REFLECTING ABSENCE, CONTEMPLATING LOSS: THE CONFLICTING NARRATIVES OF THE NATIONAL 9/11 MEMORIAL

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Introduction

In the days immediately following the 9/11 attacks, a nation-wide discussion broke out in the American press about the way in which the event would be memorialized. Bill Keller from *The New York Times* wrote only eleven days after the attacks that "there was a time when civic remembrance was a slow-gathering affair…. These days, we grab for history" (Keller). Keller's article became a proverbial canary in the mineshaft for the public debate that would ensue in national and New York state and local politics. For Keller, the Oklahoma City bombing of 1994 would become an archetype of the type of memorialization that would take form in New York – "Oklahoma city rushed into it, as New Yorkers almost certainly will, as a form of healing" (Keller). This need, in his opinion, would prove, and did prove, to be a difficult and dividing process – "the first things Oklahomans learned was how quickly the pain that unified them during the initial euphoria of rescue and bereavement began to pull them apart" (Keller).

The paradoxical euphoria that Keller referred to was likewise present in all facets of American society in the immediate aftermath the attacks. In October of 2001 the controversial American PATRIOT Act was passed by the senate with a resounding 98 yeas and one nay (United States Senate). The American political apparatus appeared to have been shaken to its core by the events, and politicians were appearing at the site in order to gain airtime in front of an American public that was watching the events unfolding on the television stations that had guaranteed one-hundred percent coverage of the rescue and recovery. President George W. Bush arrived only days after the attacks had taken place. It is there, on September 15, that he made one of the most famous speeches from his first term as president of the

United States – the so-called Bullhorn Speech. When standing atop the rubble of the twin towers Bush attempted to speak through a megaphone to talk to the workers that were tirelessly searching for survivors and the dead. When one worker shouted that he could not hear the president's voice, Bush responded with "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you. And the people — and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon" (Bush). Bush's speech became not only a precursor for the two wars that the United States would enter in the Middle East and Central Asia, but also a precursor to one of the many functions that the Ground Zero site would become – a reminder of the need for response – a place where politicians can go to remind the public of the supposed need for war, repercussion, or revenge for the attacks on 9/11.

The proclamation that the world had changed rang not only through the political establishment, but was also embraced by members of the cultural and academic worlds. In December of 2001, only months after the attacks, author and New Yorker Don DeLillo, divulged in *Harper's* magazine that the pre-9/11 world, which he defined as a "utopian glow of cyber-capital… where markets are uncontrolled and investment potential has no limit," (33) changed on September 11. DeLillo argued that "today, again, the world narrative belongs to terrorists" (33). DeLillo's arguments seemed to mirror a sentiment popular in the United States at the time – that 9/11 had somehow changed the course that the nation was on – the narrative that defined the nation. And yet this begs the question of what really did change, and what the consequences for the nation would be. Andrew Bacevich argues that American foreign and military policy took on a "bellicose character" in the newly-deemed post-9/11 era (3). Bacevich argues that America's aggressive foreign and military policy is not a result of September 11, but rather the "handiwork of

several disparate groups that shared little in common apart from being intent on undoing the purportedly nefarious effects of the 1960s" (6). If we follow Bacevich's argument that America's foreign policy was little different before 9/11 compared to after, then 9/11 itself becomes a device for America's politicians to use when defending policies that are very often unpopular with the greater American public. The memorial, then, can be seen as a stage upon which these politicians dramatically make their appeals, as Bush and other politicians have done. And yet, as I will show, neither September 11 nor the memorial to the victims of the terrorist attacks can be interpreted as simple and single-purposed.

Much of the post-9/11 memorial research focusses on the various purposes that the memorial has for their respective users and stakeholders. Erika Doss, for example, calls America's modern obsession with the memorials "memorial mania", classifying America's fixation as "an obsession with issues of memory and history and an urgent desire to express and claim those issues in visibly public contexts" (2). Doss contends that September 11 "heightened feelings of urgency and anxiety in America, feelings that were quickly revealed in all sorts of memorials"(2). On the surface, this manic urgency to create and define history appears to be an obvious explanation of a single underlying purpose– the need for the public to control how history will be perceived. One could even argue that Keller's statements in *The New York Times* about "grabbing for history" affirm this argument. And yet, other academics have contended that America's present form of memorial culture mirrors our understanding of ourselves and our psychological processes. Kirk Savage argues that the 9/11 memorial joins other "traumatic memorials" such as Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., meaning that the memorial's "primary goal is not to celebrate heroic service or sacrifice, as the traditional didactic

monument does, but rather to heal a collective psychological injury" (106). And yet Savage's assertion that the goal of the memorial is to heal collective trauma leads us to question to what extent a single event can be so traumatic and for whom: for the entire nation? For New York?

Joel McKim argues that the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) attempted to create a memorial which is both cathartic and didactic in its aesthetic nature (McKim 89). McKim views the aesthetics of a memorial which must dually act as a means of catharsis for the nation and as a didactic place where the story of the events are told, as highly problematic. He writes, "[t]he decontextualized aesthetics of healing adopted by the proposals allows the Ground Zero memorial to sit comfortably beside such blatantly patriotic symbols as the Freedom Tower. The Ground Zero memorial seems destined to waver problematically between the performance of nationalistic instruction and the public service of alleviating grief" (McKim 90). The perceived public's needs at the time of the design contest in 2003 seem to be the driving factor in the memorial's original design. And yet, in town-hall meetings held in New York City during the design period, some saw anything other than a new tower or an exact replica of the old towers as letting the terrorists win, as Richard Hankin demonstrated in his documentary *16 Acres* (Hankin). The need for the city and nation to heal and the new 'America-first' nationalism that appeared after 9/11 coalesced to create a memorial which mirrors a public sentiment that demanded a memorial to be placed at the Ground Zero site. But it still begs the question of what the future purpose of the memorial will be in a time when the pain that the event represents has faded in the American collective memory.

Following a long and highly politicized design competition, the choice was made for Israeli-American architect Michael Arad's plan titled *Reflecting Absence* (see fig. 1) After much upheaval about Arad's inexperience in large building projects, the LDMC forced Arad to partner with veteran Berkley, California-based architect Peter Walker from Peter Walker and Partners. Arad vehemently opposed this cooperation (Hagan).

(Fig. 1 – Michael Arad's submission for the National 9/11 Memorial, titled *Reflecting Absence*)

While Arad's plan was praised for its minimalist design on a grandiose scale, critics began critiquing the memorial's narrative. McKim, for instance, employed philosopher Alain Badiou's *Handbook of Inaesthetics* as a means of defining the aesthetic values of Arad's plan. By using Badiou's ideas on aesthetic purpose, McKim has rightly argued that Arad's plan attempts to be both cathartic and didactic. It appears that these aesthetic needs branch from the need to serve all stakeholders, namely the political apparatus and the families of the victims, even if this need poses problems for the memorial's effectiveness as either a place of learning or a place of catharsis in the future. This need to serve different stakeholders equally also poses a threat to the memorial's narrative, as I will argue.

The National 9/11 Memorial's mission statement defines the memorial as a place to "remember and honor the thousands of innocent men, women and children,"

"respect this place made sacred through tragic loss," and "recognize the endurance of those who survived" (National September 11 Memorial and Museum) and yet the memorial's use by politicians, survivors, and the general public suggests that it can be used for other purposes as well. The National 9/11 Memorial has become a piece of narrative design whose story reflects on loss and, as I will argue, is used as a reminder of the trauma of that day and also as a narrative which offers political capital to the American political apparatus. The memorial is thus a narrative place of reflection whose story is interpreted by the various users in various ways. In this thesis I will argue that *Reflecting Absence* is a multi-purpose memorial, meaning that the memorial is used in different ways by different users. I define this memorial as "multi-purpose" in that the term reflects the nature that the memorial has at this moment in history – it is a multifunctional memorial that behaves as a different object for its different groups – the memorial is a cathartic gravestone for the victim's families, a didactic stage for political leaders, and metonymical symbol for global terrorism for the greater public. The multi-purpose aspect of the monument has not only affected the need to build, and the use of, the memorial by its various users – it has also greatly changed and influenced the narrative that defines the memorial. I argue, however, that these narratives clash with each other, causing friction and agitation between the various stakeholders.

In this thesis I will look carefully at how the memorial's narration, stakeholders, and assigned purposes have led to the creation of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum. I will argue that by intertwining these complex needs and uses by the various groups, the creators (the LDMC and the designers) have constructed a complex memorial that not only serves a traumatic or

political purpose, but which also raises questions about the current state of memorialization, its purpose and urgency, in modern American society.

Chapter 1.

Narrating Loss

The question of what would be done with the newly-deemed Ground Zero space in the middle of Lower Manhattan was being debated in the press only days after the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. Originally, the commission to rebuild the site, run by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LDMC), had decided not on Daniel Libeskind, the eventual winner, but rather on Argentinian architect Rafael Viñoly's master plan (Sudjic). Viñoly's plan consisted of two twin memorials, in the shape of the original towers, that were to be built on about half of the 16-acre Ground Zero site (Hankin). But the heated nature of the memorial debate complicated the competition leaving no apparent winner. Libeskind had hired two publicity firms and was able to make appearances on the *Larry King Live* program (Sturken, *Tourists* 238), which afforded him the opportunity to speak directly to the American public. The battle between the two architects heated up, with Libeskind calling Viñoly's plan "two skeletons in the sky", and Viñoly calling the Libeskind's open sea-wall plan a "wailing wall" (Sturken, *Tourists* 238). In both cases, it was the supposed narrative and the spin that they placed on each other's work that most influenced the eventual outcome of the competition. Libeskind was chosen after Governor Pataki had used his political power and influence to overrule the rebuilding commission (Hankin).

From the beginning, the narrative behind the design had almost appeared to be more important than the design itself. As Marita Sturken argues, "Libeskind's triumph was to present himself not as an architect, but as a mourning citizen," which

made his design "[resonate] not only with the families of the dead but with the public at large" (Sturken, *Tourists* 244). For some, Libeskind's arguments were unfaltering. Deyan Sudjic of *The Observer* wrote that "more troubling to some in New York was the enthusiasm with which he has played the patriotic card in the race… . He would not stop talking about his first glimpse of the Statue of Liberty… and even though he had not actually lived in the city for 20 years, he told every interviewer: 'I am a New Yorker, and an American'" (Sudjic). Sudjic called Libeskind a "super salesman" (Sudjic). This super salesmanship came directly from the way in which Libeskind positioned himself in the media. He afforded himself an extraordinary place in the design debate; Libeskind even went so far to deem himself "the people's architect" (Hagan).

The phenomenon that is Daniel Libeskind's Ground Zero Master Plan demonstrates the power of the narrative and the need for a permanent place of mourning and remembrance that was ever so present in the time directly after the 9/11 attacks. Libeskind's perceived need to sell the design made his design more didactic – the design was superseded by choices that Libeskind believed told us a story. Critics, however, were not so positive. Sudjic referred his design as "emotional symbolism" – with the 1,776 foot-high World Trade Center One, and the absence of shadows on the memorial site every year on September eleventh between 8:46 and 10:28 a.m. (Sudjic). But this superficial symbolism raises questions about the power that they can have on the greater narrative that the memorial designers would have to create in order to fulfill the LDMC's strict design guidelines. Symbolism like a 1,776 foot-tall building would only be significant if the general public can perceive it. When symbolism is unobvious, many of the aspects, such as daylight and the height of buildings, would go unnoticed, even to the trained eye. This forces us to question

the extent to which spatial narratives are appropriate for memorializing and commemorating significant historical events. If it is appropriate to build a permanent place of remembrance, then what story or emotions should such a place convey? And what will it mean for America today, or America and the world in the future?

Questioning the extent to which design narratives are appropriate for the purpose of memorialization allows us to better understand how spectators will experience the work. Eighteenth-century German philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing defined the differences in narration between sequential and spatial art. For Lessing, sequential art, such as poetry and music, which he referred to as the *nacheinander*, and spatial art, like paintings and sculpture, which he labeled the *nebeneinander*, originated in two different realms that should not imitate one another (Albright 6). Daniel Albright states that Lessing's essential argument was against the idea of "pseudomorphosis – [the] attempts by one medium to imitate the technical procedures of an alien medium" (7). Lessing's views on the matter go further than the belief that the sequential and spatial narratives are equal yet different, but that the *nebeneinander*, or spatial art, is inferior. Boris Groys writes that:

> In Lessing's view, the image is deficient solely because it cannot represent actions, that is, human praxis. The reason for this is simple: in order to give an account of human actions, one must also be able to reproduce the language or, more specifically, the living speech used by the acting persons in their actions. A literary narration has this ability; poetry has this ability; but painting doesn't. (Groys 96)

Lessing's theories on art and medium led to a rebellion with nineteenth and twentieth-century English language writers such as a James Joyce, who experimented with space and sound in his "Sirens" episode in *Ulysses* (Woods 79). While authors like Joyce were experimenting with mixing mediums, memorial designers were doing the same thing – namely experimenting with the extent that spatial art can tell sequential stories. And while many contemporary art historians and critics would argue today that the visual arts, especially spatial memorial design, indeed influence human emotion as much as literature, Lessing's arguments against pseudomorphosis still leave us questioning the power that these spatial objects have on the viewer. While there is little doubt that the National 9/11 Memorial elicits emotion from the viewers, the greater question is where this emotion comes from – the memorial itself, the design, or the events that the memorial represents, which are still fresh in most of the viewers' collective memory. While the answer to this question will differ from viewer to viewer, understanding the narrative behind the memorial and monument helps us understand their greater importance to society.

For the larger part of monument or memorial building history in the United States, it was not the traumatic memorial, but rather the heroic monument that was erected. Kirk Savage defines heroic monuments as "confirm[ing] the moral integrity of the nation and the honor of those men who died defending it" (105). An interesting example of the monumentalizing of geo-political tragic events can be seen in the monuments erected directly after the Second World War for victims of the Holocaust. These monuments embodied many of the same design characteristics as the monuments of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and yet are different because they are not supporting the nation state but rather the tragic ethnic cleansing of one of Europe's many peoples. One such example is Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw

Ghetto Monument located in Warsaw, Poland. Rapoport's monument commemorates the sacrifice of the Jews who were killed during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943 (Young 69). His Warsaw Ghetto Monument can be seen as one of the first monuments to the oppression and murder of millions of Europe's Jewry under the Nazi German regime – making it a memorial, in that it focusses on the victimization of entire group of people. And yet, what is most striking about Rapoport's design is its similarity with other war monuments that glorify sacrifice for the Jewish nation and people. The Warsaw Ghetto Monument almost acts as a pastiche to previous monuments, such as the *Arch de Triomphe* in Paris; it is monolithic, depicting the heroic Jewish man defending his homestead against the atrocities of German fascism. Savage noted that Rapoport "resurrected the image of the heroic male defender" (Savage 106), making his monument not too different from Lutyen's Cenotaph, the United Kingdom's World War One monument, which erected to "Our Glorious Dead" (Savage 105). Rapoport's monument is to victims whom he allows to transcend from their victimhood to a state of permanent martyrdom and heroism, as can be seen in the monument´s dedication "To the Jewish People –Its Heroes and Its Martyrs" (Young 89). By using this dedication, Rapoport created a work which has partitioned the victims of the Holocaust into two groups: heroes of the Holocaust, and martyrs who have perished. It was completely conceivable at that time to erect a monument as a way of commemorating loss, but the epitaph "To The Jewish People" has a larger implication – this inscription signifies the end result of the Holocaust on Europe's Jewry. Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument demonstrates the quintessential difference between the monument and the memorial. Although the Warsaw Ghetto Monument was erected to commemorate the murder of those in the Warsaw Ghetto, Rapoport designed the memorial using the didactic and heroic symbols from the

monuments of the past – victimization does not play a larger role in the monument's design.

While Rapoport's monolithic Warsaw Ghetto Monument does not resemble the two gigantic reflecting pools that make up the LDMC's choice for the National 9/11 Memorial *Reflecting Absence* by Michael Arad[1], the circumstances upon which both monuments or memorials were created are similar. Similar to America's call for a memorial at the Ground Zero site in New York, the Warsaw monument also sprang from a public debate that was fueled by the press in the period directly following the Second World War (Young 79). Young writes that it was Polish Jewish poet Julian Tuwim who had called for the monument to be built "exactly one year after the uprising – the interval in Jewish tradition between burial and tombstone dedication" (79). Much like New York's *Reflecting Absence*, the Warsaw Ghetto Monument was built so quickly – only five years after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – that it too stood out amongst the rubble of a yet unbuilt Warsaw. This in stark contrast to a majority of the Holocaust memorials in the United States that were built decades later in the mid-1980s (Savage 106), or the United States' World War Two memorial at the Washington Mall that was not completed until early 2004 (Doss 40). Not too unlike the National 9/11 Memorial, the Warsaw Ghetto Monument stood for years centered in the debris that was the Warsaw Ghetto (Young 87). Young describes the memorial in 1948 as:

> A moonscape of rubble, piled sixteen feet high, covering hundreds of acres. Anchored in this landscape of debris, the granite blocks in the monument

[1] The original name for the National 9/11 Memorial, as submitted by Michael Arad was titled *Reflecting Absence*. Only later was Walker added to the project, when Arad was placed under political pressure by the LMDC. For further information on this topic see the article "The Breaking of Michael Arad" by Joe Hagan or Marika Sturken's *Tourists of History* page 265. When I refer to *Reflecting Absence*, I am referring to Arad and Walker's original submission to the LDMC, the "National 9/11 Memorial" refers to the design of the end-product – the museum of which is still to be completed.

> appeared on its unveiling to rise out of the broken stones, emerging from them almost as congealed fragments of the destruction itself. (Young 87)

America's National 9/11 Memorial, similarly, has risen from the rubble of the destruction of 9/11. Even at the time that this thesis was written, the master plan for rebuilding was not yet completed. The National 9/11 Memorial was only superseded by World Trade Center Seven, which was completed in 2006 (Skidmore, Owings and Merrill). Young argued that the Warsaw Ghetto Monument "seemed initially to draw its strength, massiveness, and authority from its relatively solitary placement amid the very destruction it commemorated" (87). This can most definitely be argued for the National 9/11 Memorial at this moment – the viewer currently must walk around the construction site of the unfinished towers and experience the memorial through the sounds of construction of the buildings that are to replace the ones which the viewer is expected to be mourning.

Similarly, the location of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument seems to play a role in the narrative that the monument portrays. Young argues that "[l]ocation would reinforce here the sense of this memorial's link to events as a metonymical fragment of the event it commemorates, not just as its displacement" (Young 87). Memorials like the Warsaw Ghetto Monument and the National 9/11 Memorial are unique in that their location acts more as the proverbial gravestone that the poet Julian Tuwim originally called for when he demanded that the Warsaw Ghetto Monument be built. As the Warsaw Ghetto was rebuilt and reinhabited, the narrative changed. As Young comments,

> Instead of seeming to pull order together out of the mounds of rubble around it, even being vivified by these ruins, from a distance it is now one rectangular

> block among many others. The trees, green lawns, and sun bathers during the summer combine to domesticate this memorial a little and relieve some of the basic tension created between its plastic, lifelike figures and massive granite base. (Young 88)

The memorial has thus become the metonym Young argues it is. The place where the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising occurred has been replaced and what remains is the memorial that future generations will view when visiting the site. This can similarly be argued for Michael Arad and Peter Walker's *Reflecting Absence* in that the location of the tragedy plays a large role in the interpretation of the memorial's narrative.

Yet, the location of the National 9/11 Memorial does not totally define the memorial's narrative. Unlike Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument, which more closely resembles Paris's Arch de Triomphe with its stoic depictions of the heroes of the ghetto uprising, *Reflecting Absence*'s memorial can be defined as holding to the zeitgeist that consumed American contemporary society in the months after the attacks. Arad's original submission for the design contest hosted by the LMDC called for a memorial that "proposes a space that resonates with the feelings of loss and absence that were generated by the destruction of the World Trade Center and the taking of thousands of lives on September 11, 2001 and February 26, 1993" (Arad and Walker). Arad's design had originally called for two "large voids" that would be "open and visible reminders of the absence" (Arad and Walker). I argue that Arad's design for *Reflecting Absence* echoes a narrative need that was being expressed in other parts of commemorative memorial art at the time of the competition in 2003. Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly's cover design for *The New Yorker* magazine (see fig. 2) on the 24th of September in 2001 displayed a "black-on-black" motif that

Mouly described as alleviating confusion that accompanied the feeling that images were "suddenly powerless to help us understand what had happened" (Mouly). Spiegelman and Mouly thus created what Mouly calls the "perfect image, which conveyed something about the unbearable loss of life, the sudden absence in our skyline, the abrupt tear in the fabric of reality" (Mouly). Visualizing absence became a necessity in the major, organized memorial works that sprung up around New York at that time. Paul Myoda and Julian LaVerdiere's *Tribute in Light*, a temporary memorial held at the Ground Zero site in 2002, consisted of two large beams of light that were illuminated at night, and which depicted the loss of the two towers (Sturken, *Tourists* 226). Marita Sturken contends that although the "*Tribute in Light* was intended to pay tribute to the dead… one could not help but feeling that it was really the loss of the towers that the light memorial mourned" (226). In many ways the sense of iconic loss or absence – in this case architectural loss – defined the symbolism that any memorial could have as its main feature. Of the eight finalists in the LMDC competition, Arad's was the only design which embodied this architectural emptiness.

(Fig. 2 – *The New Yorker* cover September 24, 2001. Designed by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly.)

Reflecting Absence's narrative can be broken down

into two major attributes that combine to create the larger story – absence and organic architecture. Sturken argues that "the towers remain a constant refrain, constantly reemerging in the space as if [the towers] cannot be erased from people's artistic imagination as they had from the skyline" (Sturken, *Tourists* 227). Arad's design embodies this inerasable architectural void that was created on September eleventh. Absence is only recognizable in the narrative because it is interconnected with the iconic aspects of the Twin Towers. Arad's original plan for *Reflecting Absence* included the reflecting pools which would be carved out of the foundation of the memorial with a water cascade that "describes the perimeter of each square" (Arad and Walker). The large reflecting pools that are situated at the place of the original towers have greater meaning if the viewer understands the symbolic foundation that the reflecting pools represent. Arad defined them as "large voids, open and visible reminders of the absence" (Arad and Walker). But Arad's design goes beyond merely recognizing the absence and relying on historical recognition of Minoru Yamasaki's design of the original World Trade Center. Arad also proposes architectural techniques that American architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan defined as "organic architecture" meaning that "all parts were related to the whole, as the whole was related to the parts: continuity and integrity" (Pfeiffer). After the viewer had passed the reflecting pools that were loosely based upon imaginary holes in the Hudson River (Hagan), the viewer would then enter the underground chambers via ramps which Arad described as removing the viewer "from the sights and sounds of the city" thus immersing him "in a cool darkness" (Arad and Walker). It is here that "organic architecture" begins to play the largest role in the viewer's experience; Arad planned for the viewer to experience the underground chambers not only visually, but

as a complete change in the senses. Arad described the visitor's descent into the underground chambers as:

> [t]he sound of water falling grows louder, and more daylight filters in from below. At the bottom of their descent, they find themselves behind a thin curtain of water, staring out at an enormous pool. Surrounding this pool is a continuous ribbon of names. The enormity of this space and the multitude of names that form this endless ribbon underscore the vast scope of the destruction. (Arad and Walker)

The waterfalls that blend into the surroundings of the memorial square above ground become an integral part of the darkness that defines the underground sanctuary. And yet Arad took his design further than mere audio and sensory manipulation through architectural technique. Arad made *Reflecting Absence* a type of mausoleum that would not only memorialize the dead, but that would also hold the remains of unidentifiable victims. Arad desired to create a "personal space for remembrance" where "a large stone vessel forms a centerpiece for the unidentified remains" in the underground chamber (Arad and Walker).

The power of Arad's design is that it becomes the symbolic metonym for Ground Zero that Young argued the Warsaw Ghetto Monument became for Warsaw's Jewish Ghetto. The iconic power of the original towers then becomes a likely, if not necessary aspect of the design of any memorial that would come, especially if that memorial was to be erected so quickly after the event it commemorates. This point is precisely why Joel McKim argues that the National 9/11 Memorial needed to be rediscussed before its building. McKim argues that "the lack of controversy generated by the memorial competition may represent a failure rather than a success"

(84). He criticizes the proposals and choices that the LMDC made when choosing a memorial stating that "some viewed the short-listed proposals as little more than a collection of clichéd elements brought forward from what has become a familiar tradition of contemporary memorial aesthetics" (84). McKim's main argument against Arad's *Reflecting Absence* is not that Arad fell short only with his design, but rather that the purpose assigned by the LDMC and master plan creator Libeskind requires two completely different memorials. McKim criticizes the LDMC by arguing that the mission statement which reads "[m]ay the lives remembered, the deeds recognized, and the spirit reawakened be eternal beacons, which reaffirm respect for life, strengthen our resolve to preserve freedom, and inspire an end to hatred, ignorance and intolerance" (National September 11 Memorial and Museum) calls for a memorial of a strictly didactic nature (McKim 89). In contrast, McKim views Libeskind's plan as requiring cathartic or healing aesthetic design: Libeskind, McKim points out, "alludes to the site's therapeutic function" (McKim, Agamben at Ground Zero: A Memorial without Content 89-90).

McKim offers the LDMC and Arad a solution to the philosophical and aesthetic problem that he perceives as arising from *Reflecting Absence*'s conflicting dual purposes; he argues that the answer can be found in Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's theories on aesthetics which require the artist to consider "how public spaces might activate the potential of language with a prescribed outcome or predetermined role" (97-98). I argue that this line of interpretation borders on that of Lessing, who also viewed the image as deficient in relation to language merely because language must be used by people to interpret it (Groys 96). This argument proves to be problematic in that it requires the designer to create public spaces with an intended outcome that must be universal to all viewers, and, given the permanence of

such a large piece of spatial art, must also stay relevant with future generations. Agamben's arguments are also based upon the idea that the stimulation of language somehow offers the viewer greater significance. And while McKim is not overly critical of cathartic memorials, like Mia Lin's Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C., which he judges by the language used to define it as "increasingly psychoanalytic rather than nationalistic" (McKim 88), He criticizes the didacticism of *Reflecting Absence*, arguing that:

> [t]he decontextualized aesthetics of healing adopted by the proposals allows the Ground Zero memorial to sit comfortably beside such blatantly patriotic symbols as the Freedom Tower. The Ground Zero memorial seems destined to waver problematically between the performance of nationalistic instruction and the public service of alleviating grief. (McKim 90)

The didacticism embodied in the "decontextualized aesthetics of healing" (McKim 90) in *Reflecting Absence'*s original design may prove to be an issue for future generations. This is evident in other memorials built for victims of human conflict. An example of this can be seen in Mauritius where one slave memorial, the Monument to the Unknown Slave, has been abandoned for Le Morne Mountain, purely due to the power that Le Morne Mountain's narrative possesses (Eichmann 323). Anne Eichmann argued that "a narrative that had foregrounded victimhood and emphasized an oppressive legacy turned into a story of resistance, whose protagonists were Maroons, not slaves" (Eichmann 320). Eichmann's example poses both a threat and, at the same time, offers a possible solution for the America's future interpretation of the National 9/11 Memorial. In Mauritius, the original monument to the unknown slave remained an unused piece of public space (320). After renarrating the Maroon slave experience and changing the often unknown slaves from victims to heroes,

public figures in Mauritius were successful in creating "unity and closure" at a new location linked to a slave story – Le Morne Mountain (326). As Eichmann points out, it may be because the original Monument to the Unknown Slave "depicts neither notions of individuality nor sociocultural features" (320), thus it is unable to become the societal metonym or symbol for the atrocities of slavery on the island. Arad's design also runs the risk of creating an overly didactic memorial that could end up being nothing more than a plaza between large skyscrapers for future generations.

Eichmann notes that "with its emphasis on victimhood, the monument follows a discourse that originated in abolitionism" (321). Something similar can be said for Arad and Walker's design for the memorial plaza. McKim believes that Arad's and the other applicants' aesthetic choices pander to "clichéd elements brought forward from what has become a familiar tradition of contemporary memorial aesthetics" (McKim 84). Arad and Walker employ many design tropes such as running water, underground chambers that act as a type of mausoleum, and dais where Arad and Walker state "visitors can light a candle or leave an artifact in memory of loved ones" (Arad and Walker), all of which seem to be reminiscent of churches, cemeteries or other memorial designs. McKim rightfully calls the designers' choice a "safe approach" to submit works which will be seen as memorials, but which fail to act as "the catalyst for the generation of space of radical participation and exchange in the present" (84, 100). But this seems to be an unavoidable response to the mandate that the designers received from the LDMC. The memorial's mission statement, which is heavily anchored in present-centeredness [2], calls for the memorial to "remember and honor the thousands of innocent men, women, and children murdered by terrorists in

[2] "Present-centredness" is the original term Anne Eichmann used in her article "From Slave to Maroon: The Present-centredness of Mauritian Slave Heritage" (2012) to refer to the faults of didactic memorials on that island.

the horrific attacks of February 26, 1993 and September 11, 2001"; "respect this place made sacred through tragic loss", and "recognize the endurance of those who survived" (National September 11 Memorial and Museum). Nowhere in the mission statement is a call given to create a symbol for the future. This aspect of present-centeredness poses a threat to memorial's future, as did the Monument to the Unknown Slave in Mauritius. In Mauritius, it was the "sketches of hundreds of indistinguishable figures" (Eichmann 321) that Eichmann argues rendered the slave monument a "cultural table rasa" (321). The question is if the same can be said for Arad's design of the National 9/11 Memorial. What will this memorial pose for future generations after the victims of the attacks are no longer remembered as individuals, but as names?

This leads me to question whether Arad and Walker's narrative design offers the possibility of open-endedness and reinterpretation for future generations. Many of the symbols used by Arad, Walker, and Libeskind are heavily centered around unnoticeable symbolism which I earlier discussed. Arad and Walker chose to use swamp white oaks which were harvested from a 500-mile radius from the attack sites, including trees imported from Pennsylvania and Washington D.C. (National September 11 Memorial and Museum). Furthermore, the National September 11 Memorial and Museum state on their website that "The trees will never be identical, growing at different heights and changing leaves at different times, a physical reminder that they are living individuals," a fact that one can assume is characteristic of most complex living organisms. The same can be said for Libeskind's plan for the Freedom Tower, which must be precisely 1,776 feet tall (Sudjic), an aspect of the design which is not visible to the blind eye. The symbolism attached to these aspects of the memorial and surrounding buildings thus become trivial and unimportant to the

visitor's experience. But this aspect of Arad and Walker's design could have to do with the dichotomy of purpose and function that was laid out by the LDMC for the design of the memorial. As McKim argued that the LDMC had already set the purpose of the design in the competition rules, requiring the memorial to be both cathartic and didactic (89-90), all that the eventual memorial designer could do is define the spatial function that the new memorial would have. This limits the possibility for reinterpretation for future generations because the purification through art that memorial catharsis offers the visitor is only relevant to those who can somehow empathize with the victims for which the memorial is erected.

One could argue that certain war monuments offer hope for the idea of reinterpreting the National 9/11 Memorial. One such is Luyten's Cenotaph in London, which was originally erected to remember those who perished in military service during the First World War, and which was changed in 1945 to remember the British Soldiers who died in World War Two (Greenberg 5). But memorials like these have only changed slightly in their societal meaning, and not in their symbolism. The Cenotaph in Whitehall is still a monument to soldiers, not to victims of war crimes or atrocities abroad. The Cenotaph is monumental in that its celebratory nature glorifies the sacrifices of those who died. And while the National 9/11 Memorial is not by definition defeatist, the dark colors of the metal used, the etched names, and the reflecting pools which act as footprints for all that was destroyed, leaves little room for reinterpretation, for example as a future narrative for victims of terrorism.

After the changes made to the memorial had the names brought from the underground chamber to the top of the plaza, the victims have become unidentifiable. Arad employed what he called "meaningful adjacency," which means that the victims are arranged in a way which places them next to people that they would have known,

or with whom they would have perished (Loos). This feature of the memorial would, however, only possesses significance for the family members and survivors of the attacks. Unlike Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C., the names of the periphery of the memorial's gigantic pools are large and surrounded by margins of space which makes the totality of the loss of nearly 3000 lives less conspicuous. Other changes to the design, such as removing the ramps, and the entire underground gallery areas with the mausoleum-like chamber that would store the remains of the unknown-victim (Loos), would change the entire narrative that Arad had hoped to create with *Reflecting Absence*.

It was the unpracticality of the memorial, its design, the complexities, and the nature of a 700-million-dollar project (Loos) that changed *Reflecting Absence* the most. Any memorial to a large-scale geo-political tragedy is bound to be influenced by the various users, financers, and stakeholders. The sensitivity of the events, dealings with victim's families, politicians, and the general public reiterate the basic fact that the National 9/11 Memorial was planned and erected under a certain amount of emotional distress. This political and social pressure transforms the memorial from a piece of public art to a work of cultural heritage – albeit one which may not be celebrated by critics and the academic community. By narrating the events of 9/11by means of public art, we have been given a chance to reinterpret the significance of the events. The larger issue remains whether this narration is one of permanent significance that can be reinterpreted by generations in the future, like Lutyen's Cenotaph, or whether the story runs the risk of the slave memorials in Mauritius, which over time have merely become plazas of public gathering with little social significance. It is hard to believe that such a large-scale, architecturally intricate and complicated memorial will be ever be viewed as merely another of New York's many

plazas. The question is whether the memorial will be able to illicit the feelings of loss and absence in the future that it does to the contemporary viewer, who is still reminded of the unfolding events of September eleventh, 2001.

Chapter 2.

Moving Towards Closure: The Cathartic Memorial

An appropriate question to ask when plans for building a memorial of the cost and size of the National 9/11 Memorial are developed is whom is it being built for and why. Bill Keller's article in *The New York Times*, which I mentioned in my introduction, shows that the social momentum to build the monument that began almost simultaneously with the attacks – before the search for the dead had ended, and months before the site had even began to resemble anything more than mounds of concrete, dust, and steel. It appeared at that time that building the memorial had become an unquestioned assumption; very few people had questioned the need at the time to build, or even begun to answer the question "why?" In answer to the basic question of why we memorialize Kirk Savage calls it "self-evident" (103). He argues that "it would help Americans, especially those most directly affected by the tragedy, heal" (103). The cathartic purpose appears to be at the core of the National 9/11 Memorial's raison d'être and appears to serve the primary function that many academics assign to the memorial. The memorial appeases our need to give tragedy of any kind a physical place. And yet, in the days after September eleventh, very little discussion was held in the public debates about why we should build. The media was only interested in the *how*. While many argue that memorialization has somehow taken on a fast-paced tendency in contemporary America, the time when civic remembrance was "a slow-gathering affair" (Keller) seems never to have existed; memorialization, it can be argued, is a natural human response to loss.

The nature of America's relation to public outcry after national tragedy is not by any means a purely modern phenomenon. Erika Doss writes that Abraham

Lincoln's assassination in April of 1865 led to temporary memorials and outcries of national mourning from the public (63). Even after a civil war whose death toll reached higher than any war to follow in America's history, Lincoln's funeral procession resembled much of the spontaneous fanfare that occurred in the days after 9/11 – his death was viewed by the American public as something more than just another casualty of a war that took thousands of lives[3]. Thousands crowded around the slow-moving funeral train and threw flowers onto the funeral catafalque (63). But spontaneous memorials to victims of history, like Lincoln, are fundamentally different from the National 9/11 Memorial. In Lincoln's case it was the death of one man, on September eleventh many perished. However, much like the temporary memorials that appeared at Lincoln's two-week-long funeral procession, Union Square, numerous fire stations, and various areas within New York City were filled with mementoes of grief (Sturken, *Tourists* 172). Marita Sturken argued that these were "shrines" made of "photographs, candles, and messages written to the dead and missing" (173). The purpose of these shrines was of course to grieve, but also, as Sturken argues, "to individualize the dead" (173). Sturken argues that the individual shrines which appeared in the days after September eleventh "attempted to resist the transformation of the individual identities of the victims into a collective subjectivity" (173). The stark individualism of the personified shrines, though, are a polar opposite to the official memorial which would appear years later. The individuality that the flags, photographs, and candles represent are blurred and removed by the uniformity of the National 9/11 Memorial design which holds each victim to be equal. Much like the individual and personal memorials that appeared spontaneously, the National 9/11

[3] David Hacker estimates that around 750,000 people died in the American Civil War, a striking blow to the nation's population considering the size of the American population at the time (Gugliotta).

Memorial was born of grief and trauma and is a result of the public's need to give the attacks a proverbial place.

Viewing trauma as a catalyst for public memorialization has become a significant part of culture studies since the 1980s when post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was recognized officially as a psychological disorder[4]. Major research into trauma as a disorder dates back to Sigmund Freud's work in 1885 and 1886 (Pollard 83). Jennifer Pollard notes that Freud's work focused mainly on the process by which trauma is created and how this directly affects the individual's daily life. Pollard argues that Freud's insight that "a traumatic experience disrupts the normal flow of memory and cognition" (83) is still the basis of research into trauma theory today. Psychoanalytical research offers us insight into how trauma affects memory. The research also offers a possible solution to the consequences that trauma may have on the human psyche. Research by psychoanalysts Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart have greatly contributed to our current understanding of trauma and its relation to the narration of memory. Van der Kolk and van der Hart's research into trauma theory has led to a better understanding of the way in which specific traumatic memories are recalled and placed into larger narrative schemes within the human psyche:

> Traumatic memories are unassailed scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language. It appears that in order for this occur successfully, the traumatized person often has to return to the memory often in order to complete it. (van der Kolk and van der Hart 176)

[4] Pollard argues that the codification of PTSD in the 1980s led to a change in culture studies discourse (82).

Traumatic memory thus differs from narrative memory in that it occurred in the past, yet has present consequences for the individual (Bal viii). Mieke Bal argues art plays a crucial role in the return to the past that van der Kolk and van der Hart have called for. Art helps victims break the traumatic cycle; Bal contends that "[a]rt – and other cultural artifacts such as photographs or published texts of all kinds – can mediate between the parties to the traumatizing scene and between these and the reader or viewer" (x). Van der Kolk and van der Hart give the example of a therapist who offered a Holocaust survivor an "image of a flower growing in the assignment place in Auschwitz" (178) which helped comfort the victim. The alternative narrative that art offers the victims of trauma is based upon their own ability to reconcile with the past. Art not only helps them confront their own reality, but in many ways an alternative reality. Van der Kolk and van der Hart argue that it is thus not "sacrilege… to play with the reality of the past" (179), but have noted that "once flexibility is introduced, the traumatic memory starts losing its power over current experience" (178).

The question that remains is whether the National 9/11 Memorial, or any memorial for that matter, can offer the "flexibility" that van der Kolk and van der Hart believe these works must possess in order to offer catharsis to the victims. If we use van der Kolk and van der Hart's example of the holocaust survivor viewing the flower in Auschwitz as an example of how art can offer catharsis, then it can be argued that the allure of minimalist beauty of Michael Arad and Peter Walker's design could become a powerful medium for the healing of victims of 9/11, much as the flower would possibly have offered the holocaust survivor comfort in the fact that something has arisen from the place where his or her traumas originate. But this creates a dilemma for any designer who must create such a larger, permanent object. It can also

be viewed as historically short-sighted when we consider the permanency of such memorials. Most importantly, it also begs us to ask the question of who the victims actually are.

A majority of the work done by psychologists and psychoanalysts from Freud to van der Kolk and van der Hart focusses on people with traumas that disrupt their ability to lead a normal life and have normal narrative memory. It can easily be argued that the lives of most Americans were temporarily changed in the days after 9/11: flights were cancelled, government buildings were closed, and most of the television stations offered non-stop coverage of the events. It is, however, much more difficult to prove that the vast American or even New Yorker's flow of memory of cognitive function has in anyway been permanently altered. As Pollard asks, "[i]f the vast majority of the American population was not directly exposed to the trauma of this event (particularly given the invisibility of bodies or actual human destruction in its media coverage), can we really say that they were traumatized at all, or just shaken and scared" (84)? Pollard argues that the vast majority of Americans did not witness any death at all; that "the task... became one of bearing witness to the fact that the event happened, and the second-hand knowledge that many people died" (85). One main issue that Pollard points out about the current view that many academics in the humanities take, especially when speaking of the events of September eleventh, is that witnessing the events has somehow led to, what she defines as, "public trauma" (86). Pollard argues that "in the case of the 'public trauma' of September 11, the traumatic experience comes, for the most part, as the result of witnessing the images that have been seen" (86). She points out that the media's coverage of the attacks on September eleventh was almost uniting in a way:

> [When] newspaper journalists began attempting to analyse the psychological fallout and trauma resulting from the attacks, most wrote about it in terms of the shock of lost security and safety, suggesting that in this, there was no less trauma for those watching from the opposite side of the country than for those in Manhattan. (85)

But of course there is a large difference between these two groups of citizens. People in close proximity to the World Trade Center, family members, and survivors were directly affected by the tragic events that unfolded on that day. And while the memorial's mission statement calls for "[r]espect[ing] this place made sacred through tragic loss" (National September 11 Memorial and Museum), viewing the memorial as a means of catharsis may prove to be unpractical, since the amount of truly traumatized victims, in a clinical sense of the word, is relatively small.

And yet, viewing trauma in purely psychoanalytical and clinical terms denies the simple fact that, for many people, seeing the attacks on television did somehow change them. Even Pollard, who warns against calling the bystanders and viewers "victims" (86), argues that "[t]his trauma is not merely the 'second-hand' assimilation of the experience of those at ground zero, it is its own kind of terror" (86). This second-hand trauma has been confirmed by various studies on how the American public reacted to various images in the media in the years following the attacks. Shahira Fahmy et al. noted that "[i]n a national survey post 9/11, Huddy et al. found that watching television news increased emotional reaction to 9/11 and amplified perception of the future risk of a similar crisis" (7). Exposure to the image of the two towers may not have affected the general public in a way that can be clinically defined as PTSD, but the images did affect the long-term memory of many who were exposed to the non-stop media coverage. Fahmy et al. concluded that "[i]f individuals

reacted to the 9/11 attack with sorrow or shock, they stored several images in their long-term memories, especially the emotional images of people jumping from buildings and depictions of dead bodies" (6). This relates closely to the supposed effect that the attacks were intended to have on the public, namely that the wide-spread images of the attacks in the media would install fear. Alex Braithwaite called it "a long-held premise in literature on terrorism" that "the provocation of a sense of fear within a mass population is the mechanism linking motivations for the use of violence with the anticipated outcome of policy change" (95). This assumption allows us to view the National 9/11 Memorial as a type of counter-image to the image that was created when the planes hit the towers, by offering healing instead of fear. Others in the literary and academic communities held similar opinions about the supposed purpose of the 9/11 attacks. Author Don DeLillo classified the attacks as "a narrative that has been developing over years… It is *our* lives and minds that are occupied now" (33).

DeLillo's 2001essay in *Harper's* offers evidence for the psychological fallout that is reflected in the headlines of many of America's major newspapers and periodicals. DeLillo calls on the public to create a new counter-narrative, arguing that "[t]he narrative ends in the rubble, and it is left to us to create the counter-narrative"(34). DeLillo's description of the narrative that the attacks created, and the counter-narrative that the public created in the aftermath is reminiscent of the shrine-like memorials that Doss argued "individualize[d] the dead" (173). As DeLillo points out,

> [t]he artifacts on display represent the confluence of a number of cultural tides, patriotic and multidevotional and retro hippie. The visitors move quietly in the floating aromas of candlewax, roses, and bus fumes. There are many people

> this mild evening, and in their voice, manner, clothing, and in the color of their skin they recapitulate the mix we see in the photocopied faces of the lost. (DeLillo 35)

DeLillo's essay, written around the same time that the first talks of memorialization were emerging in the major media, explains why using the words "trauma", or "second-hand trauma" to describe this change in the nation's psyche (or in the media's psyche) may be appropriate. DeLillo was by no means exceptional in his delineation of a post-9/11 America whose narrative is defined by public outcry and open signs of grief. The language that was used in the major media was focused primarily on terror and grief. Marita Sturken notes that even the term "ground zero", coined by the media within a few hours of the attacks, usually is used to label a nuclear bomb's detonation point (311). Similarly, Sturken argues that envisioning Ground Zero as a blank slate "enables a set of narratives about September 11" (311). It thus appears as if the moment that the attacks occurred, both locally and nationally, the momentum had been set for a memorial to tragedy – a rewriting of the attacks. From then on it seemed inevitable that the new memorial to the transmogrified, broken façade of the original towers were to be transformed into a therapeutic place for a traumatized American public.

Kirk Savage argued that therapeutic memorials are relatively new in American history; they began to appear in the mid-1980s, right around the time that PTSD had been officially recognized as a psychological disorder (106). Savage defines the therapeutic monument as " a monument whose primary goal is not to celebrate heroic service or sacrifice, as the traditional didactic monument does, but rather to heal a collective psychological injury" (106). Savage argues that Maya Lin's 1982 Vietnam Veterans Memorial located on the National Mall in Washington D.C. is America's

first therapeutic monument (106). Before the Vietnam Veterans Memorial had even been built, or any architect or designer had been named, the memorial was destined to be one centered around catharsis. Savage notes that the competition demanded that the memorial "make no political statement" and " begin the healing process" (106). Healing became the central reason for building the memorial. Even today, the U.S. National Park Service's website refers to Lin's design as "The Wall That Heals" (National Park Service). Lin originally saw her design as a "park within a park — a quiet protected place unto itself" (Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund). Lin employed 70 large, reflective black granite slabs which contain the more than 58,000 names of the American servicemen and women who died in the Vietnam War (Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund). Much like Arad's original design for The National 9/11 Memorial, Lin's memorial makes use of ramps which allow the spectator to go below ground and witness the totality of 58,000 names (Savage 106). Moreover, the spectators are confronted with their own reflection in the black granite wall. The memorial consists of two large walls and at the epicenter of the memorial, one can envision what 58,000 names and deaths mean.

One of the Vietnam Memorial's largest contributions is the way that it has changed the aesthetics of grief. The black granite slabs in themselves are not revolutionary when it comes to the aesthetics of grief in the west – black is the color of death, and black granite can be found at cemeteries across the country. Rather, the naming of the dead, and the reflective polishing that allows the viewer to be intertwined with the dead, made Lin's memorial revolutionary at the time. The use of ramps to create design narrative sets it apart from the monolithic memorials of the past. Savage notes that Lin's original intention for the spatial passage was "to encourage a process of healing" (106). What she did create was a place which Savage

argues is highly non-didactic (107), but which in many ways acts as greater place of honoring the dead than more didactic memorials (108). I would argue that the design tropes that Lin uses in the Vietnam Memorial have directly influenced Arad's design for the National 9/11 Memorial. While Lin created a black mirror which was interrupted by the names of the dead and the missing, Arad's matte, black metallic surface is defined by the emptiness that is represented in the name. The names are not engraved, but have rather been etched out of the black metallic surface (see fig. 3). At night the names are illuminated, thus allowing the viewer to see through the names. And while one can imagine that Lin's naming of the dead American soldiers on the Vietnam Memorial may have inspired Arad's design [5], as Savage points out, there is a crucial difference in the use of naming in these monuments. Savage argues that " the Vietnam Memorial justifies its existence in part on the assumption that the dead exercised some measure of agency – that they 'gave' their lives in the service of the U.S. armed forces" (110), but for victims in bombings such as the 9/11 attacks and the Oklahoma City Bombings, there has been "a complete loss of agency, a more absolute victimization" (110). Using military tropes, such as naming those who sacrificed their

(Fig. 3 - National 9/11 Memorial Slab – New York, NY – taken by author)

[5] It is also important to note that Maya Lin was one of the judges that had chosen for Arad and Walker's final design (National September 11 Memorial and Museum).

lives, in memorials to victims of trauma, people who did little more than be at the wrong place at the wrong time, does make Arad's design very different from Lin's, whose naming of soldiers, albeit spectacular in its enormity, has been used for years as a way of honoring soldiers who died in service to their country.

Arad and Michael are by no means the first creators of a memorial to trauma that name their victims after Lin did so with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The designers of the Memorial to the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City have also employed the trope of naming the victims on individualized chairs (Sturken, *Tourists*110), thus "provid[ing] a negotiation between monumentality and intimacy" (111) as Sturken argues. While one can argue that the Oklahoma City Memorial could somehow have inspired some of the tropes that Walker and Arad used in their design – it reemphasizes the sacredness of the ground and uses the design trope of reflecting pools, as Sturken points out ("Aesthetics" 111), in many ways the design for the National 9/11 Memorial appears to employ many more of the tropes that Lin used in her design. While the Oklahoma City Memorial uses "The Field of Empty Chairs" to individualize the dead(*Tourists*110), Arad and Walker have employed the names, solemnly etched onto a black surface, as Lin did with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Obviously, Arad and Walker were very aware of the contemporary use of traumatic memorials. Lin's memorial is known for the interaction it elicits between the public and "The Wall" – it is normal for the public to leave small artifacts behind, individualizing the men and women whose names have been inscribed. As we can see in figure one, Arad and Walker's design has allowed a space where the public can leave flowers in the name. On the August morning in 2013 when I visited the memorial, there were several flowers that offered a break from the grave-like, etched names. And yet, it can also be argued that by staying so

close to Lin's original plan to place the names on a black surface, the naming works somewhat anti-climactically. As I have argued earlier, one of the most impressive and emotionally striking aspect of Lin's design is the enormity of the names – at the center of her memorial the spectator is overwhelmed by totality of more than 58,000 dead. The diamond symbol, used to describe those dead, and the cross symbol, used to describe the missing (Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund), impress the reality of the Vietnam War upon the spectator. Arad and Walker's names are large – the margin between them is also impressive. There are fewer names, nearly 3,000 (National September 11 Memorial and Museum), and one cannot see all of the names at any given time. While Arad and Walker offer the griever a place to interact with the dead, the remains of most of whom have never been recovered, the enormity of the memorial and the relative scarcity of names leave the spectator questioning the entirety of the human impact of the event for which the memorial has been built, especially when compared to the Vietnam Memorial.

The Vietnam Memorial has influenced the aesthetics of future traumatic memorials. It has also changed the way that we publically grieve in the United States. Sturken affirms this when she writes:

> Since the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1982 there has been a national focus – filtered through the media and other forms of commentary, including academic scrutiny – on the kinds of rituals that individuals participate in as a means to confront trauma and loss. (*Tourists* 105)

Sturken notes that it was at the Vietnam Memorial that the practice of leaving small individualized tokens, which has been common practice at grave sites, became

commonplace (*Tourists*105). It appears that the Vietnam Memorial has also created a need in the public to create places of grief where both family members and the general public can grieve and partake in a type of traumatic tourism – which Sturken alludes to with her book's title – *Tourists of History*. Partaking in this traumatic tourism allows to construct the narratives about the attacks; narratives that many academics from Freud to van der Kolk, van der Hart, and DeLillo have argued are necessary for catharsis. Sturken writes "[i]n some ways, immediate discussion of a memorial allowed people to begin to construct narratives of redemption and to feel as if the horrid event itself was over – containable" ("Aesthetics" 321). This, I argue, is a typical aspect of many traumatic memorials, from the Vietnam Memorial and the Warsaw Ghetto Monument to the National 9/11 Memorial in New York. The haste with which these memorials are erected allows the public to control the story that will be told, a point Erika Doss alludes to when she says that America's obsession with memorialization is "an urgent desire to express and claim those issues in visibly public contexts" (2).

More importantly it seems, memorials to national tragedies such as the Lin's Vietnam Memorial and Arad and Walker's National 9/11 Memorial have changed the discourse used in both the media and the academic community when it comes to public grief. One of the major critiques of both Lin and Arad and Walker's design is the lack of human focus on the memorials[6]. The discourse has been dominated by what I referred to in my first chapter as "the zeitgeist" of the immediate post-9/11 period – absence and emptiness. Focusing on trauma as the primary catalyst for the building of these memorials may blind us from the future purposes that these

[6] Savage notes that statues of servicemen were placed across from Lin's memorial because of the lack of heroic didacticism (107). Similar critique has been offered for Arad and Walker's lack of "honor, truth, emotion and dignity" (Sturken, "Aesthetics" 322).

memorials will have. Even Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial is still to this day very relevant because of the large numbers of Vietnam veterans that are still alive. The question, nevertheless, remains: how will these traumatic memorials will be viewed by future generations that are not traumatized by the events the memorials remember. I would argue that Lin's memorial offers itself to a higher purpose of future pedagogy, whereas Arad and Walker's design does not. Savage has argued that it is the lack of didacticism that makes Lin's design so effective (107-108), with the exception of the sole inscription which dedicates the memorial, which he argues is problematic because it "revives the traditional rhetoric of heroic sacrifice" (108). This lack of didacticism offers the future public not only a place to visit the architecture, but to also experience the toll society has to pay for war. Viewing the names allows spectators unaffected by war to get a sense of the immensity of loss, albeit one for only a small portion of the war's victims. Arad and Walker's traumatic memorial is problematic in that the focus on traumatic absence reminds the spectator of the architectural loss of the towers, indicated by the footprints. This shortsightedness is exacerbated when we look at the location of the memorials – Lin's is in a memorial park, but the National 9/11 Memorial is located in the nation's economic center, Lower Manhattan, a place where thousands still must work. The National 9/11 Memorial may run the risk of ending up as a plaza between the skyscrapers that surround it.

And yet, it is important to note that not all of the public was so traumatized by the events of September eleventh. While the debate raged in the press about what memorial was to be built, architects and politicians alike argued that "to not rebuild [the towers] would be seen as a sign of weakness" (Sturken, "Aesthetics" 319). Many others did not want to live in a memorial (320). As Sturken points out, the towers

haunted the public consciousness “through the constant reassertions of their form” (319). Looking at the events and aftermath of 9/11 from a perspective of trauma theory allows us to understand why New York Governor George Pataki assured families that nothing would be built over the then-deemed “sacred ground” (317). Understanding the events as traumatic for the larger group allows us to grasp why this push to memorialize came about, but appears not to give purpose to the memorial in the long run. Furthermore, arguments by the family members have been a driving force in the need to change the memorial. Little work has been done to see if the 700 million-dollar memorial has in any way helped the victims cope. But with a memorial, a place has been created which does demonstrate the current feeling of the American public in a post-9/11 world.

Chapter 3.

Conflicting Narratives: The Politics Behind 9/11 Memorial Design

Any piece of public art – memorial or monument – with an estimated cost of over 700-million dollars is a political act. From the moment that the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LDMC) had decided to hold a competition for a memorial to the victims for the World Trade Center attacks in both 1993 and 2001, the competition and subsequent memorial had become extremely politicized. Both state and local politicians had wielded large amounts of political power to mold the monument in a way which was most advantageous for their political careers. And yet, the monument goes farther than being merely a tool for those politicians who want to seem empathetic to a grieving public. The National 9/11 Memorial tells a story about how we should view September eleventh. The National 9/11 Memorial's narrative embodies a political ideology about post-9/11 America. By collectively portraying the dead of 9/11 in their victimhood, the National 9/11 Memorial becomes a political symbol for both terrorist attacks that occurred at the World Trade Center, and a political tool for politicians who must now give shape to the ever changing post-9/11 American political landscape.

The brief history of the National 9/11 Memorial attests to the politicized nature that has defined the memorial from its beginning. In the documentary film *16 Acres,* Richard Hankin uncovers the local, state, and national political mechanism that led to the choice of Arad and Walker's memorial. Hankin reveals the costs that were taken by the political establishment to ensure that any memorial would add to the legacies of those who were responsible for building it. Hankin asserts in *16 Acres* that a large portion of the policies made directly after 9/11, especially with regard to the

commissioning of the memorial, were done to ensure that decision making power would rest in the hands of certain political officials from the New York branch of the Republican Party (Hankin). Peter Nobel, journalist and author, argues in *16 Acres* that New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and New York Governor George Pataki had created the LDMC, which would be headed up by New York's Republican governor and the future New York mayor, only to ensure that any future non-Republican mayors would have less political might when it came to making the decision on what would be built at Ground Zero (Hankin). The LMDC would control fifty percent of the political decision-making power for the future of the site. The site's owner, the so-called Port Authority (the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey), would control the other fifty percent (Hankin). The Port Authority is also controlled fifty percent by the governor of New York and fifty percent by the governor of New Jersey – yielding Governor George Pataki a total of fifty percent in the final say of what memorial, museum, surrounding buildings, and transit locations would be developed at Ground Zero (Hankin).

From the onset of the competition, Pataki had positioned himself politically in the media as the leader that the nation needed when it came to building the controversial memorial. Originally, the LMDC had tried to include as many New Yorkers as possible in plans to rebuild the city in a democratic, highly-technological town hall-style meeting called "Listening to the City". On July 20 and 22, 2002, 5,000 New Yorkers were able to voice their ideas about the original plans by Beyer, Blinder, Belle Architects (Hankin). The outcome, however, was not positive – the LMDC was left with a disillusioned public and was forced to scrap all plans and return to the drawing board, a decision that would eventually lead to the master-plan competition that Daniel Libeskind would win (Sturken, *Tourists* 238). The political chaos that

was created by the inability to quickly arrive at a final plan led politicians to offer blanketing promises to the victims' families and the public at large. Marita Sturken noted that Pataki had promised victims' families that nothing would be built in the footprints of the towers (*Tourists* 201) an aspect that would become mandatory for the memorial's design competition (Lower Manhattan Development Corporation 19). The jointly written "invitation to compete" by Governor Pataki and former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg stated : "[m]emorials serve so many essential functions: they give us a context for remembering the past, engaging the present, and reflecting on the future" (Lower Manhattan Development Corporation). While their intentions do not appear to be highly political in that they engage public with the rhetoric of grief that it expected to hear, the reality is that the building of this monument was centered around populist decision making that encroached upon disciplines such as the arts.

When the LMDC had chosen THINK architects' plan under the guidance of head architect Viñoly, it was Governor Pataki who overruled their democratic decision. By doing so, Pataki employed much of the popular rhetoric Daniel Libeskind used in the press that I discussed in my first chapter– Governor Pataki too called Viñoly's memorial "those skeletons" (242). Pataki offered three reasons in *16 Acres* for his decision to overrule the democratic decision of the LMDC to choose Viñoly and THINK Architects as the winners. He argued it is "one, unbuildable; two economically unsound; three, where the footprints were, really these skeletons [were] rising into the sky, which, to me, symbolized the destruction of the past and the hope of the future" (Hankin). Pataki's larger problem with the memorial is not merely one of price or construction, but rather with the proposed narrative. To Pataki, Viñoly's design represented a bleak future.

In the first few years it appeared that the rhetoric of rebuilding Ground Zero was as important as the rebuilding itself. When it came time to unveil David Child's plan for a 1,776-foot-tall World Trade Center One [7], it was Governor Pataki who named it "the Freedom Tower", on the spur of the moment in a press conference (Hankin), a choice which once again underscores the narrative power that Pataki assigned to himself when it came to Ground Zero decision making. Many saw Pataki's involvement in the memorial's building as purely political – as a way to gain access to Washington [8]; others though have argued that political involvement in the development of Ground Zero has been driven by other motives. Sturken argues in *Tourists of History* that

> [t]he criteria for rebuilding lower Manhattan increasingly have had little to do with urban planning and residential needs, but have been driven by real estate greed and the need to construct symbols of U.S. technological, economic, and, by extension, military power. (253)

While the design and architectural motifs that Arad and Walker employed with their *Reflecting Absence* do not appear at first glance to be militaristic in any way, the juxtaposition of the memorial with the surrounding buildings, which do employ highly patriotic and militaristic rhetoric implicit in their design [9], and the added security measures that the visitor must go through, does in fact drastically alter the memorial's experience. Sturken argues that "[t]he Freedom Tower is likely to emerge not as an icon of freedom-embracing post-9/11 society but as an icon of defended,

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[7] It is important to note that this plan is originally from Daniel Libeskind. Libeskind's inexperience at the time with building towers led to suspicion financers; he was thus forced to work with David Child, an experienced builder of skyscrapers. The only part of Libeskind's original plan that was left over was the 1,776-foot-tall building (Hankin).

[8] Nobel noted in *16 Acres* that some in the media had called the Freedom Tower "a perch for George Pataki to climb up and gaze off in the direction of Washington" (Hankin).

[9] As discussed in chapter one, Pataki called the Freedom Tower "a symbol of America" (Sturken, *Tourists* 254). This is exemplified by Libeskind and Childs's decision to make the building 1,776 feet tall.

security-obsessed, barricaded urban space" (255). The question that remains is if the same argument applies to the National 9/11 Memorial.

Currently, the memorial requires visitors to make appointments and donate to the memorial fund. Upon arrival, the visitor is greeted not by symbols of grief or reflection, but rather by barbed-wire, surveillance cameras, and extensive security checks. The visitor is not greeted by the park rangers that normally guard national memorials and parks, but rather by New York City police officers who are armed and survey the crowd for potential security threats. These external aspects of the memorial's experience reflect the perceived threat of violence that has defined post-9/11 America. The fact that they have been juxtaposed with the larger narrative of grief and freedom that defines the memorial influences the visitor's experience in almost the same way that one could imagine the first visitors to the Warsaw Ghetto Monument felt when visiting it in the first years after the Second World War – the monument was surrounded by the rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto. Sturken notes that this is a "microcosm of how violence and history converge in a cyclical fashion"; "if a tower is built to defy history, then it will be a symbol to be targeted" (*Tourists* 254). The same can be argued for the National 9/11 Memorial. The memorial's inherent design, two gaping reflective ponds, act as a constant reminder of what once was. This, mixed with the very present reconstruction works underway at the Ground Zero site heightens, if only temporarily, the visitor's experience.

Although these political undertones may appear to make the National 9/11 Memorial exceptional, the politics that drive memorialization are more commonplace. Similar memorials have been erected around the world for victims of terrorism. One such memorial is the Memorial for the Victims of Hostile Acts and Terrorism located at the Israeli National Burial Ground on Mount Herzel in Jerusalem (Shay 713). This

controversial memorial is not a grave site, but is located in a cemetery normally reserved for soldiers of the Israeli army (714). Talia Shay argues that, if we look at this memorial anthropologically, we can see how various memorial motifs are used to elevate the victimhood of the dead to a level which offers political capital to the political establishment (711). She argues that "[t]he possibility to convert dead bodies into political symbols increases whenever national ideologies emphasize ideas about suffering and victimhood" (712). Shay believes that there are three main anthropological aspects of death which society recognizes: "social, symbolic, and emotional aspects" (711). Shay argues that the victims whose names are located on the Memorial for the Victims of Hostile Acts and Terrorism in Jerusalem are removed of their individuality in the memorial, and are thus metamorphosed into a collective symbol of larger social and political importance (714); she writes that "the Memorial, like others, emphasizes the collective identity of the deceased rather than the uniqueness of the individuals found on tombstones in order to provoke sentiments of national identity" (714). Shay argues that, by creating names that are written almost identically, and by placing them within proximity of their death (in this case, based upon the year in which they were killed), the memorial evokes said "sentiments of national identity" (714).

The political nature of memorialization that has defined the National 9/11 Memorial resembles that of the memorial in Israel. Shay argues that "the attitude toward the victims of hostile activities has taken a national and political dimension" in that the way in which the dead are portrayed in the Memorial for the Victims of Hostile Acts and Terrorism has forced the public to view these deaths as "a national sacrifice for the land contested by Israel and her Arab neighbors" (721, 722). Shay noted that this elevation of death to a level of personal sacrifice resonates especially

with the mainly religious part of the population that she argues, values the "immortality of the soul and national sacrifice"(722). This resonation stems from the strongly religious motifs that have been employed in the monument (722). The inscriptions, which mimic those found in a cemetery, can be valued by certain portions of the general population. And while this politicization of death may not be an overt choice by the political establishment, the monument does act as a constant physical reminder of the deaths of those killed in terrorist attacks. Moreover, it offers political capital to the politicians who can use these deeply cultural symbols to appeal to a devoutly religiously portion of the electorate.

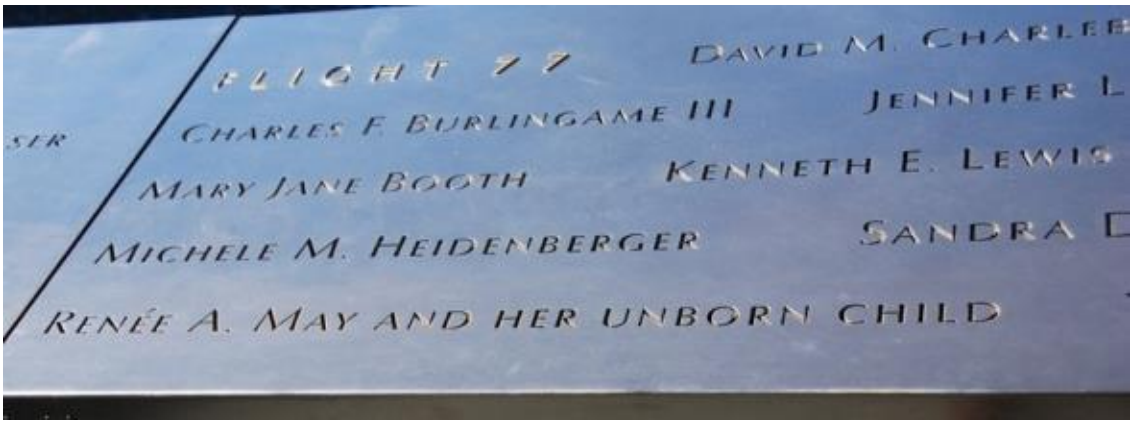
It appears as if the politicization of the dead that occurred with the Israeli monument has also taken place with the National 9/11 Memorial in New York City. The basis of this politicization lies in the association or transference that the memorials cause in the public. Shay argues that the large black name-plaques resemble grave stones found in cemeteries – giving the memorial a "stronger religious orientation" (722). And while this may be true, I would argue that the Memorial for the Victims of Hostile Acts (see fig. 4) and Terrorism goes further than merely mimicking cemetery design. The color of the stone used and the wall-like façade that make up the memorial's structure resemble Jerusalem's Western Wall, also known as "The Wailing Wall", an important place for not only observant Jews, but for the entire

(Fig. 4 The Memorial for the Victims of Hostile Acts of Terrorism – courtesy of Creative Commons)

State of Israel. As can be seen in figure five, the Wailing Wall is not only a place of religious importance, but also of military importance; military ceremonies are held there only yards away from the praying public [10]. In New York, the National 9/11 Memorial has taken on a different type of transference. I have previously argued that the National 9/11 Memorial has employed design motifs that are similar to other memorials; the use of black metal and reflecting motifs greatly resemble various motifs of Maya Lin's Vietnam memorial. This transference is not religious, as Shay argues is the case in Jerusalem, but rather militaristic and commemorative. Much in the same way that the memorial in Jerusalem allows the religious public to see the sacrifice of the victims of terrorism as "a national sacrifice" (722), the National 9/11 Memorial allows the general public to make a connection to other memorials, such as the Vietnam Memorial, and see the events as being part of a larger narrative of militarization. This larger narrative is juxtaposed at parts of the memorial with the reminders of the highly personal prevue; unborn children are listed on the memorial adding to a greater sense of victimization (see fig. 6).

(Fig. 5 Israeli Military Induction Ceremony at the Western Wall, May 2010 – taken by author)

[10]Elite military groups that used to take their military oath at the Massada, now take their oath of allegiance at the Western Wall in Jerusalem (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 154)



(Fig. 6 The naming of an unborn child at the National 9/11 Memorial – taken by author)

Carole Blair, Marsha Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci argue that the choice of what or whom to memorialize is based upon conflicts that "often are registers of present and future political concern". They looked particularly at the inherent metanarrative of Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial, which they label as prototypical postmodern architecture (Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci 263). Blair et al. argue that the metanarratives that memorial design conveys are important to the greater political understanding of the memorial because

> [p]ostmodern architecture is an attempt to "speak" not only to architects about technical architectural matters, but also to the viewers and users of the buildings about socio-cultural matters…. They frequently question and critique the norms and values of a culture. (270)

The core of their argument is that Lin's Vietnam Memorial is a monument which raises the events of the Vietnam War to something higher than other wars; they argue that "public commemorative monuments 'sacralize' individuals, places, and ideas" (271). I argue that the same sanctification has occurred in the National 9/11 Memorial. Blair et al. view the various design motifs that Lin employed as leading to the creation of a memorial of "generic violations," an example being Lin's use of the color black – "the color of sorrow" (276). It is exactly these aspects of the Vietnam

Memorial that have been introduced into the National 9/11 Memorial. The design motifs used by Arad and Walker, such as the etched names on black metal and the water falls ending in a deep abyss, enhance the same generic violations that Blair et al. argue define the nature of the Vietnam Memorial. And while Maya Lin's memorial is used to sacralize events that occurred an ocean away from Washington D.C., the National 9/11 Memorial requires the viewer to bear witness to events that have occurred at the place where the memorial stands. Moreover, by mixing the dark tropes and etched names that were employed by Lin with the architectural void that the footprints represent, the National 9/11 Memorial goes further in its sanctification of the events at the World Trade Center. Arad and Walker's memorial acts a constant reminder of the victimization of not only New York, but the entire nation, and by doing so, the memorial admonishes the public about their obligation for vigilance against the threat of global terrorism.

And yet, the larger question that remains is to what extent is the National 9/11 Memorial's metanarrative portrays a message which "question[s] and critique[s] the norms and values of a culture" (Blair, Jeppeson and Pucci 270). Originally, Arad and Walker had planned for a certain level of chaos in their memorial. The names were supposed to be scattered arbitrarily across the memorial's two reflecting ponds; they wrote "[t]he haphazard brutality of the attacks is reflected in the arrangement of names, and no attempt is made to impose order upon this suffering" (Arad and Walker). This chaos was juxtaposed with the "very private nature of the room for unidentified remains" (Arad and Walker) and the plaza which they explained as being "a mediating space" that "belongs both to the city and to the memorial" (Arad and Walker). One could argue that Arad and Walker's metanarrative is one of equality in death – by placing the names in random order, they are not only refusing to "impose

order upon this suffering" (Arad and Walker), but they are also equalizing the deaths of both office workers, policemen, and firemen, a point which, however, proved to be problematic for the families and the political establishment.

While elements of victimization may enhance the larger metanarrative of the memorial as a place of innocence lost, it has proven to be highly problematic for many of the survivors and the families of the perished. Only yards away from the National 9/11 Memorial, a large brass relief, the Fire Department of New York Memorial Wall (see fig. 7), has been placed on the side of the Ten House on Greenwich street. The memorial resembles a medieval tapestry which depicts the events of September eleventh with heroic firefighters and burning buildings. This highly didactic memorial, which is "dedicated to those who fell, and those who carry on" (Cassidy), uses many of the same heroic motifs that were used in the Three Servicemen Statue that was placed across from Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial – in that it depicts the perished not as victims, but as heroes who died for a greater cause. Its placement so close to the National 9/11 Memorial may also demonstrate how the National 9/11 Memorial's memorial narrative strikes a chord with certain victims' families; they desire a memorial which celebrates their loved ones heroism. Unlike the Three Servicemen Statue, which was placed as a response to Lin's Vietnam Memorial (Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund), the FDNY Memorial Wall was completed in 2006, years before

(Fig. 7 – The FDNY Memorial Wall, New York – taken the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum)

the National 9/11 Memorial was complete (Cassidy) [11]. The FDNY Memorial Wall is an example of the agglomeration of 9/11 memorials that can be found in Lower Manhattan. Although these memorials may be explained by what Erika Doss calls America's "obsession with issues of memory and history and an urgent desire to express and claim those issues in visibly public contexts" (2), the amount of memorials created suggest that they stem from a level of discomfort in the mass-memorialization that has occurred at the National 9/11 Memorial.

When the remains of the 1,115 unidentified persons were moved in May of 2014 to a tomb located 70 feet below the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum, dozens of families protested by wearing black cloths across their mouths (Stepansky, Badia, and McShane). One of the victims' fathers, the retired Deputy Fire Chief Jim Riches, said that "[w]e would like to see remains moved above ground in a repository akin to the tomb of the unknowns" (Stepansky, Badia, and McShane). This is precisely where the metanarrative of the National 9/11 Memorial and that of Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial differ the most. As Savage pointed out, Lin's memorial became a place of catharsis for survivors and the deceased soldiers' families and friends (Savage 107). This appears not to be the case with the National 9/11 Memorial, in that even nearly four years after the dedication, the memorial is still the center of controversy. Much of the rhetoric of victimhood that has surrounded the memorial, and which has to a certain extent made memorials like Lin's Vietnam Memorial successful, has backfired on the National 9/11 Memorial. Family members like FDNY Lt. James McCaffrey, brother-in-law of the deceased firefighter Orio Palmer, refer to the place of internment of the unidentified victims as a "basement"

[11] It is important to note that Arad and Walker had already been selected as the winners in January 2004 (National September 11 Memorial and Museum).

calling it “inherently disrespectful and totally offensive” (Stepansky, Badia, and McShane).

This discomfort that is felt by many survivors and family members of the victims may stem from the association that these specific groups of people have with the memorial’s metanarrative. In Jerusalem, Shay noted that while the religious population is attracted to the overtly religious motifs used in the Memorial for the Victims of Hostile Attacks and Terrorism, the more secular portion of the population disapproves of their loved ones being converted into political symbols (722). This discomfort goes even further for the families of soldiers who disapprove of ceremonies held for victims of terrorism on the same day or at the same times as those for their deceased loved ones (722). The problems that were experienced in Israel mirror those that have plagued the National 9/11 Memorial since its opening in 2011. Arad and Walker were forced to change many design aspects, such as the categorization of names, the placement of the names, and the underground chambers due to protest from victims’ families (Hankin). Often, it is the deeper symbolism in the memorial’s narrative that causes this distress. In Hankin’s *16 Acres*, Rosaleen Tallon, sister of slain firefighter Sean Tallon, protested the underground chambers that were a crucial part of the original design (Hankin). Rosaleen Tallon’s fears are based upon the symbolic target that the site represents:

> You would have to descend down, almost as if you are going into the subway, descend down into a combined space to view the names. That shocked us. Knowing now about 1993 and 2001 I will never go down. I will never bring my children underground at Ground Zero because I feel it is always going to be the number one target of the terrorists. They have come twice; what better place to get us than underground. (Hankin)

But the families' disapproval may also stem from the larger metanarrative of victimization that in many ways removes heroism from the deaths of the policemen and firefighters. Lin's memorial is one to a war that America had lost. Arad and Walker's memorial, built to commemorate national tragedy and victimization, is one where many firefighters and policemen voluntarily entered the building and died in the line of duty. It appears as if the narrative of victimization is most problematic for this specific group of people. In both cases family members were largely mobilized to protest various aspects of the memorial [12]. Members of the Family Advisory Council, made up of many non-servicemen victims, hailed the return of the bodies to the "sacred bedrock" where they perished (Stepansky, Badia, and McShane); even within the various groups of victims and survivors, consensus is impossible.

To a certain extent, this distrust and discomfort may stem from a change of metanarrative that took place when the Memorial was built. The original narrative of September eleventh outdates the memorial by ten years. From the first days after the attacks on September eleventh, Ground Zero had become not only a center of national strategy and mourning, but also the center of the new narrative that would define how the public viewed and interpreted the events of 9/11. Marita Sturken argues that the site of Ground Zero was immediately implicated in a rhetoric of exceptionalism; She writes that:

> The idea of ground zero as a blank slate or as the targeted center of the bombing thus sets into motion a set of narratives about 9/11, both the narrative of lower Manhattan as the symbolic center of the event and the narrative that 9/11 was a moment in which the United States lost its innocence. (*Tourists* 167)

[12] Rosaleen Tallon has been an outspoken leader of both the names protest that was depicted in *16 Acres* (Hankin) as well as the protest in May 2014 against the internment of the unidentified bodies in the bedrock below the memorial (Stepansky, Badia and McShane).

Sturken notes that this narrative of exceptionalism leads us to view the events as being "unique in the history of violent acts" (167). Once the memorial was built, a transference of this embodiment of exceptionalism took place, but the narrative was changed. I argue that the National 9/11 Memorial's focus on victimization has altered the original narrative of exceptionalist Ground Zero. The original narration, one where the victims of this geo-political crime are seen as being different from other terrorist attacks, was changed into a narration that focused on their victimhood. As I argued earlier in this chapter, this narration of victimhood offers capital to the American political apparatus. And yet, it is exactly this victimhood that makes the memorial unfit for those who see their loved ones as heroes akin to soldiers who died on the front lines.

In many ways it is this exceptionalism that defines the politicization of the National 9/11 Memorial. The memorial does more than merely remember the lives of those who died. Its sheer size and grandeur make it a memorial that exemplifies the importance that both the political establishment and the greater public have assigned to the attacks of September eleventh. The budget allotted to the memorial alone underscores this placement of purpose; the 700-million-dollar budget trumps other equally massive memorials, such as the Berlin Holocaust Memorial, which cost only 23 million euros to build (Das Spiegel). And if we assume that postmodern architects "question and critique the norms and values of a culture" (Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci 270), then what have Arad and Walker questioned and critiqued? Or have the changes forced upon the original design also been a reaction to the political establishment's deeper unease with this narrative of exceptionalism and victimization?

By removing didacticism, Arad and Walker have created a piece of postmodern public art. But in the process, the parts of the public and indeed the political establishment that demand a memorial which not only mourns and remembers, but also celebrates sacrifice, have been left with a memorial that brings equality in sorrow. These changes exemplify the political complexities that surround the memorial; they also mirror larger issues that the memorial poses to victims' families. Changes were made not merely to gain political capital with an electorate that desired one specific memorial; they were made to alter the way in which the public remembers September eleventh. This stays much in line with the perceived power that architectural design possesses. It was Winston Churchill who once said in a speech to the House of Commons that "[w]e shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us" (Churchill), an idea that, when applied to the National 9/11 Memorial, sums up the intent that the designers and politicians had when considering any possible purpose for the memorial. By making an exceptional memorial, Arad and Walker have underscored their version of the day's events – one where the visitor leaves the city and enters an underground reflective chamber. This version had political consequences – the LDMC forced changes upon the memorial, such as the removal of the underground chambers and the categorization of names. More importantly, the victims have been brought to street level – allowing present day viewers to remember and reflect while being surrounded by the noises of the city, surveillance cameras, and construction crews. The 70-foot-deep bedrock sarcophagus that holds the remains of possibly a thousand unidentified people removes the dead from the public sphere – relinquishing the bodies to a place that they normally are assigned in western culture – underground and out of the public space. They are not celebrated, but removed. These conflicting ideologies have as much to do with the

way that we mourn as they do with the current American political situation: the dead can be seen as mere victims in a national landscape that views September eleventh as a time of national defeat, or they can be raised up to a higher place of importance – a place where the public can celebrate the greater narrative of American exceptionalism. In both cases, the memorial has been shaped as much by designers as it has been shaped by politicians and the families of the deceased. Yet it still remains to be seen who will profit from these changes the most.

Conclusion

On the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks – September 11th, 2011 – politicians from all ranks of the American political establishment [13] gathered in New York City to open the long-awaited National 9/11 Memorial. The ceremony embodied many of the motifs that are indicative of both Arad and Walker's final product and the role that memorialization has been assigned in American society. The ceremony was both religious and secular, militaristic and mournful. President Obama began by reading *Psalm 46*, a psalm in which a call is made for the end of war:

> Come behold the works of the Lord
> who has made desolations in the Earth.
> He makes wars cease
> to the ends of the Earth.
> He breaks the bough
> and cuts the spear in two.
> He burns the chariot in fire. (National 9/11 Memorial and Museum)

President Obama was followed by ex-President George W. Bush, who read a letter from Abraham Lincoln to a mother of five who lost all her sons in battle:

> I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the republic they died to save. (National 9/11 Memorial and Museum)

[13] Speeches were given by various civilians and President Obama, Ex-President George W. Bush, Mayor Bloomberg, Mayor Giuliani, Governor Cuomo, Governor Christie, Governor Pataki, and Governor DiFrancesco (National 9/11 Memorial and Museum).

The diversity in the opening ceremony mirrors the same complexities that appear to rattle the narrative that defines the National 9/11 Memorial. There is a call to the end of conflict, and an appeal to wonder of self-sacrifice.

The National 9/11 Memorial strives to tell a story about events of September 11, 2001. One of the many issues that lies at the core of the memorial's narrative is the various purposes that is has been assigned to fulfil. The memorial not only must appeal to a post-9/11 American public, but also must offer hope for the future and catharsis for the victims, while simultaneously redefining the deaths of those who perished as a form of sacrifice for the nation. The complexities that this assigned purpose calls for has thus led to a memorial that proves to be loved by some and loathed by others. While the memorial has succeeded in being an impressive piece of architectural design, the various purposes and functions assigned to it has pitted both politicians and family member advocacy groups against each other. In this thesis I have argued that it is not the design, but rather the narrative, or perceived narrative, that causes this friction. The narrative played a crucial role in not only the creation of the memorial, but has also been center stage in the critique and praise that have defined the memorial's interpretation by both the press and the academic community.

A crucial issue that has plagued the memorial since its creation was the dual purposes that the memorial was supposed to have. As I argued in my first chapter, the memorial's narrative is closely linked to the site where it was erected. The memorial has become a metonym not only for the 9/11 attacks, but also for the architectural loss of Minoru Yamasaki's original Twin Towers. This emphasis on architectural loss was a crucial part of the memorial's design; the emphasis on architectural void is part of a zeitgeist that defines how people remember the attacks. It thus became a central part of Arad and Walker's design for the memorial – the two pools act as footprints

that do not rise up into the Manhattan skyline, but which descend into an abyss – leaving the bottom of the memorial unseen to the viewer. And yet, the architects were also given the task of creating a memorial which is both cathartic and didactic – it not only had to heal, but it had to give hope for a new future.

The duality of these purposes has been caused by a greater shift in what memorialization is in American society. Although America's history with regards to memorializing the dead is complex and long, the post-PTSD world, where memorials should not only focus on remembrance, but also healing, has led to a shift in the way in which modern memorials must be designed. Memorials like Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Arad and Walker's National 9/11 Memorial are ones where remembrance almost appears to take a back seat to the larger theme of healing. This is also seen in the words we use to define these structures. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a memorial as "[t]he perpetuated knowledge or recollection (of something)" (Oxford English Dictionary). This, in comparison to a monument, which is "[a] statue, building, or other structure erected to commemorate a famous or notable person or event" (Oxford English Dictionary). The thin line between "[perpetual] knowledge or recollection" (Oxford English Dictionary) and commemoration lies in the ways in which we chose to remember the events. Psychologists and psychoanalysts from Sigmund Freud to Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart help us understand how memory and narration are integral in our understanding of traumatic events. This clinical view of narration has broadened our view of public art; it is no longer monuments that tell the heroic narrative that we prefer, but memorials telling narratives that help us heal. The modern memorial's purpose goes beyond perpetuating the grand American narrative of the hero.

And yet, this cathartic narrative, void of a hero that in many ways is part of the didactic, heroic monuments of the past, proves to be problematic to many in America. As I have shown in my third chapter, families and victim advocacy groups, generally representing firefighters and police officers who died in the September eleventh attacks, have major issues with the way in which their family members are remembered. Although these issues are normally described in terms of security, such as problems with the underground chambers, or in terms of respect, as the naming of the victims or the burial of the unidentified remains below the National 9/11 Museum, the larger problem is one of narration. While elevating the deaths of the 9/11 victims may be portrayed as ultimate victimization and thus sacrifice, the heroic deeds of those who died to save others have been likened to those of the bystander victim. This narration has led to the creation of smaller monuments around not only Lower Manhattan, but also elsewhere in the United States. These memorials tell another story, one which returns to the grand monuments of the past, where the heroes are portrayed in a moment of glory right before their deaths.

Throughout this thesis I have posed the question of what the National 9/11 Memorial will mean for future generations. Speculating on the future purpose has proven to be an important aspect that the curators and patrons considered when commissioning the memorial and museum . The mission statement reads:

> May the lives remembered, the deeds recognized, and the spirit reawakened be eternal beacons, which reaffirm respect for life, strengthen our resolve to preserve freedom, and inspire an end to hatred, ignorance and intolerance. (National September 11 Memorial and Museum)

The memorial, much like the mission statement, allows my question to go unanswered. Many of the monuments that I have discussed in this essay have been

given new meaning by the larger public as time goes on. Luyten's Cenotaph is now a memorial for all British soldiers who have died since the First World War (Greenberg 5). Likewise Maya Lin's monument has taken up a new position as a quintessential exemplar for the modern cathartic memorial; she has arguably created a memorial which has set the standard for the National 9/11 Memorial. And yet countless memorials that commemorate important causes have been abandoned by the public. In a 2009 survey by the National Parks Department, Maya Lin's Vietnam Memorial was visited by 72.1% of all visitors who visited Washington D.C., beating out the White House, the U.S. Capitol, and all of the Smithsonian museums (Danials, Harmon and Park 22). On the other hand, the Washington D.C. War Memorial (the memorial for World War I) was not even studied; it was only mentioned once in the report, in the visitor comments section, where one visitor commented that the monument was in disrepair, calling it "a disgrace" (86).

The colossal size of the National 9/11 Memorial mixed with the complex architectural and design techniques used to create it will most definitely save the memorial from the oblivion that other memorials and monuments have faced. The meaning that it will be given by future generations is another story. In my introduction I noted that Erika Doss argues that America has "an obsession with issues of memory and history and an urgent desire to express and claim those issues in visibly public contexts" (2). America's obsession is one with history – how those in the future will view the events of September eleventh, and the subsequent actions that the nation took in the War On Terror. The National 9/11 Memorial and Museum thus become part of a larger national narrative about the post-9/11 world. Will the often conflicting narratives that defined the National 9/11 Memorial's beginning also define its use in the future? This depends on our interpretation of the basic conflict that it

tries to commemorate. The current interpretation is one of both defeat, or victimization, and sacrifice. The memorial's mission statement calls upon the memorial to "inspire an end to hatred, ignorance and intolerance" (National September 11 Memorial and Museum). I can conclude that, in view of the current narratives used to influence the visitors, the memorial has failed in inspiring this end to hatred. The focus on the victim removes the possibility for a different perspective. The narratives confines us to viewing the events as sobering; to view the deaths of the thousands who died on that day as a sacrifice in a larger conflict. And yet, other monuments, such as Lin's offer the memorial hope. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is still visited by thousands every year. There is a possibility that the National 9/11 Memorial will be a place for future generations to go to and contemplate the horrors of terrorism and senseless killing; a place where, like in Washington D.C., they can view and connect with the nearly 3000 names inscribed on the black steel slabs. Only time will tell.

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