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Processing Trauma: Reading Art in 9/11 Novels

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PROCESSING TRAUMA: READING ART IN 9/11 NOVELS

by

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While the negative effects of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 are still permeating throughout the United States, a few novelists have taken on the extreme task of writing about this historic event. Richard Gray describes the failure of language after the attack took place, yet novelists wanted to write about this tragedy anyway. Reading trauma in 9/11 is inevitable as it is important. In looking at three novels that deal with the events during and the aftermath of 9/11, I hope to consider the way art is used in these texts. In doing so, my thesis will look at the possibility of art being able to heal the wounds of this traumatic event. My second chapter will focus on the novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. This novel depicts the effect 9/11 had on the child protagonist, Oskar, and follows him as he works through the trauma of losing his father in the South Tower. The third chapter of my thesis will discuss Don DeLillo's *Falling Man,* which offers a depiction of the powerful effect trauma has on the main characters in the novel, particularly Lianne. My fourth chapter will discuss the novel *The Submission* by Amy Waldman. Just as Maya Lin's submission for her Vietnam memorial sparked controversy, Waldman takes the same approach by casting an American Muslim as the artist and memorial architect for 9/11. While the previous novels focus on the personal effects of trauma on the characters, my chapter on *The Submission* will elucidate how trauma is negotiated on a national scale. I hope to answer such questions as: What do we expect in a memorial? What should we expect? What are the various demands survivors place on memorials?

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. To my parents who have supported me throughout my life, bought me books, helped me, loved me, and listened to me talk about my work. To my sister, Robin, for always being willing to talk to me and give me words of encouragement. To my sister, Lindsay, for going through the graduate school highs and lows with me, for talking to me, helping me, making me laugh, and always reminding me that everything will turn out all right. To Sarah, for laughing with me, reading my work, and being a good friend. To Brad, for always being someone I can count on, for supporting me, working with me, and for being a constant source of happiness in my life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On December 14, 2012, a man entered Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut and killed twenty-six people, including twenty first-grade students and six teachers. The tragedy spawned rage and horror, with families and citizens at a loss of how to cope with "the worst violence at an elementary school in U.S. history" ("School Shooter" 1). The evening of April 14, 1912 ushered into global consciousness a multi-national tragedy. The sinking of the R.M.S. *Titanic* was the deadliest peacetime maritime disaster in history, killing 1,500 men, women, and children from various social classes and ethnicities. This spawned a transnational feeling of trauma, tragedy, and melancholy. Since President George Bush enacted the so-called "War on Terror" soon after the 9/11 attacks on New York City, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania, critics have made comparisons to the controversial Vietnam War. Taking place from 1961 to 1975, the conflict killed between two and three million Vietnamese and over 58,000 Americans (nps.gov).

The reason I begin with these three unrelated tragedies is because they all inspired art where there had been tragedy, and thus, trauma. Monuments and memorials play an important role in understanding and coping with tragic events, and these are three major traumas in recent American memory. One type of memorial that is often seen after these events is the spontaneous memorial. Spontaneous memorials are often seen along roads indicating someone died at that spot. Flowers, crosses, and photos of the deceased are placed at the site of death. The tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School offered mourners and viewers a space to spontaneously memorialize while trying to understand the space of the tragedy. Dan Blim writes that,

> when we confront its emptiness, we have a need to put something in and get something out . . . leaving photographs, teddy bears, cards, and other memorabilia . . . These not only serve to put something familiar into the site, but also cover up sites of absences we cannot bear to look at, to render the absence itself absent ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 393).

In the case of the Sandy Hook massacre, emptiness is represented by the loss of life. In order to fill the emptiness, something tangible needs to be put in the place of loss. The same sort of emptiness occurred after 9/11. "Within a day," write Rasic and Blais, "continuous vigils to honor the victims began, and the park was lined with candles, photographs, flags, letters, poems, and children's drawings" (*A Place of Remembrance* 94). The buildings had come down, thus rendering loss and absence even more visible to the mourners. Almost immediately, people began discussing how the empty space was going to be filled. A memorial to the dead was the obvious choice. The urge to fill the absence left by death is prominent throughout sites of tragedy. In fact, the 9/11 museum that is now under the site of Ground Zero is filled not just with the memorial, but artifacts, and indeed, art. This is particularly important to remember when discussing the role of memorials, as well as art, in literature. Not only does the act of placing fill an absence, it also helps the trauma sufferer begin to process his or her trauma brought on by loss.

Maya Lin's controversial memorial to the fallen American soldiers of the Vietnam War shows a good example of the role of memorial on a national scale. Her minimalist approach, according to Blim, 'suggests that an absence of meaning in a work allows for our own meanings" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 392). This work of art is a place sacred to the viewer, causing various interpretations by each individual. The memorial space allows for an interaction between

the viewer and the tragedy. This will be seen most prominently in Waldman's *The Submission.* Mohammed Khan's memorial design allows for multiple interpretations, as well as a way for mourners to make their trauma tangible.

Theories of Trauma

While reading literature that uses trauma as a central theme it is important to have a basic understanding of the medical definition of trauma. What happens to the brain and body chemistry when one experiences trauma? In the seminal text *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History,* Cathy Caruth writes, "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth 11). This is the definition that is used most commonly by trauma scholars. Caruth, one of the first experts on the subject of trauma, began her study with literature dedicated to the Shoah. While 9/11 is certainly nowhere nearly as tragic as the eight years the Holocaust took place, in terms of length and death toll, it is the tragedy to which 9/11 is most commonly compared. The Shoah is often discussed alongside he tragedy of 9/11. Kristiaan Versluys reminds us that, "both are instances of mass slaughter" (*Out of the Blue* 51). While the Shoah itself is not represented prominently in any of the novels, it is apparent that it is a major part of the Second World War. In his novel, Foer takes several tragedies from World War Two and gives first person accounts of these events. Grandpa experienced the fire bombing of Dresden by the allied forces, and is irremediably changed by this event. Foer later offers an account of the bombing of Hiroshima via a recorded interview with someone who witnessed the catastrophe. Of course these are not directly related to the Shoah, it is fair to say that the entirety

of World War Two gave authors and theorists plenty of material from which to draw a picture of trauma.

Michelle Balaev explains that trauma "refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas if an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society" ("Trends in Trauma" 1). In DeLillo's novel, Lianne feels like she is indeed a fractured individual. Her mind becomes chaotic, while her ability to process ordinary events is difficult. When she is confronted with events that are out of the ordinary, her ability to function as a normal individual is all but destroyed. Balaev also expounds on the importance of place. She writes, "place, therefore, becomes central to representations of trauma in the novel because the physical place of suffering and remembrance of loss becomes an identifiable source for the author to explicate the multiple meanings of the event" ("Trends in Trauma" 5). Therefore, trauma and place are inextricable. As will be seen in the following chapters, each novel insists on a place of trauma, the place where the event was made tangible. Suffering is inescapable in the novels, so each novel needs a place of remembrance. This is where the importance of monuments and memorials come in. To take the act of suffering and make it sublime is a part of each novel, yet the question should be asked, does aestheticizing suffering minimize the act of suffering? I hope to explore this question in each chapter.

LaCapra notes, "Trauma is a shattering experience that distorts memory in the "ordinary" sense and may render it particularly vulnerable and fallible in reporting events" (*History* 61). Throughout the following chapters, I hope to show that memory is in fact distorted for many of the characters in the novels. Memory, specifically traumatic memory, is a central part of each novel. In order to confront the problems with memory, the characters need something tangible. In this case, art is what helps them process their traumatic memories. LaCapra writes, "The

ability to give testimony is itself one important component of survival. It requires a certain distance from a past that nonetheless remains all too pressing, painful, and at times unbearable" (*History* 76). Gaining distance from the trauma is a difficult task for the characters in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, Falling Man,* and *The Submission.* While they do indeed try to emotionally distance themselves from their traumas, the characters are always brought back into the emotional turmoil— and this is mostly because of the art with which they are surrounded or in which they take part. Most critics understand trauma as, "a sudden, unexpected, and overwhelming experience that escapes one's grasp – whether conceptual or physical – and, as a result, keeps haunting one" (Craps 5). This is seen prominently throughout the novels I will be discussing. In order to more fully understand trauma, a description of PTSD is necessary. PTSD, or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder causes nightmares, flashbacks, hallucinations, and an inability to have a normal perception of time. Often, the trauma sufferer will experience more than one time at once—this is called "temporal hybridity," a term coined by Elizabeth Outka, who writes: "time is not a binary meeting but a hybrid where different times become simultaneous, multiple, ambiguous. The present moment is at once a dangerous blending of many times, but also, paradoxically, a refusal of those moments to blend" ("Temporal Hybridity" 23). Indicators of PTSD are seen most prominently in the following two chapters.

Critics, Art, Trauma

Art, according to Jill Bennett, has the ability to "open up trauma to audiences," as well as the ability to "mimic the sudden impact of trauma" (*Empathic Vision* 11). The idea of mimicking trauma with art is looked at in depth in the following chapters. What happens when a traumatized person views a photograph that represents his or her trauma? How does a person who is

traumatized perceive art that mimics the sudden impact of his or her trauma? I hope to answer these questions, among others, throughout the following chapters.

Nick Gillespie argues that the art generated in response to 9/11 has been unsatisfactory. He writes, “Too much of it has sought to replace the scene of violence and loss with superficial if heartfelt emotionalism or the pre-existing obsessions of the artist, a psychic flight to more manageable terrain. The senselessness of this heinous act has exceeded our ability to tame it into shape” (Gillespie 1). This, in short, is the problem with creating art after a tragic event. The artist and the viewers of the art need to come to an agreement about what sort of art does not sensationalize; and perhaps more importantly, figuring how to create art that does not trivialize. Of course, as Gillespie has noted, the act of replacing the tragic with the sublime is an almost inevitable response when faced with traumatic events. Yet trauma is, by definition, unmanageable, and the art needs to reflect that. I hope to convey in the following chapters that the art in each novel shows a way to experience the unmanageable as well as the unknowingness of a traumatic occurrence. Perhaps we will find, that the art in the three novels can “tame,” as Gillespie writes, the events of 9/11 “into shape” (“Why Art Failed” 2). Although, by Gillespie’s own definition of the impact of art, he writes, “the most powerful art of 9/11 refuses to let that happen by refusing to insist that we must make sense out of a senseless act” (Gillespie 2). Although it is a long and arduous process, making sense out of something that is seemingly senseless is one of the most important things a trauma sufferer can do. Art created in response to trauma can be particularly fraught with emotion, but it is indeed necessary for understanding trauma.

In her book *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*, Jill Bennett tackles the question of traumatic events being trivialized by art. She writes,

> If trauma enters the representational arena as an expression of personal experience, it is always vulnerable to appropriation, to reduction, and to mimicry. Is it possible, then, to conceive of the art of trauma and conflict as something other than the deposit of primary experience (which remains "owned" and unshareable even once it is communicated)? (Bennett 6).

As we will see in the following chapters, Bennett's concern of art reducing, or mimicking, the event that caused the trauma, is something that is discussed fully. For *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close's* Oskar Schell, the trauma is inescapably personal, and thus his is an expression of personal experience. It remains personal to him even while bringing parts of his art into the public sphere. Dan Blim asserts that bringing together objects to make a memorial, "simultaneously make private thoughts public and transform the public memorial into a private, deeply personal site" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 394). For Oskar, his art is not only a deposit of primary experience as well as a borrowing of others' experiences—some banal, some extreme. The personal and public acts of mourning are even more fully discussed in my chapter on Amy Waldman's *The Submission.*

My Study

In my second chapter, I hope to adumbrate the use of art in Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, specifically Oskar and Grandpa's art. I will also elucidate the occurrences of trauma for several of the characters—primarily Oskar and Grandpa, again. In doing so, I will argue that Oskar and Grandpa are both severely traumatized individuals. Because of this, they treat art in two different ways. Oskar retreats to the act of creating it, while Grandpa, a sculptor, runs from the art he used to take such solace in. I also hope to discuss how, in using art, Oskar and Grandpa are making their traumas sacred. As well as discussing these topics, I hope to argue

that in Foer's novel, because of his use of art, Oskar has the tools necessary to confront, understand, and potentially cope with the trauma of losing his father.

In my third chapter I will be elucidating Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man.* The novel offers a depiction of the powerful effect trauma has on the public sphere and the spectators who are a central part of it. This chapter will investigate the role trauma plays in affecting public and private space in the novel. How does the terrorist event in the novel influence the community as a whole? How do DeLillo's characters understand their own traumatic experiences? By focusing on Lianne and Keith, this chapter will show how the traumatic experience of 9/11 affects the community in the novel and the individual characters. Among studying trauma in the novel, this chapter will try to answer the question: Are there some events too large for art to understand and deal with meaningfully? In doing so, this chapter will look at the possibility of art, either in the form of literature or performance, being able to heal the wounds of a traumatic event. DeLillo's Falling Man, the photographer Richard Drew's falling man, and Philippe Petit's performance in between the World Trade Center will be analyzed and discussed in detail.

My fourth chapter will discuss Amy Waldman's novel *The Submission.* Just as Maya Lin's submission for her Vietnam memorial sparked controversy, Waldman takes the same approach by casting an American Muslim as the artist and memorial architect for 9/11. While the previous novels focus on the personal effects of trauma on the characters, my chapter on *The Submission* will elucidate how trauma is negotiated on a national scale. Similar to *Falling Man* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Waldman's novel uses a large cast of characters to give different perspectives on the effects of 9/11. Considering the novel centers on a work of art—the 9/11 memorial—it seems this is a necessary addition to my thesis. The architect of the memorial, Mohammad Khan, creates a work in the novel that is beautiful, yet is able to initiate

such controversy, allowing the interpretation that art has power for its viewers. I hope to answer such questions as: What do we expect in a memorial? What should we expect? What are the various demands survivors place on memorials? This last question seems to be the most important one Waldman asks throughout the novel. Waldman also insists that a memorial is necessary to allow the mourners to process their trauma.

CHAPTER TWO

READING TRAUMA AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER'S *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE*

After the World Trade Center's Twin Towers collapsed on 9/11, there was a sense of uncertainty in how to understand and deal with the massive terrorist event. As a way to begin to understand what happened, many people began to create art. For instance, elementary school students from Charleston, South Carolina created a banner with oil paint for family members of the dead. The banner contained mostly patriotic-themed elements, such as a Bald Eagle, an American Flag, and firefighters. A woman from Iowa decided to begin making quilts for the families of 9/11 victims. According to Allison Blais and Lynn Rasic, in addition to these tributes, "high school students and community residents . . . created a mosaic mural on the side of a building in Manhattan's East Village. Called "Forever Tall," the artwork restored the twin towers to the Manhattan skyline, built with a mosaic of flowers" (*A Place of Remembrance* 101). Unsure of how to react to the trauma of 9/11, it seems that creating art is one way to begin to process and understand the tragedy of 9/11. Trauma has invaded the lives of the characters in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.* By focusing on the grief, trauma, and memory of Grandpa and Oskar Schell, particularly, I hope to elucidate the use of art as a way of managing that grief and trauma. For these characters, their traumas are constantly being negotiated, and I would argue that art plays a significant role in this negotiation. Seeing as this thesis includes art as one of its central themes, I hope to adumbrate the role art, primarily photography, plays for the characters. In doing so, I hope to argue that several characters in the novel have indeed experienced one or more traumatic events in their lives, and often either cling to, or run from, art as a mechanism to understand their trauma. As will be discussed in further

chapters, the notion of traumatic images and trauma-induced art will be discussed. This chapter will also focus on the importance of creating the moment of trauma with art, specifically with an analysis of Oskar's scrapbook. I also hope to explain the importance of the sympathetic listener and reader in this novel. In doing so, I hope to show that Oskar, because of his use of art, has the tools necessary to confront, understand, and potentially cope with the trauma of losing his father.

Occurrences and the Meaning of Trauma

Oskar Schell is a severely traumatized child. His father, Thomas Schell, Jr., was in the North Tower when it collapsed on 9/11. Besides losing his father, Oskar has had to deal with the trauma of being on the receiving end of his father's last calls to their apartment. While mourning his father, Oskar goes into Thomas's closet and breaks a vase, in which he finds a key with the name "Black" written on it. For Oskar, this begins a journey around New York City to find the owner of the key, as well as information about how the key came into his father's possession. The quest eventually leads Oskar to a man named William Black, who used to be married to Abby Black, a woman who Oskar tried to kiss earlier in the novel. In William's office the two of them discuss the origin of the key and what it means to both of them. Oskar explains, "The whole *point* of the key is that I found it in my dad's closet, and since he's dead, I couldn't ask him what it meant, so I had to find out for myself" (Foer 295). After he says this, Oskar feels like he needs to harm himself, indicative of high stress for Oskar. Although this may seem obvious to the reader, the other characters in the novel are completely unaware of his habit. His mother sees his bruises, but never confronts him about his self-harm or his anxiety. William then explains that the key and the vase from which it came used to belong to his own dead father. After his father's death, William was in charge of selling all of his possessions, including the vase with the key.The two fatherless sons share several similarities. Upon finding out he had two months to

live, William's father spent his remaining time writing letters to loved ones and mere acquaintances. His purpose was to say his goodbyes; William explains that some letters were short, some like plays, some ten pages long (Foer 296). William continues to tell the story about his father's letter to him; how the key unlocks a safe-deposit box at the bank. After disclosing this information to Oskar, Oskar feels the urge to cry and unleashes on to William what he had been holding in for two years; "Can I tell you something that I have never told anyone else?" (Foer 300). Oskar proceeds to explain the events he experienced the day his father died. He got home from school that day and, "there were five messages. They were all from [my dad]…But this is the thing that I've never told anyone" (Foer 301). He then asks William to put his hand on him, so he can finish the rest of his story. He reveals to William that the phone rang again, but Oskar didn't answer it. Instead, he allows the machine to take the message. On the other end of the call is Oskar's father asking "Are you there? Are you there? Are you there?" (Foer 301). Oskar proceeds to break down and confess his guilt over feeling like he failed his father when he needed him most. These calls were the last words spoken by Thomas Schell, Jr. before he died when the tower collapsed, and Oskar has had to live with that guilt.

Art and Its Function

Oskar is not the only character in the novel haunted by trauma. Oskar's Grandpa is mute because of the traumas he has suffered. Because he does not speak, Grandpa takes up the habit of writing his son—Oskar's father Thomas—letters. Unfortunately, he never gives Thomas any of his letters, except for one. In his first letter to his unborn child that he never sends, Grandpa explains how his wife asked him to marry her. She begs him to marry her, and this triggers within him a string of memories and thoughts:

> I thought about small victories and everything I'd seen destroyed … I'd lost the only person I could have spent my only life with, I'd left behind a thousand tons of marble, I could have released sculptures, I could have released myself from the marble of myself. I'd experienced joy, but not nearly enough, could there be enough? The end of suffering does not justify the suffering, and so there is no end to suffering, what a mess I am … (Foer 33)

Thomas Schell is mourning the loss of several things in this passage. Most prevalently, he is reminded again of his dead love, Anna, who died during the firebombing of Dresden. This was his main trauma in his life and he has trouble escaping it. Tellingly though, immediately after this thought, he begins mourning the loss of his art. As a former sculptor, Thomas was able to have an outlet for his grief. Now that he has decided to quit making art, he begins to think about the possible catharsis that could have come if he continued sculpting. He uses the word "released," which is a word often used when discussing trauma and psychoanalysis. James A. Cherry writes, "The *catharsis* or "purgation" that Aristotle describes in *Poetics* as an after-effect of viewing tragedy might be seen as the result of such a 'constructive intervention'" ("Connecting in the Aftermath" 163). Thus, *release*, *purge,* and *catharsis* are the same and carry with them the same idea. Furthermore, in describing the effect of catharsis, Francis Fergusson writes, "Aristotle noticed that, in religious rituals that he knew, the passions were stirred, released, and at last appeased; and he must have been thinking partly of that when he used the term 'purgation' to describe the effects of tragedy" (qtd. in Cherry 163). Grandpa wants his catharsis, which is in fact a *release* of emotions. Without his art, though, any release of sculpture and emotions would be impossible. The marble, he thinks, is entrapping him and he believes he needs to be released from it; but actually it is the opposite- the marble will free him. The marble

will release him from the bounds and constraints of traumatic memory. He must purge himself from the marble and simultaneously experience catharsis from processing his trauma through his sculpture. Yet he is, to borrow a phrase from Ilka Saal, "entrapped in… perpetual melancholia" ("Regarding Pain" 455). He needs his art to function. Unfortunately, just as Thomas is unable to communicate his trauma narrative to a sympathetic listener, he is also unable to reach catharsis through art. If he were able to sculpt the marble and release sculptures, he would be able to begin to understand and release himself from his traumatic memory.

Suffering, as Thomas insists, is a part of life, and there is no end to it. Thomas thinks that because the end of suffering does not justify suffering, this means the suffering never ends. His use of "and so there is no end to suffering" relates these two concepts. Indeed, Thomas's philosophical musings front and center in this passage. His thoughts about suffering come directly after his thoughts about art—the two are connected. Suffering would seem to be a life-affirming experience, though, which would lead to him interpreting the act as a positive experience. Suffering, according to the Christian tradition, often leads to moral enlightenment, and a person who experiences suffering also achieves personal and moral growth. This idea has influenced how Western cultures understand and think about the suffering of others. Yet for Thomas, the enlightenment that comes with suffering does not justify the experience of the pain and loss that accompany suffering. Moreover, because the end of suffering can never negate the experience of suffering, the suffering will continue until the sufferer's life has ended. This does not necessarily mean that the person will be overcome with the sensation of suffering (i.e. pain, loss, trauma), but those feelings will always be there in the recesses of the mind. Because Thomas can neither communicate his trauma to a sympathetic listener, nor release his traumatic

memory through sculpting, he is doomed to spend the rest of his life suffering. And for Thomas, this sort of suffering is not hidden in the recesses, but up front and overwhelming for him.

Alice Black, one of the many Blacks encountered in the novel, greets Oskar for the first time covered in drawing charcoal. She has been living in a building used for industrial purposes and seems nervous about letting Oskar and Mr. Black inside. Trauma manifests itself through art during this meeting between Oskar and Alice. After entering her apartment, Oskar notices, "I saw drawings everywhere and they were all of the same man" (Foer 197). He does not ask Alice who the man is out of fear that the answer would make him sad and anxious, so we can assume based on her art that the man is dead. I would argue that a traumatic event has taken place with Alice, and her way of coping with it has been to repetitively recreate an image from her trauma. As I have noted, traumatic memory consists, in part, on repeating the same experience—this is part of what a flashback is. For Alice, the image of this man is representative of Alice's post-traumatic memory. As Bennett insists, " if art registers the shock of trauma (the flashback that one involuntarily revisits), it maintains this in tension with an experience of the present" (*Empathic Vision* 11). In order to survive in the present, Alice must maintain control of the past, including her traumatic memory. The way she is able to do this is by representing her trauma through her art. The act of creating the image over and over is a manifestation of what is happening in her mind. Just as the image of a person falling from the World Trade Center is used repeatedly in Oskar's scrapbook, Alice creates her own image of traumatic experience. By creating the person responsible for her trauma, she is able to begin the process of working through her trauma. Indeed, her re-creation and repetitive behavior is representative of the traumatic mind. Trauma victims experience temporal hybridity as a symptom of PTSD. Present and past are often intertwined, rendering the sufferer anxious and immobilized when confronted

with the hybridity. Alice's use of art is supposed to help her release the past into the present and allow her to view her traumatic memory on canvas in order to have control of the future.

One of the most prominent photos in Oskar's scrapbook is that of downtown Manhattan and Central Park. The black and white image spans across two pages. Perhaps the most striking thing about the photo is that where Central Park should be, is instead blank space. It is as if Central Park has been cut out of the image and all that is left is the rectangular outline of the space. The pre-doctored photograph is originally titled "Aerial View of Central Park," by prolific photographer David Ball and was taken 1 March 2000. Because of the missing Central Park, the buildings in the foreground of the photo look slightly cartoonish, as if they were drawn and not photographed. The buildings farther away from the photographer's point of origin look more real until they start to fade out into the distance. Oskar's use of this image is deliberate and related specifically to his trauma.

While I will not discuss the parable of the sixth borough in great detail, a brief description of it is necessary for further analysis of the Central Park photograph. Thomas Schell, Jr. tells Oskar there used to be a sixth borough attached to the island of Manhattan that was slowly drifting away. Efforts were taken by the denizens to try to slow the process of it drifting, yet it was all in vain. The borough floated away, except for Central Park, which used to be in the heart of the sixth borough. Central Park was dragged through Manhattan and laid to rest where it is now. The story emulates Oskar's battle with absence and presence. The image shows the absence of Central Park, while the story makes Central Park permanent and present. Lavi notes that the story, "serves as a haunting but soothing refrain, simultaneously evoking the storyteller's life and his eventual demise. It is a potent symbol of loss and memory" ("Absence and Presence" 75). If the story, then, is about memory and loss, why does Oskar want to remove the evidence of

the story from his scrapbook? By strategically placing the image of Central Park absent from Manhattan, it is as if Oskar is refusing to live in the present. If Central Park rests in the sixth borough, then his father can still be alive, waiting to tell him the story of how the park eventually moved to Manhattan. This is, of course, just one interpretation of the photo.

Besides being connected specifically to his father's parable about the missing sixth borough of New York City, this image in his scrapbook is necessary for Oskar to begin to process his trauma. The missing Central Park represents loss for Oskar. Taking a significant portion of Manhattan and erasing it from existence is Oskar's way of trying to process the loss of his father. New York City's own backyard is lost in this photograph, and represents a void in Oskar's life. This is an obvious expression of the grief he feels after the death of his father. Because he has not been able to narrate his trauma just yet, he uses art to negotiate his feelings. The photograph is amid a dozen other photos that comprise Oskar's scrapbook, and its location in the series of photographs is particularly relevant. Importantly, the two-page Manhattan image is presented in between two photographs of a person falling or jumping from one of the Twin Towers. By sandwiching the Central Park photograph in between the more literal images of Oskar's trauma, Central Park becomes the image that connects the falling body with the image of absence and loss, thus another way of viewing his trauma. Moreover, just like the emptiness that was left after the towers fell, the missing Central Park mimics that hole. Perhaps it can be said that Oskar has made this space empty in order to fill it again.

The image is split exactly in half, with the crease of the book in the middle. The length of white Central Park is reminiscent of another prominent image throughout the novel—that of the Twin Towers. Massive and divided, Central Park looms in the image like the Towers that dominated the skyline. It is almost as if the Park is the ghostly shadow of the World Trade

Center. The park, with a length of two and a half miles, could easily bury the 1700-foot tall buildings if it were to act as a gravesite for the towers—a way of filling the void left by their destruction. In a way, this is what Oskar is doing by keeping this image in his scrapbook. He wants to bury the towers along with his trauma. Tali Lavi writes, "the space he desires to fill is not one that is literal; it is the hole in his heart left by the loss of his beloved and devoted father" ("Absence and Presence" 75). Central Park is representative of that loss that he feels for his father. In order to come to terms with it, he needs to fill the hole. There is a void in his life, and because he cannot speak it, he has it represented on the page. At the end of the novel Oskar does fill the void—his father's coffin—with letters, but before that can happen he uses his scrapbook as a way of mimicking that action.

Because the white image is reminiscent of the Twin Towers, Oskar is also, in a way, removing them from existence. Tali Lavi argues that in order to heal himself, Oskar needs to "heal his topography" ("Presence and Absence" 76). Unfortunately, Oskar does the exact opposite of that in the Central Park photo. He instead removes the park, destroying the topography of Manhattan, and replaces it with absence and an outline of the Twin Towers. By doing so, he can also mentally remove the towers from existence. If the towers were never built, then his father would not have died. While the image could be one way to work through the trauma of losing his father, it can also be a way of ignoring the trauma or pretending it never happened. Oskar's possible refusal to acknowledge the destruction of the towers would only stunt his maturation and healing process. By viewing the photo as a way to think that there are no towers, or never were any towers, he is only disrupting the processing of his trauma.

Moreover, the image is black and white, which is even more relevant for a post-9/11 audience. Relegating the world, images, and people in it, to light and dark was something that

happened more and more after 9/11. Perhaps posing a clean dichotomy of light and dark made understanding the tragedy much easier for people. In his address to the nation after the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush said that the United States will "lift the dark threat of violence from our people and our future" ("9/11 Address to the Nation"). By labeling a threat as "dark," he promotes the idea that dark has a negative connotation and light has a positive one. Later, during his 2005 inaugural address he said, "It burns those who fight its progress. And one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of our world . . . We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul" ("Second Inaugural Address). Again, Bush's words support the good versus evil / dark versus light dichotomy. Freedom is the light, the fire that will tame the dark corners and people in dark places desperate for the beneficent freedom American soldiers have to offer. Oskar's photo, although possibly unaware of it, encourages the facile, and conceivably harmful depiction of light and dark. Because the photo's absence can represent death or funerary image, it is feasible that it promotes the jingoist ideology of the military industrial war complex, in that it presents dying as a positive experience for the sake of money. For soldiers, it is probably better to view death this way. For Oskar, it might actually alleviate some of the pain. The photograph mimics an artistic technique called *chiaroscuro*, which makes the image more dramatic and effective. *Chiaroscuro* is "the distribution and contrast of light and shade in a painting or drawing. . . and, the skillful use of light and shade . . . to create a three-dimensional effect, either subtle or dramatic" (*Funk &Wagnalls*). Usually, the light source would influence the look of the image when using this technique, but in this case the light comes from absence. In this particular photo, the white sections represent light. Since the largest white section is, of course, Central Park, it would seem that the "light" is coming from beneath the ground. Burial is mimicked, and

light emerges from burial in this case. Another way for Oskar to work through his trauma of his father's death is to see the photo and perhaps think that death and burial bring a person out of darkness and into the light.

Addressing Traumatizing Images

Art has a long history of aestheticizing the suffering of others. Jill Bennett expresses a particular problem with the relationship between aesthetics and trauma; she writes,

> The fundamental error, it seems to me, lies in the aesthetic reduction of trauma to the shock-inducing signifier. While it might be argued that the shock of the (graphic) image mimics, in muted form, the moment of trauma, it does not address the duration of trauma in memory (*Empathic Vision* 65).

In order to apply this sentiment to Foer's work, I want to address the traumatizing images in the novel. Perhaps it is fair to say that images in and of themselves are not necessarily traumatizing; yet those that have experienced a particular trauma may in fact re-experience the trauma upon viewing images that are related to the initial shock of trauma. This is where the concept of "triggering" comes from. Western art prides itself on the ability to take events like war, death, terror, and other atrocities and turn them into something beautiful. The Passion of Jesus has long been a popular subject for artists, who take Jesus's death and aestheticize it. I would say that the act of creating art is the act of creating beauty. For artists to take tragedies such as the World Trade Center attacks and create art is significant in that it addresses the traumatic situation. Although, in doing so, it addresses it in a way that, as Bennett contends, immediately shocks the viewer, yet neglects the reality of traumatic memory. For example, in works of art, like Picasso's *Guernica*, tragedy and trauma are confronted on the canvas, thus allowing the viewer to

contemplate the tragedy. Picasso addresses the trauma of the bombing of the Spanish village, initially shocking the viewer. It should be noted, in fact, that "Ada Black owned two Picasso paintings" (Foer 149). Picasso painted *Guernica* in grey and black, and used his post-Cubist expressionistic style of painting. This signature style is indicative of the body and mind that has experienced trauma. The scene of the painting contains many suffering people and animals, all within the exact moment of their trauma. There is a mother grieving and crying over her child, a horse lying in agonizing pain after just being stabbed, and below the horse is what appears to be a dead soldier. A woman, "eyes filled with anguish, holds up a lamp so that we can all bear witness to the calamities of war" (Escalona "Inconvenient Masterpiece"). Most notably, everything about the scene is fragmented. It is as if each character has been shattered, broken apart by the tragedy, dismembered by the attack and attempted to be reconstructed by the artist.

The traumatic mind is left fragmented and distorted just like Picasso's painting. Temporal disturbances and a shattered sense of self plague sufferers of trauma. Picasso shows this to the viewer in his painting, while also showing the moment of trauma. The viewer's role is to understand the duration of traumatic memory, which according to Bennett, is difficult for the artist to show. How does an artist use his or her understanding of traumatic memory and render that visible and tangible through art? For Thomas, his attempt to create art would mean he would have to confront his traumatic past, which he refuses to do. I would argue though, that showing, thus creating, the moment of trauma through art is just as important as rendering the duration of traumatic memory. What Bennett neglects to recognize here is the importance of the moment of trauma. It is unwise to dismiss art that shows trauma to the viewer just because there is no acknowledgement in the work of art of traumatic memory. And perhaps, by painting the moment

of trauma, the artist is in a way showing the duration of traumatic memory. When a work of art is created, like *Guernica*, it is preserved forever, much like the trauma sufferer's memory.

Perhaps Foer's use of art within the novel *is* an aesthetic reduction to the shock-inducing signifier. Throughout the novel, dozens of photos are interspersed, which are supposed to represent the photos included in Oskar's scrapbook. One particular image reappears again and again—the image of a person falling from the World Trade Center. This can certainly be counted as art, especially as based on the idea that art promotes an aesthetic or emotional response. Photography, though not always considered an art form, has quickly entered the realm of artistic discussion. Considering that the photograph appears eighteen times in the novel (the last fifteen comprise the flipbook-style series at the end), it would appear that this image is important and is used by Oskar to try to make sense of his trauma through the art of photography. The first time the photograph appears, the man is seen falling from the tower. Unlike Richard Drew's notorious photograph, the person is far away and blurry, with no distinguishable clothes or facial expression. The second time this image appears, it is even blurrier and looks as if someone enlarged the photograph so only the person was visible. This photograph seems to fit the criteria of Bennett's claim of a fundamental error. It is well known that the photos of people falling or jumping from the towers were quickly censored from newspapers after Drew's iconic photograph ran in several publications. The images were too chilling, too morbid, and seemed to aestheticize or exploit the horrific deaths of the jumpers. Oskar uses the images in his scrapbook in order to grasp the shock of his father's death. He even questions at one point if that is the way his father died, by jumping.

Oskar's use of the scrapbook is similar to Picasso's *Guernica*. Just as Picasso used his art to show the moment of trauma and the suffering of the people of Guernica, Oskar uses his

scrapbook as a way to make art to understand his trauma. The repetition of the image of the man falling in Oskar's scrapbook is distorted in each addition of the photograph. The blurriness of the image resembles *Guernica* because of the fragmented nature of the photograph. Each pixel, though grainy and foggy, is like a Cubist representation of a falling body. *Guernica* captures suffering after an unanticipated act of violence against a city, while Oskar's use of the falling body image captures the same—an act of aggression and violence against a city that was unprepared. Both take the images of death and suffering and freeze them in time. Aaron Mauro points out, as other critics have previously done, that by photographing the falling man, "the figure languishes and is unable to be saved, though saved forever" ("Languishing of the Falling Man" 587). Frozen in time, spectators of the photograph understand that what inevitably comes next is the death of the man. Yet in an image, this man is frozen, preserved from his looming death forever. *Guernica* and Oskar's scrapbook have several functions for the characters, and for viewers, readers of Foer's novel and those who *see Guernica* themselves. In order to begin to comprehend the trauma of losing his father, Oskar must bear witness to it like the woman in *Guernica* holding up the lamp.

The photographs that comprise Oskar's scrapbook tell a narrative that makes up for the inadequacy of words after experiencing trauma. Language, like Grandpa, is difficult for Oskar, which is why he needs a second language of art. Bennett explains, "artworks can be regarded, not simply as illustrating certain clinical psychological, or psychoanalytic propositions, but as engendering new languages of trauma that proceed from its lived experience" (*Empathic Vision* 24). This is precisely how Oskar's scrapbook is used. Because he lacks the full range of language to express his trauma and give his testimony, Oskar relies on his scrapbook, or what he calls, *Stuff that Happened to Me*, "my scrapbook of everything that happened to me" (Foer 42). This is

Oskar's "new language" that sustains him through his journey to find the meaning of the key. His scrapbook is comprised of images of keys, photographs of the back of a woman's head, the back of a man's head, the façade of an apartment building, and Sir Lawrence Olivier as Hamlet with skull (among many other images). The images used most frequently are photos of locks, doorknobs, and keys. Oskar's anxieties are shown through these images. His obsession with the key is manifested in his compulsion to include many images of keys and locks in his scrapbook. Because Oskar views the key as a last adventure his dad made for him, his "ultimate *raison d'être*," it makes sense that he would want to memorialize it (Foer 69). Not only is the scrapbook a good insight into the traumatized mind, it also inspires new ways of viewing the role of art and the memorial in literature.

Nancy K. Miller points out that within the photographs and flyers used for *The New York Times'* "Portraits of Grief" series, details of the subjects' lives were anecdotally used to accompany the portraits. She asserts that the anecdotes were "meant to illuminate that something 'true and essential . . . and the trademark always reveals something good, like virtue—often civic, or at least domestic, virtue" ("Portraits of Grief" 117). In using this idea, it is fair to say that Oskar's scrapbook also mimics a sort of "Portraits of Grief" series, or at least a "Photographs of Grief" series. As a way to gain insight into the traumatized mind, I would argue that each of the photographs in his scrapbook reveal something true and essential, like the anecdotes, about that state of being. There are, as previously stated, more than several photographs of the façades of apartment buildings. As Oskar searches for the truth behind the key, he leaves behind the safety and comfort of domesticity. By placing photos of apartments in his scrapbook, he is keeping the truth and the safety of the apartment with him, while cataloging the many apartments he visits on his journey. His sense of domesticity is in flux, which is what

the photos express. At once he feels safe at home with his mother, while simultaneously fearing the telephone and the emptiness of his apartment. Yet, the conundrum is that his own apartment contains one of the places of his trauma—where he listened to his father's last telephone message right before he died. Interestingly, the scrapbook contains no images of telephones. Just as the image of the falling man repeats in his scrapbook, so do the images of apartments. If, as Dominick LaCapra intimates, the truth of trauma can be ineffable, so by making a scrapbook and taking photographs Oskar is making the trauma, if not certainly knowable, then at least tangible. Oskar takes portraits of Abby Black, among other Blacks he meets on his odyssey, thus showing that Oskar is performing his own photographic series of grief. He even has a photograph of an elephant with a tear in its eye, thus rendering a grief-like image.

While I would maintain that photographs in general, particularly Oskar's photographs, are supposed to illuminate something true and essential, this idea remains problematic. As an art form, photography can stand in for words, inasmuch as words are often inadequate at times when seeking to explain and understand one's trauma. It is important to consider the political, subjective, and intensely personal ideas surrounding photography. Miller's use of Roland Barthes' theory of the *studium* and *punctum* is useful here especially as it relates to photography. The *studium* is the cultural, linguistic, and political interpretation of a photo, which Miller asserts is the result of the photographer's intentions. The *punctum* is the wounding, personally touching detail, which establishes a direct relationship with the object or person within it. It is the spectator's purely subjective reaction to an element that punctures the *studium* (Miller 119). Perhaps, though, the spectator's role is less limited than simply, or purely, viewing a photograph in a subjective way. I would argue that the *studium* and *punctum* are interconnected for the viewer, as he or she is unable to view it unbiasedly and without prejudice. The subjectivity

would, for me, describe the viewer as being unable to separate him or herself from the *studium*, which encapsulates the political and cultural interpretation of a photo. The viewer, upon looking at a photograph, particularly one showing trauma or suffering, does not view the photo without acknowledging his or her cultural and political background. When viewing the photos in Oskar's scrapbook, the details of course "grab" the viewer, as Barthes puts it (Miller 119). Yet, to think that the viewer views the images with a simple, emotive reaction is to ignore the way culture, politics, and linguistics are engrained in each viewer. Also, to believe that the photographer is completely in charge of what he or she is capturing seems problematic as well. Just as the viewer cannot escape cultural and political ideologies upon viewing a photo, neither can the photographer ignore it.

There is always a motivation about what to capture and how to capture it. For instance, in Oskar's scrapbook he has photos, "of people who had lost their arms and legs" after a ferry accident along with a screenshot from a news segment about the Staten Island ferry accident (Foer 240-241). The photographer capturing the images of dismembered people has his or her own motive and decides what *studium* the photo will have. By photographing people involved in an accident that involves a means of transportation, the photographer is able to recall grief from 9/11 in his photo. The viewer, upon looking at the photos of dismembered people, certainly experiences a moment of shock and emotion, or the *punctum*, while also considering the cultural influences behind the photo. Each photo carries its own *punctum*. Consider the photo of the falling man in Oskar's scrapbook—the *punctum* is, as Barthes puts it: he is going to die (qtd. in *Photography* 117). The *punctum* for the photos of the ferry accident is slightly different. The viewer may wonder what it is about death and dismemberment that is so fascinating, especially after a large-scale event like 9/11. Perhaps, by inserting another type of tragedy into his

scrapbook of things that happened to him, he is trying yet again to make the trauma more tangible, as well as forcing his own *studium* and *punctum* onto the image.

Oskar's scrapbook famously ends with the reversed images of the man falling from the World Trade Center. Aaron Mauro discusses at length the use of the images in the scrapbook. He writes that Foer "reconciles the photographic and traumatic history of the event by imagining the possibility of another life in a fictional world that eases sorrow and mourns the memory of those lost on that day" ("Languishing of the Falling Man" 585). Oskar's use of these images is for this very purpose. In order to ease his own sorrow, Oskar imagines a world where the falling man returns to the burning building, the planes reverse out of the buildings, and everyone is safe, especially his father. This is the possibility Oskar wants so badly, and since he cannot have it in his life, he enacts the possibility in his scrapbook. Images, Mauro contends, are necessary in order to capture time, place, and history in fleeting moments. He writes, "The flitting past of those who fell that day exposes the limits of mimesis in language. At the point of exposure to this falling man, as the shutter falls and the witness blinks, photography and falling are harshly aligned in a terrifying moment" (Mauro 587). For Oskar, this is certainly the case. He compiled those images in the scrapbook after he had his cathartic interaction with William Black. Thus, the images stand in place of the language, and render the trauma visible through photography. For Oskar, the language of trauma is not adequate, which is why he adds the photos to his book. This is the last step in Oskar's process of understanding and processing his trauma. He has spoken his trauma, and now he must make it visible.

When Oskar meets Abby Black, he begins to pull the key out of his shirt and she examines it. As he explains, "We were frozen there for a long time. It was like time was stopped. I thought about the falling body" (Foer 97). Instantly, Oskar experiences a freezing of his

temporal perception then is brought back to an image of his trauma- the falling body. Two trauma victims coming together is just the start of the social integration Oskar needs to be able to manage his trauma. Yet, Oskar has not yet been able to narrate his trauma to a sympathetic listener, and this experience with Abby is no different. His trauma comes rushing back to him, and all Oskar has at this point is his scrapbook, which is a sort of synechdochal substitute for his language of trauma. Nancy Miller explains the possibility of images to stand in for text when focusing on loss and remembrance in Tatana Kellner's homage to the 9/11 victims. She writes, "Kellner pays homage to the verbal portraits that emerged from the desperate information the flyers supplied by eliminating the text, keeping instead the visual imprint of the face" (Miller 124). Because Oskar is keeping the secret of his trauma locked inside him, he has turned to using images and taking photographs to help him negotiate the complexities of his trauma. He includes no original text in his scrapbook, thus keeping images as his own homage to his and his father's lives. Not until later when Oskar is able to combine his experience with art and his knowledge of his trauma, is Oskar finally able to come to terms with what happened to his father.

Oskar has chosen what he considers a safe space to reveal his trauma to William, who has bared his soul concerning the loss of his own father to Oskar. Oskar's engagement with the present is necessary in order to give his testimony. By engaging the present he is acknowledging the past and is able to distance himself from the traumatic event. Oskar's contemplation and insightfulness about his trauma is particularly evident when he says, "And why didn't he say 'anyone'? *Is anyone there?* 'You' is just one person. Sometimes I think he knew I was there. Maybe he kept saying it to give me time to get brave enough to pick up" (Foer 301). Oskar's ability to remove himself from the grips of trauma in order to talk through it is the culminating event for his journey. Every interaction with the dozens of Blacks has prepared him for this

moment. He has finally reached the safe place where he can gather himself and focus his thoughts about his father's last phone call to him. Oskar tells William that he heard glass breaking and people screaming, "which makes me wonder if people were jumping" (Foer 301). He also timed the length of Thomas's call. Oskar understands what the timing indicates; as he puts it, "which means it ended at 10:28. Which was when the building came down. So maybe that's how he died" (Foer 301). Oskar's capacity to analyze and interpret different scenarios might be understood in terms of what LaCapra suggests about testimony—that it "provides some space in which one may gather oneself, engage the present, and attempt to open viable possibilities" (*History* 76). Instead of being haunted by one thought persistently, Oskar is now able to expand his thoughts and think of other possibilities. At this point he is no longer completely consumed by the trauma of the phone call because he gave his testimony to William. Uytterschout writes, "a trauma survivor must learn to accept that what seemed utterly impossible before, did in fact happen," and, "this acceptance can be facilitated by articulating what happened" ("Melancholy" 222). By making his scrapbook, Oskar is able to visualize the trauma of his father's death, thus allowing him to accept the impossible. Art—photography in particular—has allowed him to come to terms with his trauma. Oskar's ability to narrate his story to William is the exact opposite of what Grandpa could not do. Because Grandpa has an "unwillingness to cope with his traumatic past," he will never overcome or be able to cope with his trauma (Uytterschout 222). Conversely, Oskar has the means and ability to admit his trauma to William, rendering him able to begin the process of coping with his trauma.

The Memorial

While on his quest across New York City, Oskar encounters Georgia Black who, "in Staten Island, had turned her living room into a museum of her husband's life" (Foer 239). She keeps his Purple Heart, his shoes, diploma, and photos of his home, among other personal items. Oskar wonders where all of her belongings are, and it turns out that Georgia's husband is alive and keeps a museum of her stuff in the next room. I would argue that this act of memorializing is indicative of the overwhelming nature of a post-9/11 anxiety. One does not have to look far to read anxiety in post-9/11 novels, and certainly Foer's fits that description. In order to cope with this increasing anxiety and post-9/11 sense of doom, Georgia and her husband work to preserve their sense of safety. By memorializing each other, the Blacks do not have to wrestle with the existential question of how they will be remembered, because they already know. The preservation of each other's artifacts insists that they will live forever inside the museums they have constructed for one another after they have died.

The Blacks are attempting to make each other sacred, which is exactly what Oskar wants to do with his trauma. The idea of sacralizing a person, memory, or event is consistent with recent trends seeking "the expansion of passion for memory in our amnesiac society" (Misztal 67). Oskar constantly fears that he will forget his father, so one of his ultimate goals is to preserve the memory of him. By preserving his father's memory he will in turn sacralize his father's life and death. At the end of the novel, Oskar and Grandpa decide to dig up Thomas Jr.'s empty grave in order to properly memorialize him. At first, Oskar suggests, "filling the coffin with things from Dad's life, like his red pens or his jeweler's magnifying glass, which is called a loupe, or even his tuxedo. I guess I got the idea from the Blacks who made museums of each other" (Foer 321). As he ponders this idea, Grandpa reminds him that he may want to keep these things around the apartment as mementos, so they decide not to bury them. Instead, Grandpa

brings two large suitcases filled with letters to the gravesite, which confuses Oskar since he does not know yet that this man is his grandfather. Once he figures it out, the two presumably fill the coffin with the letters, every unsent letter Grandpa ever wrote to his son. Tali Lavi points out that since there is nothing to bury but an empty coffin, "the honor usually bestowed by a funeral is instead accorded with recollections and a protracted search that ultimately leads to Oskar arriving at a place of resolution" ("Presence and Absence" 76). Before, Oskar's ability to fill the void left by his father's death was only done metaphorically. Take the Central Park photo, for instance. Filling the emptiness was nearly impossible for Oskar. Finally, by the end of the novel, Oskar's capacity to fill that void with something tangible shows that he has finally begun to process his trauma of losing his father. This leads to a place of not just resolution, but a sense of closure. By filling the casket, he is able to replace his father's body with words written to his father, thus allowing for a type of closure.

The gravesite is a sacred place for Oskar, and is certainly considered sacred in Western society as well. A gravesite functions as a place to preserve the memory of the dead and a spot to mourn and remember for survivors. Misztal writes, "a sacred place is where the soul is and the attribution of a kind of iconic status to the past" ("Sacralization of Memory" 69). While critics may debate the definition of what constitutes a sacred place, I consider this to be a good place to begin. Considering Oskar has no idea how his father died and the fact that there were no remains of his body, Oskar must find something and somewhere tangible to connect to his father. The gravesite plays that role. He is able to make the gravesite sacred, which is shown when Oskar says, "we agreed to go on a Thursday night, which was the second anniversary of Dad's death, which seemed appropriate" (Foer 304). I would argue that by observing the anniversary of his father's death at the gravesite, he is sacralizing his father. Memorials themselves help to sacralize

not just the space of tragedy, but also the people, the memory, and the time of tragedy. Caruth writes, "memorializing through one's death or one's life, or memorializing an event through the relation between death and life, is perhaps linked to another question, the question of what it is that one means to recall (a life or a death)" (*Unclaimed Experience* 116. n 7). This is precisely what Oskar needs in order to alleviate his anxieties and control his PTSD. Having a place to recall the past is important for Oskar's future, in that it allows him to go to a sacred space to remember his father. To answer Caruth's question, to recall is a major step in working through a trauma. As has been extensively noted, trauma victims experience a repression of the trauma and can only begin to recover once they start to recall and acknowledge the trauma. Since Oskar gave his testimony to William before Oskar and Grandpa dug up Thomas Jr.'s grave, he may begin now to properly cope with the loss. Tali Lavi writes, "the honour usually bestowed by a funeral is instead accorded with recollections and a protracted search that ultimately leads to Osakr arriving at a place of resolution for both himself and his mother" ("Phantom Bodies" 76). This search has lead Oskar to this place of remembrance where he can acknowledge his trauma. The place that will happen is in a sacred space, the gravesite. Because Oskar compiled images in his scrapbook that enacted, as well as let him visualize, his trauma, Oskar is able to process the death of his father. Without art, photography and scrapbooking, Oskar would not be able to turn his loss of language into something productive. Without art he would be unable to turn the metaphor of loss into an actual working through of that loss.

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* lends itself to an in-depth critique of the use of photographs that are potentially re-traumatizing for viewers, as well as a discussion of the various traumas of the characters. In expanding this chapter, I would include looking at the role of public and private mourning for the characters. It would be important to

expand on the notion of domesticity in the novel, as well. Uytterschout contends, “Oskar’s musings about life and death is the struggle for a balance between self-destruction and self-preservation” (“Melancholy and Mourning” 228). Luckily for Oskar, because of his ability to create art and narrate his trauma to a sympathetic listener, he leans more closely to self-preservation. For Oskar and Grandpa specifically, their traumas are constantly being negotiated, and art plays a significant role in this negotiation. Unfortunately for Grandpa, his inability to speak his trauma along with his refusal to create art render him stuck in perpetual melancholia, doomed to repeat his trauma and never escape from his traumatic memory. Oskar, on the other hand, is able to grieve and process his trauma, which means he will be able to avoid the possibility of being stuck in a melancholic state. Just like the students in North Carolina that painted a banner for the family members of 9/11 victims, or the high school students who created a mosaic on the side of a building in Manhattan after the terrorist attack, Oskar has compiled a scrapbook of photographs and art that he can use as a way to make the trauma of losing his father more tangible. Art becomes a way for Oskar to manage and understand the trauma he has suffered. Because he uses art, and because he is able to narrate his trauma, Oskar has the ability to confront, understand, and potentially cope with the trauma of losing his father.

CHAPTER THREE

READING TRAUMA AND PERFORMANCE ART IN DON DELILLO'S *FALLING MAN*

In 2005, a man named Kerry Skarbakka set up a harness and wires to perform over thirty jumps from the roof of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Stunned onlookers, most of whom were aware that the performance would be taking place watched as he hurled his body from the roof, assuming various positions during each fall. After he finished his performance of these falls he was soon, "finding himself in the in the crossfire of harsh criticism" (Muntean 181). Skarbakka's falls from the museum brought back the trauma of 9/11 for some of the viewers, citizens, journalists, and politicians. Immediately his act was derided as, "nauseatingly offensive . . . and an utter disgrace," by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Governor George Pataki, of New York; and, as Laszlo Muntean puts it: "All the charges raised against him seem to give the same reading to his performance: a distasteful and irreverent reenactment of the horrors of 9/11" ("Men on Wire" 181). It is no coincidence if this sounds familiar. Just like Skarbakka, the titular character of DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* roamed the streets horrifying unsuspecting onlookers. Both performance artists wear business attire suitable for working at a firm in the World Trade Center. Skarbakka spent his career prior to the infamous Chicago debacle falling from other various objects: trees, showers, cars, and cliffs, and so on. Falling Man's performance emerged from the still-settling rubble of the World Trade Center collapse and began haunting the streets and citizens of Manhattan as a way of forcing the acknowledgement of the loss of life on that day. Like Skarbakka, a harness secures DeLillo's Falling Man during every jump—giving only the perception of death.

Since its emergence in the 1960s and 1970s, performance art has become a well-known art form, allowing the public to view versions of performance art in public spaces for free and often in a political context. According to art critic Deirdre Heddon, performance art is difficult to fit into one particular category. Nevertheless, it often includes, "social, political and economic circumstances… and individuals with particular visions and commitments, and informal and formal networks" ("Practices of Live Art" 4). It is impossible to ignore the importance of performance art in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*. The novel offers a depiction of the powerful effect trauma has on the public sphere and the spectators who are a central part of it. This chapter will investigate the role trauma plays in affecting public and private space in the novel. The terrorist event has a significant effect on the community in the novel, particularly Lianne Neudecker. I hope to elucidate how DeLillo's characters understand their traumatic experiences. Most importantly, though, this chapter will discuss Falling Man's various performances and expound upon the relationship between performance art and trauma, as well as elucidate the relationship between DeLillo's Falling Man, Richard Drew's falling man, and Philippe Petit's performance on wire.

Heddon's central claim is that performance art often employs the social, political, and economic circumstances of the time in order to highlight a given culture's *zeitgeist,* and I hope to show that the aforementioned artists perform in order to either evoke the sensation of trauma, force onlookers to confront their own personal traumas, or offer a different way to perceive the world. Often, as in the case of Falling Man, trauma is brought to the forefront. Laszlo Muntean makes the claim that his performances, "subscribe to a compulsion to repeat, symptomatic of the post-traumatic phase, as he renders his performance and the place that it transforms… a virtual site of memory" ("Men on Wire" 188). While I will expand on that claim, I hope to add that

memory plays an important function when viewing images that may be traumatizing. As will be seen, upon viewing art that objectively is not traumatizing, the referencing the art does, especially symbolically, can be traumatizing to the viewer. Additionally, the common idea of repetition and flashbacks will play an important role in this chapter as well. I hope to explain the significance of performance art and fine art and how they help, or at times, rather, hinder the negotiation of trauma in the sufferers' lives.

The Falling Man and the Man on Wire

Falling Man's stunt throughout the streets of New York City is reminiscent of another real-life performance from the recent past. During the construction of the Twin Towers in the early-1970s a Frenchman named Philippe Petit began a mission to highwire walk between the two buildings. In 1974, he succeeded. Petit's performance reemerged in social consciousness after the 9/11 attacks. As writer and literary critic Johanna Skibsrud argues, Petit offers a surrogate image and response to the "helplessness and fear evoked by the 'Falling Man'" ("Refloating the Falling Man" 17). Instead, his performance evoked hope and a sense of beauty. Because Petit's highwire walk returned to public discourse after 9/11 (mostly thanks to the documentary film *Man on Wire* released in 2008), the image of Petit walking among the towers replaced, for some, images of people falling on 9/11. Much like Petit's performance, DeLillo's Falling Man offers his falling body to viewers as a way to manage and understand the traumatic events of 9/11.

Falling Man begins with the World Trade Center collapsing as Keith Neudecker emerges from Ground Zero. His wife, Lianne, is at home in their apartment worried about what has happened to Keith. Although they are estranged—Keith lives in another apartment—he shows up at her apartment covered in ash. The trauma of seeing her husband narrowly escape

death is only one trauma Lianne has to process. When she was younger, Lianne's father killed himself by putting a shotgun in his mouth. His reason was because he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Unable to "submit to the long course of senile dementia," he instead took his life—and left Lianne and her mother, Nina, to live with the aftermath (DeLillo 40). Nina, a former professor, now lives in the city and whose only romantic relationship is with a man named Martin, an art dealer, who may or may not "have a wife in Paris" (DeLillo 42). Keith begins an affair with a woman, Florence Givens, who was also in the tower that he was in when the plane hit. The affair is fleeting and is mostly therapeutic for Florence, as it gives her a chance to narrate her trauma to a sympathetic listener. While Keith and Florence are the only protagonists in the novel who were in the towers during their destruction, this novel is not necessarily about them. *Falling Man* is Lianne's story, and her character and interior is the one to which we have the most access.

While not a surrogate image, Falling Man certainly is a synechdotal image of the 9/11 attacks. His presence embodies the terror of that day, while also reminding viewers of one of the most documented reasons for PTSD from it—seeing the bodies fall. Of Petit's performance, Skibsrud writes, "This invitation to dance face to face with death is perhaps what we find so compelling in the imagery of Petit's highwire act, especially next to the helplessness attributed to the Falling Man[1]" ("Refloating the Falling Man" 20). Petit emerged from the roof of Building One and managed to spend an unauthorized forty-five minutes on the wire, completing eight crossings, 1350 feet above the ground. The walk was beautiful, dangerous, breathtaking, and forced a new perspective of the buildings onto the viewers. Petit even came away from the walk thinking that he saw the buildings differently than before. Tears filled the eyes of many viewers.

[1] Skibsrud refers to Richard Drew's photograph of the man falling from the World Trade Center when she writes "Falling Man". She is not referring to the Falling Man in DeLillo's novel.

He exited his precarious wire and returned to the steady ground of the World Trade Center roof only to be arrested. I would like to apply Skibsrud's statement about Petit's performance to DeLillo's Falling Man and his performances. Whether Falling Man knows it or not, his role, in part, is to invite people to come face to face with death. Lianne, one of the protagonists of the novel, does, in fact, come face to face with him in an alley, thus rendering the metaphor literal. Falling Man himself is a representation of death—specifically, death by jumping or falling.

Skibsrud explains further, "Like Petit, we look not at the towers but at the space between them, and it is this new perspective that permits us, in the words of Breytenbach, to 'dance, even with death'—not *in defiance* of death, but rather *in spite* of, *because* of, *alongside* of death—in a manner" ("Refloating the Falling Man" 20). By replacing "Petit" with "Falling Man," we can grasp a different kind of performance that brings viewers even with death. While Petit's performance was indeed more of a dance with death, Falling Man plunges into an encounter with it. Although, one could argue that Petit's performance was in defiance of death, Falling Man certainly performs his act because of it. Skibsrud writes that Petit comes even with death. I agree, but I would also argue that Falling Man brings his audience even with it. This means that he brings them close to and equal with death. To come even with death, as Skibsrud suggests, means, in a way, to match it. One of Falling Man's purposes is to bring his audience into an encounter with death. First, though, Falling Man has to confront death for himself. For instance, DeLillo writes about Falling Man's second jump as witnessed by Lianne: "The train comes slamming through and he turns his head and looks into it (into his death by fire) and then brings his head back around and jumps" (*Falling Man* 167). In this instance, the performance artist addresses two of the ways people died on 9/11—one by fire, one by jumping. Yet, he refuses to die in the fire the way so many victims did that day, and fully grasps his role as the falling man.

Those who jumped presumably saw the possibility of being engulfed by flames and chose to turn their heads back around and look away from that death. By bringing their heads back around, Falling Man and the jumpers refuse to die by fire and instead pursue a possible death by jumping. The imagery conveyed here by DeLillo is of a person (a man, for instance) standing on a ledge, feeling the fire roar behind him. He knows that if he stays, his body will be consumed with flames, and that will be how he dies. What happens is he understands that he has two choices left to him—suffocate and burn in the fire, or risk death by jumping. The Falling Man can only choose the latter. Because Falling Man looks into death, he specifically comes even with it. He is equal to it, and chooses to transcend it, in a way. By looking into one type of death and choosing another, Falling Man chooses to do his act in spite of death, just as Skibsrud writes of Petit.

In Falling Man's rendition of Drew's photograph, the falling man is not helpless. Although his performance mimics the helplessness of those who fell or jumped that day, his performance is actually more like photography. Just as Drew's photograph allows the falling man to freeze in time, Falling Man's performance does the same. He is safely attached to a harness and rope, thus allowing the viewers to experience the shock of seeing a man fall, yet get to experience the redemptive image of seeing the man safe. Is it possible that in fact Falling Man's performance is not re-traumatizing, but actually helping the unsuspecting spectators? In order to work through a trauma, the sufferer must first acknowledge the trauma. By viewing Falling Man's performance, the viewer—Lianne for instance—is forced to recognize the traumatic image. In doing so, she is forced to reconcile the previous images of her trauma with the new image of the Falling Man: falling, then hanging, and not dying. Yet we may ask if it is unfair for Falling Man to force Lianne to confront her trauma. Shouldn't Lianne be able to

choose whether or not she wants to work through it? The trauma sufferer must choose for him-or herself how and when to work through the trauma. Trauma, according to Pollock, is "an event of extremity that overwhelms a subject's capacity to integrate what has happened to him or her in their lives" ("Art/ Trauma/ Representation 44). Because Lianne has experienced trauma, her capacity to integrate the experience of seeing Falling Man perform into her life is confusing and difficult. She is not the only member of his audience that finds his act appalling and vulgar. Whether he knows it or not, Falling Man brings further trauma to his audience. Falling Man is the subject that tries to make sense of the trauma of 9/11 to his spectators. Though arrogant and hurtful, he may be trying to relieve the spectators, his public, from this pain

The image of the Falling Man falling, though, as has been expressed, is not usually redemptive, and often times is re-traumatizing for the viewer. Lianne, especially during her second encounter with the Falling Man, repeatedly brings up the notion of revisiting a trauma. Upon viewing him, Lianne begins to panic and flees the scene of his performance. Again and again, Lianne experiences symptoms related to PTSD—besides panic, fear, a flashback to her father's suicide, and the physical feeling of blood rushing from her head. Time slows down and simultaneously speeds up—she is stuck in both the past and the present; she sees another viewer, "attached to his spot for half a lifetime," and she sees "things as fleeting shimmers" (DeLillo 168-169). Falling Man once again brings back the moments of trauma for his viewers, especially Lianne—and this is not redemptive.

Perspective, as Skibsrud suggests, is something that altered during Petit's performance; and, I would argue, it altered even further after the 9/11 attacks. Art, particularly sculpture or performance art dedicated to tragedy, allows people to view their surroundings from a different perspective. Drew's photograph offers its viewers only one perspective—that of a man in

freefall, accepting death, frozen in time, although inevitably dying. With Falling Man's performance, his viewers get to experience various perspectives—of death, of falling, of art. Van Schepen argues that, "In the midst of hurtling, of a body thrown, there is an internal state of meaning-making instead of arbitrary violence" ("*Tumbling Woman* Debacle" 134). Philippe Petit is a body wagering with death *not* to be thrown, not to hurtle himself from the towers. He is a body rocking back and forth against the wind—he chooses to be there. Petit's meaning-making is a dance with death—a way of looking between the towers. By looking in between the towers, his audience encounters a perspective that is about the person in contact with death and not about the towers themselves. In his performance, the audience looks at him, balancing between the towers. Internally, he knows his act is framed by death. In fact, he says of his performance, "If I die, what a beautiful death" (*Man on Wire*). This makes his performance more meaningful, the fact that it is surrounded by possible death. For his viewers, the performance was an experience of beauty. The problem, though, is that a death from falling can be perceived as beautiful if the death happens during an act by choice. But what happens when this is an act brought to the victim unannounced? By this I mean, a death by falling (Petit's for instance) would be rendered beautiful, to him at least, because he chose to be on the roof of the World Trade Center performing art, doing what he loved. This is opposed to the death of the 9/11 jumpers who were forced to jump to their deaths. Their deaths were and will continue to be perceived as tragic.

Beauty remains to be an unavoidable topic in any discussion of Petit's performance. Annie, his girlfriend, says:

> I saw Philippe up there. It was extraordinary. It was so, so beautiful! It was like he was walking on a cloud. And there were such amazing moments…when he lay down…we were thrilled by this image of Philippe laying down up above…and, and the very

> powerful moment was when he …he… It was so beautiful… when he knelt down…there was a moment when he knelt down and saluted (*Man on Wire*).

For Annie, Petit's performance inspired only beauty. She sees a body wagering with death, and winning. She sees a body overcoming the possibility of death, and that makes, for her, the meaning of his performance. The beauty of it all overrides the fear of any possibility of death, or perhaps, the wagering with death *makes* the meaning. There was no trauma as with Falling Man. There is no violence, no arbitrary violence or death—only spectacle and performance.

Petit, though, would shake his head at a possible analysis of his act. He says, as soon as he was done with his performance, people were asking him the same question repeatedly. He says, "You know, 'Why. Why'… and that was a very, again, in my way of seeing America, very American finger snapping question. I did something magnificent and mysterious and I got a practical 'Why'. And the beauty of it is that I did not have a why" (*Man on Wire).* Petit is saying that a "why" may not be necessary when encountering works of beauty and works of art. He indeed did do something magnificent. His performance has replaced DeLillo's rendition of the Falling Man, as well as Drew's image of the falling man with something remarkable. Because of the reemergence of his highwire act after 9/11, the image of Petit balancing between the two towers could possibly be seen as a different way of viewing the towers. Instead of seeing them as a place of death for thousands of people, Petit's performance is a way to view them as a source of a life-affirming event. His encounter with death begs the question of why, though. DeLillo's Falling Man, on the other hand, begs to be asked "why" of his act, as it bridges the gap between performance and death.

Falling Man is a body who chooses to fall. He throws his body in the face of death, knowing he will survive—the very opposite experience of the 9/11 jumpers. The meaning

making comes from his performance. Lianne's interpretation of his performance is that she sees her husband in the act. She sees her husband's friend's death and her husband's escape from it. The novel begins with Keith, Lianne's husband, emerging from the ashes of the World Trade Center just minutes after the crumble and fall of the first tower. Keith was able to escape from the second tower, making his way down flight after flight of stairs and showing up at Lianne's door "all blood and slag, reeking of burnt matter, with pinpoint glints of silvered glass in his face" (DeLillo 87). Keith's friends and fellow poker players, Hovanis and Rumsey, died in the attack. Lianne sees their deaths and her husband's avoidance of it. Falling Man, on the other hand, sees much more than Lianne, perhaps. DeLillo writes, "She thought the bare space he stared into must be his own, not some grim vision of others falling" (*Falling Man* 167). He looks again, not into his own death like before, but into a bare space void of death. He does not, in this instance, turn his head back into death; he does not see others' deaths, a privileged view for him—a view that perhaps his audience cannot escape. He looks into blank space, and that is where the meaning lies. The void, the nothingness, is where Falling Man finds meaning. There is no death where he stares.

Perhaps, then, DeLillo suggests that the only way to reenact the trauma of the falling bodies is to believe that they never happened. Again, as with Oskar Schell's scrapbook, there is absence in Falling Man's performance—the absence of death. By pretending that the deaths never happened, Falling Man can replace the deaths of the jumpers / falling bodies from the World Trade Center with his own body. By reenacting the trauma for his onlookers, he possibly erases the deaths of those who died and instead offers his body as a replacement image. There is no violence in his performance—only an act performed to inspire thought and meaning. Yet the viewers see traumatic occurrences, and must look beyond their own trauma to find meaning in

his act. For Falling Man's spectators, they must find that meaning for themselves through his art. There are several meanings they can take from his performance, and confronting death and trauma is one of them. Perhaps Lianne and the other spectators' reactions of horror play on their Puritan, Western sensibilities. Discussing death is difficult, and often euphemisms are used to replace the concept. "Passed on," "passed away," and "departed" are all common ways of referring to death without actually saying the word. These other ways of talking about death mollify the harshness of it. The indirectness of the discussion of death is what Falling Man hopes to challenge. His audience, though, is less willing to participate in the open, direct interaction with death, particularly death by falling. They find the spectacle grotesque exactly because it makes them, and us as readers, confront death and dying.

The spectators of Richard Drew's photograph are faced with an entirely different interpretive dilemma. The photograph tells the story of a man (a body) put there by circumstance, unlike Petit and the Falling Man. He is not there by choice, yet he hurtles, just as Falling Man does. In this so-called performance, there is arbitrary violence. Still, like Munteán, I would like for a moment to "recontextualize the man's fall as a performance" ("Men on Wire" 178). The man is showing viewers of the photograph a particular action documented at a particular time. His performance of dying lasted maybe thirty seconds and Drew snapped twelve photos during that span. Drew's photo depicts a man 'at ease' with death. The image garnered negative attention from various news sources and critics, deriding the photo and its publication as exploitative and unnecessary, ghoulish and sadistic (Kroes 5). Because of the nature of the photo, it was quickly censored, thus denying the public the opportunity to acknowledge and contemplate this person's death by falling. Rob Kroes himself even asks, "Is it so hard to read a meaning in [the jumpers'] fate?" ("Ascent of Falling Man" 4). There must be meaning here then,

according to Kroes. To inspect and dissect a photograph of this nature and not find meaning in it would render both the photograph captured and the man's death ineffectual. Fortunately, Kroes explains the various ways the photograph has been interpreted—some macabre, some hopeful, and some redemptive. A process of making meaning of the jumper's fate through the photograph has taken place. By finding our own way, as viewers, to make meaning from Drew's photograph allows us to battle the existential questions related to death. Conversely, though, the photo allows us to ask meaningful questions related to life, as well. As one relative of a 9/11 victim so aptly puts it: "I hope we're not trying to figure out who he is and more to figure out who we are through watching it" (Kroes 7). Like Petit's and Falling Man's performances, this photo urges us to evaluate who we are through viewing these types of images of death and suffering.

Sigmund Freud proposed that there is an obsession with death by humans, and whether that means an obsession with avoiding it or an obsession with viewing it, it is always there—and reactions to this photo prove that, and hopefully help us understand who we are. As a country, the U.S. wanted to run from this image and substitute more heroic images of (almost exclusively male) firefighters, police officers, and rescue workers. An image that highlights the vulnerability of the nation would not be tolerated. America could not be shown as weak, as a victim, as fallible, penetrable. László Munteán reminds us that the photograph was denounced as "irreverent and subversive," and "before long, it vanished from the media, along with other depictions of death" ("Men on Wire" 172). Images of the loss of buildings soon replaced images of the dead. Buildings became bodies[2], and forced us to mourn the loss of the buildings-as-people as opposed to the actual loss of human life. Yet the question of who the man falling in Drew's photograph is remained pervasive in the weeks and months after the photograph was

[2] Munteán discusses the anthropomorphizing of the buildings after the attack. I am using his idea here.

published. “We have known,” writes Richard Drew, “who the Falling man is all along;” he is every person who died that day (Qtd. in Munteán 173). He is, in fact, the psyche of the American people—obsessed with and trying to understand death. This is the purpose of his performance. What makes the photograph so disturbing is that we as viewers ask ourselves, *how could he choose this*? As viewers, the suicide taboo disturbs our sensibilities. The photograph makes us question our own actions: *what would I do*? It lends itself to selfishness, perhaps a selfishness we do not want to acknowledge. We, naturally, as viewers, put ourselves in that position—in which case, the photograph becomes not about the falling man, but about ourselves, and how we view the world. It begs us to ask: *how do I want to die?* Every person knows death is inevitable; yet the photograph makes us, just as Lianne does when she sees Falling Man in the alley, confront that inevitability.

Memory plays an important role in processing and understanding trauma. DeLillo describes a city fraught with terrifying and tragic memories for its citizens. The city becomes a landscape with a memory of its own. Place becomes inextricably linked with trauma and terror in the novel, and Falling Man reminds his viewers of that fact. What happens with trauma is that “place, therefore, becomes central to representations of trauma in the novel because the physical place of suffering and remembrance of loss becomes an identifiable source for the author to explicate the multiple meanings of the event” (Balaev 5). Lianne’s entropic view of the world begins as soon as she enters the story and much of that is focused on space. She looks around her apartment and starts seeing it as “altered space” (DeLillo 7). She is unable to fully grasp how she feels about the trauma that has overtaken the private space of her apartment as well as the public space of the Manhattan streets. The private space of her apartment is where she found out about the planes hitting the buildings, and when her estranged husband arrived at her door covered in

soot and ash, and the initial shock of the trauma became bound to that space. Because of the connection between trauma, memory, and space, Lianne's perception is indeed altered. It is typical of the mind to perceive things differently after a traumatic event; in fact, Keith, her traumatized husband, emerges from the towers and, "began to see things, somehow, differently . . . .There was something critically missing from the things around him . . . They were unseen, whatever that means" (DeLillo 5). Here, trauma changes the way Keith perceives the physical, public space. His place is altered and becomes bound to trauma and loss. As the second tower falls behind him, Keith understands that the change of the Manhattan skyline is parallel to his change of perception of the world.

Falling Man and Trauma

Lianne witnesses Falling Man twice in the novel. The second time this happens, she is alone and is able to watch his set up of the performance, witnessing him not just as the performer Falling Man, but just as man. This is short-lived, as Lianne is unable to fully comprehend the extent of her trauma. She tries to rationalize what she is seeing in front of her: "She wished she could believe this was some kind of antic street theater, an absurdist drama that provokes onlookers to share a comic understanding of what is irrational…This was too near and deep, too personal" (DeLillo 163). With this, we become aware of the inability of trauma victims to make sense of that which seems bizarre. The traumatized mind is fractured and already perceives reality differently, for example, experiencing flashbacks. The traumatized mind of the victim is already working hard to make sense of seemingly ordinary experiences, thus, when faced with something out of the ordinary, the disturbance can be too much to process. Richard Gray notes that the trauma sufferer experiences "confusion of feeling, the groping after a language with which to say the unsayable . . . new forms of terror . . . and the disruption of the nervous system"

(*After the Fall* 27). The absurdist drama unfolding in front of her is too much for her to handle, and she runs away from him dangling there in the street. In a way, Lianne is trying to escape her personal traumas—her father's suicide, her estranged husband's emergence from the ashes of the Twin Towers, the possibility of being afflicted with Alzheimer's—by trying to escape the sight of Falling Man confronting her with death and her previous traumas. However, as trauma often plays itself out, we understand that it will always come back. The event is always hiding, waiting in the alley of the mind, the unconscious, to reappear. Sometimes it comes back more perverse if repressed long enough, at other times it stares the victim in the face—as Falling Man does to Lianne that second time she sees him, all alone. That time, "she could have spoken to him but that was another plane of being, beyond reach" (DeLillo 168). Lianne is strong enough to look at Falling Man playing the role of her trauma, but she has not reached the point that trauma victims hope for, which is the ability to articulate what it is that haunts her. Lianne runs, and in so doing, flees the burdens of her traumas.

The only character whose interior we are allowed into that witnesses the performance artist perform his stunt is Lianne. The first time Lianne witnesses the act she is with her young son, Justin. Falling Man dangles above the street from a steel structure:

> She'd heard of him, a performance artist known as Falling Man. He'd appeared several times in the last week, unannounced, in various parts of the city, suspended from one or another structure, always upside down, wearing a suit, a tie and dress shoes. He brought it back, of course, those stark moments in the burning towers when people fell or were forced to jump…There were people shouting up at him, outraged at the spectacle, the puppetry of human desperation, a body's last fleet breath and what it held. It held the gaze of the world, she thought. (33)

For Lianne, this is another reminder of the traumatic event of 9/11. The event of 9/11 is in Lianne's mind all the time, and the experience of seeing Falling Man reminds her of the people that fell or jumped from the towers that day. Haunted by images of the dead from the attack, Lianne eventually has to hide from the sight of Falling Man. He brings back too many painful memories from which she wishes to escape. At the time of her first sighting of Falling Man, Lianne turns into a spectator, a forced audience of Falling Man's performance.

Falling Man is the figure that retraumatizes the traumatized in that he is, as Duvall concludes, not simply a representation of the horror of 9/11, it is the horror of 9/11 itself ("Narrating 9/11" 158). By acting as a body falling from the World Trade Center on 9/11, Falling Man becomes the bodies that fell that day for the viewers—particularly for Lianne. Falling Man's performance, according to Duvall, invites the spectator's reflection on 9/11. Although he invites this reflection, it does not come for Lianne. Her trauma has stunted her ability to reflect thoughtfully on her traumas. At this point, the disturbing sight of Falling Man has only allowed feelings of fear and disgust for Lianne. His performance, for the audience, is "disturbing enough to stop traffic" (DeLillo 33). Objectively, seeing a man perform an act of art should not traumatize the audience. It is because of what the act represents that makes the act horrifying for the spectators. Falling Man, while forcing people to be unwilling participants in his performance, causes more damage to the already wounded psyches of the citizens of Manhattan. It is arrogant of Falling Man to believe that he has the power to either harm and retraumatize the traumatized, or think that he is helping the wounded citizens by forcing them to deal with their trauma.

Art historian Griselda Pollock explains, "the purpose of art attempting to engage in any way with trauma is different for the traumatized victim who may well wish to be delivered of the unbearable presence of the traumatic experience" ("Art/Trauma/Representation" 43). Falling

Man's performance may well deliver the spectators from their ever-constant present state of trauma. Unfortunately, his performance instead engages trauma in a way that makes his performance too difficult to comprehend or reflect on for the victims of trauma. For someone that has never experienced a traumatic event, particularly the trauma of seeing someone fall to his or her death, then Falling Man's performance would have an entirely different meaning. Since he performs around Manhattan it is safe to say that the majority of the people he performs in front of have been traumatized by 9/11, seeing as how the planes crashed into buildings in lower Manhattan.

Trauma survivors use repetition as a way of negotiating PTSD and consider the possibility that their particular traumatic experience needs to be worked out through repetition. There is the trauma, and there is the working through of that trauma, which the Falling Man provides when he repeats the trauma of the event by physically reenacting it. Falling Man, as Aaron Mauro writes, is the incarnation of 9/11 in that he is "producing a neurotic compulsion to unsuccessfully return to an inaccessible event" ("Languishing of the Falling Man" 588). It can be said that Falling Man is not just a performance artist, but also the manifestation of all of the wounded psyches and unhealed traumatic wounds of 9/11 Manhattan. The performance that he puts on is there to make spectators confront the painful memories they have endured and in most cases, have repressed. Either Falling Man is the hero Manhattan needs, or is simply the horrifying menace of which it must rid itself. Moreover, the desire to repeat the trauma lends itself to the desire to repeat and consume the events of 9/11. Noha Hamdy writes, "there is a desire to repeat and adapt particular acts of narrative and visual consumption of 9/11" ("Revisiting Transmediality" 249). This is clear within the novel, as readers see the repetition and consumption of 9/11 as a spectacle to be taken in by those watching Falling Man, and

Falling Man himself as someone who believes an acceptable way to understand his own trauma is by repeating it as a performance.

The Falling Body / The Artistic Body

According to Linda S. Kauffman, *Falling Man* is obsessed with the corporeal body—in motion, in bed, in suspense; and the burden Keith carries centers on bodies—burned, shrieking, and falling ("Bodies in Rest and Motion" 135). Falling Man embodies, so to speak, the novel's obsession with bodies. He falls, he twists, he makes his audience confront his falling body. He is, according to Skibsrud, arrogant, and should be ashamed for what he does with his body: "how dare [he] do that with his own body" (Skibsrud 19). It is not what Falling Man represents—the horror of that day—but perhaps what he manages to do with his body that is so shameful. He is throwing his body and in so doing, his life, in the spectators' faces. His performances of falling began only a few days after the attack. Besides stunning and shocking his onlookers, his performance also seems to mock the deaths of the victims. It has been well documented that the sight of the bodies falling from the World Trade Center were some of the most horrifying images from 9/11 and the act of capturing them on film was often met with equal horror. By hurtling his able body, untouched by fire or debris, in the faces of the citizens he is in a sense, laughing in their faces.

Yet, his subjectivity is questionable because he is a performance artist. Can audiences get angry at a man who is playing a role? Falling Man seems to be presenting himself as an object-as-body. He is nameless, which, like Drew's falling suggests the critique that perhaps he is everyone who fell. He may not be himself because he is performing. Laura Di Prete writes, "DeLillo's narrative imagines trauma as necessarily bound to the emergence of a 'foreign body,'

a phantomlike figure in full flesh that makes the workings of a traumatic memory accessible" ("Performing the Body" 483). Lianne and presumably the other spectators in the crowd are able to use the site of this foreign, anonymous body of Falling Man as a way to work through their personal traumas of seeing men and women falling from the towers. Because he is anonymous for Lianne and the other spectators, he brings no other background to his performance. This allows for a more thorough processing of his act, as well as the initial trauma, for his viewers. His foreign body has no bias and offers no prejudice to his onlookers. Hi performance is for everyone and is available because he plays the role of an object. It is this idea that would re-imagine Falling Man as an everyman figure. Moreover, the body of Falling Man, then, is not just a body; he is the trauma itself.

Painting

It is not just Falling Man's performance art that plays an integral part in the novel. Fine art also makes an impact. Lianne visits her mother Nina six days after the attack and spends time with Martin, Nina's lover. The two sit in silence as Nina drifts off to sleep. Martin walks over to one of the Morandi paintings; Lianne joins him and they inspect it together:

> Two of the taller items were dark and somber, with smoky marks and smudges, and one of them was partly concealed by a long-necked bottle. The bottle was a bottle, white. The two dark objects, too obscure to name, were the things that that Martin was referring to. "What do you see?" he said. She saw what he saw. She saw the towers. (49)

This is compelling in the sense that art and terror are brought together in this instance, just as Falling Man is an artist who terrorizes the streets. Unlike the paintings discussed in the previous chapter, the Morandi works do not objectively represent a traumatic occurrence. The viewers though, Martin and Lianne, read their own traumas in the painting anyway. To borrow the terms

from the previous chapter coined by Barthes—*studium* and *punctum*—I hope to elucidate the meaning of the painting as well as the importance of it for Martin and Lianne. The *studium*, to reiterate, is the cultural and political interpretation and is the result of the artist's intentions. The *punctum* is that which pricks the viewer. It is the emotional, wounding, pressing detail influencing the response of the viewer. The *studium* is highlighted in DeLillo's use of repetition: "…long-necked bottle. The bottle was a bottle". This serves as a sort of reminder for the viewers and us. It is reminiscent of the person with a traumatized mind talking oneself out of a flashback. The bottle is a bottle, and nothing else. Yet, Lianne and Martin look beyond the realism of the bottle to the two shadowy figures. The *punctum* of these figures pricks them immediately, and through these smoky, somber figures they see the World Trade Center.

Trivializing Trauma

If 9/11 is something that can be consumed, as Hamdy asserts, then it is also something that can be sold. The novel *Falling Man* is something to be bought, which begs the question: does the novel itself trivialize the event of 9/11 if Falling Man the performance artist trivializes it as well? Creating something for monetary gain, I would argue, diminishes the capacity for it to be fully, and un-exploitatively significant, although art tries repeatedly to acknowledge tragedy and help viewers understand it. Hamdy argues, "In more concrete terms, the 9/11 story as 'two planes crashing into the Twin Towers' is not the real event but how it folds and unfolds in narrative and visual representations, the fold being the 'Event'" ("Revisiting Transmediality" 251). A trivializing of the event by art would not do the event justice; but art may actually accentuate the reality of it. Creating representations of it only makes it more real to viewers and readers alike. Falling Man, then, has been showing up "Dangling from the balcony of an apartment building on Central Park West. Suspended from the roof of a loft building in the

Williamsburg section of Brooklyn," to make the event more real (DeLillo 219). Yet, his performance repeatedly forces us to ask: are there some events that are too big for art to deal with in a meaningful way? DeLillo tries to answer this question. I would also like to attempt to answer this question with a metaphor. 9/11 is the Grand Canyon of catastrophic events in United States history. If an artist were to paint the Grand Canyon, he or she would be stuck with two choices. To try to paint the entire Grand Canyon would be impossible, as it is too big. To paint a section of it, and maybe include a cactus in the rendition, would trivialize the enormity of it. DeLillo tries to paint the whole tragedy of 9/11 by giving a narrative that starts and ends in the towers. He offers characters who were in them, heard the planes, and managed to escape. He also gives us the character of Hammad, the suicide bomber on the first plane. He gives us the survivors' lives after the fact. DeLillo also gives us Falling Man. Falling Man is the cactus of the event. He is only one part of it, though a significant and terrifying part of the event. Falling Man's act may indeed trivialize the deaths of the jumpers, but DeLillo's novel is able to show the entirety of the event, from before the planes hit to the effect the trauma has on the characters' lives. Three years go by in the novel, which means there is a chance to see the consequences of everyone's actions. Keith transforms from an estranged husband, to a distant lover of Lianne, to an absentee father of their son Justin. The novel shows Keith's previously innocuous poker night with his (now dead) friends transform into an addiction that takes him to Las Vegas. When engaging art as a way to negotiate, understand, or replay a traumatic experience, the trauma gets transformed into an aesthetic experience. The medium of the trauma changes.

In the last section of the three-part novel, we come to realize that the Falling Man has a name: David Janiak. Lianne skims the obituaries of a six-day old newspaper and comes across a "brief and sketchy" obituary, "written in haste to meet a deadline…[His] acts were noted in a

single sentence, pointing out that he was the performance artist known as Falling Man" (DeLillo 219). After reading this, Lianne drops the newspaper and proceeds to lie down in bed, and soon after awakes so she can search for him on the Internet. She finds dozens of links chronicling his falls across Manhattan and subsequent arrests. His death of apparent natural causes allows Lianne, as well as readers, to question his acts in a larger sense. In what sense, we may ask, is David Janiak, the Falling Man, a terrorist himself? If he is in part a terrorist, is he also an inspiration? Architect Julian Bonder writes, "yet, as embodiments of art in the public realm, their value is not just derived from the artwork, but from their ability to direct attention to larger issues" ("Memory, Trauma, Public Space" 64). The larger issue here is acknowledging and accepting trauma; yet, a general consensus is that, "neither art nor architecture can compensate for public trauma or mass murder" (Bonder 65). Yet what Falling Man does is try to get people to think about terror, acceptance, and memory in a broader, more poignant way. I would also argue that he, like Petit, hopes his audience grasps a new or different perspective of public space, especially as that space relates to trauma. Oliver speculates that, "The model of spectatorship suggested by performance art takes as its very foundation the discomfort of the viewer, and in so doing it achieves a clear political goal" ("Trauma, Bodies, and Performance Art" 122). The reader never hears from Falling Man, only plays the role of spectator, just as Lianne is spectator. Introducing the idea of a spectator in the novel through the medium of performance art allows for "the formation of what trauma systematically erases: an internal witness" (Di Prete 489). Traumatic events effectively stunt not only the character's advancement as an indivual, but also confuse the traumatized person's memory and perception of what exactly was so traumatic. For Lianne to witness a recurrence of the traumatic event is to replay the trauma in her mind. It manifests itself with Falling Man, however confusing her more. Her mind is chaotic along with

the city in which she is living. It is only through processing her trauma will Lianne's mind become less chaotic and fraught with traumatic memory.

The real-life falling man, Kerry Skarbakka, had mostly notorious fame during his performance of falling. DeLillo's Falling Man remained a more nuanced and intriguing figure for the citizens of New York. Lianne remembers him even after his death. Performance is fraught with emotion and politics in DeLillo's novel and offers various insights into the mind of a traumatized individual. Traumatic memory plays a significant role in the novel, as well as the processing of the traumatic event. Lianne, the main protagonist of the novel, offers a particularly apt depiction of a traumatized individual. I hope to have shown that performance art, as well as some fine art, either help, or at times, rather, hinder the negotiation of trauma in the sufferers' lives. DeLillo's novel offers a depiction of the powerful effect trauma has on various characters, particularly Lianne. I hope to have shown the relationship between performance art and trauma through the use of DeLillo's Falling Man, Richard Drew's falling man, and Philippe Petit's performance on his highwire. It is impossible to ignore the importance and prominence of performance art in DeLillo's novel as a tool which Lianne can use to process her various traumas: her husband's escape from death, as well as her father's suicide. Of course, there are more instances of trauma besides Lianne's in the novel: for instance, Keith and Florence's trauma of being in the tower that was hit by one of the planes, but an in depth analysis of Lianne's traumas and her negotiation of them through Falling Man's performance art is particularly relevant. Falling Man evokes the sensation of trauma, as well as forces his spectators to confront their traumas.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING TRAUMA AND ARCHITECTURE IN AMY WALDMAN'S *THE SUBMISSION*

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away[3].

One year after the attacks on the World Trade Center, composer John Adams and the New York Philharmonic premiered Adams's memorial piece *On the Transmigration of Souls*, which became, "one of the first large-scale, official efforts to memorialize the victims of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center" (Blim 383). Consisting of an orchestra, chorus, children's choir, and pre-recorded sounds on tape, the piece uses words, phrases, and names from the Missing Persons posters that plastered the area surrounding Ground Zero after the attack. Additionally, Adams used the famous last words of flight attendant Madeline Amy Sweeney aboard Flight 11 right before it flew into the World Trade Center North Tower: "I see water and buildings," she told ground control when asked what her location was (Blim 387). Adams used her words as a repetitive device in his piece, mimicking the idea of a flashback. Besides referencing a flashback throughout the piece, Sweeney's words can be seen as "an apt description of the 9/11 memorial itself" (Blim 388). Consisting of two reflecting pools that sit in the footprints of the Twin Towers, Michael Arad's winning design for the 9/11 memorial, "Reflecting Absence[4]," uses water where the buildings used to stand.

Adams, upon agreeing to compose the memorial piece, poses a question about music that can be transferred to the larger question of memorials themselves. He asks, "Are the Enlightenment profundities of Beethoven or the "yearning spiritual quests" of Mahler "no longer

[3] From Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias."
[4] Details of Arad's memorial taken from *A Place of Remembrance*; ed. Blais, Alison and Lynn Rasic

possible in our more ironic and painfully self-conscious contemporary climate?"" (qtd. in Blim 401). By applying this question to architecture and perhaps the act of mourning itself, maybe we can try to understand what type of memorial is necessary for an event like 9/11. The attacks were supposed to be the end of irony, as declared by several writers for the *New York Times*, yet twelve years later, it seems that irony has only gotten stronger[5]. In order to combat that, the memorial to 9/11 needed to be earnest and embrace the Enlightenment profundities and yearning spiritual quests that memorials (and music) had so readily done in the past. After 9/11, Roger Rosenblatt wrote that "Sept. 11 might at least "spell the end of the age of irony," said that while irony had its place and time, this was not it" (qtd. in Newman 2). Mourning is a process that needs to be considered more earnestly, and irony has no place in that process, which is what Waldman tries to assert throughout her novel. It is so earnest, in fact, that characters die because of the process of deciding which design should be chosen for the 9/11 memorial.

Historical musicologist Dan Blim articulates the roles of memorials in contemporary American culture; he writes, "Memorials perform the task of figuratively picking up the pieces, helping us to remember the lives of the dead as well as their deaths" (Meaningful Adjacencies" 385). Throughout the previous chapters, I hope to have articulated the importance and prominence of the remembrance of life and death through art. Continuing to try to understand the aesthetic and artistic processing of trauma, I will focus more specifically on the role of the memorial in Amy Waldman's novel *The Submission* and plan to elucidate the ways trauma and art, particularly architecture, intersect. Blim quotes sociologist Neil Smelser about memorialization: "To memorialize is to force a memory on us by the conspicuous and

[5] See Michiko Kakutani's "The Age of Irony Isn't Over After All; Assertions of Cynicism's Demise Belie History," David Kirkpatrick's "Pronouncements on Irony Draw a Line in the Sand," and Andy Newman's "Irony Is Dead. Again. Yeah, Right" for further discussion of the effect 9/11 had on perceptions of irony.

continuous physical presence of a monument; at the same time a memorial also conveys the message that now that we have paid our respects to a trauma, we are now justified in forgetting about it" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 385). Essentially, we remember in order to forget. Not only that, but what memorialists including Waldman's architect Mohammed Khan hope to do is to represent an event fraught with grief. I hope to argue throughout this chapter that Waldman acknowledges the need to return to a type of mourning that is sincere, as well as a type of memorializing that helps the mourners process their trauma. I hope to answer questions through my reading of the novel, such as: why do we memorialize? I hope to argue that each character demands something different from the memorial, which exposes certain desires and fears about life and death. The memorial is a way to understand grief, for instance, as well as a way of keeping the wound of the trauma open. Public and private mourning are also discussed within this chapter, as well as a discussion about the aesthetic processing of trauma through the memorial.

Trauma and Memorials

Waldman's novel begins with the jury, tasked with choosing which memorial will be built upon the spot where the buildings fell, debating the design. Claire Burwell is one of the protagonists and has been given the daunting responsibility of being the only family member of a victim on the panel. "The names," she says, "What about the names?" (Waldman 3). These are the words that open the novel, and with them set up an understanding of how important the practice of naming the dead is for the survivors and for a memorial. It is one of the most important aspects for a memorial, Waldman assures us. Alison Blais and Lynn Rasic put it simply by saying, "names are a core expression of a person's identity, and the challenge of how to arrange the victims' names on the memorial was one of the first and most impassioned topics

raised" (*A Place of Remembrance* 160). Blais and Rasic write about the process that went into designing and building the memorial for the victims of 9/11 that rests at Ground Zero. Their insights into that complicated process offer an apt comparison between Waldman's novel as it understands trauma, and memorial making and the actual 9/11 memorial itself. The actual jury for the 9/11 memorial debated into the night, until around 11 p.m. when "Reflecting Absence" was finally chosen by ten of the thirteen jurors; "the design that just days before had been described in the *New York Times* as the "dark horse" of the competition" (*A Place of Remembrance* 135). Waldman's Tom Wolfian realism-in-fiction style takes details directly from the actual deliberations such as this. Like Mohammed Khan, the designer of "Reflecting Absence," Michael Arad, was the only finalist, "who entered the competition without a partner or a team" (*A Place of Remembrance* 136). Unlike Khan though, his design did not cause the uproar that his does.

The names are important to the fictionalized design as well as the real one that sits in lower Manhattan. Individual's deaths are important, and so is understanding the larger context of the tragedy. Blim contends, "Although modern memorials frequently emphasize individual and personal responses, they do so within a public and collective framework" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 399). This is specifically what Waldman's novel deals with. Khan and his competitors must take into consideration the demands of the individuals that are personally connected to the attack. Yet, he must also understand that a larger context of the attack must be taken into consideration in his memorial. He takes the demands of the individuals seriously, as he uses the names of the victims in a way that is parallel to the way Michael Arad used the names of the victims in his memorial. Blim explains that, "there are no easy answers to the questions of how and why we memorialize, or easy ways to understand the memorials we

encounter; our collective demands on them are too complex" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 407). Naming the dead is one of the most important aspects of the design of the memorial not only for the characters in the novel, but also the actual families of the 9/11 victims. Arad used a tactic called "meaningful adjacencies" in his design for the 9/11 memorial. According to Rasic and Blais, among others, meaningful adjacencies is, " a structure in which names of victims related in life could be related together in death…it is also an idea that would make the arrangement of names both more complex and more personal" (*A Place of Remembrance* 138, 166). One of the few ways to make the memorial personal for relatives of the dead is to name them, and Waldman understands this importance.

The practice of memorial making is certainly not a new practice, yet the modern memorial is a mostly new way of honoring the dead. Since before Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the practice of inscribing the names of the dead at the memorial site has been one of the most important aspects of remembrance. Not until one hundred years after the Titanic sank was a memorial unveiled in Belfast—the city that built the Titanic—which listed the names of those who lost their lives. The other well-known memorial in Washington D.C. does not contain the names of the victims. Guidelines for the Vietnam Memorial insisted that the names of those killed were to be included, and Maya Lin's design did this with elegance and somber beauty. The Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 people has a memorial as well. It contains a reflecting pool, the Gates of Time, and most notably the "Field of Empty Chairs," which sits where the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building once stood. The chairs are organized in nine rows, representing the nine floors of the building; they also symbolically represent the now empty

chairs at the dinner table. Each chair also bears the name of someone killed in the attack[6]. Are memorials always built as a response to trauma? Memorials have a long history, spanning just about as long as the history of humanity. They are not always built because of tragedy, but increasingly, after a trauma, a memorial will be erected.

The memorials that I have discussed briefly above are directly related to Mohammed Khan's design in *The Submission.* Khan's design consists of two bifurcating canals in the middle of a garden. The four sections cut out by the canals have trees, flowers, and other types of flora. Interspersed throughout are steel trees that appear twisted and metallic. Surrounding the garden is a white wall, "with the date of the attack on the exterior" (Waldman 242). The names of the dead would be engraved on the inside of the wall, mimicking the design of "the exterior of the destroyed buildings" (Waldman 242). There is plenty of dispute throughout the novel about the design itself and its relationship to Islamic gardens, but what I would like to focus on is the function of actual memorials as well as the fictional design of Khan's—ignoring the Islamic debate for now. I would like to pose the question: do modern memorials refuse closure? Do they function as a way to keep the psychic trauma wound open for the public and those personally affected by the terrorist event? For the characters in Waldman's novel, closure does not come.

The debate surrounding Khan's design spans years, and ultimately leads to his design not being built. I would argue that in fact, the characters start the debate about the design in part to refuse closure for themselves. If the design gets built, the characters will have to face the tangible reality of their loved ones' deaths. By keeping the debate ongoing and by causing public outcry against the design, each character gets to talk about the tragedy and how it affected him or her. By letting the process extend over years, the characters get to remain stuck in the past. Traumatic

[6] Details of the Oklahoma City bombing memorial are taken from oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org.

memory itself resists moving into the future. By not allowing the memorial to proceed, the characters are expressing their desire to leave their psychic trauma wound open. Deciding which memorial to build means they would have to move on from this part of their lives. Twenty years after the debacle with Mohammed Khan's design, Claire Burwell's son William and his girlfriend Molly make a documentary about the whole process. They go to Mumbai to interview Khan and show him the video footage they took of Claire. She is ailing from cancer and answers Molly's questions about the memorial process. Claire explains that she never goes to the memorial that ended up getting built: "A Garden of Flags? Hideous. As ugly as the whole process . . . selecting a new design . . . by the time it got built I'm not sure anyone cared" (Waldman 332). Twenty years later and she never visits the site of her husband's death. Eventually the ugly design gets chosen and now the protagonists must face their grief and welcome closure. There are only a couple characters still alive at this point. This acknowledges the fact that so many of the characters are afraid of: everyone dies. The memorial is a way of resisting death and it yearns for the dead: remember us, it says. If the dead are remembered, it is as if they are still living. Besides resisting closure for their traumas, keeping the memorial debate open throughout the novel allows the characters to neglect the fact that death is waiting for everyone, including them.

The aesthetic mediation of trauma in memorials requires various mechanisms and operations. This novel establishes precisely those mechanisms. Besides showing how people grieve a mass death, it also shows the process they go through while deciding to pick a monument to their grief. The memorial / monument is the tangible way the characters are able to mediate their trauma in an aesthetic way. Art, in this case, allows the characters to process their trauma. Yet, there are conflicting perspectives about how to appropriately do this. They must

battle through the questions of how closely a memorial should be related to trauma, and if depicting trauma is an aesthetic experience. Tackling issues of identity and unity are at odds within the novel too. One of the first memorials in Pennsylvania honoring the lives of the victims of Flight 93 was called "Angels of Freedom," and consisted of forty wooden angels painted in the colors of the American flag (*A Place of Remembrance* 106-107). Though kitschy and reminiscent of folk art, the memorial itself eliminates all identity of the victims except for one—their Americanness. Thus, denying individual identity, some memorials like this one, opt for unity instead. Khan's design repels the idea of any American flags or blind patriotism at his memorial. Khan chooses instead the mechanism of reflection and individuality for his memorial to mediate trauma.

David Simpson writes about commemorating victims of human cruelty. He explains that acknowledging this cruelty "has often seemed to insist that we not pass into a future that is forgetful of the history of atrocity, even that we reenact the primary shock of suffering itself as a state not to overcome but endlessly made present" (*9/11* 3). The primary shock is to be made present through the building of a memorial to the trauma. Again, this insistence on staying in the past is directly related to trauma. Each character in the novel has his or her demands of the memorial design. One of these demands remains universal throughout the memorial, and that is the demand for remembrance. Neil Smelser further indicates that in order to memorialize, a monument needs to be present. Something physical needs to be erected, in the case of *The Submission*, at the site of tragedy in order for remembrance to take place. Just as Oskar Schell carries around his scrapbook and keeps the telephone in his hiding spot as a way of making his trauma tangible, the characters in Waldman's novel, as well as actual people, continue to make monuments as a way of making tragedies tangible in order to continue remembering their loss. In

the introduction to this thesis, I opened with identifying several types of memorials, which included the spontaneous memorial as well as national memorials. Often, one leads to the other. In the case of 9/11, the Missing Persons posters served as a spontaneous memorial to the victims. "The spontaneous amassing of objects into makeshift memorials," as Dan Blim explains, "simultaneously make private thoughts public and transform the public memorial into a private, deeply personal site" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 394). The intersection of public and private thoughts of the mourners highlights the importance of individuals in a tragedy—this is what makes Mohammed Khan's job, as well as the job of the other designers so difficult. They must appeal to each affected person's memory of the tragedy while making the memorial design universal enough so that the public can appreciate it and mourn at the site. They must also make their design timeless, in a way, so that future generations will be able to visit and feel connect to the people who died and are being memorialized. The mourners demand that their loved ones are appropriately remembered with the memorial.

Traumatic Occurrences

Waldman's novel does not focus as much on personal trauma, so much as it does public trauma. Unlike the other novels I have discussed in this thesis, there are very few instances of flashbacks, nightmares, or other indicators of PTSD. Waldman instead uses platforms such as a public hearing, news outlets, and gatherings of victims to show that the trauma is not exclusively private in an event like 9/11, but publicly affecting everyone near to the tragedy. Moreover, she presents an insight into the overwhelming grief and the processing of that grief throughout the novel. Because the novel is about the process of designing and erecting a memorial, more or less, it allows for an understanding of the aesthetic and artistic processing of that grief, as well as the trauma of that day. The memorial is a way of coming to terms with death and finding a way to

make grief, trauma, and remembrance tangible. Building memorials for tragedies is a way of formalizing grief—which demands artistic and aesthetic integrity. The memorial should be a way to understand trauma.

There is an instance in the beginning of the novel concerning Paul Rubin—the head of the committee to choose the memorial—as he sits in the locked room with the jury and starts to remember his experience watching the tragedy unfold:

> The trauma, for Paul, had come later, when he watched the replay, pledged allegiance to the devastation. You couldn't call yourself an American if you hadn't, in solidarity, watched your fellow Americans being pulverized, yet what kind of American did watching create? A traumatized victim? A charged-up avenger? A queasy voyeur? Paul, as he suspected many Americans, harbored all of these protagonists. The memorial was meant to tame them (*The Submission* 15).

This is one of the few times Waldman specifically uses the word "trauma" in the novel. Because she writes that the trauma did not come until later, Waldman shows an understanding of how trauma works. During a traumatic experience, as has been noted in the previous chapters, the person experiencing the event is not able to comprehend the trauma at the time. Instead, it is not until after the experience may the victim begin to process what has happened. For Rubin, the trauma comes after the "replay," signifying that he had seen it as it happened. In this instance though, Waldman barely writes of Rubin, and instead she manages to capture the way the entire nation felt during and after the attacks. In doing so, she manages to explain how not just Rubin, but many of the characters in the novel felt and their reasoning behind selecting a memorial for the dead. Sean, Lou, and Debbie—the extremists in the novel—play the part of the charged-up avengers, rallying their own type of troops against Khan's design, while also embodying the

other roles subsequently. Not only should the memorial be a reminder of the day that spawned trauma for many people, but it should also quell the extreme emotions initiated on that day.

Towards the end of the novel, a man named Nasruddin escorts Asma, the Bangladeshi immigrant, out of her building because she is on her way back to Bangladesh after being exposed as an undocumented resident. A crowd of hundreds waits outside of her building to witness her departure, as she had become a reluctant celebrity after her testimony at the public hearing for the memorial. Along with regular citizens and friends, the press waits to try to take a photograph or get an interview. Unfortunately, Asma never makes it out of her street because an unknown assailant stabs her and she subsequently dies from her wounds. During the chaos, Waldman writes of Nasruddin: "He was living in the past and present at once: the white man, he was tall, but everyone seemed tall next to Asma; or was there even a white man at all . . . then he was in the future now, too" (*The Submission* 289). Again, as has taken place in each novel, characters experience the temporal hybridity phenomenon. To reiterate, this means that a person experiences two or more times at one moment—and this is exactly what happens with Nasruddin when he finds out that Asma has been hurt. Because Waldman expresses this with Nasruddin, it is understood that he, is in fact, experiencing a traumatic occurrence. His confusion about the white man shows further disturbance in his mind, as he is unable to fully comprehend the overwhelming experience. This is one of the few instances of a singular personal trauma that is expressed in the novel. Mostly, trauma is talked about in a broader, public, and cultural way.

The reaction to build a memorial after a tragedy highlights the importance of personal and national memory. Memorials have a way of promoting national unity—if only for a short time; they also fit into a specific narrative of national identity and national memory. They promote a narrative that favors the victims' side of the story, while demonizing the purveyors of

the tragedy. Thousands of people's deaths need to be written in the annals of American history, and the memorial to their deaths is part of that narrative. At times a national tragedy can and will promote jingoist ideologies, much like right-wing radio personality Lou Sarge's and right-wing fearmonger/leader of Save America From Islam, Debbie's rhetoric promotes throughout the novel. Jan Assmann asserts that cultural memory is important and, "reassures the members of a society of their collective identity and supply them with an awareness of their unity and singularity in time and space—i.e. an historical consciousness—by *creating* a shared past" ("Collective Memory" 30). Identity through community is what is at stake with the memorial. The community's awareness of their place in history is the driving force behind Lou, Asma, Claire, and Sean's determination to get Khan's memorial built or see it abandoned. The shared space of the memorial has to promote collective identity as well as a national narrative. Anger, grief, fear, hope, and healing are all unifying factors for the people involved in deciding whether Khan's memorial gets built. Ultimately, everyone involved in the process needs to understand their place in this particular time in history in order to erect a memorial that shows an understanding of historical consciousness.

Not only does the novel explain the importance of memory, it shows what the process of creating a memorial is like when the people involved are still working through the bereavement it is memorializing. Waldman tries to make a distinction between public and private memory, as well as public and private mourning. Death and mourning are connected, and the mother of a victim of the attack discusses the two, as well as shows how bereavement functions during the memorial process. Patrick was a firefighter whose station was located near the buildings, thus making his unit one of the first responders. His grieving mother and brother, Sean, both handle his death in different ways. Sean begins a movement to deny Khan's design while also

promoting xenophobia towards all Muslims. While Sean's rage is public and loud, his mother's emotions are quieter, although she still harbors resentment and hatred toward Muslims. She is adamantly opposed to Khan's design, yet soon becomes weary of the whole process. She says to Claire backstage at a forum being held for the victims' families in a school auditorium, "Sometimes I wish Patrick had died in a regular fire. No firefighter dies a private death, not if he is on the job. But to have all these politics mixed in—I don't like it, all… the noise. Grief should be quiet. A memorial should have the silence of the convent" (Waldman 99). Here, Waldman exposes the dichotomy between public and private mourning. Every person who died in the attacks died a public death, including the first responders. To die publicly calls for public mourning, and Patrick's mother is well aware of the pressure that is put on her to be public with her grief as well as her feelings toward the memorial. She wants there to be silence, instead of the continuous debate surrounding the memorial and her son's death. Sean, on the other hand, makes his grief extremely loud and incredibly close to the debate surrounding the memorial. Sean and his mother show two different ways of mourning.

Because the victims died publicly, this means they need a public memorial to their lives and deaths. Again, Blim contends that memorials continue the work of publicizing trauma and grief by taking "seemingly private and intimate spaces that nevertheless confront visitors with other mourners and the public evidence of their experience" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 404). Grief and trauma are intensely personal, yet they can also be collective experiences. Sean and his family, Claire, Asma, and the other family members have their own grief to work through, but they also have a community of mourners. They are not the only ones grieving the loss of their loved ones—friends, family, and even strangers share their grief. Trauma scholar Judith Butler iterates how important it is to connect to community after a tragedy; she writes:

> Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility (qtd. in Blim 404).

A public monument allows for the community to come together and bear witness to the tragedy. The memorial itself would be erected in order to prove that the tragedy that befell the victims indeed did happen. The memorial is necessary in the process of working through trauma as well as demonstrating that the trauma is real. Perhaps this is another reason everyone is so involved in the memorial process, because it signifies that their trauma did indeed happen, and their family members or friends are dead. Since trauma disrupts thought processes in the ordinary sense, the memorial will help set their fragmented minds back to their normal state. It is as if their reality has been tilted and erecting a memorial—the healing, or aggressive, or peaceful memorial—will help set their realities straight again. In order to fully process their trauma, each person affected must bear witness to the tragedy that caused it—this is the purpose of the memorial.

Architecture and Art

Many readings of this novel[7] focus on the political tensions surrounding Mohammed Khan and his design for the memorial. While I would agree that these readings are worthwhile and valuable, I would like to expand on another type of tension, most importantly the conflict surrounding art. The entire novel is about art and architecture and the tensions surrounding one design. Politics plays an important and prominent role in the novel, but art and trauma are just as, if not more, important. By looking at the way the characters in the novel work through the

[7] See Nadia Abu el-Haj's "Bringing Politics Back in," and Bruce Robbins's "Why Claire Slams the Door," and Bethe Dufresne's "And the Winner is . . .," for example.

artistic and aesthetic processing of their various traumas throughout the novel, I hope to answer several questions regarding memorials. The conflicts in Waldman's novel range from the religious to the political, but I would like to focus on the aesthetic conflicts. This major conflict is between the desire for the memorial to be both universal while also speaking to the constituents of people who have a personal interest in seeing something established. Most importantly, I would like to answer the questions: what does Waldman show that people demand of memorials? And, how does the process of making a memorial for the dead relate to the process of dealing with and working through trauma?

Art in the context of a memorial must not be ugly according to Claire and the other jury members, but it must also not be too beautiful either. Early in the novel, the other members of the committee criticized Claire's choice of memorial design. Claire chose Mohammed Khan's design "The Garden," and was an avid proponent for it. Even before it is revealed that Khan is the architect of the design, it is divisive for the committee. Ariana, the "memorialist" for the committee is an ardent supporter of the other design and has strong feelings about why The Garden should not win the competition. Waldman writes, "The Garden was too beautiful, Ariana and the other artists kept saying of Claire's choice" (*The Submission* 4). With this statement, questions of the functions of memorials arise. What does this mean for the aesthetics of memorials? Are memorials supposed to be aesthetically pleasing? Ruth Phillips contends that, "a monument's power pertains to its beauty, design, size" (*Monuments and Memory* 7). With this, the idea of the aesthetization of suffering and tragedy emerges. Ariana and the other artists are wary of the possibility that Khan's memorial would aestheticize suffering. A memorial that is too beautiful would perhaps trivialize the deaths of the victims, and this is the last thing the committee wants.

Ariana further describes how she believes a memorial functions: “I’m sorry,” she begins, “but a memorial isn’t a graveyard. It’s a national symbol, an historic signifier, a way to make sure anyone who visits—no matter how attenuated their link in time or geography to the attack—understands how it felt, what it meant” (Waldman 6). Here, Waldman offers one definition of what a memorial is and what its function should be. A memorial is an historic signifier, which is one reason why the debate is so impassioned. Ariana understands that this memorial will most likely outlive any of the committee members. Waldman later offers other ideas of what a memorial should be. Memorialist Marita Sturken explains, “cultural memory of times of trauma produces a field of contested meanings. . . where both the structures and the fractures of a culture are exposed” (qtd. in Blim 403). Throughout the process of deciding whether to keep Khan’s design as the winner of the national memorial contest, many meanings about culture are indeed exposed. For instance, Waldman writes that the “developer who controlled the site wanted to remonetize it and needed a memorial to do so, since Americans seemed unlikely to accept the maximization of office space as the most eloquent rejoinder to terrorism” (*The Submission* 9). In this instance, there is a reminder of what America has been built on—capitalism, often predatory and exploitative capitalism. The developer wants money to stay in lower Manhattan and believes the only way to do it is by building a memorial. He is perfectly content with developing office buildings regardless of the bodies that perished on the site, but that would be too vulgar. Instead, he decides that a memorial would be the best way to bring in money. For him, the memorial is not about death or grieving, it is about capitalism—the culture that defines America—and his desire for this is certainly exposed. Capitalism may have fractured momentarily when the towers came down, as they were symbols of prosperity, but the fact that people like him still look for ways to exploit death for profit shows that it remains a sturdy structure in America.

Soon after, Ariana tries to convince Claire to switch her allegiance to a different finalist for the memorial, The Void. She speaks of the design: “The Void is visceral, angry, dark, raw, because there was no joy on that day… it speaks exactly to this moment in history. It’s created destruction which robs the real destruction of its power, dialectically speaking The Garden speaks to a longing we have for healing” (Waldman 6). Upon saying this, Ariana, brings up important questions for the other committee members in the novel, as well as the readers of the novel themselves. What do we expect in a memorial? What should we expect? What are the various demands survivors place on memorials? This last question seems to be the most important one Waldman asks throughout the novel. The Garden expects its viewers to be hopeful; the Void elicits anger. Should a memorial be hopeful or chaotic and violent? Should it offer peace and comfort? Should it mimic the tragedy or offer a place to reflect on it? Blim continues his discussion of memorials by supplying other demands survivors place on memorials that commemorate trauma. He writes, “whether we want truth or something life can’t supply, comfort or a chance to reflect on sadness or anger . . . many modern memorials resist any single reading, refuse closure, and offer new discoveries” (“Meaningful Adjacencies” 390). Ariana proves that memorial designs like The Garden and The Void do elicit different responses. She does not believe a memorial should heal, but in fact invoke the moment of shock felt on that day. She wants violence and anger in response to the anger and violence seen and felt when the towers were hit.

After a consistent mix of public outrage and support, the head jury member and friend of the governor, Paul Rubin, decides to have a public hearing regarding Khan’s design. The hearing allows for public debate about the memorial and the representation of tragedy. Erika Doss asserts, “debates reveal deep cultural anxieties about who and what should be remembered in

American history, and on what terms," and that, "Indeed, rancorous public debates over 9/11 memorials reveal haunting uncertanties about what 9/11 actually means in America" ("Remembering 9/11" 27). Those invited to speak are mostly family members and citizens highly invested in the memorial. Before the public is allowed to speak, Khan gets a chance to defend and explain his design. After, the family members get their chance to voice their support or anger. In doing so, Waldman offers myriad explanations and ideas about what a memorial should be, how it should function, and what a memorial's meaning should be. This is certainly one of the longest scenes in the novel, and one that I would like to elucidate more fully. The audience's expectations range from keeping Khan's memorial design for aesthetic reasons: Khan's former architecture professor "praised the cleanness and elegance of the design, its tension between form and freedom, between the natural and inorganic;" to keeping the design to support Khan as a person, regardless of possible Islamic elements: "any reference to Mohammed Khan's religious background or heritage is a disgrace, an insult to what this country is," one of the family members says (Waldman 248, 252). One particular family—parents who lost their daughter in the attack—further supports the design because of the healing qualities, saying, "We find the design poetic, healing . . . That gardens need care and maintenance is exactly the point. It's a beautiful metaphor for tending the memory of this tragedy" (Waldman 252). For this particular family, interaction with the memorial is crucial. Peace and healing are elements that they see as being important if a memorial is erected. There is no need for a masculine display of machismo, anger, or retaliation for them. Furthermore, this particular family shows what some reactions to 9/11 were, as explained by Blim: "Memorals can help overcome cultural difference rather than simply overlook it by avoiding a singular national perspective and instead embracing and connecting individual perspectives" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 403). Here, Waldman

acknowledges a few of the demands the public puts on memorials to the dead. Understanding a memorial is much like reading a text. The architecture professor "reads" the various aspects of the design and analyzes how the parts would function. Moreover, every person who views the design has a different interpretation of it. The design being referred to as a metaphor further illustrates the way the memorial is like a text to be read and analyzed by different people.

Furthermore, Waldman shows what different people expect in a memorial. Monuments and memorials are given meaning by those who view and create them. Phillips explains, "the monument expresses the power and sense of the society that gives it meaning, and at the same time obscures competing claims for authenticity and meaning" (*Monuments and Memory* 7). Throughout the hearing, various meanings and processes of meaning making are expressed from citizens. What is at stake for the people in *The Submission* seems to be figuring out what the memorial to the dead should express. The public seems to understand that they are the people who will give the memorial meaning. In order to figure out what meaning the memorial will have, they first have to understand what sort of memorial they want. Sean and Frank Gallagher, the brother and father of one of the firefighters, get their chance to voice their opinion about the memorial design. Sean allows his father to do the talking, which is unusual for him. Frank says, "This garden is insufficiently . . . heroic to commemorate the lives lost. We would like a more powerful memorial, one that does not suggest America lay down like lambs in the clover, instead of fighting back" (Waldman 253). Frank's own interpretation of the design and his thoughts about what a memorial should be is important for discussing the architecture of loss and grief. Can architecture be heroic? What would a heroic design look like? A possible interpretation of heroic could be that which is masculine. A garden has been relegated as female space and perhaps this is why Khan's design does not seem heroic to the Gallaghers. Images that permeated

the public sphere after the attack were often of male firefighters raising flags or searching through rubble. These were images of heroism; and, often images that included women centered on shock or grief. Women mourned the loss of men. The men that survived were labeled as heroic. Frank continues by saying he wants the design to suggest retaliation instead of what he considers weakness. For Frank, the memorial for his son must be strong. It must send a message to the perpetrators of Patrick's death. For Frank, the memorial is more about the attackers than the victims. A garden does not show strength and power, according to Frank.

Essentially, what the characters are working through is the process of trying to erect a memorial to their personal traumas. Michele Balaev notes, "place, therefore, becomes central to representations of trauma in the novel because the physical place of suffering and remembrance of loss becomes an identifiable source for the author to explicate the multiple meanings of the event"("Trends in Trauma" 5). Place, therefore, is inextricably tied to the trauma of death. The memorial site is fraught with grief and suffering because it is where trauma occurred. Because of this, the memorial process becomes more acrimonious and aggravated since the characters are trying to process their trauma. What Waldman wants to show is that everyone's grief is sincere. Each character wants his or her mourning to be taken seriously and shown seriously through the memorial. James Curl asserts that, "Memorials, to be successful, must have a spiritual and poetic content" (*Celebration of Death* 316). The spirituality for the characters comes from the sincerity of their grief and their desire for their loved ones to be remembered in an earnest way. The poetic aspect must come from the beauty of the design. It is clear that the victims' families want their voices to be heard the loudest, and are aware of the burden they carry in voicing their support or condemnation of Khan's memorial design. The last thing they want to do is have a design chosen that does not reflect sincerity and might appear to be random. "Randomness," Blim writes, "can

prove potent, even disturbing, by signaling the arbitrariness of the lives lost. Such a sentiment offers little of the comfort that many expect from memorials and risks trivializing or dehumanizing death" ("Meaningful Adjacencies" 395). Eventually, the memorial does get built, even though it is ugly—the exact opposite of how Ariana described The Garden. While the reactions to the Garden of Flags is unknown in the novel, it may be fair to say that it was chosen out of fatigue for the whole process, as Claire hinted at earlier. The novel comes to an end with Claire's son interviewing Khan about the memorial process. Waldman shows that memorials have history and are fraught with personal demands of individuals.

Although John Adams's piece *On the Transmigration of Souls* is not a tangible memorial, that does not mean it is not important. By being the first large-scale memorial to honor the victims of 9/11, Adams set precedence for the memorial process. Memorials have different meanings for each person that views (or, in Adams's case, hears), them, and so they allow for different perspectives on life, death, and tragedy. For Adams, mimicking flashbacks and instilling peace in the listener was important for what he called his "memory space" piece (Blim 384). For Khan, he saw his Garden as a place to reflect and heal. What Waldman works to show throughout her novel is that building memorials are one of the most important ways of working through trauma. She shows that what characters demand reveals anxieties about life and death, as well as show a need for historical consciousness. The memorial is a way to understand grief, as well as a way of keeping the wound of the trauma open. Public and private mourning are elucidated in the novel, as well as the aesthetic processing of grief and trauma through a memorial. Waldman acknowledges the many problems that can arise when building a memorial to a large-scale, public, mass death. In doing so, she shows tensions surrounding art and the historical significance of art.

Conclusion

Throughout the previous chapters, I have offered various theories of trauma and its relation to literature and art. My initial claim is that after experiencing trauma, characters in 9/11 novels often turn to art as a way to process and understand their traumas. Because trauma is understood as "a sudden, unexpected, and overwhelming experience that escapes one's grasp – whether conceptual or physical – and, as a result, keeps haunting one," survivors need to find a way to understand the event that is out of his or her grasp, as well as unable to be narrated by the trauma survivor (Craps 5). In order to process their various traumas, the characters in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, and Amy Waldman's *The Submission* turn to various forms of art as a way to understand the overwhelming event of trauma.

I hope to have shown in my second chapter discussing Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* that Oskar and Grandpa are both severely traumatized individuals. Because of this, they treat art in two different ways. Oskar retreats to the act of creating it, while Grandpa, a sculptor, runs from the art he used to take such solace in. I also hoped to have shown how, by using art, Oskar and Grandpa are making their traumas sacred. I hope to have argued that in Foer's novel, because of his use of art, Oskar has the tools necessary to confront, understand, and potentially cope with the trauma of losing his father. Throughout my third chapter, besides looking at trauma in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, I have answered the question: Are there some events too large for art to understand and deal with meaningfully? The chapter investigated the possibility of art, either in the form of literature or performance, being able to heal the wounds of a traumatic event. DeLillo's Falling Man, the photographer Richard Drew's falling man, and Philippe Petit's performance in between the World Trade Center were analyzed and discussed in

detail. While the previous chapters focused on the personal effects of trauma on the characters, my chapter on Amy Waldman's *The Submission* elucidated how trauma is negotiated on a national scale. I also discussed the demands that are placed on memorials for the dead.

For further exploration of my study of the intersection of art and trauma in 9/11 novels, I would expand on my discussion of the sacralization of trauma through the use of art, as well as the importance of the sincerity of mourning. There are plenty of novels that use 9/11 as a focal point or plot device, and a number of those novels integrate art as a way of talking about trauma. For instance, I would expand my project to discuss Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers*. The list of novels, movies, and art dedicated to understanding the trauma of 9/11 is constantly growing. I hope to be able to extend this project with future research and development of these ideas.

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