in response to these modes of memorialization—have rendered not only the attacks and devastation that took place, but also the very public remembrance of the attacks and devastation a *national* issue or concern.[20] Put more simply, the ways in which the events of 9/11—from the planes' collision into the World Trade Center, to the Towers' collapse, and to the mass death of thousands of individuals in Lower Manhattan—have been made memorable for the public provide an urgent opportunity to address the complicated and agonistic dialogue at work between the public memorial and the formation of the "American" "public" sphere; this, primarily because the identities of the individuals trapped in the World Trade Center Towers at the time of their collapse are first of all recognized in these memorials as belonging under the rubric of an "American" loss.

Two prominent issues regarding the public modes of memorializing 9/11 serve as the critical foundations of this project, as well as the respective subjects or objects of analyses for the following two chapters that constitute this body of work. First, in Chapter 1, "Beyond Remembrance: (Re)Animating the Living Dead and the Dead Living," the overwhelming amount and quality of coverage the television news media devoted to the attacks on New York City quicken my exploration of the ways in which 9/11 was rendered a "traumatic" event that affected and still affects not only the people living in the cities in or over which the attacks took place, but also those

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[20] The events of 9/11, particularly the ways in which it will or will not be remembered by potential rebuilding projects in Ground Zero, was considered an issue of national importance by some individuals. New York-based architect Ralph Applebaum went as far as declaring that, "[s]omething else has come out of [9/11], and that is how much ownership people outside of New York feel about our city. Maybe it's not just our decision. Maybe we should let the American people vote on it" ("To Rebuild" 81).

spatially removed television viewers who either sympathized with the "Americans" or identified as "Americans" themselves. I argue in this section that, in the case of 9/11, the news media's extensive involvement in "covering" and broadcasting the attacks proved instrumental in establishing who the "public" sphere includes (and, for that matter, *excludes*), as well as in marshalling other forms of media—such as the documentary and the computer simulation game—into contributing to the policing of the "public" sphere. Second, in Chapter 2, "Ground Zero's (Im)Possible Voids," the fetishization of the Twin Towers' footprints, as the central or only "necessary" features of the 9/11 memorial planned in Lower Manhattan, provokes in my project a consideration of the manner by which the interpretation of the attacks as an *"American"* tragedy is mediated through the agonistic and controversial designation of a very particular memorial space within Ground Zero itself. Put more simply, I argue that the rejection of Ground Zero's transformation into an expansive memorial void, and the subsequent and more popular suggestion to preserve the "inviolability" of the Twin Towers' "footprints" sustain the sense of collectivity established by the media coverage of the World Trade Center on 9/11. I argue in Chapter 1 that the media coverage of 9/11 "filtered" who mourns and who is entitled to be mourned publicly and collectively, and in Chapter 2 I propose that the preservation of the Towers' footprints upholds the feelings of common grief in those visitors and mourners who did not themselves personally suffer the loss of a loved one in the collapse of the World Trade Center. By visiting the remains of the Towers—the only "creatures" the "removed" mourners saw die and cease to exist on television—those who did not have loved ones who perished on 9/11 could identify with the sense of loss, partake of New York City's work of mourning, and thereby be given the illusion

of being counted, to a certain extent, among the bereaved. What complicates my arguments in this section is the way in which the simultaneous and paradoxical inclusion and exclusion of the "distant" mourners serves to fortify the understanding and acknowledgement of the "event" of 9/11 as a palpably *"American"* tragedy, regardless of one's refusal to identify *as* "American."

The primary concern or burden of this project is to gesture towards unsettling the notion of fostering "authoritative," "proper," or "right" ways to mourn and memorialize the dead, whether collectively or otherwise. Because as this body of work seeks to argue, the very concepts of "mourning" (and, for that matter, and perhaps more importantly, "public" mourning and memorialization) are far from established and simply "formulaic" terms, to be utilized invariably upon every experience of death and loss. If, as I argue in this project, the work of mourning palpably informs who or what the public sphere constitutes, then it more importantly opens up and allows for the very possibilities and conditions of "community," "nation," and "society." To be sure, having woken from "dogmatic slumber," one finds that a "reflection *on* philosophy" first begins with a reflection *on* the work of mourning, for from it emerges the very heritage of what "we" know, recognize, and refer to as "political" philosophy.

CHAPTER 1

Beyond Remembrance: (Re)Animating the Living Dead and the Dead Living

>   Is it the media that induce fascination in the masses, or is it the
> masses who direct the media into the spectacle? ...[T]he media make
> themselves into the vehicle of the moral condemnation of terrorism and
> of the exploitation of fear for political ends, but simultaneously, in the
> most complete ambiguity, they propagate the brutal charm of the
> terrorist act, they are themselves terrorists, insofar as they themselves
> march to the tune of seduction[.]

>   ---Jean Baudrillard, "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media"[21]

>   [W]hat is possible and what is imaginable I guess changes on a day
> like this.

>   ---Aaron Brown, CNN News Broadcast, 11 September 2001[22]

Media Matters

Thanks largely to the proliferation of advanced mass communication

technologies that were able to project or broadcast images of the September 11, 2001

attacks on the United States, people from other parts of America—and from other

parts of the world great distances removed from the United States—were able to

witness and watch scenes of the devastations as they were taking place. From camera

to antenna, to satellite, to television screen, to viewer, and to all other types of

communication apparatus in between: 9/11, at the same time as it "impacted" a

manifestly severe blow to the cities of New York, Washington, and indeed the entire

nation of the United States, was also "a particularly televisual moment, located in the

home" (Bociurkiw par. 11). Seeing 9/11—"the first time since the War of 1812 that

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[21] Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994. 79-86.

[22] Quoted in Silberstein, Sandra. *War of Words: Language, Politics and 9/11*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

the national territory has been under attack, or even threatened" (Chomsky 11)—

unfolding before one's very eyes or, better yet, seeing 9/11 unfolding before the

television screen that is situated before one's very eyes, gives every television viewer

a sense of spatial proximity and closeness to the site of the attacks. It is after all,

happening *in front* of them, on the television screen; as the camera lens is clouded by

dust and debris from the Towers' collapse, momentarily obscuring the view of the

ensuing devastation, so too, are the viewers' eyes temporarily blinded, thus simulating

the experience of disorientation and having to negotiate one's way through the chaotic

zone of fallen towers which, even after their mighty collapse, still garner the title,

"The Giants That Defied The Sky."[23] The experience of trauma from the comfort and

relative safety of one's home, and the ability literally to face that trauma, were in

large part due to the media's unshakeable pursuit to capture every imaginable or

possible image or angle of the attacks. Though 9/11 was not a segment in some

formulaically voyeuristic "reality television" show, the quality and quantity of media

coverage it induced shows television "reality" in the very process of formulating a

kind of voyeurism that, according to Baudrillard, simultaneously condemns and

propagates "the brutal charm of the terrorist act," in that the media's repeated

reiteration and presentation of the attacks as deplorably "terrorist" are themselves

ways of being seduced by the visual appeal or spectacle of the very acts the media

condemns.

What motivated the television news media to meander their way through the

rapidly settling ruins of the World Trade Center, the morning the Towers were

obliterated? Why did cameramen and news reporters consider it part of "their job" to

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[23] This reference to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center is from Peter Skinner's book, *World Trade Center: The Giants That Defied The Sky*. Vercelli, Italy: White Star, S. r. I., 2002.

"sweet-talk" police officers into allowing them greater proximity to the rapidly

becoming mass grave of law enforcement officers, firefighters, brokers, financiers and

other WTC workers and visitors? Was it merely for the sake of providing their

viewing audiences as close a close-up view they could get of heaps of twisted steel

and rubble? Dead bodies? Body parts? Was it simply, as Baudrillard suggests in my

epigraph to this chapter, "the tune of seduction" that propelled the media to

"spectacularize" the horrific events and aftermaths of that day? By asking these

questions I mean to ask whether the media's claim to report the attacks "accurately" is

not as benign as it seems—that is, whether they themselves are in a sense directly

implicated in further traumatizing television viewers by images of and from the

attacks.

In this chapter I seek to explore in detail the "notes," so to speak, that make up

that tune of seduction, which Baudrillard claims renders the media—and, in

particular, the television news media, through their rabid coverage of terror—

"terrorists themselves." I argue here that although the media imperative to "get the

facts straight" and "provide accurate information to the world" motivated them to

replay the events of the attacks and probe as much as possible or permitted of Ground

Zero with their cameras and microphones, the pervasive media coverage of the day's

events more importantly hints at the anxiety not only to master the traumatic event of

9/11, but also to reinforce or even fashion, right then and there, at the scene of mass

death, who the "public" and the "world" constitute. In other words, and more

specifically, this chapter proposes to unpack the complicated ways in which the media

contributed, and still contributes, to the creation and reinforcement of the "American"

public sphere, even and especially when the boundaries of what is perceived to be the

"public sphere" are threatened, problematized and unsettled. This, by the expansive

technological and geographical reach of the very media that seek to delineate these

boundaries at the onset of "national" crises: paradoxically, by virtue of the mass

media's capability to surmount spatial distances and physical boundaries between

countries and continents—for example, by the use of satellites to transmit events from

one hemisphere to another, from a camera located in a "first-world" nation to a

household in more destitute parts of the world—it has never been more urgent to re-

establish those boundaries of nationality and race as soon as possible, when particular

interests call for it. That is, the United States' pride in its technological capabilities,

its prowess to contact and reach via satellite or other electronic gizmo virtually any

one, any where, and at any time, is in itself also a source of anxiety once the interests

of establishing and mobilizing a (strictly) "American" public obtain importance and

urgency during what are deemed to be "national" crises. To this end, how and to what

extent did the media shape and police "American" and non-"American" identities and

reactions to 9/11?[24] Related to (but by no means obviously or uncomplicatedly) this

anxiety to presume and police a particular public sphere and audience is my

discussion of the ways in which media attempts at mastering and understanding the

trauma of 9/11—whether through constantly repeated narratives and eye witness

accounts of that morning's proceedings by way of documentaries and news reports, or

through intricately detailed digital simulations of the attacks—intensify the

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[24] It must be noted here that similar modes of policing non-"American" identities may very well (or likely) be at work in the formulation of various kinds of memorials in other countries. But because the focus of this project is on the ways 9/11 and its victims have been memorialized in the "American" public sphere, my study primarily explores the torsions at work between the "American" media and their treatment or coverage of the disaster from the standpoint of being or identifying as "American."

traumatization of their viewers by virtue of compressing the events into easily representable images and narratives of death and destruction.

Just as the transmission and interpretation of "news" on September 11, 2001 demonstrate an increased dependency on virtual reality[25] and new technologies, the ways in which the dead are mourned also undergo a kind of upheaval, one that opens up possibilities for memory work that utilize and exhaust the capabilities of various available multimedia genres.[26] How were the modes of mourning work that ensued in response to the publicized losses from 9/11 affected by the highly "mediated" narratives or accounts of tremendous loss and suffering? I seek here to interrogate how different types of media—specifically, news reports and television documentaries and computer games—not only contribute in enlarging and enhancing the modes of memory work available for engagement, but also unsettle and problematize the very "fundamental" and "conventional" assumptions that have made the concepts of public remembrance and memory work intelligible. For example, it is made to look or seem "obvious" that memorials and monuments are for the living, as much as they are for the dead; after all, it is indeed the living who will see, view, and judge these memorials on the grounds of numerous and equally complicated issues— not the least of which would be issues concerning the aesthetics of the memorial, the gestures it makes towards achieving or maintaining "historical" accuracy, and perhaps even the potential a particular memorial has to endure over time. Thus it would *come across* as "only natural" to claim and acknowledge the interactive relationship

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[25] For the purposes of this section, I employ the phrase "virtual reality" to refer to the (imagined?) public space created by the Internet, e-mail and satellite technology.

[26] Indeed, these types of media have enabled the proliferation of computerized music videos, and brief memorial (and often musical) montages dedicated to the memory of the attacks, both on television and on the Internet. For examples of this, see *Remember 9/11: 9/11 Memorial Website.* Home page. 3 June 2004 <http://www.911-remember.com>.

between memorials and the living. But it is not simply because those who are alive

happen to be the only audience for these memorials that the living are invested and

caught up in the cultural work of public remembrance. As I argue in this section,

memorials more than simply reflect, but themselves are determined and enlivened by

the very ideologies and power structures at work within a given community. In their

construction, the memorials enter into a kind of complicated dialogue with their

builders—those who remember the deceased. Through the torsions at work in this

dialogue, not only is the memorial infused with what it is designated to remember and

what it ought perpetually to remember; indeed, through the medium of the memorial

the living are also instructed on how to perceive themselves from now on, in light of,

and as a result of the losses they commemorate. To take it a step further, the coming

about of a particular memorial work may, in fact, even clarify and—for the first

time—explicitly articulate to the living the identity politics and dynamics of power

that are always already at work within a community, unacknowledged and

unrecognizable though they had once been. It is not so much that the public memorial

merely and benignly pays tribute to, and honours those who have died; the public

memorial also determines a kind of spectatorship—that is, who the "public"

constitutes—and establishes a prescribed and authoritative reading of the traumatic or

memorable event recently experienced. The memorial's insistence on the collective

experience of the same event consequently results in the "public" accepting and

acknowledging their perceived commonality with one another, as well as welcoming

and celebrating what is conceived to be their need to engage in the collective act of

public grieving and remembrance. In the case of 9/11 and the multimedia

memorializations that have ensued in response to the losses from that day, the

projection of a shared experience of terror and trauma over the course of the day's devastating events bound together an imagined "public"—both assumed and taxonomized to consist of "American" citizens and "anyone who supports or is allied with them in the world" (Derrida, *Philosophy* 108)—and brought about the impetus to mourn the deaths from that day publicly, and as "Americans."[27]

Situated amidst these unsettling questions of trauma, recovery and public remembrance are the 9/11 memorials that have taken shape in the form of television documentaries and interviews. I argue here that just as the attribution of 9/11 as a "traumatic" event ought to be interrogated, so too should the objects—and subjects— of our grief and memory work undergo rigorous scrutiny. This, because who we mourn is intricately bound up with why we mourn, for both aspects are answerable to, and shaped by, the same ideologies, the same value-systems and the same politics of identity that insist on certain lives and deaths mattering *dramatically more* than others. *Why* we are traumatized by 9/11 largely depends on who "*we*" are and who "*we*" perceive ourselves to be. The ways in which the television news media approached, and continues to approach, 9/11 are far from benign, inquisitive gestures towards understanding or providing an "accurate account" of the event. To be sure, the media demonstrate not only how the public "we" obtains coherence and primary importance, but also offer useful insights into how the anxious circulation of a prescribed reading of 9/11 can itself elicit and even amplify the very feelings of fear and trauma in the established spectatorship.

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[27] Note that the phrase, "We're all Americans now" was constantly evoked by those who expressed their sympathy for the trauma and the loss the United States experienced on 9/11. Those who were not considered "American," in their desire to express their sympathy and outrage over the attacks, began identifying themselves as "American" "now."

With these issues in mind, my initial analysis of a CNN news report from the morning of 9/11 speaks primarily to the ways in which the "public sphere," and the collective "we" are reinforced or, better yet, *created* by the structural format, rhetoric, and stylistic manoeuvres employed by the reporter or journalist. This particular discussion of the genre of the news report examines as one of its key elements the inclusion of an extensive eye witness account that addresses the rapid sequence of events that took place on September 11, 2001. I argue here that both the journalist/news reporter and the selected eye witness work in tandem to establish a sense of collective experience and identity in the wake of the attacks. That the two individuals are neither intentionally attempting to construct a collective identity through the time they are allotted, nor by any means cognizant of the effect(s) they elicit by virtue of the medium by which they are implicated, is a crucial aspect of my discussion of the television news report genre—certainly, one that quickens and propels my analysis of its implications as a medium upon which identity politics can and do play out.

Following this discussion is my brief exploration of the documentary genre, as it has been affected and influenced by the events of 9/11. There have been numerous documentaries on 9/11,[28] but in this chapter I specifically look into Desmond Smith's documentary, *As the Towers Fell: Minute by Minute with the Journalists*[29] to unpack the rhetorical and artistic tactics the documentary undertakes in order to tell the story

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[28] Television documentaries on 9/11 usually air on or a few days before and after the attacks' anniversary. This, perhaps to encourage audiences to reflect upon 9/11 in anticipation or in light of its anniversary. Ric Burns's *The Center of the World*, a segment from a larger oeuvre, *New York: A Documentary Film*, was broadcast on PBS three days before the second anniversary of 9/11. Although Burns's documentary can "stand alone" as a coherent and self-contained documentary on the history of the World Trade Center (from its inception to its destruction), it can also be viewed as only one chapter among many in the history of New York City.

[29] Smith's documentary is a Canadian production that first aired on CBC's *Passionate Eye Sunday* on 7 September 2003, four days short of the attacks' second anniversary.

of the "story-tellers," the reporters themselves. My interest here lies in the seeming

conflict the documentary has in terms of its subject or object of focus; while the title,

"As the Towers Fell: Minute by Minute with the Journalists" implies or perhaps even

clarifies that the focus is on the journalists and media personnel covering the attacks,

the bulk of the footage implies an incongruity between the title—a supposed

indication of the subject matter at hand—and the actual material covered in the

documentary. Propelling my discussion of the media's seemingly interminable

obsession with reliving the trauma that took place in Ground Zero, is the issue that

while the reporters' stories and impressions of their personal experiences during 9/11

are implied—by the documentary's title—to *foreground* the chaotic destruction that

ensued that day (*as* the Twin Towers were falling, *this was what was happening/what*

happened to the reporters), the documentary itself does not seem to achieve this, but

rather focuses more heavily on recycled footage of the crashing planes and collapsing

Towers. Thus I also address the media's capacity to recuperate and reproduce the

terror experienced that day. Additionally, in my exploration of Smith's work I also

question the possible motives that induced the compilation, production and screening

of a documentary about the reporters of the attacks. Why create a documentary that

proposes to speak to, and learn about the predicament of the reporters, camera

operators and journalists as 9/11 unfolded? I effect here an interrogation of the ways

in which undertaking the role of news providers places the individual occupying such

a role in a "socially" liminal position. I thereby question how Smith's documentary,

in particular, addresses and negotiates this liminal position under the guise, or with

the accompanying aim of providing a space in which these very news providers can

tell "their own stories." Consequently, I establish a dialogue between my discussion

of this documentary and my preceding analyses of the CNN news report and the eye

witness account that punctuated it.

The last section of this chapter takes for its object of inquiry the computer

game, *911Survivor*—more accurately speaking, the *911Survivor* game modification[30]

that not only attempts to simulate visually what it must have been like for those

trapped in the WTC Towers shortly before their fatal collapse, but also recreates the

horrific predicaments in which the trapped individuals are imagined to have found

themselves moments before their deaths. Using this "game mod" in particular as a

case study, I argue that through the detailed digital replicas of certain aspects of

9/11—indeed, those aspects that had heretofore been rendered "unimaginable,"

ironically not the least of which because there were no cameras to record, for

example, what the interior of the burning buildings looked like, or how distortedly

horrific had been the faces of those dead, dying and about to die when the Towers

collapsed—those still living in the wake of the attacks on Washington D.C. and New

York City are constantly reminded of the terror and horrific deaths their loved ones

suffered that day. As a result, such a constant and vivid reminder, recollection or

recreation of what terror and terrorism "look like" become not only as traumatizing

and terroristic as the event itself, but also contribute in the formulation of an account

of the events that congeals into a narrative with prescribed roles—in this case, of

Middle Eastern terrorists who seek to torture and kill their innocent American or

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[30] A "game mod" or "game modification" is a modification of a commercially released
computer game (in this case, Unreal Tournament 2003). In the culture of "game modding" (that is, the
act or practice of exploring the possibilities of the concept of game modification), "players can create
their own levels or maps for a game that they can then distribute freely over the net. People who own
the commercial version of the game can then download and play these mods" (Mactavish par. 4).
911Survivor is one such "game mod." For more details, and to see specifications on this game, see
911Survivor. Home page. 3 June 2004 <http://www.selectparks.net/archive/911survivor/
911about.html>.

"Western" victims. What significantly complicates my discussion of computer

gaming and the *911Survivor* game modification is the very nature of the game *as a*

game. Or, more specifically speaking, the creators' employment of the gaming genre

as a means of approaching and thinking about 9/11 and the implications the event

suggests for media representations that proliferated as a result of the attacks' appeal to

notions of the spectacular. Should this gruesome simulation of scenes of death and

destruction on the morning of September 11, 2001 be treated as merely a game—a

cultural artefact that ought not be subjected to, or perhaps is *exempt from* critique, in

its sheer designation as "entertainment" and "amusement," which are themselves

constructed and policed cultural effects? A game, after all, is conventionally

understood to function as an object of amusement and entertainment; but what of

games that treat as their focus scenarios in which "real" lives that were "really" placed

in physical jeopardy were, indeed, gruesomely and "really" lost? What of games such

as *911Survivor* that do not seem to have "winning" as an objective, if not at all a ,

possibility? What of the individuals who were not, in the first place, personally

affected or traumatized by 9/11—can these people be said to be "harmlessly" playing

a game, by virtue of their inability, refusal or denial of the "reality" and "trauma" of

9/11? Clearly, my discussion will be greatly influenced by the question of what

"games" (are seen or regarded to) constitute, and the ways in which the assumptions

that come across as "inherent" to the concept of "gaming" and "playing games" are

problematized and complicated in their encounters with, and appropriations of, not

only "real" events, but "real" events that are felt to have had serious, traumatic effects

on the cultural psyche.

Trauma: Life and Death in the Media

Jacques Derrida's provocation to rethink and re-evaluate the language and rhetoric we tend too quickly to employ in our discussions and debates in the aftermaths of 9/11[31] is taken up by Judith Butler, and she effectively "calls into question" the work of mourning and memorialization propelling public displays of grief over the victims of the attack. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Butler's discussion of "grievable lives" interrogates the inclusionary—and, by the same token, exclusionary—politics that buttress and sustain the conventions or norms of public grief and remembrance to which we (are made to) adhere. Her inquiry into the means by which certain deaths are deemed grievable, while the very lives of others are grossly devalued as "inhuman," problematizes both the act of mourning and the affect of grief. Those lives that have been rendered and habitually treated as "inhuman," "not human," or "not human *enough*," Butler argues, do not—and would not ever—in their deaths suddenly warrant the grief and public recognition commonly reserved for their "legitimately human" counterparts.

Although Butler's *Precarious Life* specifically focuses on the treatment of Middle Eastern and Islamic people in the wake of 9/11 as the lens through which to examine and unsettle conventionally accepted assumptions about mourning—namely, that mourning and public grief neither reflect nor possess the capacity to affect the current political and social milieu,[32] her book also enters into a complicated dialogue

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[31] See Derrida, Jacques. Interview. "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides." Borradori, Giovanna. *Philosophy In A Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. 85-136. See in particular page 100, where Derrida declares that the "event" of 9/11 "calls for a philosophical response... that calls into question, at their most fundamental level, the most deep-seated conceptual presuppositions in philosophical discourse."

[32] This particular attitude towards mourning was palpably emphasized and promoted shortly after the attacks and the subsequent rescue efforts at Ground Zero. Public messages prompting

with Holocaust memorialization and James E. Young's groundbreaking work on

memorial theory. In *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*,

Young's study of Holocaust memorials attempts to negotiate the history/memory

divide by "reinvest[ing] the monument with our memory of its coming into being" in

order "to vivify the memory of events by writing into it our memory of the

monument's origins" (Young 14). Certainly, one of the underlying thrusts of Young's

work is to recuperate the cultural worth of both history and memory, as well as to

reconcile their respective maintenance through the medium of the memorial.

Interestingly, Butler's concerns about the mapping out of "grievable lives," as well as

her approach to the identity politics emanating from the events of 9/11, modify

Young's aims, and thereby recast the question of memorial work and make it more

urgently and ethically answerable to issues that lie in excess of the acts of mourning

and remembrance.

In her book, Butler introduces and offers a third element to Young's

enumeration of what is at stake in memorial work. By arguing that the very lives of

those who have died are equally important to discussions about the potential

hindrance monuments and other memorial artefacts pose either to history or to

memory itself, Butler greatly expands the reach or social function of the memorial

beyond the realm of public remembrance and the formation of national identity.[33] For

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American citizens—and New Yorkers in particular—to start putting aside their grief in order to help America rebuild after the attacks were circulated not only by political leaders like President George Bush and NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani, but also by television commercials prompting Americans to keep "America rolling" by shopping in order to boost the US economy.

[33] Young also argues that monuments, "as part of a nation's rites or the objects of a people's national pilgrimage... are invested with national soul and memory. For traditionally, the state-sponsored memory of a national past aims to affirm the righteousness of a nation's birth, even its divine election" (Young 2). Despite his extension of the public memorial to discussions of the means by which national subjectivities are formed, Young still confines the function of the memorial to the realm of public remembrance. In other words, memorial work—most especially through

Butler, works of mourning also achieve far more than compromise the sustenance of

history for the sake of memory, or *vice versa*; she does not limit her critique of

memorial work to a primarily binary struggle between history and memory. Instead,

human lives themselves, among other things, are also jeopardized; better yet, they are

the most palpably jeopardized in the memorial process. In keeping with the

arguments she presents in *Precarious Life*, Butler reads the cultural work of

memorialization as a politically charged means by which the subjectivities of those

still living—not those already dead—are taxonomized and policed. Thus, while for

Young, memorials—in their portrayals of the dead—construct the way those left to

mourn the dead identify themselves (for example, in light of the many tributes to the

millions of Jews killed in the Holocaust, the Jewish community develops a sense of

itself as a persecuted people who have persevered and survived drastic social

injuries), memorials for Butler determine *who is mourned, and who has the right, or*

is permitted to engage in acts of mourning and memorialization, upon experiencing

profound loss. Indeed, Butler takes still another step further by claiming that works of

memorialization testify to the most extreme case of a community's exclusionary

politics; that which concerns claims to being human and having a human life, if not a

grievable one. To be sure, as Butler insists, for one's death to be recognized or

honoured publicly, one has to have had a life that warranted such recognition and

honour. Those we mourn publicly are required to have lived a life recognized as

worthy of living. Butler effectively clarifies her arguments by citing the concept of

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monumentalization—is implicated in the legitimacy of nation-states only insofar as "[t]he matrix of a nation's monuments emplots the story of ennobling events, of triumphs over barbarism, and recalls the martyrdom of those who gave their lives in the struggle for national existence—who, in the martyrological refrain, died so that a country might live" (2).

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putting together an obituary for the dead as a kind of legitimating act that

acknowledges the worth of one's life:

> There are no obituaries for the war casualties that the United States
> inflicts, and there cannot be. If there were to be an obituary, there
> would have had to have been a life, a life worth noting, a life worth
> valuing and preserving, a life that qualifies for recognition. Although
> we might argue that it would be impractical to write obituaries for all
> those people, or for all people, I think we have to ask, again and again,
> how the obituary functions as the instrument by which grievability is
> publicly distributed. It is the means by which a life becomes, or fails
> to become a publicly grievable life, an icon for national self-
> recognition, the means by which a life becomes note-worthy... The
> matter is not a simple one, for, if a life is not grievable, it is not quite a
> life; it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note. It is already
> the unburied, if not the unburiable. (Butler, *Precarious* 34)

Memorial work does not retrospectively examine the quality or worth of lives for the

sake of justifying why they, in particular, are mourned. Rather, memorial work

merely reiterates "for the last time" that the subject/object of public mourning had

been—and still is and will be—of the camp whose lives and deaths (to follow in the

spirit of another of Butler's books[34]) *matter*. Because it is through the memorial—and

often through the monument—that this "final" reiteration takes place, it must of

course be noted that such a gesture paradoxically robs this "last time" of any finite

quality or finality. Even though it is the last time this grievable life will be flaunted or

celebrated, *this last time* will always induce us to remember that this life had been

worthy of remembrance and grief. For do we not charge memorials with the

responsibility of never allowing us to forget what we associate with it? In this way,

the constant loop of recognizing grievable lives through the memorial is always

already phantasmatically shadowed or shaded by the recognition of the lives and

deaths of those who are *not* deemed worthy of public remembrance. Acknowledging

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[34] Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity.* New York:
Routledge, 1993.

that these kinds of occlusions take place in current public memorials will prove a challenge to future public memorials, and will also open up possibilities on how one can redress these occlusions.

Butler's work on the tangled intersections in constant flux between the political effects of 9/11 and the ensuing memorial efforts is a highly counter-intuitive approach to the study of memorial theory, not the least of which because she blurs and problematizes the commonly accepted conceptual relations between the living and the dead. Even though Butler upsets the underpinning assumptions about the work of mourning, she does not, however, dismiss them altogether. Far from it, in fact, since what she achieves in *Precarious Life* is an arguably radical unsettling of the ideas that constitute mourning work; but one that hopes to intervene positively and responsibly in our ways of relating to one another, whether we are literally or figuratively "dead" and/or "alive." Thus, instead of simply insisting on the remembrance of the life of the monument, we should more pressingly inquire into the *occlusions* and *disavowals* that have taken place, from the very anticipation of the memorial work, to the current forms of reception it attracts. What are we expected to remember and grieve, what kinds of attitudes and ideologies do we (inadvertently) subscribe to, and what kinds of exclusionary politics and dynamics of power do we (again, perhaps inadvertently or unwittingly) fortify and legitimize, when we enact public mourning? The exploration of such questions—and the potential to glean valuable insight regarding them—of course cannot begin until we respond to Derrida's philosophical call to arms, which seeks to imbue us with the responsibility of actively questioning, rigorously engaging and reacting to the "fundamental" concepts that make us "human."

But what are the "fundamental" concepts that make us "human?" How can we approach such an inquiry responsibly, if we can even "adequately" approach it at all? As Butler's work suggests, the line that demarcates and separates the "living" from the "dead" is not at all as distinct as has been conventionally imagined, but is, in fact, always permeable and always susceptible to manipulation and constant redefinition. The boundaries of what constitute a "grievable life" and an "ungrievable death" are continually shifting, oftentimes serving the interests of particular regimes and ideologies, to the extent that some who are still living are considered or valued as always already dead, while some who are dead are *guaranteed* the incessant recognition of their lives through the cultural work of memorialization. Thus the living, by virtue of what is regarded as their "human worth," can by rights, be deemed dead, without physical deaths or losses of life taking place.

Corporeal tangibility in Butler's arguments do not at all sufficiently denote that individuals belonging to a particular community are granted the same amount or the same kinds of human rights and privileges as their counterparts in other social groups. Just as Butler upsets the binary opposition of "dead/alive," so too—and perhaps more importantly—does she disrupt the assumption that being "human," or being *recognized* as "human," is an obvious, given or incontrovertible issue. Her critique draws attention to the constructedness of what "humanity" and "being human" constitute—by emphasizing that the act of recognition imposes the one who recognizes to acknowledge and accept a *specifically prescribed* set of guiding characteristics that make the recognition of something or someone intelligible, or at the very least, possible:

> When we recognize another, or when we ask for recognition for
> ourselves, we are not asking for an Other to see us as we are, as we
> already are, as we have always been, as we were constituted prior to
> the encounter itself. Instead, in the asking, in the petition, we have
> already become something new, since we are constituted by virtue of
> the address, a need and desire for the Other that takes place in language
> in the broadest sense, one without which we could not be. *To ask for ·*
> *recognition, or to offer it, is precisely not to ask for recognition for*
> *what one already is. It is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a*
> *transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other.*
> It is also to stake one's own being, and one's own persistence in one's
> own being, in the struggle for recognition. (44, emphasis mine)

To ask for recognition is to *solicit a becoming,* to *instigate a transformation*: "being

human," therefore, is not, and has never been, an attribute with which every one has

been endowed at birth; nor one to which every individual has been entitled by virtue

of having been born. Furthermore, no one is human or becomes human, and no one

can assume to be human until—and only until—one is *recognized* as such. Clearly, in

Precarious Life Butler does not simply argue for human rights "for all," because she

argues that every individual has *yet to be included* under the rubric of "humanity."

Thus she calls—first and foremost—not only for a rigorous rethinking, but also a

radical reconfiguration of the principles and characteristics to which we subscribe

when we speak of being "human." For only then do we glean the extent of our

exclusionary identity politics, be it in our relations with the "living," the "dead," or

both—in the most complicatedly dialectical of ways.

The disavowal of certain lives as lives, and, conversely, the preservation of

certain deaths as having been lives worthy of celebration and remembrance, have

become even more pervasive and perhaps most palpably enacted in the highly

"media-tized" eye witness accounts of the September 11 attacks, as well as in the

commercially touted "anniversary" documentaries commemorating the traumatic

event of 9/11. Those narrative accounts the media, primarily the television media,

chose to air—and by this I specifically mean those accounts that had about them a

flair for the "spectacular" and the "dramatic,"[35] elements which are more commonly

attributed to the making of good cinematic extravaganzas like epic or disaster

movies—indicate and prescribe to their assumed audiences what constitutes a

"grievable" life, and therefore a life worthy of perpetual public recognition. Although

this particular study of the television media's selective reporting parallels and

resembles the critique Butler offers with regards to the formulation and publication of

obituaries, I see her critique capable of extending to the "real-time" manipulation of

the events that constituted 9/11.[36] Thus, *even and especially* when no sufficiently

"coherent" account of what was happening in the United States was available at the

time of the "live" broadcasts,[37] the concept of whose lives and deaths were deemed

"grievable" and "worthy" of remembrance was *already* in the process of being

mapped out. Furthermore, those narratives of lives and deaths on which the media

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[35] I will revisit, in greater detail, these two "elements" later on in the chapter, in my subsequent discussion of individual eye witness and "near-death" narratives broadcasted weeks after 9/11, and indeed years after the attacks.

[36] Butler's critique regarding the process of deciding which obituaries are permitted publication implies that a certain amount of time has passed between the death of the individual and the proposal to publicize their memorialization. I am arguing here that even the media coverage of 9/11 deaths and "near-deaths"—while these deaths and "near-deaths" were taking place or had just taken place—were already exercising authority over the decision of who, at the end of the day, will have a "grievable life."

[37] That is, if a "coherent" account of *any thing* is even at all possible. To this end, I problematize and question the very concept of a "coherent" or "true" account of events as such, and argue instead that what is considered "coherent" is, in fact, really only the account most considered "authoritative," "official" and "straightforward." My comment here, then, refers to the "packaged" and "airtight" account of events that television news media most often offer its viewers. Because 9/11 received coverage as most of the events were unfolding, there was little time to edit the raw material received by the journalists and newscasters. Still, I argue here and elsewhere in this chapter that the very "raw" material sought out and broadcasted by news personnel is always already mediated—even if the personnel themselves were not aware of what drove them to cover what they did. Herein lie key elements of Butler's argument: most often, we do not—sadly to our detriment—reflect on the motivations and ideologies that shape and influence our actions and thinking. While Butler questions the ideologies that mediate our concept of what is human (and thereby our treatment of those we do not consider human), here I argue that so too must we question the motivating factors that influence us to consider certain events or aspects of events as more important, significant or "newsworthy" as others.

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[35] I will revisit, in greater detail, these two "elements" later on in the chapter, in my subsequent discussion of individual eye witness and "near-death" narratives broadcasted weeks after 9/11, and indeed years after the attacks.

[36] Butler's critique regarding the process of deciding which obituaries are permitted publication implies that a certain amount of time has passed between the death of the individual and the proposal to publicize their memorialization. I am arguing here that even the media coverage of 9/11 deaths and "near-deaths"—while these deaths and "near-deaths" were taking place or had just taken place—were already exercising authority over the decision of who, at the end of the day, will have a "grievable life."

[37] That is, if a "coherent" account of *any thing* is even at all possible. To this end, I problematize and question the very concept of a "coherent" or "true" account of events as such, and argue instead that what is considered "coherent" is, in fact, really only the account most considered "authoritative," "official" and "straightforward." My comment here, then, refers to the "packaged" and "airtight" account of events that television news media most often offer its viewers. Because 9/11 received coverage as most of the events were unfolding, there was little time to edit the raw material received by the journalists and newscasters. Still, I argue here and elsewhere in this chapter that the very "raw" material sought out and broadcasted by news personnel is always already mediated—even if the personnel themselves were not aware of what drove them to cover what they did. Herein lie key elements of Butler's argument: most often, we do not—sadly to our detriment—reflect on the motivations and ideologies that shape and influence our actions and thinking. While Butler questions the ideologies that mediate our concept of what is human (and thereby our treatment of those we do not consider human), here I argue that so too must we question the motivating factors that influence us to consider certain events or aspects of events as more important, significant or "newsworthy" as others.

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semblance of comprehension, this act of too quickly and too coarsely lending itself to

formulaic and journalistically palatable narratives of "heroes," "victims," and

"villains"—this act of efficient mastery and appropriation of the traumatic events of

9/11—was mobilized and employed well before the trauma itself had come to a

"close." The television media *anticipated* the events to be traumatic; indeed, they

contributed greatly in *making* the events of 9/11 traumatic, and, indeed by the urge to

"master" and render "comprehensible" through repetition the event before it fully

unfolded, the television media played a crucial part in further traumatizing their

viewers, as if the initial news or first sight of airplanes bloated with jet fuel, crashing

into highly populated and prominent buildings, sending hundreds of individuals to

their deaths over a hundred stories below, had not by themselves been enough to

produce that effect.

From Ground Zero: The Emotio-Omniscient Report and the "I" Witness Account

Commenting on the important role of the television—more specifically, the

role of the television news media—during the events of 9/11, Marusya Bociurkiw

observes that "[t]he call to turn on the television," was heard "even in final phonecalls

between hijacking victims and their wives, [and] even by those watching the event

first hand" (Bociurkiw par. 11). Bociurkiw further recounts that she "heard about a

young man who watched the towers start to go down from his Manhattan rooftop. As

they were in mid-collapse, he left the roof to go inside to turn on his TV, hoping it

would make him 'understand'" (par. 11). This particular anecdote effectively

demonstrates the capacity attributed to television to provide "the clearer picture"—

both literally and figuratively: literally, because the cameras transmitting images of

the Towers' collapse have the capability of "zooming in" without risking great injury

to the camera operator, and figuratively, because unlike the eye, which cannot

perceive much detail from afar—and by implication cannot fully perceive what is

taking place at a significant distance—the camera gives the *illusion* of close ·

proximity, which in turn suggests that the closer one *spatially* is to the "action," the

more likely one *understands* it, by virtue of the abundance of detail in the viewer's

field of perception. In this way, the television news reports that "covered" 9/11 were

treated as sources of "reliable" information that helped piece together a coherent

account of the events that led up to, and have been employed as "legitimate"

justifications for what is now referred to as the "war on terrorism."

At the time of the attacks, the repeated description of the Towers' destruction

as something "like a Hollywood movie"—though it at first seems to rob the event of

its occurrence in and impact on the "real" world through its identification with the

blatantly contrived artifice of Hollywood action and disaster movies—itself denotes

the anxiety on the part of the media to emphasize, instruct and reiterate that 9/11 is, in

fact, extremely steeped in "reality," and that it *is* really happening and *is* really taking

place. The media's anxiously insistent appeals to regard 9/11 as "real" are especially

evoked by the use of the simile, "*like*" a Hollywood movie. Although the scenes of

destruction in Lower Manhattan and the substantial structural damage inflicted on the

Pentagon draw numerous similarities and resemblances from equally numerous

movies,[39] these similarities and resemblances to a certain extent reach a limit imposed

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[39] In particular, movies like *Independence Day* have been evoked in descriptions of the attacks on 9/11. But alongside retrospective references to past movies are also references to some movies released after 9/11. More recently, Frank Rich of *The New York Times* cites Roland Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow* as having "recreated" the devastation of Lower Manhattan on the movie screen. This, less than three years after the attacks, when public gestures towards "redeveloping" the Lower

by the very articulation that 9/11 is like a movie: it *is* like a movie in its hyperbolic

destruction of human lives and cityscapes, but its very *resemblance* to a movie

implies that it is not *actually* one, and therefore must not be confused for the thing

itself.[40] *This* is real, while Hollywood blockbuster films about alien invasions and

large-scale natural disasters are not. A news account of "9/11" is a mimetic offshoot

of "disaster" movies, in its very capacity to shock and render chaotic an ordered and

highly regimented population. The "obvious" distinctions between the "real" and the

"fantastic" are thrown into question by this particular impression of 9/11, because to

insist that one is some thing—that is, "real"—and not another—that is, "artificial,"

and in this case, a "movie"—demonstrates the anxiety to establish a particular

viewpoint or interpretation that had not always been self-evidently "given," although

it may, perhaps, had been assumed as such. The events taking place in Lower

Manhattan are "real," because the events are not broadcast in the movie theatre, but

through television news; to prevent further "confusion," the word "Live" was often

unobtrusively inserted somewhere on the television screen. This, to insist firstly that

there are no lapses of time between the reception of events and their transmission, and

secondly that the transmitted events have not undergone any form of tampering or

mediation, despite their "totality" having been negotiated and undermined by the

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Manhattan district have started picking up greater momentum. Describing the palpably awkward
reaction a Manhattan movie audience had to the movie's fantastic scenes of destruction, Rich writes:
"We were watching a (barely) encoded re-enactment of 9/11, and we knew it. Lower Manhattan was
being obliterated again, and once again the powerful government of the most powerful nation in the
world was unable to stop it" (Rich par. 2).

[40] In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Slavoj Žižek notes that it is not only because
Hollywood represents artifice and "fantasy," but also because it "is the nerve center of the American
ideology" (Žižek 39) that there persisted an anxiety to differentiate 9/11 from the idea of a Hollywood
movie: "Hollywood is literally the 'dream factory': its main function is to fabricate the hegemonic
ideological dreams, to provide to individuals coordinates for their private fantasies" (39). Therefore, it
would not do to have "the hegemonic ideological dreams" of Hollywood movies confused with and
contaminated by the "real-life" intrusion of 9/11.

medium of a television broadcast.[41] Butler's ideas on the concept of recognition

obtain here as well: she argues that the recognition of a life as "human" reveals that

such a classification—by virtue of being a classification, a mode of categorizing and

organizing concepts, ideas, people and things—always already exacts particular

discriminations and occlusions. One cannot be regarded or validated as human until

one is acknowledged, recognized—and, in a sense, classified—as such. So it is with

the assumed binary concept of "real" and "unreal:" that news reporters reiterated the

events of 9/11 as resembling scenes from a Hollywood movie signals to the public

that it should not be regarded or considered *as* a film (though it may very well be

regarded as one, for it meets the prevalent criteria of a summer blockbuster film that

boasts stunning scenes of destruction via computer-generated images), but rather as a

"real" experience that is taking place in their world—that is, what is conceived and

accepted to be the "real" world conjured by the television news.

Just as the conventions and attitudes the news media adopted in their reports

on 9/11 contribute to the delineation—the mapping out—of the "real" world (as

opposed to the world of disaster movies), so too does their treatment of the "public"

sphere impact the very constitution of that sphere as such. The provisional

establishment of an interactive and symbiotic relationship between a news reporter

and an eye witness plays a significant and complex role in bringing about notions of a

collective identity and a coherently articulated public sphere. For example, an

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[41] For example, although the manner by which news cameras captured the collapse of the Towers replicates the view of a bystander on the sidewalks of Lower Manhattan (indeed, the person behind the camera *was* a bystander as well, only one with a heightened desire to see and record the attacks as they unfolded), broadcasting this "live" footage over the news already renders it lacking in the "totality" of the experience of being "there," since the camera provides only images and sounds. The texture of the debris falling over the city blocks, the taste of grit and dust, and the smell of fire, smoke and everything else in the vicinity of the Towers—are just some of the aspects of the attack the camera is incapable of transmitting to its audience.

interaction that ensued on the morning of 9/11 between CNN's Richard Roth and a female eye witness—who provided a detailed personal narrative—punctuated and guided the interpretation of the day's events. But even though the news reporter and the selected eye witness both contribute in the formulation of an imagined "public sphere," the roles they assume in this construction, and the ways in which they are caught up and partake in this construction, differ starkly, and in the most telling of ways.

Because the news reporter is expected to fulfill the responsibility of articulating and conveying "key points" or, if possible, a "comprehensive summary" of an event, she—in a sense—decides what constitutes "news." But does she? As a "news reporter," she reports the news: although a rather tautological definition, the implications this linguistic formula suggests are far from simple and self-evident, because the specific details and elements of what is "newsworthy" about the news the reporter reports is again determined by ideological forces and hegemonic assumptions that effect not only the emphasis and focus on specific aspects of an event, but also the dismissal of certain details as "trivial" or "superfluous." The news, before it becomes or is *recognized* as "news," is always already decided for the news reporter. But who or what decides what constitutes as news, and what does not? Even though the reporter and camera operator prowling Ground Zero exude a sense of autonomy and mastery over the items they "cover" by virtue of their presence as figures of authority[42] in front of or behind the camera, they themselves are (unwittingly) caught up in and influenced by particular assumptions that—in the first place—lead them to

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[42] The reporter leads the audience towards a particular narrative that is certified as factually accurate—the authoritative narrative. In a similar fashion, the camera operator forces the audience's gaze to turn towards what she finds of interest, or what she deems is of importance to the transmission of news events.

seek out the items they deem "newsworthy." To say the least, the claim that reporters overtly "sensationalized" the events of 9/11 imbues the media personnel with an agency or autonomy they possess only tenuously, if not phantasmatically. Additionally, it is too coarse an articulation of the media's presence and involvement that day, since the news is always already taxonomized, policed, mapped out. More importantly, such a claim also fails to consider *why* the obsessive, non-stop coverage of the attacks[43] was not questioned. Why was it taken as a given, or why was it considered "only natural" or "expected" that *this* particular event of 9/11 warranted coverage twenty-four hours a day, even and especially when the same vague pieces of information were merely reiterated anew?[44] The news reporter—and especially one who had been prowling Ground Zero almost as soon as the first hijacked airplane hit the North Tower—plays a crucial role in unpacking the implications offered up by these questions. Firstly, it is not so much that the news reporters "sensationalized" the event of 9/11, as it is that 9/11—in its "sensationality" (that is, however ideas of and exemplifying "sensationality" are recognized as elemental to news reports)—attracted the extensive media coverage. Thus, the "sensational" was not created by the news reports covering 9/11; rather, the news reports covering 9/11 were in themselves symptoms of 9/11 being viewed and anticipated *as* a "sensational" event. *If you*

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[43] This non-stop coverage of the attacks of course also includes the "ticker-tape" of 9/11-related information inserted at the bottom of television screens.

[44] I am reminded here again of the "ticker-tape" of news items CNN fed through the bottom of the screen. What is the function of the "ticker-tape" tactic of conveying news to viewers? Once the motion of the ticker-tape starts, it becomes difficult to look away because one cannot be certain when the whole set of news items ends and begins anew. As well, the viewer is encouraged to read the bits of information at the same time as she watches the broadcasts that dominate the screen. The viewer is then bombarded by an overwhelming deluge of 9/11-related material, and the bombardment itself evokes the impression of the event's magnitude.

destroy it, they will come:[45] in the same way, prescribing and policing ideas of the

spectacular and the sensational—in this case, scenes of mass death and several city

blocks of rubble—determine what classifies as "newsworthy," and definitely

guarantee what warrants "live coverage."

In flocking or being sent to scenes and events recognized as "newsworthy"

and warranting "live coverage," news reporters not only reinforce what constitutes as

news, but more importantly contribute in dictating *to whom* the pieces of information

they broadcast are, or *ought* to be seen *as* news. Sandra Silberstein's *War of Words:*

Language, Politics and 9/11 undertakes a thorough parsing and dissection of the oral

narratives of CNN News broadcasts from September 11, 2001. A transcript of CNN

correspondent Richard Roth's conversation with a selected eye witness is

"analyze[d]" in Silberstein's work in terms of "the mediated linguistic constructions"

(Silberstein 64) that made the events of 9/11 intelligible. While Silberstein focuses

primarily on the eye witness account as an example of an effective "newsmaker ,

narrative"—that is, a narrative that satisfies the ways in which the mass media

"manage[s] and manufacture[s]" (64) news—I scrutinize here the torsions at work

between Roth's introduction of the scene in Manhattan and the eye witness account

that works simultaneously to verify and validate his prefatory remarks. Through this

verification or validation of 9/11 as "newsworthy," the identity politics buttressing the

news media's assumptions about who comprises the public sphere become most

evident.

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[45] This line is a modification of the quote, "If you build it, they will come," from the movie *Field of Dreams*. Whereas the character played by Kevin Costner razes a substantial portion of his cornfield to build a ballpark that, by night, attracts the "ghosts" of renowned baseball players (and, consequently, a mass of baseball fans interested in watching the game), the razing of the World Trade Center towers, and indeed a substantial portion of Lower Manhattan, attracts the attention and interest of the news media (and, consequently, a mass of television viewers interested in looking at images of destruction).

Although Silberstein rightly points out that Roth's narrative uses "[t]erms that

heighten emotion and intensify the description" (64) of what was happening in Lower

Manhattan, his account serves only to establish the criteria 9/11 fulfills in order to be

classified as news. This is because Roth's comments—despite the emotional charge

quickening his words—do not sufficiently designate who the media assumes will not

only find the news interesting, but also identify and sympathize with (and thereby

experience vicariously) the trauma inflicted upon New York City:

> Aaron, New Yorkers think they've seen everything, but ah they'll
> never, they'll say they- they're amazed at what has happened, stunned.
> Right now behind me, what normally would be the World Trade
> Center is no more. A huge cloud of white smoke. And right now it's
> like a war zone. Thousands of New Yorkers streaming north. The
> mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani, has told everyone to get
> north of Canal Street. We're several miles north of it. Ah right now
> New Yorkers are trying to get out of Manhattan. There's a ferry on the
> west side going to New Jersey, it's really the only access out. The
> mayor advising ah that people should take the subways. We have seen
> dozens of emergency vehicles, hundreds. Firemen being bussed in,
> decamp- decontamination vans coming in, calls for blood donations,
> for New Yorkers, their faces, their expressions—stunned, amazed right
> now. With us several of those people who witnessed some of the
> carnage today. (qtd. in Silberstein 64)

Even though Roth—by virtue of being a "field reporter"—personally witnessed the

chaos that ensued in Lower Manhattan, as a reporter he largely detaches himself from

the situation around him by adopting the rhetoric of an omniscient narrator: it is the

New Yorkers who are stunned and amazed, even though *he himself* falters over and

throughout the delivery of his news report. Despite his references to a "we" who

stand several miles away from the disaster area and see dozens or hundreds of

emergency vehicles, Roth for the most part effaces himself from the scene about

which he is reporting: he is there, observing and describing the scenery, the New

Yorkers, rescue workers and survivors, but he is not there *as himself* to experience or

convey the emotions the event evoked and was still evoking in him. Descriptions

Roth provides of his surroundings—though rich in detail and visual imagery—give

the impression that he is aware of everything happening all around him, all at once.

The frenetic way in which he delivers the various and, at times—narratively .

speaking—remotely linked pieces of information makes this anxiety to see and hear

everything all at once palpably obvious: stunned New Yorkers, a vanished World

Trade Center, a backdrop akin to a war zone, peripatetic New Yorkers, Rudy Giuliani

enforcing safety precautions, still more New Yorkers undertaking their exodus, ferry

service, Rudy Giuliani and the subway system, emergency vehicles, firemen, the call

for blood donations, witnesses. Roth's lack of specific narrative focus and direction

can also be seen as an urgent purging or outpouring of the abundant information he is

provided, and this hints at the traumatizing effect the events have had on him, just as

they had on the stunned and amazed New Yorkers. Therefore, despite his failed and

ineffective attempts at mastering the events that rendered his narrative skills as a,

reporter almost incoherent, he unwittingly and inadvertently conveys the traumatic

quality of the attacks, and in so doing perhaps provides the most effective means of

articulating the terror felt that morning. Roth could not eloquently, nor in a composed

or well-organized fashion, articulate what was happening around him; but his very

failure to do so in fact succeeded in conveying the trauma the scenes of death and

destruction evoked—this, significantly more so than could his usage of intensely

emotional and vividly descriptive words and phrases. Certainly, in his prefatory

remarks Roth is able to designate the events that took place in New York as horrifying

and traumatic. His comments that the scenery before him is "like a war zone" and

that New Yorkers are "amazed at what has happened" are forms of recognizing 9/11

as "newsworthy:" a seeming war zone in America, a spectacle of destruction that has

amazed the stereotypically "jaded" New Yorkers—*this* is different, *this* is spectacular,

this is shocking. And therefore, it *must be recognized as news*.

Ought people removed from New York—and Washington and Pennsylvania,

for that matter—be drawn in, and emotionally moved to identify with the victims and

survivors of these events? Even though the audience's "imaginary proximity to the

suffering inflicted on others... is granted by images" (Sontag 102) and vivid

descriptions provided by the television news media, Susan Sontag argues in

Regarding the Pain of Others that "the link between the far-away sufferers—seen

close-up on the television screen—and the privileged viewer... is simply untrue"

(102). Through the visual images presented by the media, viewers perceive a

proximity to the suffering of others; although this proximity is imaginary and never

explicitly suggested, it is nevertheless palpably felt. In other words, that imaginary

link may very well be "simply untrue," but its very presence or suggestion *does* exert

particularly powerful ideological influences over the "privileged" viewer; influences

that determine the ways in which interactions and relationships—both with those

considered living, and with those considered dead—can, are, and will be conducted.

Therefore it is important to ask the pressing questions of how and why the media and

the transmitted images are able to establish this link between the sufferers and

"privileged" viewers in the first place. For it is through the exploration of these

questions that the imagined basis or groundwork for public mourning and

remembrance depends and begins to take shape.

Although Richard Roth's frenzied anxiety (and subsequent failure) to offer up

a coherently articulated—and authoritatively prescriptive—narrative of 9/11

paradoxically succeeds in recognizing and establishing the events from that day as not only "newsworthy" but also traumatizing and traumatic, the self-effacing approach he adopted in relaying as much information as he was able does not sufficiently achieve (if it does so at all) that imaginary link between the sufferers and the viewers to which Sontag refers in her work. This, because Roth's assumed "omniscience" as a news reporter renders him impersonal, and therefore unable or unqualified to establish an "identificatory" link between the traumatized New Yorkers and the television viewers he addresses through CNN news anchor Aaron Brown. Roth, assuming his role in the chaotic milieu as a news reporter, therefore succeeds in setting up the "newsworthy" scenes of trauma, terror, death and destruction—the field upon which that imaginary link between sufferers and viewers is established. As the news reporter, Richard Roth articulates—either by his choice of words (or lack thereof), or by his manner of delivery (narratively incoherent though it was)—the events of 9/11 into intelligible concepts of suffering, confusion and devastation. But his comments, in fact, work to contain, localize and specify to the most precise degree the area affected by this instance of suffering, confusion and devastation. Indeed, Roth's repeated invocation of the term "New Yorkers" even carries with it an exclusionary means of articulating the experience of the attacks: the people *of New York* are those affected, the city *of New York* is in utter chaos, the mayor *of New York* is attempting to establish some semblance of control in the city. Those Sontag labels the "privileged viewer[s]" are thereby not included in Roth's narrative of "the carnage" over which descended "[a] huge cloud of white smoke." Roth's repeated references to the suffering of New Yorkers—what can be interpreted as a localization of the trauma—explicitly calls attention to Sontag's observation that the illusion of visual proximity to events does

not at all indicate or signify any concrete commonality or collective identity between the viewers and the sufferers. Or do Roth's efficient reduction and apprehension of the attacks as affecting only the city and citizens of New York (and no one else; especially not himself) in fact signal not only his own traumatization but also—and more importantly—the very suggestion that the attacks ought not be regarded as a localized matter? Upon the negation and denial of an idea depend its acknowledgment and, indeed, its acceptance in the first place: *New Yorkers* are traumatized; *New York City* has been attacked; *those* people over *there* are the *only ones* affected—but is it also the case that *we* are *all* affected? Roth's detached and impersonal role as a news reporter seems to dare (or is it encourage?) television viewers to think and feel otherwise.[46] That his brief news report impeccably becomes a forum for people on the street is by no means an insignificant element in establishing the phantasmatic proximity to New York City, as well as that imaginary link between the sufferers and their distant audience.

But how does Roth's insertion of "eye witness" accounts—that is, accounts other than his own as a reporter, which is always already not his own, in its very anxiety to feign omniscience and detachment from the event—complicate the news report's presumed role of benignly pointing out instances of "news" that are shaped and determined by conventionally accepted conceptions of what is "spectacular," "different," "unusual," and thereby "newsworthy?" How does the inclusion of an eye witness account police the efficient (re)establishment of the identity politics that seek to (re)absorb viewers into the trauma experienced by the sufferers? Does the eye witness account (re)create, reinforce or recuperate a notion or assumption of a ·

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[46] I wonder here to what degree the news media influenced the coining of the phrase, "We're all Americans now."

collective "we," in the concept of a "public sphere" that suffers from the *social* injury

9/11 has inflicted? What, after all, makes the trauma that ensued on 9/11 a *social*

trauma, as opposed to a personal or individual trauma to which not many "others" can

or would want to relate? Silberstein cites the eye witness account "Colleen"[47]

provides immediately after Roth's prefatory remarks as an example of "a newsmaker

narrative" (Silberstein 64), rather than those provided by "the newscasters" (63):

> Um, it was very smoky and then we exited on Church Street out of the PATH train station. Um, I crossed over to Church and ah Fulton, and I was trying to get a cell phone. I was trying to get up the block, and I turned around and saw this tremendous fire. I thought it was a bomb, I couldn't see a plane. And I saw people jumping out of- off the building, many, many people just jumping. And in a panic, I had my bag and my cell phone and everything, and I was trying to find a phone because the cell phone wasn't working. Everybody was screaming, everybody was running, the cops are trying to maintain the calm. And in that haste people were stampeding. People started screaming that there was another plane coming. I didn't see the plane but I turned around and it just- the second building just exploded, and again all the debris was flying towards us. There was a woman on the ground with her baby, people were stampeding the baby. Myself and another man threw ourselves over the baby and pushed into the building. I got up and I just ran. And I ran towards towards City Hall. Then I said "oh God why am I running there?" And then I started to run towards the water. And then ah, I was by probably Spring Street, or- or- or I'm sorry Prince Street? I was at a pay phone and I heard the rumbeling [phonetic spelling]. I thought it was another bomb, I thought it was another building close to me. And then I just ah- ran from the pay phone. The man is grabbing me back telling me, "Stay here you're safe." I was like, "No way, I'm getting outta here. Go north." And then I ran into a shoe store because I wanted to call my husband, that's all I wanted to do. I wanted him to know I was alive because he knew I was in the World Trade. And um I got my office, and they connected me to my husband, and then we heard the second fall of the World Trade Center. And I- I'm astonished by the bombing. I just want to make a statement that these New York policemen and firemen, God bless them, they kept us calm, they tried so hard to keep us moving

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[47] In her book (from which I quote this account), Silberstein "used pseudonyms" for the "survivor narrators"—that is, "those who appeared in real time" (Silberstein 64)—she cites in her chapter. For the sake of convenience and clarity, I will also use "Colleen" to refer to this particular eye witness Richard Roth provided to supplement his brief news report.

north. And it was just absolute, absolute horror, it was horror. (qtd. in Silberstein 65)

Colleen's narrative differs in many ways from Richard Roth's rendition of the scene in Lower Manhattan. First and foremost, her focus—unlike Roth's—is on herself: where she was (the PATH train station, on Prince Street, at a pay phone, inside a shoe store); what she was trying to do (get a cell phone, get up the block, find a pay phone, help protect a nearly stampeded baby, run towards City Hall, call her husband); what she was (not) able to see (a tremendous fire, people jumping from the building, a second plane, a second explosion, debris, a baby, people stampeding the baby); and what she was feeling (confusion, panic, astonishment, gratefulness, horror). Whereas Roth anxiously detaches and effaces himself from Ground Zero by attributing what he witnessed to the imperative of reporting what the "New Yorkers" experienced, Colleen maintains the focus of the story on her Self, and thereby personalizes and "narcissisticizes" her account of what took place that morning. At the time of the attacks and the towers' collapse, she was not aware of everything that was happening around her; nor did she make any attempts to be even more so. In fact, her account of the events of 9/11 could very well have been an account of her need to reach her husband by phone, with the ensuing destruction and chaos serving as obstacles she must first overcome in order to realize her goal or objective: during her morning routine, she—having been disrupted and upset by scenes of horrific deaths and crumbling buildings—was moved to try to reach her husband and assure him of her safety and well-being. That the policemen and firemen and other people she encountered contributed to the successful end to her narrative punctuates her memory and impression of 9/11. Clearly, her account only includes people who affected her

actions at the time: Colleen's story and memory of the attacks is saturated with what happened to *her*—not what happened to *New Yorkers* as a collective group.

Colleen's narrative, however, when juxtaposed with the news account presented by Roth, succeeds in rendering the process of the events of 9/11 into a language and rhetoric familiar to viewers, and one to which they can relate: had any other people *just like* Colleen, people who can understand and relate to her actions and reactions—that is, for example, people who commute to work every morning, people with spouses and families, people who carry cell phones to stay in touch with or contact loved ones in case of emergencies, people who do not wish to see babies injured, nor want to watch others desperately commit suicide by jumping out of skyscrapers—had any other people *just like* Colleen experienced or gone through her ordeal, they would all have done, or tried to have done what she did. This, because of the seeming commonalities between Colleen and viewers that are conveyed—indeed, "fleshed out" and embodied—by her appearance on television as she delivered her eye witness account. As opposed to Richard Roth's affectation of seeing and knowing everything happening all at once to New Yorkers around Lower Manhattan, Colleen's account makes no pretence of detachment for the sake of undertaking an organized sharing of information. She was an eye witness—"a person-on-the-street" (64), one who could have very well been you or I, had either of us been in New York that morning. As a "person-on-the-street," Colleen's appearance on television and the presentation of her narrative on a "live" news broadcast make her story available to countless viewers who are able to sympathize with the commonalities they may feel they share with her, commonalities they may glean from her words, expressions and descriptions of the morning's proceedings. But do the commonalities of having a

similar weekly morning routine, a family or close relations, and a dependence on

telephone technology sufficiently serve as the only "connections" viewers can make

between themselves and this woman who had fortunately survived the devastation of

Lower Manhattan? Are these commonalities enough to make television viewers

establish that imaginary link with the sufferers they watch on their television screens?

The last portion of Colleen's eye witness account leaves plenty of room to

reflect upon this question of "commonalities." Indeed, the last few comments Colleen

is permitted to make in front of the camera before she is urgently interrupted are

gestures toward articulating and conjuring particular identities of which she feels a

part, and in the future, specific subjectivities she feels will retaliate against, and serve

justice to the attacks and their perpetrators:

> It's devastating, I can't look back... And you know what? Americans
> will persevere. And I don't think that we'll stoop to the level of these
> zealot, terrorist pigs. And we won't kill children, I hope, and mothers.
> But you know what? Whatever we have to do to eradicate the country
> or the world of this- of this vermin, I just hope Bush will do whatever
> is necessary to get rid of them. And I don't know, don't know what
> the root of, what they, of what the answer is[.] (qtd. in Silberstein 66)

We won't stoop to the level of *these* zealot, terrorist pigs.[48] *We* won't kill children

and mothers. *We* have to eradicate the country or the world of *this* vermin. Bush

must get rid of *them*. From an overtly "self"-centred eye witness account to an

enraged commentary that anxiously delineates an over-determined "us" from an

equally over-determined "them," Colleen's narrative—Silberstein points out—"builds

a sense of what it means to be human, to be a New Yorker, then an American, and a

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[48] Ironically enough, Colleen undermines her conviction that "we won't kill children" only a few sentences after her proclamation: *"Whatever we have to do* to eradicate the country or the world of... this vermin, I just hope Bush will do *whatever is necessary* to get rid of them" (qtd. in Silberstein 66, emphasis mine).

citizen of the world" (68), and in this way "moves from individual to collective identity" (69).

While I understand and accept Silberstein's argument that "storytelling can be used to create group membership for oneself and solidarity for a group," and that "[s]tories locate one's very personal experience within cultural norms and expectations" (68), I question the order in which she organizes the movements Colleen's narrative makes from establishing an individual to a collective identity. Note that Silberstein itemizes "human" as the first collective identity of which Colleen makes herself a part, and "American" and world citizen as the final group identities to which she subscribes. Silberstein argues that Colleen's identification as an "American" and "citizen of the world" come about only at the end of her account, while her recognition of herself as "human" comes about early in her narrative, when she describes the episode in which she and another man use their bodies as shields to protect a baby from the stampede of people:

> In Colleen's world, people do the right thing. No normal person under normal circumstances would trample a baby. Colleen tells us that *in that haste* people were stampeding. And noticing that, Colleen and another man throw themselves over the baby. This is the only complicating action that is not followed by an evaluation, an explanation. In the absence of evaluation, doing the right thing becomes the default; it establishes a particular collective identity. (68-9)

Silberstein uses this explanation to illustrate this person's identification and recognition of herself as "human," but I question the degree to which Silberstein herself too quickly and too coarsely equates the concept of being "human" with "doing the right thing." It would be less problematic in this situation for Silberstein perhaps to have observed that Colleen identified herself as "a person who does the

right thing," or better yet, "a person who considers it a given to protect babies in distress," rather than one who recognizes herself as "human," by virtue of her actions during the stampede. But why intensely scrutinize the order in which Silberstein arranges the collective identities established in Colleen's eye witness account in the first place? To return briefly to Butler's argument, the process of recognition and the act of recognizing oneself as well as others have inherent to them the necessity of exacting particular occlusions and disavowals; this, for the sake of rendering distinguishable and intelligible the thing recognized. Although Silberstein rightly points out the occlusions and disavowals that take place in identifying the kinds of subjectivities that pertain to the collective identities of "American" and "world citizen," she fails to acknowledge that *even* the term or identity of "human"—a term treated as "self-evident" due to the assumption that "human" refers to any and all embodied individuals who look, think, act and behave like men or women[49]—is *itself* problematic, even and especially when it is applied to the wide spectrum of individuals that supposedly all fall under the rubric of "humanity." All of us may very well be "human," but some of us are more or less "human" than others: there are humans, and there are those who are not-quite-human-enough. I argue here that Colleen's narrative demonstrates this hegemonic and subjugative rendering of "humanity," in that her account—contrary to Silberstein's claims—first establishes an "American" identity, which serves as the basis for her formulation and recognition of

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[49] One can glean from this definition the complexity and difficulty involved in establishing what "humanity" is or means, for even the concepts of "men" and "women" must also undergo scrutiny (After all, what is a man? What is a woman? How does one distinguish one from the other? What of men who used to be women, and vice versa? What of women who act and behave like men, but do not look like men, and vice versa? The possibilities of complicating and problematizing the man/woman binary are inexhaustible). To be sure, even the concepts of "looking, thinking, acting and behaving" are themselves problematic (For example, what does it mean to look like something or someone? Does looking like something or someone transform the subject into that something or someone, or is the subject still "other" to that something or someone?).

herself as a "human," and which in turn is an identity utilized to distinguish herself and others like her (that is, those who sympathize with her) from the "pigs" and "vermin" who were driven to attack the United States. Rather than Silberstein's arrangement of "human, New Yorker, …American, and a citizen of the world," I point out here that the collective identities in Colleen's narrative in fact shift from "New Yorker," to "American," to "human," to "world citizen," to "human" again, and then anxiously returns emphatically and yet again to "American" before her narrative is cut short and brought to an abrupt end. Colleen's articulation of "American-human" and then "human-American" suggests a (rather erroneous) conceptual assumption on her part that the two terms are interchangeable, and that one necessarily implies the other.

Silberstein points out correctly that Colleen's knowledge of "the local geography" of New York City, as well as her having referred "colloquially to 'the World Trade'" (69) indicate and establish her as part of the collective identity of, "New Yorker": to be sure, visitors would not have been able to manoeuvre their way around Lower Manhattan as expertly as Colleen during the stampede, much less recount the streets they travelled to evade the majority of the falling debris from the Twin Towers. Upon the conclusion of her personal narrative, she launches into a direct and highly opinionated discussion—one that brooks no argument or dissent—of what she feels will happen in the days and weeks to come: "you know what? Americans will persevere." By virtue of being a New Yorker, and equally by virtue of being one who had been among the survivors of the attacks, Colleen adopts the identity of an American—as Silberstein observes, a part of the "'we' who 'persevere'" (69). After this comment, Silberstein argues that Colleen's references to

the "zealot, terrorist pigs" and "vermin" that attacked her city and country are "certainly [references to a] 'them'" (69).

It is at this point that I wonder whether Silberstein's observation can be pushed further, perhaps into a more suggestive and politically charged reading of the uses of "pigs" and "vermin" to refer to the hijackers. To recognize something as a "pig" or "vermin" implies that that something or someone is, first and foremost, an animal, and secondly an animal that is not regarded very favourably (pigs "stink" and "disgustingly" wallow in the mud, while vermin are "pesky" and pose health "hazards"[50]), but is instead conjured up rhetorically to imply particularly "disagreeable" qualities in certain humans (for example, one is a pig because one has "poor" hygiene, or is a lewd or sexually "dirty" individual). Thus, Colleen's recognition of the hijackers as "zealot, terrorist pigs" and "vermin" denies and negates the very human characteristics and abilities they possessed—not the least of which were, of course, learning how to fly, and actually flying an airplane, and even more so hijacking one.[51] The argument I am making here, of course, does not at all condone the hijacking of the planes, the killing of the passengers and the destruction and death that ensued once the planes reached their destinations—far from it. What I argue here is that Colleen's references to the "pigs" and "vermin" who orchestrated and

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[50] These assumptions, of course, are taken from the "very human" point of view—that is, from the point of view that sees itself threatened or bothered by the "lifestyles" of such creatures.

[51] Ironically enough, Colleen's reference to the hijackers as "pigs" calls to mind the phrase, "when pigs fly"—a sarcastic saying that bemoans and derides the very limits of human endeavours and possibilities. Thus, being able or willing to do something only after pigs are able to fly implies that the "impossible" or "unthinkable" has been achieved. Therefore, if we are to adopt Colleen's reference to the hijackers as pigs, then it would imply that defying the impossible has been achieved: "pigs" have flown. More importantly, and perhaps more sombrely, however, the strange convergence of Colleen's reference with this colloquial idiom problematizes and complicates the very notion of what constitutes "humanity:" these "pigs" have flown; while the ability to fly (in this case, the ability to fly airplanes) is a "human" skill, these supposed "pigs" were able to do so. Thus, they are not quite pigs (because they possess the "human" capacity to learn how to fly an airplane), but are also not quite human, either (because they are "pigs"—zealot, terrorist pigs, at that; a phrase which again problematizes the concept of a "pig," in the assumed cognitive incapability of pigs to be(come) "terroristic").

undertook the attacks do not only devalue the hijackers' lives as equally *human* lives, but also refuses to consider the extenuating circumstances that may have motivated and driven the hijackers to attack the United States in the first place. That Colleen distinguishes the very American victims as humans in comparison to the "pigs" and "vermin" that committed this atrocious feat of devastation is to imply that the hijackers' lives—not simply their existence, but their sustenance, their interests, their homes, their loved ones, their physical and emotional needs and concerns, every thing the victims themselves would consider the sum of what constitutes their lives—do not matter in the same way as do those of the victims. Thus, whatever reasons propelled the hijackers to attack the United States, Colleen's references suggest, ought not be valued equally as American interests and lives—lives that are "human" in comparison to those of pigs and vermin—are valued or are seen to matter. Furthermore, Colleen's insistence that "we have to… eradicate the country or the world of… this vermin" not only establishes her place (and, by implication New York's and America's place) as a part of the world, but it once again implies that whatever Colleen stands for—be it as a New Yorker, an American, a human being, a world citizen—is in stark contrast with, and is more "civilized"[52] when compared to whatever else is in the world in addition to the "vermin" that "require" eradication.

Thus, some of us are more or less "human" than others: because of this assumption, some of our lives, as Butler argues, will never warrant the privilege of being grieved publicly—if at all. This, because those "ungrievable lives"—at the very least, according to the worldview voiced by Colleen—do not amount to any thing

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[52] I argue this point in light of Silberstein's observation that Colleen hopes Americans "don't 'kill children and… mothers'" (Silberstein 69). By hoping Americans do not "stoop to… [this] level," Colleen's comment implies that Americans are *more capable* than the hijackers of engaging enemies in more "ethical" ways, if such ways are even possible or conceivable.

more than the lives of farm animals and disease vectors, creatures that are always

already at the mercy of those believed to be "human." Not only are their lives "de-

humanized,"—or better yet, "un-humanized," because they *never were, nor will they*

ever be(come) "human"—but their deaths are also deemed unworthy of human

remembrance or attention. For how can a public moved to relate to and sympathize

with "civilized humans" be equally moved to mourn and grieve for "zealot, terrorist

pigs" and "vermin?" To be sure, the "mirror-machine" (Bociurkiw par. 43) that "[t]he

television [news] has become" (par. 43) operates selectively—better yet,

discriminately—in its celebration of grievable lives. This phenomenon is perhaps

most powerfully articulated when Marusya Bociurkiw draws from her personal

experiences, and keenly points out that

> The faces of New Yorkers mourning the loss of their husbands, wives,
> daughters and brothers are suddenly familiar to me: they look like my
> face… and I have reached a limit, of skin stretched taut to connect
> their experience and mine, to connect theory and affect, my brother,
> my father, my grandmother, my own dead, flesh and blood, skin and
> kin. The unrepresentable "real" has folded into the reality of personal
> grief. (par. 43)

In this way, what constitutes "news" is paradoxically both "spectacular" and

"commonplace:" the staggering visual images and accounts of 9/11 that were fed

through the television draw viewers into a new experience of devastation and

destruction. But at the same time, the "live" coverage of individuals walking away

from the disaster return viewers to more familiar territory: grief and sorrow, suffering

and death. Through the suffering and deaths of others—that is, people who we

(wilfully?) assume or are (wilfully?) made to assume are just like us—we remember

our own pain and profound losses. Thus it is that public remembrance is, in a sense, a

collective experience of private and individual grief. That there is no "real"

collective, but an imaginary but powerful projection or phantasm of one serves only to complicate further the media's "seduction" by "the brutal charm of the terrorist attacks" of 9/11. Did the news reports from that day—by airing eye witness accounts provided by specific people and not others[53]—right then and there, and only right then and there—establish the constitution of the "public sphere?" Or did the very selection of these particular people itself function as proof of what the media has assumed the "public sphere" has been comprised all along? Just as the news reporter defers to other eye witnesses in order to "humanize" the events of 9/11, so too do they look to these very people-on-the-street to "humanize"—that is, in this case, embody, inhabit and animate—the very concept of what "human" and "humanity" are meant to imply. This, because every event deemed "newsworthy" carries with it the potential to re-inscribe who the "public" consists, and whose lives, generally speaking, matter. Indeed, particularly exclusionary identity politics were already in place by the time 9/11 was covered by the media; but the media's sheer "availability"—by virtue of advanced communications technology—even to those already excluded from this "public sphere," deemed it necessary, in the interests of the *American* public, to reconfigure and perhaps tighten the scope of what "the public" and more importantly what "the human" is meant to consist. Just as close-up images of destruction and suffering are taken to establish an imaginary but powerful "link" between actual

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[53] Silberstein recalls that another eye witness from Roth's report was not given the same amount of treatment or air-time as Colleen. She notes that the overlooked eye witness had "a less successful narrative structure" (Silberstein 67). Later on in the same chapter of her book, in the section entitled, "A Truncated Narrative," Silberstein suggests that this eye witness—to whom she has given the pseudonym "Mr. Gonzalez"—was cut off for reasons other than the structure of his narrative: "One can't help but wonder if his accented English contributes (to his dismissal)" (Silberstein 79). This possibility—if it were the case for the man's dismissal—further problematizes the media's assumptions of what makes up the public sphere: should an individual's ineloquent articulation of a particular narrative be deemed useless and unworthy of "public" attention, because it does not seem to appeal to the "native" language of that assumed "public?"

sufferers and viewers who matter, so too are precautionary measures taken to fortify

an equally imaginary but also equally powerful "chasm" that separates "legitimately"

or "sufficiently" human (and thereby grievable) lives from lives that are "merely" and

"insufficiently" not-quite-human (and thereby not-quite-grievable) *enough*.

The Documentary: Who Reports on the Reporters?

What of news reporters such as CNN's Richard Roth? What of their roles as

omniscient narrators? How do they—as reporters—finally "fit" into the neat division

between what the media projects as grievable and ungrievable lives? Under what

rubric do they fall, in the anxiety to map out the public sphere?

Desmond Smith's *As the Towers Fell: Minute by Minute with the*

Journalists—first aired on CBC's *Passionate Eye Sunday* on 7 September 2003, four

days short of the attacks' second anniversary—is a detailed chronological compilation

of various personal narratives and reflections offered up by the journalists and news

anchors responsible for "covering" the attacks as they unfolded on the morning of

September 11, 2001. What are considered the "crucial," "memorable," and

"noteworthy" events of 9/11 are used to organize the format and pacing of Smith's

documentary. That is, those events that have earned perhaps thousands of times of

airplay on news reports and talk shows, such as the crashing of the planes in the

World Trade Center, the evacuation of the United States' senior administrative

officials from the damaged Pentagon, the bystanders' horrified reactions to people

jumping from over a hundred floors to their gruesome deaths, to the devastating

collapse of the Twin Towers, to the scattered plane wreckage in a Pennsylvanian

field—each of these events are used in *As the Towers Fell* to coax the interviewed

journalists to reveal their feelings of confusion, helplessness and shock over that day's proceedings, as well as their responsibilities and duties as reporters to "keep the story straight" and not to report news items that "just weren't true." While news anchors like CBC's Peter Mansbridge and CNN's Aaron Brown, as well as cameramen from various media companies and network affiliates relayed their stories and reactions throughout the documentary, it becomes unclear, however, whether the documentary's focus was truly on exploring the journalists' reactions, or whether interviewing the journalists for their reactions was merely another means by which to revisit, reenact and relive the events of that day, again through the optic lens of the video camera, but this time also through the eyes and in the shoes of the cameramen and news anchors—those whose job or responsibility it was to render the attacks "coherent" to their viewing audience. This, because at several moments throughout Smith's documentary the journalists' comments and reflections are relegated to nothing more than voiceovers that accompany formerly "live" footage of the attacks. Certainly, a documentary on the journalists' varying emotional and mental states while on the job in Ground Zero and on news soundstages at the time of the attacks can, conceptually speaking, succeed in its genre as documentary with minimal footage of the attacks. Its title, "As The Towers Fell: Minute by Minute with the Journalists," does imply or perhaps even clarify, after all, that the focus is on the journalists and media personnel covering the attacks—not the attacks themselves: as the Towers were falling, the journalists were covering the story, doing their job; but they themselves had stories of their own to tell—that of covering the story of 9/11. If we are to regard Smith's choice of words and phrasing for the title of his documentary as an indication of his primary focus or subject matter, then it stands to reason to assume that the

journalists' narratives of their personal experiences and impressions of "covering" the events of September 11, 2001 will, in the documentary, foreground the chaotic destruction that ensued that day. Additionally, the blurbs of commentary pieced together by Smith indicate that extensive and fairly intimate, one-to-one interviews were conducted with the selected media participants; therefore, it is highly unlikely the director "ran out" of interview material and decided as a viable solution to fill in the temporal gaps in his documentary with archival footage of the attacks. To be sure, Smith—by inserting specific scenes of destruction and wreckage into his documentary, and weaving them, at times repetitively, with comments and narratives—seeks for his audience to make a particular connection between the event of 9/11, and the newscasters or "news providers" (i.e., the cameramen and journalists on the field) relaying the events to their audiences. In light of my preceding discussion of news reporter Richard Roth's role as the "omniscient narrator" who presided over the events of 9/11 in Lower Manhattan, I seek briefly to argue here that Smith's documentary addresses the liminal role of the reporter as both omniscient narrator and eye witness by attempting to recuperate the reporter's "humanity"—that is, the reporter's status as a recognizable "human" and thereby one who matters, and whose life is grievable—through the production and broadcast of a documentary report on the reporters, a cover story on the story-tellers themselves.

In a sense, Smith's having interviewed the reporters for their personal reactions to and ruminations on 9/11 can be viewed as the last interview of the last "reliable" eye witnesses available. Since the reporters—at the time of the attacks— had exhausted or filtered out various eye witness accounts of the events, they themselves are the only individuals left to be interviewed. They could have very well

provided their own eye witness account at the time of the attacks, but as the "news reporters," their personal stories were temporarily occluded; this, for the sake of fulfilling their responsibilities of establishing the scenario that was unfolding at the time: at the time of the attacks, they served as the mediums through which the imagined public could experience and learn about the totality of the events of 9/11. Thus, it was required of the reporters to assume the role of omniscient narrators; their own stories had to wait—the impetus to tell the public of personal experiences fell to the other eye witnesses, those who were not reporters but were "regular" people, such as Colleen.

Perhaps Smith's documentary is an attempt at imbuing the news reporters with possessing a similar kind of heroism attributed to the police officers and firefighters of New York City. The argument may be valid, but in light of my earlier treatment of Richard Roth's role as omniscient narrator to Colleen's personalized account, I am more compelled to argue that perhaps Smith's documentary seeks to rectify the seeming "in-human-ity" of the reporters at the time of the attacks by providing for them a venue in which they could relay the very same feelings experienced and voiced by the eye witnesses they selected and interviewed. Since the reporters—on the morning of 9/11—seemed willingly to have expelled themselves from the public sphere by virtue of divorcing themselves from personal reflections and expressions of grief, Smith's documentary enables them access and acceptance into the public sphere they (inadvertently and/or unwittingly?) helped to reinforce and simultaneously create that day. Just as the news reports the reporters conducted helped to instruct the viewing audience on how to frame the events of 9/11 into a comprehensive and intelligible narrative of "victims," "villains" and "heroes," does Smith's documentary

instruct the viewing audience on how to implicate, integrate or incorporate the story-tellers themselves into the story they have helped create? The numerous instances in which the camera zooms in for a reporter's close-up and patiently waits for him or her to admit (or is it confess?) that "none of them" really "knew" what was going on at the time succeed in destroying the illusion of the reporters as having possessed authoritative knowledge of the chaos that ensued in Lower Manhattan that day. They were still human, after all—"just like us," and the documentary succeeds as well in "reassuring us" that the media personnel, contrary to what Baudrillard claims, are never themselves terrorists, and that the terror is always "external" and thereby lies outside the reach of the camera, even though the "effects" and "aftermaths" of that terror are perfectly captured by the camera's lens. That the media may have marched to the terrorist act's seductive tune should, in fact—as Smith's documentary seems to suggest in its celebration of the media "doing their jobs as best they could"—even be celebrated.

Playing with Terror: Winning and Losing in *911Survivor*

> As flames crackled and the wind howled through a gash in the skyscraper's wall, a gray-suited businessman wandered in a daze through the smoke. Unable to find an escape route, he suddenly strode toward the sky and leaped.
>
> This appalling scene appears neither in print nor on film but in a computer game, "9-11 Survivor" [*sic*], that was briefly available this summer on the Internet. Using a mouse, players could move through an animated, three-dimensional rendering of a burning World Trade Center office. Ultimately one might perish in the fire, opt to jump like the businessman or, if concealed stairs were discovered, flee to safety. (Mirapaul pars. 1-2)
>
> Matthew Mirapaul reports that the creators of *911Survivor*—namely, John

Brennan, Mike Caloud and Jeff Cole—came up with the idea for the game

modification because they were "[i]nured to the distant televised images of Sept. 11"

and had "hoped an immersive, interactive version would restore an immediacy to the

day's horrors" (par. 4). Clearly unlike the popular criticisms circulating about the

media coverage of 9/11—that is, that the media had perhaps themselves "propagat[ed]

within the public space images or rumors aimed at terrifying the so-called civilian

population" (Derrida, *Philosophy* 109)—*911Survivor* claims that the images the

media decided to air or broadcast to the public were, in fact, *not enough* to convey the

traumatizing quality of the event. Although this game modification provokes several

pressing ethical questions, and can and ought to be approached from several different

aspects related to 9/11, for the purposes of this chapter I focus my discussion on the

ways in which the creation of this game speaks to and affects the formulation of

(un)grievable lives in the public sphere.

This game reproduces the traumatic experience of watching and hearing about

the people who jumped from their office windows as the Towers continued to burn.

Arguably speaking, this game modification may even *amplify* that trauma because

viewers are given the opportunity to experience—although virtually—what it must

have been like for the victims during the final minutes of their lives. By adopting the

persona or role of a trapped office worker, one is given the option of choosing how

they are to die: jump, suffocate or burn to death—regardless of the choice one makes,

one is still bound to die; there is no way of "winning," because the very objective of

the game (if it can even truly be called a "game") is to demonstrate that by playing or

taking part in it, one has no choice but to lose one's life. Certainly, the game

"restore[s] an immediacy to the day's horrors:" it attempts to recreate the situations

inside the burning Towers and emphasizes the palpability of death felt by many that

day. But what of the identity politics that were at play in the media reports of the attacks? Do the politics of determining whose lives are "human" and therefore "grievable" also obtain in this detailed interactive computer simulation of the Towers' collapse?

An interesting hierarchy of different kinds of "lives" is established in this game modification. If, as I have discussed earlier, the media contributed in creating particular classifications and kinds of lives as "grievable" or "not-quite-human" and thereby "ungrievable," how does this hierarchy translate, or is rendered coherent, in a game that has no "real" lives, but only "simulations" of lives? By virtue of the grievable lives becoming "unreal" in this game (that is, through the digital simulation of the mourned victims' deaths), those lives that were deemed ungrievable by the television media become *even less* real, and consequently, become even less human and, conversely, more unreal than the ways in which they were rendered "ungrievable" and "not-quite-human-enough" by the television news media. In a sense, their "non-human lives"—already disavowed by the television media—are obliterated and made literally to vanish—in this game modification: through this game, those "ungrievable" lives are made doubly not to matter.

It is doubtful, however, that the erasure of "ungrievable" lives is what makes the game chillingly terroristic. Rather, it is the consignment of *any and all* lives as not mattering *too much* in the medium of a game that proves terroristic. The genre of the game, because it is conventionally made intelligible under the rubric of the concepts of "play" and "playing," overlooks the anxiously imposed hierarchy of "lives that matter and lives that do not matter as much." The social order upon which ideas about the "public sphere" and "humanity" and who is considered eligible to be

classified under such categories are seen to unravel at the hands of such a game as *911Survivor*. And this proves the most terroristic scenario of all—perhaps even more so than the hijacked planes crashing into the Twin Towers—because in essence, there are no lives that can be justified as mattering enough to be spared obliteration, whether by a digital death or a forgetfulness induced by the desire to move on to the next level, the next opportunity to watch another die, one gruesome way or another.

Considerations of the media's role in the engagement of public mourning and remembrance problematize and unsettle the very languages and practices by which the work of mourning and memorialization have been made intelligible. That various types of media—in their representations of human lives and human sufferings—shore up different and severely conflicted and conflicting interpretations of what it means to be (considered worthy to be classified as) "alive" or "dead," indeed calls for a thorough interrogation of the motivations that currently propel the modes of mourning work that have been undertaken in the aftermaths of 9/11. Perhaps once that interrogation is undertaken, we may very well find that we had been mourning at the wrong times—well after "real" deaths had occurred—and sometimes, we had been mourning for the wrong reasons; in that the lives we mourned do not need our remembrance (since they are always already remembered and honoured), and that the lives we have wilfully forgotten, should not have been. Indeed, that the lives we are still wilfully forgetting and continuing to forget ought not be treated in this way.

CHAPTER 2

Ground Zero's (Im)Possible Voids

> Clearance and excavation had swept the site clean of any physical remains of the towers or their inhabitants. To venerate this area as a graveyard, now that the actual graveyard was the distant landfill where the debris of the buildings was being meticulously sifted for human remains, was akin to venerating the chalk outline of a body on a sidewalk.
>
> ---Michael J. Lewis, "Into the Void with Daniel Libeskind"[54]

> In the end, I'm not sure if we are ready to finalize the design of the memorial. Perhaps not enough time has passed to absorb the tragedy and come to terms with our loss. In a few brutal seconds, the collapsing towers robbed us of family members, friends and fellow citizens. We can't allow a memorial to do the same.
>
> ---Eric Fischl, "A Memorial That's True to 9/11"[55]

> Some people get through mourning quickly. Others devote their lives to it. There's no wrong or right way. As in this city, it is a novel experience for us. We don't know what stage of mourning we're supposed to be at.
>
> ---Herbert Muschamp, "An Appraisal: Amid Embellishment and Message, a Voice of Simplicity Cries to Be Heard"[56]

The Public Life of Mourning, The Mourning Life of the Public

Why venerate a graveyard, long after the bodies interred within them have

been removed? Why mourn for the fall of two buildings, as though their devastating

collapse simply coincided with—rather than brought about—their occupants' deaths?

Rather than ask about "the stage of mourning" at which one is supposed to be, must it

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[54] Lewis, Michael J. "Into the Void with Daniel Libeskind." *Commentary.* 115.5 May 2003: 40-4.

[55] Fischl, Eric. "Op-Ed Contributor: A Memorial That's True to 9/11." *New York Times* 19 December 2003: 8 pars. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/19/opinion/19FISC.html>.

[56] Muschamp, Herbert. "An Appraisal: Amid Embellishment and Message, a Voice of Simplicity Cries to Be Heard." *New York Times* 20 November 2003: 16 pars. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/20/nyregion/20MUSC.html>.

not be asked as well what and why one mourns in the first place, and also what it is

one does (or, for that matter, does not do) when one is said to "mourn?"

Candlelight vigils were held in front of Lower Manhattan shop windows

covered with missing person posters. E-mail messages transmitted and circulated

low-resolution slide shows and music videos dedicated to all the victims of 9/11.

Tourists who came to Las Vegas, Nevada to carouse and gamble instead placed

flowers at the feet of "New York, New York" Hotel and Casino's replica of the Statue

of Liberty. Today, visitors walking along The Strip on Las Vegas Boulevard can stop

and look at glass displays of 9/11-related t-shirts and small posters the hotel received

from tourists hailing from other states and countries.[57] Impromptu memorials no

doubt proliferated in the days and weeks following September 11, 2001, while

"officially-sanctioned" memorials waited—and in some cases, are still waiting—

before joining their more spontaneous siblings in commemorating the attacks and the

lives lost as a result of them.

9/11, to be sure, is mourned and remembered by many people: through this

common recollection of "having been affected" somehow by what happened that day,

individuals are drawn together and (are made to) think and feel that their personal

experiences and various memories of the attacks can and are, in fact, shared by those

around them. But what exactly about 9/11 affected "everyone" or "all of us?" What

particular memory of that day do "we" share? Conversely, how does sharing or

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[57] A t-shirt in one of the glass displays has signed messages written in Italian. The t-shirt was given to the hotel from tourists hailing from Rome. Several t-shirts were sent in by Fire departments from other states, in honour of their comrades who died in New York. Baudrillard has, of course, written about simulations and Las Vegas, and how Las Vegas's obsessive simulations of past civilizations evacuate from their experience and knowledge the particular hardships and complexities with which each civilization was riddled. To be sure, an extremely interesting study would emerge if one examines the torsions at work between the New York, New York hotel's completed public memorial in Las Vegas and New York City's agonistic process of rebuilding Ground Zero.

recalling "the same" memory bind particular individuals into an "us" who remembers together and enacts remembrance together, in the public sphere in which "everyone" is (assumed to be) implicated, and of which "everyone" is (made to be) a part? The term "9/11," and the images and narratives to which one refers when speaking of 9/11—such as the hijacked airplanes crashing into the World Trade Center, or the destructive implosion of the Towers—have become familiar to many people; certainly to those who were not "people on the street" at the time, but rather distant television viewers who were provided the opportunity in "real" time to watch the devastation over and over again, while the individuals they repeatedly watched and pitied were scrambling to put some geographic or spatial distance between themselves and what they had experienced. As the survivors and eye witnesses were coaxed to flee the scene, the media remained and fixed their cameras on Ground Zero, and only briefly reported from, or on the crash sites at the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania, but always returned to the disaster area in Lower Manhattan, even when there was nothing new to report. Why had there been such a rabid interest in Ground Zero on the part of the media? Nearly three years since the attacks, well after clearance and excavation had removed the debris from the Towers, why does the media still scrutinize what happens within the fences demarcating Ground Zero from the rest of Lower Manhattan? How and why was public consensus anxiously marshalled in support of preserving what little was left of the Towers' physical presence on the site? In a city seen—oftentimes, stereotypically—to pride itself for its "toughness,"[58] why is such a palpably agonistic relationship between the vanished skyscrapers and those who

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[58] I recall here Rudy Giuliani's much-lauded remark that firefighters, police officers and paramedics should wait a while longer to call off the rescue mission in Ground Zero because the people trapped under the rubble are not simply ordinary people, but are "New Yorkers."

mourn their "deaths" cultivated by honouring the evidence of the Towers'

disappearance?

I speak here of what are now known and called "the footprints," the

foundational bases upon which Towers One and Two of the former World Trade

Center stood, and from which they—for nearly thirty years—began their stunning

ascent towards the sky. For, just as television news cameras on 9/11 could not get

enough angles of the planes hitting the Towers, or of the Towers themselves toppling

to what would later be called "Ground Zero," the public—whose existence the media

simultaneously presupposes, but also polices into being—similarly refuses to "have

done" not so much with the dead, but with the Twin Towers themselves. What

especially complicates this scene of collective mourning is not only the fact that the

disintegration of the Towers was what caused the deaths of the thousands of

individuals trapped within the fiery floors of the World Trade Center—the individuals

the impromptu and officially sanctioned public memorials are assumed, said, and

believed to mourn and remember. More importantly, rather, the widely-held

conviction to "immortalize" the Towers—by preserving and rendering utterly

inviolable the only parts of them that remain, and still exude presence within the

site—plays a decisive role in unsettling the conventional ways in which ideas and

assumptions about mourning and public remembrance are made intelligible.

In the previous chapter I argued that the extensive media coverage of 9/11—as

revealed through the television news report and the eye witness account it

incorporates—is caught up, at the same time as it taxonomizes the identity politics

that render some lives as (potentially) grievable upon their (intimate) encounter with

death, and that the same identity politics also devalue other lives as less-than-human,

and therefore unworthy of public grief upon their death (and much less worthy of public remembrance of their lives as "human" lives). This chapter further engages questions pertaining to the formation of both collective memory and collective identity, and how the notion of shared experience coagulates into an assumption of commonality or community through one's identification with those who are directly affected by grief—what, after Susan Sontag, I have previously referred to as the establishment of "an imaginary link" between the "sufferers" and the "privileged viewers" who are in many ways removed or distanced from the images of destruction and trauma they encounter in photographs as well as on the television screen. But rather than focus on how that link—imaginary, to be sure, but still very much strongly felt—is established, I explore here how it is *sustained.* Put more simply, and specifically with regards to 9/11, I interrogate in this chapter how and why it is that even (and especially?) individuals who did not personally lose a loved one in the attacks also find themselves feeling bereft, and subsequently engaging in mourning work that addresses and negotiates with first-hand experiences of loss and grief. How did the feelings of pity for the dead, injured and traumatized New Yorkers that were evoked in "privileged viewers" watching, for example, CNN News from Ground Zero, congeal into feelings of grief, as though the viewers themselves had experienced the death or loss of a loved one?

Here, the concepts of "pity," "sympathy" and "grief" warrant some untangling—especially when speaking of a "televisual" moment or event such as 9/11—since the television news media have oftentimes challenged or even collapsed the differences that distinguish these terms one from the other, and in doing so have disavowed the crucial dissimilarities that exist between being *part of* the suffering

taking place and *viewing or watching* the suffering taking place from a privileged

distance. While "grief" conveys what one feels and does upon experiencing a loss—

in that one feels the loss of something or someone important to or beloved by them,

"pity" expresses the sadness or regret one feels for the person doing or experiencing

the suffering, whether due to grief or otherwise. In other words, the act of pitying

describes the instance in which one feels sorry for another individual's painful ordeal

of having lost something or someone; it is not, therefore, an emotion directed towards

the lost object or loved one, but rather towards the sufferer of the loss. Pitying

someone implies that one is removed from direct experience of death and suffering,

while grieving or being "grief-stricken" conveys one's feelings of sadness and

incapacitation upon the encounter with, or experience of loss. Television viewers

who saw the attacks on the Towers, but did not know any one who died at the World

Trade Center on 9/11 *pity* those who suffered and died from the Towers' collapse, and

also those who lost and were now *grieving for* someone who died. The "imaginary

link" that establishes one's sense of connection with the bereaved is routed through

the *sympathy* one feels for the sufferer or mourner. Briefly recalling the news report

conducted by CNN's Richard Roth, the experiences the eye witness "Colleen"

narrates to the camera—and by extension, to those watching CNN News broadcasts

on their television screens—give viewers the opportunity to identify with what

happened to the people on the street by finding or seeing in those people some

commonality or "common ground" that would enable them to understand or "picture

themselves in" the same situation, had they been "there" instead of in their living

rooms or offices watching the television. Roth's detached and "matter-of-fact"

account of what had happened and was still taking place in Lower Manhattan evokes

pity in the television audience: they feel "bad" and "sorry" for those in New York

who were dying, injured or traumatized by what they saw before, during and after the

collapse of the. Towers. However, viewers' pitying the individuals in New York who

were in varying states of suffering gradually transforms into viewers' sympathizing

with the grief and trauma experienced by people such as Colleen, the eye witness

selected by Roth. I have already said much in the previous chapter regarding the

complexities involved in and resulting from the selection of specific eye witnesses; in

particular, that such a selection simultaneously creates and polices the establishment

of a particular spectatorship, a specific group of individuals made to engage in the

collective remembrance of the deaths incurred from what are considered—in the case

of 9/11—"historical events" that fall under the rubric of "national" rather than

"personal" or "localized" tragedies. But it is important here to reiterate that Colleen's

narrative successfully garners the sympathy or identification of television viewers

with those in Ground Zero by virtue of her narrative's capacity to coincide with the

potential narratives of many people "just like" her, had they gone through her ordeal

of having her morning work routine interrupted by the large-scale collapse of office

buildings, and her mode of communicating with her loved ones rendered useless by

the subsequent failure of wireless technology. Certainly, television viewers who have

families and loved ones, who join the morning rush hour of people going to work,

taking subway trains, and who carry cellular phones as communication devices,

would be able to identify more readily and easily with Colleen's narrative, than with,

for example, those of survivors and eye witnesses from the Pentagon crash, who were

mostly U.S. government employees efficiently and systematically herded out of the

high-security building onto the massive front lawn, alongside uniformed military

personnel and other "important" people such as U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.[59]

From pitying those in Ground Zero, to sympathizing and identifying with the suffering and grief clouding a group of strangers some geographic and conceptual distances removed from oneself: what happens once that "imaginary link" has been established? How is the sympathizer, or the one who identifies with the feelings and experiences of loss, trauma and grief able (or made) to sustain or uphold this connection, this link that suggests one's commonality, community, and collectivity with the sufferers? Why sustain this precarious "imaginary link" at all? Answers to these questions, this chapter argues, are partially embedded in Ground Zero, and are particularly offered up by the fate of the Twin Towers' footprints, the twin voids that have been revered and rendered inviolable by strong "public" demand. Extensive media coverage of the Towers' collapse—their "deaths," so to speak—provided the opportunity for the distanced television viewers to transform or modify their identification with or sympathy for those who lost loved ones at Ground Zero into grief; not so much grief over the individual strangers they are aware have died from the buildings' collapse, but grief over the collapse of the Towers themselves. Extremely complicated though its similarities are to the deaths of flesh-and-blood creatures—in this case, of what are recognized as "human" beings—the "death" of the Twin Towers moves a distant and distanced observer from the position of sympathizer to a position of fellow mourner or "griever:" in watching the Towers "die" or cease to

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[59] Of course, in comparing the scenarios in New York and Washington D.C., I am not suggesting that the attack on the Pentagon should be dismissed or that it is any less grievous or "deserving" of remembrance. What I am arguing here is that more people watching the television that day were able to "put themselves in the shoes of" those in New York—the office workers, those meandering through the streets—rather than those in Washington D.C., since the Pentagon is not as accessible to the "public" as was the WTC Towers. More will be said in this chapter regarding the Towers' "accessibility" to the public.

"exist," one no longer "puts oneself in the shoes of" an eye witness, a survivor or a mourner directly affected by the attacks on Lower Manhattan. Rather, by "taking in" (for example, visually taking in through watching the images on television) the death of the Towers, one is implicated and perhaps even taken to task in personally. mourning *something* one had lost on 9/11—regardless of whether or not what had been (considered or prescribed as) lost or "dead" to the distant television viewers was even "alive" in the first place. It is through this experience of mourning "something" one had lost—or, better yet, finding something to mourn, or something one can say they have lost—on 9/11 that people who were not acquainted with those who died in the attacks are able to feel a part of the collective or community who now grieves for the losses that day.

Conventional understandings of mourning or mourning work and its place and purpose in the public sphere unravel in the interrogation of the public memorial, and the motivations and identity politics that shape them. Public memorials such as , officially sanctioned commemorative days, and monuments made of stone and steel are readily imbued with the responsibility of fulfilling what is considered the grieving subjects' duty to remember the dead by having these memorials represent or embody the living's refusal to forget those who have died. But (how) does the assumed purpose or role of the public memorial change, when who or what is deemed lost and urgently "grievable" is complicatedly bound up with or inseparable from the very constitution of the collective who, in the first place, seeks to enact mourning? The memorial function with which the Tower footprints have been infused addresses and further complicates this issue, since what the footprints primarily remember and "immortalize" are the deaths of the Towers, not those of the nearly 3,000 individuals

trapped within the World Trade Center complex. In grieving for the deaths of the

Towers, the sphere of the "public" allows for the inclusion and absorption of

mourners who grieve for something other than the lives with which they were neither

acquainted nor familiar; this inclusion or absorption can, in fact, even be said to

initiate the very formation or establishment of the "public" sphere. That the footprints

are anxiously and persistently made to comprise a substantial portion of New York

City's "officially sanctioned" public memorial to 9/11 suggests the perpetually

precarious existence or ephemeral cohesion of this public sphere that mourns for

"fellow" New Yorkers and Americans. The footprints not only serve to remind "us"

of what happened or who died, but also—and perhaps more importantly—that in

remembering or "immortalizing" the memory of the Towers through the footprints,

each mourner is reminded of what made her one of those *bereaved* by 9/11, rather

than one of those who only pity or sympathize with the mourners. Public memorials,

therefore, are erected or established not so much merely for the fulfillment of one's

duties to, or the maintenance of one's relations with the dead. Rather, public

memorials in fact intimate the paradox inherent to the very nature of mourning work;

namely, that the public memorial's insistence on maintaining the living's relationships

with and responsibilities to the dead is itself what cultivates the living's very

relationships with, and among, the living. To this end, and by taking up a sustained

interrogation of the Towers' footprints as constituting the only "necessary" 9/11

public memorial in New York City's Ground Zero, this chapter gestures towards a

reconsideration of the public memorial; one that rethinks the public memorial as an

artefact that simultaneously undercuts and exceeds its "prescribed" or "conventional"

function of simply and benignly commemorating the dead in the "public" sphere.

Destruction and Debate: An Overview of Ground Zero

In *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning,* James E.

Young argues that "[b]y returning to the memorial some memory of its own genesis,

we remind ourselves of the memorial's essential fragility, its dependence on others for

its life" (Young 14). Even though the 9/11 public memorial for Lower Manhattan is

still in the initial stages of design, and has many months of planning ahead before

actual construction begins, the developments that led to the decision to build a

memorial within Ground Zero confirm and make more explicit the memorial's

reliance on its builders; that is, on what those who build the memorial believe the

memorial should remember, as well as what it ought to look like. But the 9/11

memorial anticipated for Ground Zero, however, is not the only fragile aspect of the

site, since highly publicized debates concerning the sixteen-acre super-block formerly

occupied by the World Trade Center complex demonstrate the extent to which the fate

of the *entire* site—and not simply the area designated for the memorial—depends

largely on "others for its life." To glean the reasons for the rigorous scrutiny of every

action (or lack thereof) undertaken in that devastated area of Lower Manhattan since

9/11, it is necessary to rehearse briefly the narrative of Ground Zero's transformation

from real estate property to revered memorial site that will, in a few years, house

within it New York City's "actual"[60] memorial site to the victims of the attacks.

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[60] Although a substantial portion of Ground Zero will be occupied by the memorial to 9/11
(plans for a 9/11 museum to accompany the memorial itself are also underway), what will remain of
the property's sixteen acres will be used for office buildings, a cultural center, the Freedom Tower and
the renovated PATH Train station. Despite these plans, however, the entire sixteen acres of the site
have thus far been treated with reverence; even the "non-memorial" plans to rejuvenate Ground Zero to
a certain extent refer to or recall what was once there (i.e., the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center
complex). So, the current plans for Ground Zero have (inadvertently or unconsciously?) transformed
the property into a kind of concentric layer of memorials: a memorial within a memorial.

The hijacked airplanes that descended over the Manhattan skyline on the

morning of September 11, 2001 brought about the devastating collapse of the Twin

Towers of the World Trade Center. Built by the Port Authority of New York and

New Jersey and inaugurated in 1973, the approximately 1,360-foot tall Towers had,

by 2001, become iconic landmarks of New York City. It was not, however, because

of the buildings' imposing physical presence alone, but also because they housed head

offices of prominent businesses involved in world trade and other finance-related

global operations, that the Towers came to symbolize the power and influence

wielded by the American economy's practice of capitalism throughout the world.

What was attacked, destroyed and "victimized," therefore, were not just tall

skyscrapers and thousands of individuals who inhabited them but also, as Jacques

Derrida points out, "the economic place or capital 'head' of world capital" (Derrida,

Philosophy 96). Jean Baudrillard goes so far as to argue that the hijackers'

"successful" attack of the Twin Towers—when compared to their "bungled" attack on

the White House[61]—"demonstrate[s] unintentionally that [the White House] was not

the essential target," and "that political power no longer means much, and real power

lies elsewhere" (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 50). For Derrida as well as for Baudrillard, the

symbolic "elsewhere" in which "real power lies" was in Lower Manhattan, more

specifically in the World Trade Center. But even though the Towers—and the

financial offices housed within them—symbolized, spearheaded and greatly

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[61] The terms "successful" and "bungled" here imply the hierarchical valuing of the extent of
each attack, wherein "success" consists of effecting full-scale destruction and loss of life, while
"bungled" consists of the failure or incapability to do so. The Towers' total collapse, as opposed to the
partial structural damage suffered by the Pentagon, garnered more media coverage even though 9/11
was the first time the Pentagon—the very "heart" and "brain" of the United States' military defenses—
had been attacked. Baudrillard argues that the commercial and economic might symbolized by the
WTC towers rather than the political and military might symbolized by the Pentagon was considered
more powerful and more threatening by the hijackers.

influenced world capital, it cannot be said necessarily to be the only reason behind the choice to attack them, even though this kind of reasoning has been too quickly adopted and promoted by those eager to retaliate in the name of America and American "democracy." What is, however, important about this incongruity between the aggressively patriotic and nationalistic rendition of the events ("America" has been attacked by terrorists; fundamentalists who despise the "American" way of life) and the elusiveness of the "real reasons"[62] that motivated the attacks is that the "officially" sanctioned interpretations of 9/11 continue to shape and influence how the event is remembered by the victims and survivors, regardless of their (in)accuracy. Indeed, it is because of the policed interpretations of 9/11 as an "American tragedy" that the plans to recuperate New York City and the Manhattan skyline—themselves easily recognized landmarks and icons of "America" and the kind of life "America" offers—are considered or viewed as "national concerns."

In the span of 102 minutes—the length of time between the impact of the first hijacked airplane and the collapse of the second Tower—Lower Manhattan became a disaster area teeming with dust, debris, and bloodied survivors. On Ground Zero, the twisted steel frames of the Trade Center towers measured several metres high, while fires continued to burn within pockets of the wreckage, thereby delaying and preventing rescue teams from searching for survivors of the buildings' collapse. Despite the commendable tenacity of the firefighters and of other individuals who

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[62] The "real reasons"—that is, the actual reasons why the hijackers and their associates decided to attack what they did (the WTC Towers, the Pentagon, and perhaps the White House), when they did (September 11, 2001), in the manner in which they did (by living in the United States for years, learning how to fly airplanes in the very country they intended to attack, and then hijacking specific airplanes and crashing—or intending to crash—them into specific buildings), will remain a mystery, in that the hijackers are dead and can no longer be questioned for answers regarding the attacks, and that any evidence pointing to Islamic "fundamentalists" serve only to further complicate the issues at hand.

volunteered to take part in the search for those wounded and trapped, the rescue

efforts in Ground Zero soon became harrowing attempts to recover human remains

scattered and cached in the rubble. But even when the debris from the fallen Towers

was still proving a seemingly insurmountable challenge to the workers assigned the

project of dismantling and clearing the wreckage, talk of rebuilding and "occupying"

once again "the hole in the skyline" ("Filling the Void" 80) of Lower Manhattan had

made it to print less than two weeks after the attacks.[63] However, as eager as various

parties were to be rid of the Towers' ruins and to work towards "recovering" from the

attacks, all those involved in the "clean up" process were also paradoxically wary of

proceeding (or, in the eyes of the media and individuals watching the news, *appearing*

to proceed) too harshly and too quickly with their task of clearing the site. The city's

anxiety over the pace of the clean-up process of course stems from the fact that the

Towers' collapse instantly transformed Ground Zero into a mass burial site: friends,

lovers, and family worked, died and were now buried there as well. This gruesome

awareness of the thousands who fell to their deaths in Ground Zero in turn influenced

and propelled the treatment of the area as a mass grave: to enter and walk around

Ground Zero was, in some sense, to enter and walk around "sacrosanct" ground.

Only a few days after the attacks, the suggestion to "erase the erasure" by replacing

the Towers with "new" structures[64] was considered "tragic" ("To Rebuild" 81) by

architects Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, who felt that leaving a void in the

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[63] In *The New York Times Magazine*, "Filling the Void: A Memorial by Paul Myoda and Julian LaVerdiere" was accompanied by a set of quotes from renowned architects who comment on the question of rebuilding. See "To Rebuild or Not: Architects Respond." *The New York Times Magazine* 23 September 2001: 81.

[64] The concept of "replacing the Towers" was interpreted in the most diverse of ways. For example, Team Twin Towers <http://www.teamtwintowers.org> lobbied for an "exact replica" of the Towers to be rebuilt on their predecessors' footprints. They insist "[t]he WTC site does not need to be re-imagined or re-developed."

Manhattan skyline and in Ground Zero would be a more poignant gesture than

rebuilding. After the Towers' massive metallic remains had been painstakingly

removed from the site, the proposal to designate a portion, or *all* of Ground Zero[65] as

a "void" symbolizing the city's sense of loss acquired greater appeal and more

advocates. Completion of the clean up process revealed that the bases or "footprints"

of the Twin Towers, as well as the "slurry" wall surrounding the perimeter of the

buildings' foundations—that is, the "bathtub" wall designed to "hold back

groundwater fed by the Hudson River" (Glanz, "Ahead" par. 2)—remained

substantially intact, despite the force of the trauma they sustained when the Towers

collapsed. The exposure of the slurry wall and the Towers' footprints—powerful

evidence and visual reminders of the loss of the World Trade Center buildings and the

people who were trapped inside them—would later figure prominently and crucially

in the months of debate that followed after the decision to rebuild in Ground Zero.

Once the clean up process was "successfully"[66] finished, however, practical,

commercial, and financial needs slowly began to take precedence over the

"sacrosanctity" attributed to the site. Since the city officials, the Port Authority and

leaseholder Larry Silverstein were not too keen to write off "one of the most valuable

pieces of real estate" (Libeskind, "Monument") as a site of mass death, the Port

Authority—working with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation

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[65] Literary critic Leon Wieseltier is perhaps the most outspoken proponent of rendering the entire sixteen acres of Ground Zero inviolable. His arguments against the commemorative function of architecture (through the erection of monuments and other memorial artefacts) will figure more prominently in the following sections of this chapter.

[66] The firefighters, crane operators and other construction workers and volunteers who took part in the removal of the debris were lauded for their dedication to such a harrowing task. As well, the gradual but steady pace the clean up process adopted seemed to have been "acceptable" or "agreeable" to those who initially expressed a degree of wariness regarding how quickly the city might "intrude" into Ground Zero and "reclaim" the site of mass death as "use-able space." Severe and highly "scandalized" criticisms of the clean up process did not ensue during or after the removal of rubble from Ground Zero.

(LMDC)—formulated six rather vague and sketchy design proposals that sought to

reconfigure and revitalize the devastated area, first by recovering the amount of

"rentable" commercial and office space lost in the aftermath of 9/11, and also by re-

establishing the PATH train station at the former World Trade Center. Because the

financing required to fund any form of construction on the site was still forthcoming,

and its exact amount was still largely undetermined,[67] the LMDC publicly presented

the proposals with the intention of obtaining civic feedback on their vague plans to

rebuild. Although the proposals were *intentionally* vague and inattentive to detail—

after all, their purpose was, first and foremost, to gauge how New Yorkers would

react to the location of new commercial buildings and the division of the sixteen-acre

super-block into smaller sections[68]—the outcry that ensued in response to the

proposed designs proved crucial to the proceedings that led to the development of

what are currently considered the established and approved plans for Ground Zero.

The LMDC, publicly castigated[69] for what was heralded its "mediocre" plans

and its "failure" to offer a considerably "significant" memorial to those who died on

9/11, responded to what Michael J. Lewis inopportunely refers to as "the public-

relations disaster" (Lewis 43)

by organizing an international architectural competition in the fall of 2002,[70] which

required contestants to submit a detailed rendering of what they envisioned a

"rejuvenated" Ground Zero should look like in the wake of September 11, 2001.

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[67] In "Rebirth Marked by Cornerstone at Ground Zero" David W. Dunlap mentions Larry Silverstein's losing "battles with... insurers" (Dunlap, "Rebirth" par. 25).

[68] This would be achieved by reopening streets that had been previously closed off at the time of the Towers' construction.

[69] That is, by those who identified themselves as citizens of New York and thereby individuals entitled to voice their opinion of what ought to be done to/with the site.

[70] The LMDC created a webpage for the competition. See "Memorial." *World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition.* Home Page. Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. 24 September 2003. <http://renewnyc.com/Memorial/default.asp>.

Perhaps recalling the scathing criticisms directed at their initial proposals, the LMDC

provided participants only two mandates: to "restore" the Manhattan skyline via "a

significant, identifiable symbol for the residents of the metropolitan area" (43); and to

set aside, in the words of former mayor Rudolph Giuliani, "'a very substantial portion

[of the site]… to a memorial, particularly the footprints'" (qtd. in Lewis 43). Build

commercial and office buildings, but in doing so, ensure the *restoration* of the

Manhattan skyline; build within Ground Zero, but not over, or on top of what had

previously been there: the design mandates may have been surprisingly few, but their

appeals to recall or refer to what had previously occupied the ground and sky(line)

considered a "part of" or "owned by" Lower Manhattan made it obvious "that almost

all the decisions about the site would be driven by the memorial to the victims"

(Wyatt par. 10)[71] and, to a certain extent, to the Towers as well. What once had been

the tacitly acknowledged tension between rebuilding "rent-able" commercial space

and devoting a "sufficient" memorial to the nearly 3 000 dead had become a contest

among renowned and fledgling architects alike, a contest that incited them to upstage

the other proposals' commemorative features by formulating the schematics that

would be regarded by the LMDC as effecting the "best" gesture of honouring the

fallen Towers and their unfortunate occupants at the time of their collapse.

Literary critic Leon Wieseltier, unconvinced by architecture's capacity to

convey "the sense of finality" that descended over Manhattan on 9/11, criticized the

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[71] Wyatt's 13 September 2003 article from *The New York Times*, "Ground Zero Plan Seems to Circle Back"—written around the second anniversary of the attacks—discusses the evolution of the rebuilding process, as well as the setbacks it has encountered. Wyatt cites the gradual exclusion of civic input as having resulted from the increased and complex involvement of other parties and architects: "The effect of these prospective changes has unnerved some people who have supported the planning process. Robert Yaro, the president of the Regional Plan Association, a civic group, said rebuilding officials were very responsive to public opinion last year. 'Since then, it's been a less open process,' he said. 'That has been unfortunate'" (Wyatt par. 51).

competition and its participants by remarking that "the architects in the aftermath of

September 11th have been altogether too avid" (Wieseltier) in their treatment of

Ground Zero as "an architectural perplexity" (Wieseltier).[72] Despite Wieseltier's

strong recommendation that a void occupy the entirety of Ground Zero, and despite

his critique of architecture as the "default" and thereby somewhat impoverished

convention of public mourning and remembrance, the LMDC's highly publicized[73]

site design competition pushed through the adjudication process, and on 27 February

2003 named architect Daniel Libeskind's ambitious proposal, *Memory Foundations*,

the winning entry. Libeskind's "career-making commission in 1988" (Lewis 42) was

the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Berlin—a commission that earned him the

reputation as "the architect of remembrance"—which no doubt influenced and

contributed to the selection of his submission, but was not the only factor that

determined his success, because *Memory Foundations* succeeded in more than

fulfilling the compulsory design requirements established by the LMDC. While far

simpler designs—such as Peterson and Littenberg's "gently updated Art-Deco essays"

of "two 55-story towers" (43)—were "widely jeered for lack of imagination and

courage," because exercising "restraint and reticence" in the competition "was…

precisely the wrong note to strike for the LMDC" (43), Libeskind's submission went

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[72] On 27 September 2002, Leon Wieseltier, Daniel Libeskind and Sherwin Nuland took part in *Monument and Memory*, the Columbia Seminar on Art in Society. The seminar's objective was to "offer alternative ways of thinking about the memorial, divorced from real estate calculations, and to reconceptualize how the trauma at Ground Zero might inform redevelopment of the site" (*Monument and Memory* 6).

[73] The prestige of the competition and the media coverage it amassed attracted hundreds of widely diverse submissions. For example, Richard Meier's submission "proposed a superblock of three interconnected verticals and horizontals that formed an odd tic-tac-toe board in the sky" (Lewis 43), while THINK architects connected two large lattices with "a bridge at the exact location where the two planes struck… creating a monument to the crime rather than a memorial to its victims" (43).

as far as dazzling Governor George E. Pataki and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg.[74]

By addressing the memorial space within Ground Zero, Libeskind's plan meant

simply to designate a significant amount of space to the memorial site. But the care

with which Libeskind described the proposed location of the memorial was enough to

render his ideas for what the memorial ought to comprise sufficient enough to forego

the international competition for the 9/11 memorial, which would be held several

months later. The area Libeskind designated in his plan for the memorial allowed for

the possibilities of exposing the slurry wall, as well as preserving the "hallowed,

sacred ground" in which lie "the deep indelible footprints of Tower One and Tower

Two" (Libeskind, "Memory" par. 4). While the press text he prepared for the

adjudication committee and the media personnel present at the competition

proceedings revered the strength of the slurry walls as "eloquent as the Constitution

itself asserting the durability of Democracy and the value of individual life" (par. 3),

other aspects of his proposed plan were similarly riddled with rhetorical expressions

and themes of heroism and perseverance, features which no doubt appealed to the

desire of many New Yorkers to address and overcome the grief brought on by the

trauma of 9/11. Libeskind's speech—as well as his schematic renderings of Ground

Zero—echoed and bolstered the prevailing discourse that celebrated and honoured the

heroism of those who died while helping others evacuate the buildings:

> Those who were lost have become heroes. To commemorate those lost
> lives, I created two large public spaces, the Park of Heroes and the
> Wedge of Light. Each year on September 11th between the hours of
> 8:46 a.m., when the first airplane hit and 10:28 a.m., when the second

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[74] Pataki called the Libeskind plan "'an emotional protection of the site of ground zero itself'" (qtd. in Pogrebin, "The Incredible" par. 1), while Bloomberg observed that *Memory Foundations* "restor[ed] 'lower Manhattan to its rightful place in the world'" (qtd. in Pogrebin, "The Incredible" par. 1).

> tower collapsed, the sun will shine without shadow, in perpetual tribute
> to altruism and courage. (par. 6)

In addition to the "Park of Heroes" and the "Wedge of Light," *Memory Foundations*

also boasted that "[t]he sky will be home again to a towering spire of 1776 feet high,

the 'Gardens of the World'" (par. 9). The language Libeskind used in his press text,

the names he bestowed upon the structures he proposed to build, and, more

importantly, his "fidelity" to strong public demand—as demonstrated by his reverence

of what remains of the collapsed buildings (the slurry wall and the footprints) all

contributed in creating the well-received impression that everything within Ground

Zero has "a commemorative function" (Viñoly par. 7). What becomes problematic

later on as a result of the Libeskind design, however, was that in essence, the

subsequent memorial design competition would be burdened with the "consequence

of having [the participants]... design a memorial within a memorial" (par. 7).

But despite the "official" approval of his design, and despite his having

fulfilled the competition's design mandates and appealed to the popular rhetoric

celebrating the "heroes" and "heroism" that emerged from the terrorist acts of

"cowardice" and "evil," Libeskind's plans have since garnered severe criticisms: for

example, his penchant for employing blatant symbolism (as demonstrated in his plan

for a 1776-foot high spire, an obvious reference to the year of American

Independence from the British Empire) attracted the derision of critics who felt his

design bordered on kitsch.[75] Also, Michael Kimmelman, in his comparison of the

Jewish Holocaust Museum in Berlin and *Memory Foundations*, offers a far from

complimentary interpretation of Libeskind's acquired appellation as "the architect of

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[75] Michael J. Lewis's "Into the Void with Daniel Libeskind" attacks the architect's proposal as "symbolism [approaching] the very brink of bathos; having renounced the tyranny of Euclidean geometry, Libeskind decked his design in patriotic American numerology" (Lewis 44).

remembrance." Interestingly, Kimmelman claims the architect "has devised a formal

rhetoric of suffering and disaster... that can as easily be applied to Jews in Germany

as to New Yorkers at ground zero, where his master plan uses much the same visual

vocabulary" (Kimmelman par. 3). Bluntly speaking, then, Libeskind is excessively

fond of memorial "templates," a predilection to which Kimmelman feels the architect

conveniently resorts at every given opportunity. For Kimmelman, Libeskind's

reputation as the "architect of remembrance" takes on a sarcastic tone, in that the

consistently similar approach Libeskind adopts in the architectural moves and

gestures he incorporates into both of his memorial projects hint at his foreclosure of

other, more pertinent and specific ways of commemorating each event and the lives

lost as a result or consequence of them. This critique of Libeskind's work falls in line

with Leon Wieseltier's total dismissal of architecture as a memorial medium:

Kimmelman takes issue with what he regards is Libeskind's blatantly formulaic

"rhetoric of suffering and disaster" in the same way Wieseltier bemoans that "our

commemorative imagination" has become "too poor for anything except architecture"

(Wieseltier). Wieseltier calls for abandoning architectural forms as modes of public

memorialization because of what he sees is architecture's rigid refusal to accept "the

sense of [death's] finality"[76] (Wieseltier) and its offer instead of a pre-packaged

remembrance of the dead and their consignment to "immortality." Kimmelman's

critique, on the other hand, provides a "case in point" to Wieseltier's broader

argument by pointing out that the standard features "of shattered, quasi-religious

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[76] Wieseltier argues that monumental memory—the commemorative function of a memorial artefact made of stone and steel, built sturdily to last and "survive" for an extremely long period of time (the ideal objective, of course, would be for the monument to last "forever;" that is, for as long as possible)—"lies" by giving off the illusion that through the vehicle of the monument, "the dead live again." Thus it is that monuments are built to last forever, so that the dead the monument "remembers" live on in this way, through the "life" of the monument.

shapes and voids" Libeskind adopts in the Jewish Museum as well as in *Memory Foundations* indicate the architect's (conscious?) inattention to the particular complexities that pertain to each event. Consequently, through this inattention, Kimmelman sees Libeskind conflating and addressing the altogether different and incomparable experiences of suffering that took place during the Holocaust and on 9/11 by employing only one kind of generic "rhetoric of suffering and disaster" for them.

It is unclear and certainly debatable whether these criticisms influenced the gradual diminishment of Libeskind's role[77] as Master Planner for the Ground Zero redevelopment process, as well as the dramatic alteration of aspects of his original design, which Libeskind himself seems graciously to have taken in stride.[78] To be sure, Libeskind's inexperience with building skyscrapers provided the opportunity for leaseholder Silverstein to involve more architects on the project of rebuilding Ground Zero. David M. Childs of the firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill was hired to become the primary architect for the Freedom Tower,[79] an "evolved" version of the 1776-foot spire from the *Memory Foundations* plan, comprised of "70 occupied floors topped by a cable superstructure and a spire" (Glanz, "High" par. 3). Silverstein "has [also] named four architects [to design] ...the office buildings: Fumihiko Maki, Jean Nouvel, Norman Foster and David M. Childs" (Dunlap, "Master Plan" par. 11), even though the design guidelines Libeskind formulated for these buildings were initially so precise "that other architects would have had little leeway to pursue significantly

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[77] Robin Pogrebin's 20 June 2004 article from *The New York Times*, "The Incredible Shrinking Daniel Libeskind," is a detailed account of the architect's gradually diminishing role and influence as Master Planner.

[78] For further details, see Robin Pogrebin's 20 June 2004 *New York Times* article, "The Incredible Shrinking Daniel Libeskind."

[79] David W. Dunlap's "Rebirth Marked by Cornerstone at Ground Zero"—from the *New York Times*—reports on the 4th of July 2004 laying of the Freedom Tower cornerstone.

different designs of their own" (par. 2). The guidelines for the buildings have since, however, been modified, because Libeskind himself believes Ground Zero's redevelopment project is "an organic process" (qtd. in Dunlap, "Master Plan" par. 17); a process that will also see the architect collaborating with Santiago Calatrava in the construction of the "permanent PATH station, which will replace the temporary one now in service" ("Santiago" par. 1).

Fetishized Footprints

Despite Libeskind's minimized role in the redevelopment project of Ground Zero, what *has* remained certain is the inviolability of the Towers' footprints, the designation of the Towers' bases as "off-limits" to (re)construction. Perhaps the only instance in which the footprints were not "left alone" was during the design competition for the memorial component, when debates proliferated and public scrutiny intensified as the fate of the footprints was decided. But even when the design competition for the memorial was underway, the restriction tacitly imposed with regards to the footprints became more palpably explicit: participants in the competition were urged to be as creative as possible in designing their memorial work, but amid the encouragement percolated the demand that they neither obstruct the Towers' footprints from view, nor violate their "inviolability" by erecting structures over or on top of them. It was, therefore, not too surprising when the design team comprising of Michael Arad and Peter Walker was selected in January of 2004 as the winners of the 9/11 public memorial competition in New York City. Their proposal, *Reflecting Absence*, "provides private meditative space" ("Reflecting" par. 2) in the form of a "'forest grove'" (par. 1). More importantly, however,

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"[c]ascades" (Muschamp, "Strong" par. 8) fall into "the two pools of water where the twin towers once stood" (par. 3). Arad and Walker's design was not an extreme departure from Libeskind's own initial renderings of the footprints in *Memory Foundations*, and the selection of *Reflecting Absence* as the winning design was widely approved, because "[p]rotecting those footprints was a remarkable achievement, the result of true aesthetic vision and popular will" ("A Memorial" par. 1). However, even before Libeskind—much less Arad and Walker—emerged victorious from the respective design competitions in which they took part, the notion of preserving the Towers' footprints had already congealed into a basic demand on the part of the public; one which the designers are now expected to satisfy. But why, in the first place, is there such an obsession with—or, better yet, such a fetishization of—the footprints? The very idea of "preserving the Towers' footprints" warrants some interrogation, since such a phrase—when used to refer to office buildings, and particularly to the World Trade Center office buildings—belies the many ways in which the Towers themselves, vanished or not, are implicated in the public memorialization and collective remembrance of 9/11 and its victims.

Two footprints, so many modes of fetishizing them: even though a general consensus had been established regarding the preservation of the footprints, the various *rationale* for leaving the footprints "as is" are extremely and complicatedly diverse, especially when they are read in the context of mourning work. For example, in the overview of Ground Zero's evolution I addressed one of the reasons why many people felt the bases of the buildings ought to be kept inviolable: the Towers' implosion brought down with it nearly 3 000 people, thereby rendering the site of the buildings' crash a mass grave in a matter of minutes. Ever since the attacks, Ground

Zero has exuded the aura of "sacrosanct ground" to some because it is the place where so many lost their lives. In this case, the fervent suggestion to leave the footprints alone and abandon all projects of building over them indicates a refusal to trespass upon what has been and still is considered a graveyard—the final resting place of the dead.[80] But while those who viewed the two voids in Ground Zero as impromptu graveyards are constantly reminded of death, those who attributed anthropomorphic qualities to the Twin Towers in the aftermath of the attacks "enliven" or "breathe life into" the collapsed Towers, and thereby engage with the Towers' spectral life as vanished buildings. Thus it is that Baudrillard insists on the paradox that the Towers "have not been annihilated" (Baudrillard, *Spirit* 52) despite their disappearance, but have, because of their disappearance, "left behind an intense awareness of their presence" (52): in their "deaths" they are made more "alive," so to speak. Also, by christening the two empty voids in Ground Zero as "the Towers' *footprints*," the buildings themselves are human-ized, and their destruction treated as deaths that, coincided with—rather than brought about or caused—those of its trapped occupants. In a sense, referring to the empty space left behind by the Towers as "footprints," and refusing to erase or "fill in" these footprints, suggests a view of the Towers that is akin to Immanuel Kant's view of the value of human lives as inherently irreplaceable: nothing can, or must, substitute (for) them because they are—by nature— "insubstitutable." But while fetishizing the Towers' footprints in Ground Zero can be seen to revere and "immortalize" the "lives" of both the victims and the Towers, perpetually reminding viewers and visitors of the deaths that took place on the site can

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[80] Even though, as Michael J. Lewis points out in the first epigraph to this chapter, that the dead's remains have been cleared and excavated from the site as a result of the clean up process and the transference of large pieces of debris to a distant landfill.

also be interpreted as an interminable longing to be rid of one's ghosts, one's painful past. For, as Derrida argues in *Specters of Marx*, "effective exorcism pretends to declare the death only in order to put to death. As a coroner might do, it certifies the death but here it is in order to inflict it" (Derrida, *Specters* 48).

Two footprints, and yet so many ways in which they are fetishized and used to negotiate one's ties to the dead: why the footprints, and why fetishize them? Why is the *Reflecting Absence* memorial design for Ground Zero commended for making "the gaping voids left by the towers' destruction the primary symbol of loss" (qtd. Collins par. 6)? And, more importantly, why will "the real evocative power of this [design] plan come *not from the individual names* [of the dead] but from the emotional focus those two voids will provide" ("The Winning" par. 2, emphasis mine)? In *The Politics of Aesthetics,* Marc Redfield discusses the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" as an artefact of public mourning and memorialization, and he specifically addresses the roles anonymity and the abstraction of "physical" or "actual" death play in creating a notion of collective memory and experience:

> Indeed… burying a corpse under the monument [of the Unknown
> Soldier] would pollute it as perhaps no other act of sacrilege would.
> The corpse, then, may be read as the remainder, the excess that
> nationalism's official scene of mourning excludes. The corpse marks
> death's resistance to its own universality, recalling the inassimilable
> particularity and finitude of *this* death, the absoluteness of an
> irrecuperable loss. In the terminology we have been working with, the
> corpse marks the resistance of anonymity to abstraction or
> formalization. From a national perspective, it is the *unimaginable*.
> Yet without it—without, that is, the possibility of the radically other
> death that it represents—the Tomb could not exist… we may say that
> the nation itself as imagined community comes into existence thanks to
> a death it cannot mourn, a corpse it cannot bury—a corpse that must be
> foreclosed, expelled from the nation's abstracted, aestheticized
> anonymity. (Redfield 57)

Even though an "anonymous" corpse cannot be identified, the fact that it *is* a visible

and tangible corpse implies that it had a name, a life, and a set of personal

idiosyncracies—what are considered the "irreducible remainders" of an individual's

life; those aspects about a person one cannot ever incorporate into oneself, nor fully

articulate in any kind of memory work. That having a corpse to hand—or, for that

matter, having available a narrative or a reference to a particular life—as part of a

nationally sanctioned work of mourning in fact unsettles and disrupts the very purpose

of that work of mourning, which is to absorb the individual into a collective identity

of "the nation." Thus, the nation cannot mourn the death of a particular corpse, for

the very specificities that apply to that corpse contribute in unravelling the "nation" as

an imagined community. This, because the "nation" is seen to comprise of particular

individuals, whose specific deaths—though a commonality all individuals share—still

render them elusively other to the "nation" by virtue of the narrative or circumstances

of their deaths being specific or unique only to them.

From a national perspective, Redfield says, the corpse is unimaginable: in this

way, sanctioning the Towers' footprints as a substantial part of the 9/11 public

memorial in Ground Zero achieves far more than simply allowing distanced witnesses

to the attacks to identify with, and grieve alongside the sufferers by having them

mourn the Towers' collapse in place of an actual person. By fetishizing the footprints

of the Towers and by employing those footprints as the "national" mode of

remembering 9/11, even those who survived the attacks, and most especially those

who mourn for a particular person who died that day, are also seen—like the

distanced witnesses or viewers who transform their pity for the sufferers into first-

hand grief for a loss they feel they share with the sufferers—to negotiate and mediate

their grief in the interests of becoming part of or entering into a collective identity

which, in this case, is a palpably national and "American" one.   But unlike the distant

witnesses to the devastation—whose memory of the Towers' "deaths," whether by

television or other media, implicates them in the work of mourning their collapse—

those who survived or are grieving for someone who died in the attacks are made to

address their personal losses as, first and foremost, a loss suffered by the "nation."

CONCLUSION

Public Memorials to Come

For Freud, mourning "is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction" (Freud 243). Despite the loss that befalls the subject, however, Freud maintains that "the ego becomes free and uninhibited again" once "the work of mourning is completed" (245). If one adopts Freud's schema, one would expect to engage in a transactionary relationship with the dead, wherein one expects a subsequent fulfillment and termination of one's duties to the dead. But what happens to this therapeutic schema if the work of mourning does not, in fact, seek to liberate, but rather to implicate us and keep us from ever becoming "free" or "uninhibited?" If in fact, as Judith Butler argues, "[i]t is not as if an 'I' exists independently over here and then simply loses a 'you' over there, especially if the attachment to 'you' is part of what composes who 'I' am" (Butler, *Precarious* 22), what kinds of mourning work would then ensue from such a convoluted conception of the "living" and the "dead?" To be sure, it would be a work of mourning without end, without termination, for it forms the very basis of relationality, subjectivity, friendship—and thus, of life itself, as "we" know and live it.

Only through death and loss—in witnessing death, in suffering from or grieving the loss of someone or something, in wanting to remember that loss, and in finding some sense of commonality and relationality with others through the shared experience of loss: only through death and loss do notions of "community" and indeed, notions of "relating" and having "relationships" take shape. In *Mémoires: for Paul de Man,* Jacques Derrida advises that, "there is no friendship without this

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knowledge of finitude. And everything that we inscribe in the living present of our

relation to others already carries, always, the signature of *memoirs-from-beyond-the-*

grave" (Derrida, *Mémoires* 29). When Derrida speaks of "friendship," he does not

mean simply the amicable bond that exists between a pair or small circle of

individuals, but rather the possibility of any and all kinds of relationships and

interactions that breathe life into, or make up the intricate tapestries of a community.

Therefore, his argument that it is "only in this bereaved allegory" (28) that "the self

appears to itself" (28), equally inheres and applies as well to the formation of

collective identity or subjectivity as it is articulated through notions of the "public"

sphere—what, in keeping with the language Derrida uses, can be referred to as the

appearance, intelligibility or reflection of the public sphere to itself. If, as thinkers

such as Derrida and Judith Butler suggest, mourning is the paradigmatic "work" that

makes all other work—and, by extension, all other interactions and encounters with

others (or for that matter, all concepts pertaining to an "other" apart from the

"self")—possible, then it would be of utmost importance to effect rigorous analyses of

the kinds of memorial or commemorative artefacts a community's work of mourning

employs. This, because from these memorial artefacts may be gleaned not only the

ways in which "we"—who comprise a community—interact with the "dead" and each

other, but more importantly, these memorial artefacts reveal the ways in which "we"

may, in the future to come, intervene in, reconfigure, and hopefully work to better

those relations.

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