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Munteán László

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Topographies of Trauma: Constellations of the Corporeal and the Architectural in Representations of 9/11

Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskola

Doktori Iskola vezetője: Dr. Kulcsár-Szabó Ernő DSc

Amerikanisztika Doktori Program

Doktori Program vezetője: Dr. Frank Tibor DSc

A bizottság tagjai:

Elnök:	Dr. Bollobás Enikő DSc
Titkár:	Dr. Szelid Veronika PhD
Bírálók:	Dr. Friedrich Judit CSc
	Dr. Anneke Smelik PhD
Tagok:	Dr. Kállay Géza PhD
	Dr. Kúnos László PhD
Póttag:	Dr. Vöő Gabriella PhD

Témavezető:

Dr. Bán Zsófia PhD

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INTRODUCTION

A 15th century Transylvanian folk ballad, “The Wife of Mason Kelemen,” tells the story of human sacrifice conducted to give stability to a new building, the castle of Déva. Unable to keep the walls of the castle from crumbling the twelve stonemasons in charge of the construction agree that one of them must sacrifice his wife in order to break the spell that befell them. The wife to be sacrificed will be the one who comes first to visit. With Kelemen’s wife being the first to show up, the masons burn her body and immure her ashes into the cement which makes the wall stand firm hereafter. Upon learning about her mother’s “whereabouts,” Kelemen’s son goes up to the castle and dies of grief. The story survives in numerous variations all over Eastern Europe, giving evidence of a primordial belief in the fundamental reciprocity between body and building. Reverberations of this sacrificial practice can be traced in James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough,* in which he mentions a Transylvanian tradition of secretly measuring a person’s body or shadow and then burying the measures into the foundation stone. Frazer even documents the institution of “shadow-traders” who supplied builders with measurements to secure their walls (191).

The application of human measurements to buildings, one may rightfully argue, has been playing a key role in architectural design ever since the Renaissance. However, the fetishization of the human body as a repository of perfect proportions in the Renaissance, significantly differs from the application of human measurements in Transylvanian constructions. While Leonardo’s depiction of the “Vitruvian Man” offers a study of bodily proportions as a universally applicable scheme for new constructions, the ritual that Frazer describes is less concerned with the proportions than with the symbolic enactment of the immurement lamented in the ballad of Mason Kelemen. In other words, the Renaissance practice of mapping the body onto the built environment—

a practice that has influenced both architectural and urban design for so long—is concerned with form and dimensionality, whereas the sacrificial rite of measuring a person's shadow has to do with materiality insofar as it symbolically reenacts human sacrifice.

In the ballad of "The Wife of Mason Kelemen" the materiality of the ritual is most palpable when the stonemasons, after burning Kelemen's wife, mix "with lime her ashes taken from the pyre."[1] Towards the end of the ballad, as Kelemen's son goes up to the castle looking for his mother "walled in, midst the stones," the dismembered body of the mother turns into a muted voice responding to her son's desperate call—a voice that nevertheless makes itself heard in the lines of the ballad: "Son, I cannot speak up, for the stone wall presses / Heavy stones lie o'er me, body, limbs and tresses."[2] The mother's words emanating from the walls of the castle can be read as an echo of the son's trauma—a psychic wound that ultimately causes his own death. The voice, however, also lends a sense of coherence to the body dissolved into the materiality of the building. If it speaks of absence and loss, it also retells and reframes the method of sacrifice in which lime and ashes are named as metonyms for the architectural and the corporeal. For even if her body dissolves into the walls of the castle, the voice marks an unbridgeable difference between body and building that the ballad preserves at the level of metonymy, preventing us from the comfort of distance that the metaphoric substitution of body *for* building would afford. In other words, the poem offers no perspective on the castle of Déva but posits its very materiality as a site of trauma instead.

My re-reading of this folk ballad has been prompted by a particular instance of the events of September 11, 2001, which stands at the core of this dissertation. The construction of the castle of Déva and the destruction of the World Trade Center are, of

[1] "Az ő gyönge hammát keverék a mészbe" ("Kőmíves Kelemenné" 31).
[2] "Nem szólhatok fiam! mert a kőfal szorit, / Erős kövek közi vagyok bérakva itt" (31).

course, oppositional processes, nevertheless the traumatic juxtaposition of the corporeal and the architectural constitutes a point of intersection between the two. If the voice emanating from the brand new walls of the castle of Déva speaks to a metonymic relationship between body and building, it is a voice that uncannily echoes in the remains of the destruction left behind by the terrorist attacks. The inseparability of victims' remains from architectural debris, which left many families of the victims without bodies to bury, as well as the harrowing images of people escaping the inferno inside the towers by jumping to their deaths configure instances of trauma that have largely been muted by what Marita Sturken describes as the "touristic" lens on history, "a particular mode through which the American public is encouraged to experience itself as the subject of history through […] a form of tourism that has as its goal a cathartic "experience" of history" (*Tourists* 9). In the vein of what Elaine Scarry calls the "analogical verification" in her book *Bodies in Pain* (14), Sturken, among others, identifies various forms of "framing" the dead by contextualizing corporeal vanishing into the narrative of heroic sacrifice. Notwithstanding the effectiveness of these heroic narratives in facilitating a collective working through of the trauma of 9/11, they also impose a "tyranny of meaning" (Sturken, "Aesthetics" 312) on the complexity of 9/11.

My purpose in this dissertation is to conduct a survey of alternative topographies of trauma that refuse to be transformed into "sites of tourism" and are therefore declared off limits to "visitors." Centering my scope on the attacks against the World Trade Center[3] and focusing on intersections of the corporeal and the architectural, my intention is to identify those combinations of the two that do not lend themselves to be framed by narratives of heroism and sacrifice. In so doing, I will base my discussion of the

[3] With the exception of Paul Greengrass's 2006 film *United 93*, artistic representations of 9/11 have so far almost exclusively focused on the events in New York, largely eclipsing the two other sites of the tragedy. Apart from the fact that the majority of lives were claimed by the attacks on the Twin Towers, the buildings' collapse (unlike the two other sites) also attests to an irremediable architectural loss, the fall of man and building, which lies at the center of my project.

intersections of the corporeal and the architectural on two case studies developed in the first and second chapters of the dissertation: Richard Drew's iconic photograph known as the "Falling Man" and the materiality of the ruins of the World Trade Center. Both the ruins and the photograph configure body and building as a concentration of incongruent narratives resulting in the confluence of body and building, as well as victim and terrorist. Exposing the crumbled interiors of a modernist icon and turning the skyward trajectory of progress into an indelible imprint of the fall of man and building, these configurations of the corporeal and the architectural challenge the meaning-making mechanisms that underpin the constructions of "hero" and "sacrifice" in the context of 9/11.

In his *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy,* Kenneth Foote schemes up a taxonomy of four terms according to which sites of trauma can be categorized: sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration. Within the terrain of what quickly became known as "Sacred Ground," well illustrating the practice of "sanctifying" Ground Zero as a site of national tragedy, the sites I address in this dissertation fall under the category of "obliteration" in Foote's terminology. As opposed to sites that are sanctified by monuments or memorials, obliteration marks a collective desire to forget and disown the memory ascribed to a particular location. Nevertheless, while in Foote's terms obliteration is accorded to "sites associated with notorious and disreputable characters" (25), in the case of 9/11 the term has to do rather with the inability to reconcile conflicting systems of signification that, for instance, the iconography of Drew's photograph activates. The growing number of artistic representations that address these tabooed remains of the catastrophe attests to their haunting presence in the collective imaginary of 9/11 which demands bearing witness to a particular aspect of trauma that cannot be assimilated into pre-packaged narratives.

The theoretical framework which I apply to approach these sites of obliteration is based on Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia. Foucault defines heterotopias as "counter-sites" whose constitution counters or subverts the prevailing "set of relations" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 24) sustained by the sites to which they are related. In the context of my dissertation, heterotopias configure a crisis of signification resulting from the collapse of discursively produced patterns of "proper" relationships between body and building. The literary, photographic, filmic, and architectural approximations to the body-building continuum, which I will discuss in this dissertation, constitute virtual *lieux de mémoire*,[4] where the metonymic configuration of body and building is brought to the fore in a number of ways.

Before introducing the arguments of the individual chapters, I will first situate the notion of heterotopia as a site of trauma in the context of the corporeal and the architectural. This will serve as a groundwork to the theoretical framework which underpins each chapter of the dissertation. In what follows in this introduction, I will first foreground psychosomatic symptoms produced by witnesses to the collapsing buildings and contextualize them within theories of identification with the built environment. In the second section, I will demonstrate that the dynamics of architectural identifications are fundamentally catalyzed by a metaphorical exchange between body and building. Although some of the symptoms illustrate the embodied nature of these metaphorical substitutions, in the third section I will account for heterotopia as a site where such substitutions are unsettled by a metonymic contiguity of body and building.

[4] I am using the term in Pierre Nora's sense, who defines *lieux de mémoire* as objects reconstituted "beneath the gaze of critical history" (12).

1. Bodies and Buildings

In their respective articles on 9/11, cognitive linguist George Lakoff and architectural theorist Neil Leach make mention of people who felt as though their bodies collapsed upon watching the towers go down (Lakoff, Leach, "9/11" 85). To illustrate the embodied nature of traumatic identification with the event, Judith Greenberg describes the case of five girls who, shortly after 9/11, lost a substantial amount of weight and were unable to swallow because they "*believed* that some debris or body part from the destruction of the towers had lodged their throats and *produced* the symptom." As Greenberg explains, "[t]heir identification with the scene of witnessing was so strong that it 'entered' their bodies. Upon examination, each girl indeed *had* a physical constriction in the throat, but there was nothing, no visible matter, inside to cause it" (26 [emphasis in original]).

At first sight, all of these corporeal reactions appear to be symptoms of traumatic reenactment. Reworking Freud's theses on the structure of the traumatic experience, contemporary trauma theory defines trauma as an event inassimilable into categories of consciousness, an "event without a referent," in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's words (102), which the traumatized subject, unwillingly relives in various forms of traumatic reenactment. The immediacy and inaccessibility of the traumatic imprint is, as Cathy Caruth suggests, inherently paradoxical:

> [T]he greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it, that immediacy, paradoxically enough, may take the form of belatedness. […] Central to the very immediacy of this experience, that is, is a gap that carries the force of the event and does so precisely at the expense of simple knowledge and memory. The force of this experience would appear to arise precisely, in other words, in the collapse of its understanding. (*Trauma* 6-7)

Thus trauma constitutes a crisis of understanding, which manifests itself in the compulsive repetition of the repressed experience without the subject's awareness of the

nature of the symptom that s/he produces. Precisely because of this unwitting reenactment of the repressed experience trauma "is not known in words, but in the body" (Culbertson 170). The body, in other words, is the one that remembers what is incompatible with the field of knowledge and memory.[5] Although the symptoms Lakoff, Leach, and Greenberg describe are indeed instances of corporeal reactions to the unimaginable magnitude of the events, the ways they reenact the subject's identification with the scene are nevertheless different. In order to demonstrate these differences, we need to look at the way humans identify with the built environment in the first place.

In his emblematic essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin writes about architectural identifications as follows:

> Buildings are appropriated by in a twofold manner: by use and by perception—or rather, by touch and by sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of the tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. (*Illuminations* 233)

Benjamin's argument on the pivotal role of habit in our appropriation of the built environment has been frequently applied to a number of phenomenological accounts of the urban scene. For instance, Elizabeth Grosz defines the city as "the condition and milieu in which corporeality is socially, sexually, and discursively produced" (104). She traces the city's manifestations in "forms of corporeal exertion—the kind of terrain it must negotiate day-by-day, the effect this has on its muscular structure, its nutritional context, providing the most elementary forms of material support and sustenance for the body" (104). Perhaps one of the most elementary of these forms of material support is

[5] 9/11 as a "cultural trauma" has been examined most prominently by Neil J. Smelser, who has identified emotional numbing, anxiety, collective mourning, the indelibility of trauma, as well as the fetishization of its sacred character as its emblematic traits (266-267). This latter category ties in with Marita Sturken's trope of the "tourist gaze" with relation to the construction of the "us and them" binary and the celebration of American exceptionalism mediated through nostalgic kitsch and souvenir items.

the potential of the built environment to serve as a system of spatial reference points in our navigation of the city.

In order for these reference points to become embodied in the form of cognitive maps,[6] the built environment needs to be stable and cater to a sense of home. Ever since Gaston Bachelard's meticulous archeology of the experience of the home in his *The Poetics of Space,* the (built) environment, which serves as a background to our everyday lives, has frequently been described as "our first universe" (4), or second skin. It is precisely this embodied stability of the built environment that is put to the test in Sartre's famous statement in his *Being and Nothingness*, written in the heave of World War II: "My body is everywhere: the bomb which destroys my house also damages my body insofar as the house was already an indication of my body" (325). Dissenting from the Cartesian conception of the body as "being first for us and revealing things to us," Sartre claims that "it is the instrumental-things which in their original appearance indicate our body to us. The body is not a screen between things and ourselves; it manifests only the individuality and the contingency of our original relation to instrumental-things" (325).

Sartre's rendering the body as contingent on the house, which attests to an inversion of the classical notion of the idealized (male) body as a regulating principle,[7] is particularly pertinent to discuss such damages to the home as the terrorist attacks of 9/11. As Judith Greenberg writes in her essay "Wounded New York," "September 11 blew apart not just our sense of home but our psychological unity as well. If not literally, then

[6] I am using the term in Kevin Lynch's sense whose book *The Image of the City,* still serves as a principal source on *cognitive mapping*. He coins the term "imageability" and defines it as "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. […] It might also be called *legibility*, or perhaps *visibility* in a heightened sense, where objects are not only able to be seen, but are presented sharply and intensely to the senses" (Lynch 9-10).

[7] In his *The Architectural Uncanny* Anthony Vidler reads Sartre's statement as a subversion of the Renaissance gaze insofar as "Sartre's body participates in a world within which it has to be immersed and to which it has to be subjected even before it can recognize itself as a body. […] Thus where, in classical theory since Alberti, the house is a good house only insofar as it is constituted analogically to the body, and the city is a good city for the same reasons, in Sartrean terms the body is only seen to exist by virtue of the existence of the house" (81).

internally, it tore many of us into fragments" (24). If the environment that we perceive as home is appropriated by habit, as Benjamin claims, and becomes part of our bodily dispositions as the phenomenological notion of embodiment reveals, the symptoms described at the outset echo Sartre's statement of the house as an "indication" of the body. It remains to be seen, however, what processes are at work when the house indicates the body.

2. Anthropomorphization and Architecturalization: Metaphoric Identifications

In her phenomenological account of 9/11 Gail Weiss extends Sartre's statement to the context of the city. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body as "flesh" and reworking Edward Casey's notion of the body as a "proto-place," which "constitutes my corporeal here" (131), Weiss introduces the term "urban flesh" to denote a site of our lived experience of the city. She recalls that "[t]he collapse of the towers' own bodies was as shocking for many as were the deaths of the thousands of people who were trapped inside. […] Indeed, the seeming permanence of a city's buildings, and of the city itself, has been materially and symbolically significant in anchoring its citizens' own sense of security and stability throughout history" (152). The urban flesh, in this relation, shares much in common with Sartre's conceptualization of the house as an indication of the body. Weiss's metaphorization of the towers as bodies, however, is not only illustrative of the corporeal experience of the shattered stability and security traditionally attributed to the city, but also of the way corporeality is projected onto the built environment.

Along with the surge of newspaper articles and illustrations that ascribed human qualities to the World Trade Center in the wake of 9/11 (Boime 199; Sturken, *Tourists* 222-223), such a metaphoric transfiguration of building into body seems to be a central

component of our sense of home in the environment. There is, of course, nothing new about this tendency. One only need to look at the innumerable architectural metaphors we use in our descriptions of corporeal states or, inversely, the great many corporeal metaphors that we use to describe such architectural details as footing, façade, and footprints (Onians). In addition, the history of architectural design from Vitruvius through Frank Gehry's "dancing house" in Prague is replete with buildings fashioned from human proportions. Such metaphorical substitutions are more intriguing, however, when they are physically *enacted* by the body in the event of a shocking sight. This is how George Lakoff comes to explain why people felt physical pain upon seeing the collapsing towers. By way of explicating the mechanism that is at work in such symptoms, Lakoff stipulates that "[t]all buildings are metaphorically people standing erect. As each tower fell, it became a body falling. We are not consciously aware of the metaphorical images, but they are part of the power and the horror we experience when we see them" ("Metaphors of Terror"). To account for the embodied nature of this metaphorical identification, Lakoff offers the following argument:

> Each of us, in the prefrontal cortex of our brains, has what are called "mirror neurons." Such neurons fire either when we perform an action or when see the same action performed by someone else. There are connections from that part of the brain to the emotional centers. Such neural circuits are believed to be the basis of empathy. […] If we metaphorize the building as a person and see the building fall to the ground in pieces, then we sense—again unconsciously but powerfully—that *we* are falling to the ground in pieces. Our systems of metaphorical thought, interacting with our mirror neuron systems, turn external literal horrors into felt metaphorical horrors. (Lakoff)

Lakoff's debt to Merleau-Ponty's notion of "carnal formula" ("Eye and Mind" 296) is more than obvious in his conceptualization of the embodied nature of metaphorical

thought that translates the damage inflicted on the towers into corporeal terms.[8] The environment is thus not clearly distinct from the human organism but it is an active component of his/her identity. The catalyst that fuels this translation is the "Buildings Are Persons" conceptual metaphor. Although Lakoff does not extend his argument to humans metaphorizing themselves in terms of buildings, it follows from his arguments that if we unconsciously metaphorize buildings as persons, the "felt metaphorical horrors" also invert the relationship between source domain and target domain and become embodied in the form of "Persons Are Buildings." Consequently, by dint of anthropomorphizing buildings, we also "architecturalize" ourselves—a phenomenon Juhani Pallasmaa articulates vividly in his phenomenological analysis of the mimetic capacity of the body: "We feel pleasure and protection when the body discovers its resonance in space. When experiencing a structure, we unconsciously mimic its configuration with our bones and muscles: […] the structures of a building are unconsciously imitated and comprehended through the skeletal system" (67). Once that architectural environment is damaged, the pleasure will turn into horror, insofar as our "resonance" with the building persists.

A similar dialectics of anthropomorphization and architecturalization lies at the core of Neil Leach's conceptualization of the way humans identify with the built environment. In his prompt reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Leach, similarly to Lakoff, makes mention of a person who "felt as if his whole spine was also collapsing" as he witnessed one of the towers go down ("9/11" 85). His argument, in which he situates his explanation to this symptom, shares a lot in common with the phenomenological scaffolding of Lakoff's analysis, though Leach's theoretical apparatus comprises a heterogeneous body of sources, primarily coming from psychoanalysis.

[8] As cognitive linguist Mark Johnson claims, "We can only experience what our embodiment allows us to experience. We can only conceptualize using conceptual systems grounded in our bodily experience. And we can only reason by means of our embodied, imaginative rationality" (81).

To explain how humans relate to the built environment, Leach adopts the terms "introjection" and "projection" from Christian Metz's film theory, which Metz employs as instances of vision and identification in the context of the cinema. In architectural terms, in the process of introjection the environment prints itself into the self, while, in a simultaneous and reflexive manner, the self projects itself onto the perceived environment. As the two processes reflect each other, identification takes place:

> Identification with a particular place may therefore be perceived as a mirroring between the subject and the environment over time. Here we might understand the subject, in Metz's terms, can be both screen and projector, for in moments of identification we see ourselves in objects with which we have become familiar. At the same time, we have introjected them into ourselves. That registering of impulses leads to one type of reflection—the recognition of the other in the self. Meanwhile the projection of the self onto the external world leads to a second type of reflection—the recognition of the self in the other. (Leach, "Belonging" 132)

Although Leach's argument resonates with Lakoff's, his reference to mirroring is more indicative of his debt to Freud's theory of narcissism and Lacan's "mirror stage" than to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, to which Leach dedicates little attention in his work. Extending Benjamin's argument on the appropriation of buildings by habit, Leach regards the "double movement" of introjection and projection through the lens of Judith Butler's notion of reiteration and citationality, as central components of performativity. Appropriation by habit (the reiteration of previous engagements with the built environment) is thus inherently performative whereby the built environment is appropriated as a taken-for-granted background of everyday life.

In this relation, the terms "introjection" and "projection" rhyme with architecturalization and anthropomorphization respectively: by way of introjection the body is architecturalized, while the simultaneous movement of projection entails anthropomorphization. For Leach, the psychosomatic symptom of physical pain generated by the sight of the collapsing buildings derives from the age-long tradition of

anthropomorphizing the built environment on which identity can be "*cathected*. […] Once a sense of identity has been forged against a backdrop of a certain architectural environment, any damage to that environment will be read as damage to the self" ("9/11" 84, 85 emphasis in original).

If trauma constitutes a crisis of understanding, the corporeal reenactment of the sight of the collapsing towers suggests, as Lakoff argues, that the metaphor which catalyzes anthropomorphization and architecturalization works at an unconscious level, as an embodied mechanism. Although it indeed demonstrates the operation of the traumatic experience, what remains intact in this relation is the very possibility of the metaphoric order of architectural identification serving as a "script" for the experience of trauma. This formula allows the building to *stand in* for the victims inside. The perception of the buildings as bodies, however, requires a sense of perspective that allows for the metaphorical substitution to play out. In the absence of this perspective, the "scene" presents a very different constellation of body and building.

Without doubt, the girls' symptom in Greenberg's example attests to a particularly strong identification with the scene, but the scene with which they identify is radically different from the cases described by Leach and Lakoff. While the latter yields a topography of trauma that affords identification with the buildings *as* bodies, the former withholds this possibility by materializing body and building as inseparable, albeit incongruent, elements. The ambiguity at the heart of this uncanny[9] mixture is signified by Greenberg's use of the conjunctive "or," between "body part" and "debris," which fails to contain body and building in the order reiterated through the habitual appropriation of the environment. At stake here is an undifferentiated continuum of the victims' bodies and architectural debris, which the girls refused to swallow both at the

[9] Throughout the dissertation I will be using the word in Freud's sense, who, after Schelling, describes the uncanny as "something that should have remained hidden and has come into the open" (*The Uncanny* 148).

psychic and physical levels. What is reenacted here is not so much the collapse of the towers as the indigestible nature of the residue of the collapse itself. The abject quality of this residue lies in the fact that it construes body and building as contiguous, rather than *in terms* of, each other. Such an arrangement of the corporeal and the architectural configures a different topography of trauma, which can be best described by using Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia.

3. Immurement and Incorporation: Metonymic Identifications

The text that is most frequently referenced in Foucault's formulation of heterotopia is the essay "Of Other Spaces." Resonating with Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner's early formulations of liminality, as well as with Henri Lefebvre's destabilization of the binary logic of spatial thinking,[10] Foucault contends that "[w]e do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable in one another" (23). Similarly to Lefebvre, Foucault undermines the entrenched duality of disembodied mental space (Lefebvre's *conceived space*) and empirically described spatial practices (Lefebvre's *perceived space*), and introduces the term "other spaces"—a category which he divides into utopias and heterotopias.

As sites with no real place, utopias "present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down" (24). Evoking Lacan's metaphor of the mirror (albeit making no explicit reference to the "mirror stage" *per se*), Foucault identifies utopia with the mirror in which "I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that

[10] In his work *The Production of Space,* Lefebvre claims that "[i]f space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production. The 'object' of interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space,* but this formulation itself calls for much additional explanation" (36-37).

gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror" (24). The mirror, in this sense, is a utopia because it is a no-place in which the observer perceives himself in and against a homogeneous and coherent spatiality that is performatively appropriated as if it were a legible text. Leach's application of the narcissistic manner of architectural identification resonates with this mode of subject-formation insofar as we "see" ourselves reflected in the environment with which we identify.

Foucault's mirror-metaphor, however, also introduces the second category of other spaces: heterotopias. If it is situated in reality and compels me to "discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there," the mirror also works as a heterotopia, as Foucault asserts (24). This perception of the mirror destabilizes the constituents of the virtual space into which I read myself, and compels me to "reconstitute myself there where I am" (24). Heterotopias are "counter-sites," the characteristics of which Foucault defines in five consecutive points, the third of which will be of relevance to my argument in this dissertation: heterotopia is a site that "is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (25). Material or immaterial, heterotopias encompass a heterogeneity that subverts the prevailing system of ordering. This aspect of heterotopia reverberates in Gillian Rose's conceptualization of "paradoxical space," Rob Shields's problematization of interrelations between the center and the margin, Kevin Hetherington's "alternative social ordering" and, perhaps most prominently, Edward Soja's application of the multi-faceted notion of "Thirdspace" in his analysis of downtown Los Angeles.

Although these proponents of the recent "spatial turn" use "Of Other Spaces" as a primary reference material on heterotopias, Foucault's preface to his voluminous work

The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences offers an even more detailed treatment of the term. While in the essay Foucault subsumes particular sites, such as brothels, prisons, schools, libraries under the various categories of heterotopia*,* in the preface of *The Order of Things* he brings the laws of discourse and the materiality of language into the limelight. The preface opens with a quote from Borges's famous Chinese Encyclopedia in which animals are enumerated in alphabetical order ranging from ones that "belong to the Emperor" through those that "from a long way off look like flies" (xv). Apart from the amusement that the orderly arrangement of such an unlikely crowd of animals offers, Foucault senses a "monstrous quality" in Borges's list, which lies in the absence of "a table, a *tabula,* that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and their differences—the table upon which, since the beginning of time, language has intersected space" (xvii). Borges's extraordinary enumeration leads Foucault to envision an even worse kind of disorder, in which "fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry" (xvii). In contrast to utopias, which he sees as spaces that "afford consolation" although without a real locality on their own,

> *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'. This is why utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the *fabula*; heterotopias (such as those to be found so often in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences. (xviii)

In much the same way Borges's Chinese Encyclopedia dispenses with the common ground indispensable for the enumeration to be thinkable, heterotopic configurations

reveal the constructedness of what is presumed to be taken for granted: laws of discourse and entrenched social norms that produce and, via reiteration, vindicate certain configurations as orderly while exclude others as disorderly.

The unsettling power of heterotopias*,* as Benjamin Genocchio surmises, lies in their ability "to both question and undermine the limits of the alleged coherence and totality of self-contained linguistic and spatial systems" (41). Still, it is not the discursive or spatial relations within heterotopias that define them as such but, as Kevin Hetherington suggests, "[i]t is how such a relationship is seen from outside, from the standpoint of another perspective, which allows a space to be seen as heterotopic" (43). In other words, heterotopic configurations have the potential to unveil the scaffold of discourse which supports the façade of what is perceived as order. It can therefore be argued that the metaphoric appropriation of the collapsing towers on 9/11 is predicated on a habitually learned order of mirroring between body and tower. Once the mirror is shattered, the order of resemblance, which ensures the dynamics of metaphoric substitution, yields to an alternative constellation into which Foucault's interpretations of Magritte's paintings in *This Is Not a Pipe* offer further insight.

In the paintings *Decalcomania* (*Décalcomanie*) and *Megalomania* (*Folie des grandeurs*)*,* Foucault insinuates that Magritte's surrealistic forms work to dissociate similitude from resemblance. As he explains,

> Resemblance has a "model," an original element that orders and hierarchizes the increasingly less faithful copies that can be struck from it. Resemblance presupposes a primary reference that prescribes and classes. The similar develops in series that have neither beginning nor end, that can be followed in one direction as easily as in another, that obey no hierarchy but propagate themselves from small differences among small differences. Resemblance serves representation, which rules over it; similitude serves repetition, which ranges across it. Resemblance predicates itself upon a model it must return to and reveal; similitude circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar. (44)

Resemblance, in other words, is a modality of reference, a "finger pointing out from the canvas in order to refer to something else" (49). With similitude, on the other hand, the objective reference is destabilized in favor of a "play of transferences that run, proliferate, propagate, and correspond within the layout of the painting, affirming and representing nothing" (49). By doing so, similitude is capable of revealing "what recognizable objects, familiar silhouettes hide, prevent from being seen, render invisible" (46). Resemblance, as Hetherington's reading of Foucault suggests, rests on a metaphoric, while similitude on a metonymic, mode of signification (42). As James Harkness argues in his introduction to the English translation of Foucault's work, in the case of similitude "the reference 'anchor' is gone. Things are cast adrift, more or less like one another without any of them being able to claim the privileged status or 'model' for the rest. Hierarchy gives way to a series of exclusively lateral relations" (*This Is Not a Pipe* 9-10).

It is this metonymic functioning of similitude that Hetherington regards as the backbone of Foucault's notion of heterotopia. Similarly to Magritte's surrealistic paintings, in heterotopic configurations "meaning is dislocated through a series of deferrals that are established between a signifier and a signified rather than directly to a referent" (42-43). Heterotopias, in this sense, bring together unusual collections of heterogeneous things without allowing them the unity or order established through resemblance, as already foreshadowed by Foucault's reference to the absence of the "tabula" in his preface to *The Order of Things*. In the context of architectural identifications, the "tabula" is the metaphoric order or substitution (based on resemblance) that governs the dialectics of introjection and projection whereby identity can be "*cathected*" on the built environment (Leach, "9/11" 84). While this metaphoric

order remains intact in the symptoms described by Lakoff and Leach, it literally falls into pieces in the symptom of the five girls in Greenberg's example.

Let me return briefly to Leach's model of architectural identifications. Prior to his discussion of Metz's double movement of cinematic identifications, Leach refers to the "mirror stage" as a "vital dynamic," which postulates that "identity is constituted as much through distinction as through connection." In spatial terms, Leach argues, "identity can be understood in terms of gestalt as a figure/ground relationship to one's environment, a sense of separation that cannot be enacted without first establishing a sense of connection, and a sense of connection that cannot be enacted without first establishing a sense of separation" (*Camouflage* 139). In the case of the symptom that Greenberg describes, this gestalt of connection and separation is threatened by what Lacan calls a pre-mirror stage "fragmented body" ("The Mirror Stage" 1288), which is repressed in the process of identification with the gestalt of the "total form of the body" (1286), only to reappear uncannily "in the form of disjointed limbs, or of those organs represented in exoscopy, growing wings and taking up arms for intestinal persecutions—the very same that the visionary Hieronymus Bosch has fixed, for all time, in painting, in their ascent from the fifteenth century to the zenith of modern man" (1288).[11]

Similarly to Foucault's reading of Borges's Chinese Encyclopedia, Lacan's description of Bosch's paintings amounts to a description of a "counter-site" of the coherent body-image, a site undermining the order of things, in the manner Julia Kristeva describes abjection: "What causes abjection is not lack of cleanliness but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (*The Powers* 14). Quite fittingly, the story of Narcissus, which Leach reads as a trope for the creative engagement with the environment (*Camouflage* 126-128), receives a bitter edge in

[11] In her book *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* Linda Nochlin offers an insightful analysis of artistic representations of corporeal fragmentation as an epitome of the modern condition.

Kristeva: "[N]arcissism is never a wrinkleless image of the Greek youth in a quiet fountain. The conflicts of drives muddle its bed, cloud its water, and bring forth everything that, by not becoming integrated with a given system of signs, is abjection for it" (*The Powers* 14). What Leach infers from the story as a model for engagement with the environment, Kristeva renders a performative act of exclusion which results in a "*narcissistic crisis*" [emphasis in original]. Abjection is "witness to the ephemeral aspect of the state called "narcissism" with reproachful jealousy heaven knows why; what is more, abjection gives narcissism (the thing and the concept) its classification as 'seeming'" (14). Herein lies the spectral quality of the abject: for abjection is, above all, as Kristeva notes, "ambiguity" (9), which applies to the symptom of the five girls as the tormenting inability to tell body from building.

If identification with the built environment is always already performative, it follows thereof that identification with place brings about the production of zones of uninhabitability, terrains left outside of the scope of identification. To extend Leach's application of Butler's notion of performativity, the production of "intelligible bodies" is concomitant with the production of "unthinkable, abject, unlivable" bodies that, as Butler argues, are "not the opposite of the former, for oppositions are, after all, part of intelligibility; the latter is the excluded and illegible domain that haunts the former domain as the spectre of its own impossibility, the very limit to intelligibility, its constitutive outside" (*Bodies that Matter* xi). Correspondingly, the girls' symptom bespeaks confrontation with this excluded and illegible domain by means of translating resemblance into similitude: it is not only the border separating body and building that this constellation of the corporeal and the architectural destabilizes, but also the border between the living and the dead. This grotesque constellation of the corporeal and the architectural bespeaks, in Kristeva's terms, "a weight of meaninglessness about which

there is nothing insignificant" (*The Powers* 3). Abjection does not "*signify* death," Kristeva contends. "In the presence of signified death—a flat encephalograph, for instance—I would understand, react, or accept" (4). Within the similitude of the corporeal and the architectural, the living and the dead, however, the abject is recycled in an "indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar," to reiterate Foucault's formulation of similitude.

If buildings and their contents unfurl in undifferentiated simulacra in the materiality of dust, the "desire for meaning" (Kristeva 3) that takes hold of the subject in the face of abjection is here attendant on the desire to reverse the entropic sequence of similitude. Foucault's interpretation of Magritte's *Megalomania* provides a poignant comment on this desire (see figure 1). Magritte's painting features a torso of a woman in three parts with each diminishing in size as one moves from bottom to top. "While holding back all affirmations of identity, the shared proportions guarantee analogy: three segments lacking a fourth in just the same fashion, though the fourth element is incalculable. The head (final element = x) is missing: *Folie des grandeurs,* says the title" (*TNP* 50). The resemblance of the individual sections, regardless of their disproportionate sizes, would indeed allow the observer to recognize the woman by way of recalling the female body as a pre-existing model that the representation in the painting resembles. With this analogy in mind, the interstices between the sections are effaced by the totality of the female body mapped onto the sections. Similitude, by contrast, settles in the interstices

Figure 1. René Magritte, *Megalomania* (*La Folie des grandeurs*), 1962.

between the sections of the torso and, by way of rendering them parts of potentially *different* bodies, unmoors the sections from the image of the coherent body cathected on Magritte's forms.

Relating Foucault's interpretation of the painting to heterotopias and architectural identifications, we can surmise that the interstices between the particular sections of the torso, which lend themselves to the dynamics of similitude to play out, manifest themselves as the interstices between the source domain and the target domain of the Buildings Are Persons / Persons Are Buildings conceptual metaphors. What appears as a passage facilitating the "traffic" of signification between the two domains in a metaphoric relation becomes, in the metonymic constellation, a site of *aporia* which reveals the metaphor as an (embodied) discursive construct and defamiliarizes the conventional order of architectural identifications. By doing so, it establishes a network of alternative passages between, and juxtapositions of, the corporeal and the architectural whereby, the structure of the discursive foundations of order are exposed. On the whole, the heterotopic configurations that I explore in this dissertation are sites of ambiguity and instability where deeply entrenched power relations are revealed. Rather than offering narratives of the traumatic past, I will locate a radical undecidability of the past residing in the interstitial blanks of these narratives.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to the "excavation" of the photograph known as the "Falling Man," which has become a tabooed icon of 9/11. I will demonstrate how the photograph's iconography becomes a site where mutually exclusive systems of signification collide and collapse, allowing what Foucault identifies in Magritte's *Megalomania* as the "x" to emerge as a governing absence of meaning. In order to mitigate the spectral power of the photograph, journalists have attempted to trace the identity of the man featured in it. I will read the journalistic accounts of the quest as an

effort to inscribe the Falling Man into deeply entrenched cultural narratives of success and heroism. The constructedness of these inscriptions is ingeniously revealed in a short film by Kevin Ackerman which brings forth the "x" and restores the spectrality of the "Falling Man."

Chapter 2 delves into the ruins of Ground Zero and applies the notion of heterotopia to explore their materiality. Similarly to the conflicting layers of signification in the "Falling Man" photograph, I will study the materiality of the debris as a repository of incompatible layers not only making the remains of the victims inseparable from the remains of the buildings but also from those of the terrorists. My discussion of the ruins, however, is not limited to the site of destruction *per se* but extends the concept of heterotopia to the various functions they have come to serve after their displacement from Ground Zero. The examination of the ruins' afterlife will reveal the *aporia* of "value" and "waste" once the material that contains human remains finds its way as a commodity in capitalist exchange.

Chapter 3 explores two novels, Michael Cunningham's *Specimen Days* and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* as literary sites of heterotopia where uncanny juxtapositions of the corporeal and the architectural are expressed in ways that, similarly to Ackerman's film on the Falling Man, withhold the comfort of narrative and subscribe to what DeLillo terms as "counter-narrative." Both works interface with the sites that I excavate in the first two chapters and bring forth the "x" in different ways. While *Specimen Days* configures the 9/11 jumpers and the uncanny materiality of the ruins in the form of textual absences, *Falling Man* comprises the spatiality of the ruins in its texture.

Chapter 4 extends the discussion of concealed traumas that Cunningham and DeLillo bring forward in their novels to the field of visual and architectural representations. Starting with the scandalous performance in Chicago in 2005, which

reminded many onlookers of the 9/11 jumpers, I will proceed to discuss James Marsh's documentary film *Man on Wire* which, apart from telling the story of Philippe Petit's legendary tightrope walk between the WTC towers in 1974, voices the tabooed memories of the jumpers through images of Petit's performance and recalls the towers' ruins by incorporating original footage of their construction. This uncanny similarity between the site of construction and the site of destruction, which Robert Smithson describes by the phrase "ruins in reverse," inspires the argument in the last section, in which I revisit ongoing constructions at Ground Zero and trace manifestations of what I term "virtual ruins" inscribed into new buildings.

Budapest, September 8, 2011, three days before the tenth anniversary of 9/11.

Note to the reader:

1. Throughout the dissertation, the term "falling man" will appear frequently and will denote a number of different representations indicated as follows:

"Falling Man" – Richard Drew's photograph

Falling Man – the individual in Drew's photograph

"The Falling Man" – Tom Junod's article

Falling Man – Don DeLillo's novel

The Falling Man – Kevin Ackerman's (2006) and Harry Santiago's films (2010)

2. For the sake of brevity, I will henceforth abbreviate the titles of three works by Michel Foucault in parenthetical references.

OT – *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*

"OS" – "Of Other Spaces"

TNP – *This Is Not a Pipe*

3. Although MLA does not require a separate Sources of Illustrations page, I decided to provide source information for images in a separate section following the Works Cited page to make it easier to identify them.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPECTRAL BODY

"He was trapped in the fire, and decided to jump and take his own life, rather than being burned. I don't know." (Richard Drew)

"We don't like to say they jumped. They didn't jump. Nobody jumped. They were forced out, or blown out." (Ellen Borakove)

Through Foucault's reading of Magritte's paintings we have seen how similitude deconstructs systems of reference predicated upon deep-rooted conventions of signification. Applying Foucault's distinction between resemblance and similitude to architectural identifications, the centrality of a presumed resemblance that underpins the dialectics of anthropomorphization and architecturalization becomes apparent. We have also seen how the symptom of the girls in Judith Greenberg's example illustrates the collapse of this model by foregrounding the similitude, rather than resemblance, of body and building. Similarly to the missing element of the female torso in Magritte's *Megalomania,* which Foucault marks with an "x," the symptom not only indicates a missing element, the no-man's land of abjection between the two bridge posts of the Buildings Are Persons / Persons Are Buildings metaphor, but literally crosses it out and reduces it to the level of metonymy. Where body and building are juxtaposed in such a fashion, heterotopia makes itself manifest as an instance of insight into the discursive foundations of architectural identifications. As a concentration of incompatible sites, the "x," denotes difference, the interstitial void of meaning eclipsed by resemblance but resurfacing in similitude in configurations of the abject.

In this chapter I will apply the archeological gaze to excavating the iconography of the infamous "Falling Man" photograph of 9/11 (see figure 1.1.). Taken by Associated Press photographer Richard Drew, the image depicts a man falling headfirst in a perfectly vertical position, his body aligned with the girders of the buildings behind him,

as though he were in full control of his descent. Later dubbed the *Falling Man*, the photograph ran in a number of newspapers the day after the tragedy. It did not take long, however, before the editors of these papers found themselves in the crossfire of complaints made by their readers. Some denounced the picture's publication as disrespectful to the family of the individual in it, while others claimed "they didn't want to see this over their morning cornflakes" (Howe).

My purpose here is to demonstrate that the image constitutes a multi-layered heterotopia marked by the collisions of mutually exclusive narrative schemes instantiated by its iconography. If the metonymic dynamics of similitude is, as we have seen, integral to the palimpsestual sedimentation of heterotopic spatiality, this chapter explores the photograph as a mode of palimpsest. After contextualizing the image within the framework of 9/11, I will employ Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida's theories to unravel conflicting layers of signification that manifest themselves in a) the image's gruesome content vs. its aesthetic composition, b) the conflicting signifying mechanism behind the terms "falling" and "jumping," and c) the body's relation to the building in the pictorial dimension of the image.

Figure 1.1. "Falling Man," 2001. Photo by Richard Drew /AP.

Following my "close reading" of the photograph, I will proceed to discuss the efforts of two journalists to identify the man in the photograph. I will argue that these constructions showcase particular modes of spectatorship—on one hand instigating

readers to bear witness to the tabooed photograph, and on the other making the act of witnessing bearable by inscribing it with identity-constructions. Insofar as the photograph is an *agent* of disturbance, I will demonstrate that the efforts to identify the man in it can be analyzed as performative acts of divesting the image of its agent-position and transform the spectral body of the Falling Man into what Foucault would describe as a "docile body."[12] Finally, I will conclude the chapter with the discussion of a short film that undermines these narratives and reinstates the Falling Man as a spectral body.

1.1. Homo Sacer

Emphasizing photography's significant role in the public response to the terrorist attacks Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett describes 9/11 as the ultimate "Kodak-moment" (13). Accordingly, visual representations of the traumatic experience of 9/11 has raised substantial scholarly attention in the past nine years with the works of Marianne Hirsch (2002, 2004), E. Ann Kaplan (2002, 2005) Lorie Novak (2002), Barbie Zelizer (2002), Albert Boime (2003), and Rob Kroes (2009) defining the main paths of the discourse. Yet, for all the attention the subject of photography has received, the tabooed "jumper-photos" tend to be lumped together with a larger group of photographs depicting corporeal remains that have been withheld from circulation. Slavoj Žižek, Susan Sontag, and David Simpson make mention of the falling people in their respective works, pointing to the long-standing tradition of withholding images of American war deaths in the name of reverence and good taste, which is a precaution that the American media does not apply to images depicting the deaths of "others" in distant countries. "The more remote or exotic the place," Sontag claims, "the more likely we are to have full frontal

[12] I am using the term in Foucault's sense, as bodies "that can be made" as an effect of centralized (panoptic) power (*Discipline and Punish* 135-169).

views of the dead and dying" (63)[13]—a tendency Žižek describes as a "'derealization' of horror" (*Welcome* 13).[14]

The jumper-photos, however, present a kind of horror that does not merely emanate from the sight of carnage *per se* and therefore need to be addressed at a different register. Offering the first scholarly response to Drew's "Falling Man," Susan Luire's 2006 article "Falling Persons and National Embodiment: The Reconstruction of Safe Spectatorship in the Photographic Record of 9/11," describes the man in the photo as an objectified body camouflaged by the vertical girders of the towers that may elicit "empathetic identification" but, in its anonymity, it may also offer a way to keep the horror at a remove and ensure "safe spectatorship" (45). She analyzes the photograph in the context of N.R. Kleinfield's article "A Creeping Horror" which accompanied Drew's photograph in the September 12, 2001 issue of the *New York Times*. Her reading reveals that Kleinfield's descriptions of the escape stories of survivors function as a narrative mechanism in which the image of the Falling Man is configured as a looming fate that the survivors escape. Lurie argues that such escape stories facilitate "nostalgic spectatorship" by focusing on the absence of the towers and keeping viewers from being carried away too much by the images of the jumpers and the collapsing buildings (50). Significantly, the dislocation of the images of carnage by the ruined towers is supplemented here by a series of dislocations: first, from the Falling Man to the buildings, and then, from the buildings to reassuring images of resilient rescue workers. The sights of unimaginable horror are thus tamed into a familiar sight reinforcing the

[13] An editor justified the publication of Drew's photograph "by comparing it with earlier difficult photos, such as Eddie Adams's photograph of a Vietcong officer being shot or that of the napalmed girl running down a Vietnamese street" (Zelizer, "Photography" 65). Obviously, as Sontag and Žižek would argue, the problem with the Falling Man is that he is not a foreign victim of a faraway war but of a terrorist attack—a semantic category that was relegated to other countries and now made its way to their own "backyard."

[14] As Žižek continues, "while the number of victims—3000—is repeated all the time, it is surprising how little of the actual carnage we see—no dismembered bodies, no blood, no desperate faces of dying people … in clear contrast to reporting on Third World catastrophes, where the whole point is to produce a scoop of gruesome detail: Somalis dying of hunger, raped Bosnian women, men with their throats cut" (*Welcome* 13).

feeling of safety.[15]

Notably, however, her argument about journalism's attempt to absorb these images is predicated on the assumption that there is a linear trajectory in which the transformation from unsafe to safe spectatorship can be performed. If such a continuity existed, the memorable photographs showing WTC employees desperately holding on to the girders would indeed be tamed by the iconography of images showing workers at Ground Zero dwarfed by the immensity of the ruins and later presented as triumphant heroes of reconstruction. But even if this linear trajectory applied to the selection of photographs published in the papers, her approach does not account for the proliferation of these "unsafe images" on the Internet in ever-changing user-generated contexts. A quick search for images on the Web yields over two million hits for "9/11 jumpers" and some videos on YouTube have attracted just as many or even more views. The countless comments to these images and videos give evidence of a large variety of gazes that subvert the binary of safe vs. unsafe spectatorship Lurie puts forward in her article. Moreover, the relegation of these photographs to the Internet did not simply transform "the spectator from sympathizing mourner into lewd voyeur" (Engle 31) or exemplify "an alibi for censorship" by the media (Hirsch, "Collateral" 1211), because, as the hundreds of e-mails and letters of complaint testify, spectators did not reflect on their position vis-à-vis the "Falling Man" as sympathizing mourners. Rather, it is precisely the privilege of mourning that the photograph denies to the viewer. In Allen Meek's words, "[t]he Falling Man was *homo sacer*,[16] able to be killed, but not sacrificed for the glory of the nation" (182).

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[15] Primarily relying on selections of photographs in *One Nation* and *A Nation Challenged* she traces how the sight of the hardly noticeable figures leaning out of the broken windows of the towers is recalled in photographs of workers dwarfed by the immense ruins—a sight which evokes the dead "within the very visual lexicon that objectifies and repudiates an identification with the falling people" (58).

[16] Meek uses the term via Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.*

Meek's identification of the Falling Man as *homo sacer* speaks to what Tom Junod problematizes in his September 2003 *Esquire Magazine* article as an aspect of 9/11 that has been collectively willed away, without granting the Falling Man a place among the "heroes" ("The Falling Man"). While the hero-cult of the victims obviously serves the purpose of Translating trauma into a narrative whereby loss gains meaning as an act of sacrifice (as the term "hero" suggests),[17] the only deaths that involved agency on the part of the victims were those of the firefighters who were killed in the collapse and the people who jumped out of the towers to escape death by fire. This latter form of intentionality, however, just would not pass smoothly as heroism. The power of Drew's photograph thus lies not so much in its "graphic" content as in its potential to be perceived as a conflation of incongruent narrative schemes. Before discussing the dilemmatic concept of agency in connection with the "Falling Man," let me reiterate Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida's theories in the next two sections in order to lay the theoretical foundations of my reading of the image.

1.2. Image Worlds

A tabooed icon,[18] the "Falling Man" is part of a large group of traumatic images taken at a variety of sites in the world that have been withdrawn from circulation. For instance, some photographs of atrocities committed in Nazi concentration camps have only been published once or twice due to their overly graphic content such as the images of dead bodies stacked up among logs of wood in Alain Resnais's 1955 documentary *Night and Fog,* providing an "obscene similarity between flesh and wood" (Wilson 101). In the

[17] As Jürgen Habermas remarked in the wake of 9/11: "But why do they need to be called heroes? Perhaps this word has different connotations in American English than it does in German" (qtd. in Simpson viii).

[18] In this context the term "tabooed" has to do with Aleida Assmann explicates in her taxonomy of cultural memory as an way of "active forgetting" (99) which, paradoxically, as Kenneth Foote reminds us in connection with "obliterated" sites of tragedy, are as visible as "sanctified" sites (25). The photograph's tabooed status is thus largely conducive of its iconic power.

same documentary the camera pans over the ceiling of a gas chamber in Maïdanek and reveals scratches inmates carved into the concrete in the moment of their death. As Emma Wilson notes, "[w]e have no purchase on these images, images that are abusively tactile, a record of the deathly, devastating imprint of dying hands on concrete. […] Expressly tactile, formally reminiscent of a number of other shots within the film, these images are nevertheless radically disjunctive, obtrusive, unassimilable as we resist them make sense, as we resist the category disturbance they represent" (109). Frank van Vree calls these indigestible documents "grounding images" (276) because they "give proof of and epitomize the atrocious tragedy in its barest form, but as such they are—also in this respect—"indigestible," not letting themselves be absorbed by a story that takes the viewer away." Images of the falling bodies of 9/11, Vree suggests, operate in a similar way (278).

What makes the "Falling Man" indigestible? Although Richard Drew documented the man's fall in a sequence of twelve frames, it is only in this particular frame that the man appears to be falling headfirst. Even if his posture may have lasted only for a split second, it nonetheless leads to the perception that the position was maintained for the whole duration of his fall. This illusion is generated by the ability of the mechanical eye of the camera to document instances that escape human perception—a phenomenon which Walter Benjamin calls the *optical unconscious*.[19] According to Benjamin, photography is capable of unraveling "physiognomic aspects, image worlds, which dwell in the smallest things" ("Little History" 512). Marianne Hirsch sees this aspect of the photograph as structurally congruent with trauma. If deferral—the delayed understanding of the perceived event—is integral to the structure of both trauma and

[19] As Benjamin writes, "[f]or it is another nature which speaks to the camera rather than to the eye: "other" above all in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious. […] Photography, with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis" ("A Little History" 511-512).

photography, then the medium of photography, Hirsch contends, is potentially conducive to bearing witness and coping with trauma: "To photograph, we might say, is to look in a different way—to look without understanding. Understanding is deferred until we see the developed image. The deferral is as inherent to photography as it is to trauma, enabling photography to help us understand the traumatic events of September 11" ("I Took Pictures" 74). In this sense, the photograph may facilitate the working through of the "unclaimed experience" of trauma by way of assisting the spectator to bear witness and integrate the image into narrative patterns.

Weaving narratives around characters and objects is inevitable when we look at photographs. Inasmuch as the *optical unconscious* is a "'linguistic' dimension beyond signs" (Elo), the "image worlds" that have been "unclaimed" by the naked eye compels one "to read what was never written" (Benjamin, *Reflections* 336), a text that presents itself for the camera rather than the eye.[20] Since reading is always already a mode of interpretation, what Benjamin calls "image worlds," can be conceived of, in tandem with his notion of the dialectical image, as landmarks for new contexts of vision, rather than mere traces of the past.

The construction of such interpretive texts is palpable in a certain group of photographs of the 9/11 jumpers, particularly those taken by Richard Drew and Lyle Owerko, that recur on a number of Internet sites. These images show the falling bodies in such poses that evoke familiar scenes: one depicts a man who seems to be holding his cell phone to his ear while falling from the building, while another one shows two people holding hands in their fall with the edge of one of the towers filling the right side of the frame. Yet another features a man facing upwards as he falls with arms "raised" skyward. Tom Junod mentions one image that "shows people jumping in perfect

[20] For instance, Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film *Blowup* elaborately comments on the "unconscious optics" of the camera as a means of accidentally revealing a murder.

sequence, like parachutists, forming an arc composed of three plummeting people, evenly spaced" ("The Falling Man"). Similarly to the "Falling Man," these photographs have earned titles because they capture the bodies in postures that not only produce them as objects of the collective gaze but also invite the spectator to "recognize" the familiar body positions and, in the instance of recognition, invest their fall with narratives.

To illustrate this compulsion to narrativize, let me reiterate the caption that accompanied Drew's photo in the *New York Times*: "A person falls headfirst after jumping from the north tower of the World Trade Center. It was a horrific sight that was repeated in the moments after the planes struck the towers" (Kleinfield A7). By virtue of explaining what the photograph depicts, the caption expands the temporal horizon of the image and transforms it into a headfirst fall. For even if the man never really fell headfirst, he is *made* to do so by the caption. Therefore, it is by way of "reading" the image world that unfolds beyond the unconscious optics of Drew's camera that the man in the picture is *produced* as the Falling Man. The caption in the *New York Times* thus functions as a performative statement that produces, rather than describes, the man's headfirst fall. As Anneke Smelik poignantly observes in her study of 9/11 and media culture, "Put a camera on it and the real will be literally transformed into a performance" (4).

In the case of the "Falling Man," however, Smelik's statement is doubly pertinent. Drew's choice to sell this particular frame to media evinces the operation of aesthetic criteria; he was captivated by the image's "verticality and symmetry" (Drew qtd. in Junod, "The Falling Man"), two attributes that the editors further enhanced by centering the figure whose posture uncannily evokes an acrobatic performance, and cropping off part of the background (see figure 1.2.). The photograph published in the *New York Times* occupied little less than a quarter of a page, revealing the contours of

the man’s face, his slightly darker complexion, and the white jacket and black pants he was wearing.

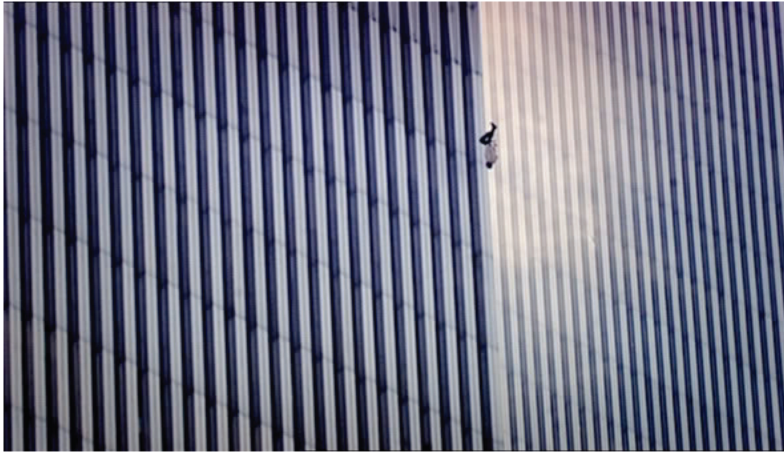

Figure 1.2. The “untrimmed” frame of the “Falling Man.” Photo by Richard Drew.

If the photograph’s iconographic qualities account for its iconic (albeit tabooed) status, how do these qualities inform the image worlds yielded by the photograph? And if the image worlds that unfold in a photograph invite narrative inscription, what narratives does the “Falling Man” elicit? In order to proceed in the direction set forth by these questions, let me turn to Roland Barthes’s theory of photography as a useful apparatus for the close reading of Drew’s photograph.

1.3. Punctum and Metonymy

In his *Camera Lucida,* Barthes distinguishes between two categories, the *studium* and the *punctum,* which I will employ as methodological tools to “excavate” Drew’s photograph as a site of heterotopia. The *studium* entails taste, a general like or dislike of the image contingent on the beholder’s cultural background. As Barthes writes, “[i]t is by *studium* that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political

testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally (this connotation is present in *studium*) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions" (26). This field of the *studium* is disturbed by the *punctum,* which "rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces [the viewer]" (26). Unlike the contextually grounded *studium,* the *punctum* is an "accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (27). Within the category of the *punctum* Barthes differentiates between two types: a) a particular detail that arrests the viewer's attention, b) one that stems from the spectator's knowledge of a past of which the photograph speaks as a future yet to come. "This new *punctum,*" he writes of the latter type, "which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* ("*that has been*"), its pure representation" (96). To demonstrate this aspect of the *punctum,* Barthes takes Alexander Gardner's 1865 photo-portrait of Lewis Payne, a young man sitting in shackles, awaiting his execution:

> The photograph is handsome, as is the boy: that is the *studium.* But the *punctum* is: *he is going to die.* I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What *pricks* me is the discovery of this equivalence. (96)

Be it a particular detail or the irreversible passage of time, the *punctum* points to what is absent, rather than what is present, in the photograph. Unlike the *studium,* which Martin Jay compares to the Barthesian "readerly text," the *punctum* is "writerly," in that it takes "the viewer out of the frame into a 'blind field' charged with desire of the unseen" (Jay 453). Indeed, as Barthes writes in *Camera Lucida,* the *punctum* is "a kind of subtle *beyond*—as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see" (59).

It is precisely this unfulfilled desire for reference, which renders the Benjaminian image world a terrain of potential narrative inscriptions that Jacques Derrida sees as an

essential component of the *punctum* in his essay "The Deaths of Roland Barthes." Engaging in a contrapuntal dialectics with the *studium,* Derrida observes that the *punctum* presents itself as the "place of irreplaceable singularity and of the unique referential" (57). In so doing, however, he realizes that this unique referential is withheld by the *punctum.* As much as it arrests the viewer's attention, it "irradiates and, what is most surprising, lends itself to metonymy. As soon as it allows itself to be drawn into a network of substitutions, it can invade everything, objects as well as effects" (57). The *punctum,* in Derrida's reading, is a decentralizing force, contrapuntal but still part and parcel of the field of the *studium.* Not only does it lend itself to metonymy but the *punctum* also "induces it, and this is its *force,* or rather than its force (since it exercises no actual constraint and exists completely in reserve), its *dynamis,* in other words, its power, potentiality, virtuality, and even its dissimulation, its latency" (57). Insidiously, the metonymic force of the *punctum* disrupts the "referential trait, suspends the referent and leaves it to be desired" (61).

Derrida's reading of Barthes's *punctum* highly correlates with Foucault's distinction between resemblance and similitude in his analysis of Magritte's paintings. As opposed to resemblance, which abides by a pre-existing model of referentiality, similitude destabilizes the model and allows the interstices among the model's constituents to unravel. The *punctum,* in this sense, is what Foucault marks with an "x," the element that holds back "all affirmation of identity" and puts the law of analogy to the test (*TNP* 50). In much the same way the metaphoric model of architectural identifications is denied to the girls producing psychosomatic symptoms after the terrorist attacks, the *punctum,* empowered by metonymy, undermines the model of metaphoric identification. The girls' confrontation with the metonymic constitution of the corporeal and the architectural evinces the operation of the *punctum* in Derrida's

reading of Barthes. To reiterate Kristeva's formulation of abjection's relation to narcissism, the *punctum* in Derrida's description renders the reference between signifier and signified "seeming." In what follows, I will apply the theories discussed above to the "Falling Man."

1.4. Still Life

In accordance with Barthes's *Camera Lucida,* I will apply the first person singular at the outset of this analysis. My general interest in the "Falling Man" is raised by its shocking content: I see a person's imminent death suspended forever by the unconscious optics of the camera. The photograph informs me of a gruesome aspect of 9/11, the fact that people jumped to their deaths after the planes struck. The background texture is defined by the dazzling repetition of vertical columns; some darker, others lighter, divided by the joints between aluminum panels forming lines that run across the picture in a diagonal fashion. This holographic texture fills the entire background, providing no clue as to the buildings' base, top, and side, as though the same pattern were repeated endlessly beyond the frame. The section of the façade behind the Falling Man is intact, although I know from context that the man's fall was precipitated by the destruction which remains invisible in the picture. Upon closer inspection I realize that the columns in the right half of the picture are blurred, which, again from contextual knowledge, I visualize as one of the more distant towers. The line of the man's fall is congruent with the corner edge of the building closer to the camera. My interest is also triggered by the man's peculiar position. His fall in midair seems to be halted as he assumes a position in harmony with the verticality of the façade. Even his bent knee, which seemingly disrupts this harmony, is positioned in parallel with the delicate diagonal lines formed by the joints between the panels. This, to me, is the photograph's *studium.*

Where is, then, the *punctum*? In a way similar to Barthes's reading of Gardner's photograph of the boy awaiting his execution, the realization of the man's impending death shatters my illusion of suspended time: I know that this man is going to die. In her seminal study of what she calls "about-to-die" photographs, Barbie Zelizer argues that all the images of the 9/11 jumpers "depended already at their original depiction on the public to fill in the narrative of a gruesome death beyond that actually depicted" (*About to Die* 43). For Zelizer, then, the photo is a euphemistic representation of the actual death that would be more repulsive, as well as offensive, to display. Predicated on her notion that an "about-to-die image reflects a corresponding decision not to show evidence of death" (29), the *punctum,* for her, would be the very death of the Falling Man invoked "as if," rather than "as is" (29). In this sense, we can argue that what is "still life" in the photograph is already death in an "anterior future." Depicting an instance of near-death, such iconic photographs as Robert Capa's "Falling Soldier" taken in the Spanish Civil War or Eddie Adams's photograph of a Vietcong officer being shot show obvious parallels to the "Falling Man."

There is, however, another way of perceiving the "Falling Man" as an "about-to-die image." Besides the inevitability of death, which Drew's picture implies as an "about-to-die photograph," the illusion of the acrobatic pose of the Falling Man counterpoints the "gruesome death" that the image foreshadows. Zelizer discusses a photograph from 1942, as one of the first to capture a suicidal woman's fall in midair after jumping off from a building in Buffalo, NY. The photographer Russell Sorgi described the woman's pose as "doll-like" and "balletic," in sharp contrast with such mundane attributes of street life as the barbershop and other advertisements (38). Likewise, the aesthetic quality of the "Falling Man" appears incongruous with the horror that it depicts. The handsomeness of the photograph, which Barthes registers as the

studium in the Gardner photo, here sneaks insidiously into the realm of the *punctum* as the image's "verticality and symmetry" (the qualities that informed Drew's choice for publication in the first place) are pitted against what Karen Engle calls a "morality of looking" (31). While the mediatized dissemination of tragic images may assuage their traumatic impact as it does in the case of the Naudet brothers' documentary entitled *9/11*, in which the horrid sounds of people plummeting in the ground, as well as images of carnage have been edited out (Smelik 4-5), the aestheticized mediation of the falling body in Drew's photograph, no less than in Sorgi's shot of the falling woman, seems to achieve just the opposite.

If, as Susan Sontag contends, talking about the beauty of the photographs of the ruins seemed "sacrilegious" in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 (67), the impertinent beauty of Drew's image in turn makes the image even harder to look at. Although I know that the picture documents a man's fall to certain death, I cannot resist reading it as a composition, a work of art that transcends the limits of mere documentation. Part of the reason for this unease is that the photo opens up a Benjaminian image world, an interpretive void which prompts me to decide how to relate to the image and the event depicted in it, that is, what the gaze directed at the photo says not only about the photo but also about me looking at it. Should I even be looking at this, not to mention finding beauty in it? The photo identifies and morally positions its audience. To look, in this sense, is also to be *someone,* vis-à-vis the published photo, to identify. Seeing is nothing less than self-definition. "Objects look back, and their incoming gaze tells me what I am," as James Elkins asserts (86). In the "Falling Man," the *punctum* lies in the incongruence of the photograph's content and the aesthetics of its composition, constituting the first layer of heterotopia.

There is, however, another aspect of this aesthetic dimension. While the method in Sorgi's image death is indicated by the caption "Genesee Hotel Suicide" and it is similarly suggested by the context of both Capa and Adams's photographs, the case of the Falling Man is problematic even if his death is obviously framed by the terrorist attacks of 9/11. If beauty manifests itself in the illusion of perfect harmony of man and building, the same discrepancy between what I read into the man's body as an acrobatic performance (*punctum* as detail) and his inevitable death (*punctum* as time) uncannily morphs into a disconcerting connection between the two. For the element of agency, which I ascribe to the position of the body, posits death as the result of a voluntary act, investing the man's *fall* with the phantasmagoric image of his *jump,* which remains invisible in the photograph. It is thus not merely the "narrative of a gruesome death" that the viewer is compelled to imagine, as Zelizer suggests in connection with Drew's photograph, but the similarly "sacrilegious" decision that renders his fall a result of a voluntary act: suicide. Given both the hopelessness of the situation in the burning towers as well as the stigma attributed to the word "suicide"—not to mention, as Laura Frost reminds us, the term's consonance with "the other suicides of that day, the hijackers" (188)—this reading is, of course, highly problematic.[21] Nevertheless, the general unease surrounding the terms "falling bodies" and "jumpers" indicates the irresolution of the problem in the public imaginary. As Joanne Faulkner contends, "[t]he falling man reveals and embodies a traumatic horror, difficult to encounter: the horror of *choosing* the means of one's own particular death in the face of a less certain but more protracted demise at the hands of another" (68).

Simultaneously, however, our contextual knowledge of the hopeless situation inside the buildings overwrites the narrative of suicide. The two ends of the binary

[21] Richard Bernstein expresses this uncanny consonance as follows: "[I]t was the falling bodies, the desperate suicidal leaps caused by the actions of suicide terrorists that made for the grimmest images, the images that would haunt forever those who were there to see them with their own eyes" (2).

opposition thus formed are manifested in the terms “jumpers” and “falling people.” What is at issue here is a discursive reproduction of a norm that coercively confines discourse to an either-or binary. This is a semiotic trap that Dennis Cauchon and Martha Moore probe in their *USA Today* article “Desperation Forced a Horrific Decision.” The article refers to the New York Medical Examiner Office’s position on the issue, which discards the word “jumper” on grounds that these people “were forced out by the smoke and flames or blown out” (Ellen Borakove qtd. in Cauchon and Moore). But this does not discourage the two authors from delving deeper into the problem: “To be sure, some who fell didn’t jump. Witnesses say a few people seemed to have stumbled out of broken windows obscured by smoke. But most say those jumping appeared to make a conscious choice to die by falling rather than from smoke, heat or fire” (Cauchon and Moore). The concern that the authors imply is the imposing binary of conscious decision vs. lack of decision that defines discourse on the falling people.

Borakove’s repudiation of the term “jumper” as a misnomer in the context of 9/11 officially annuls the “discrediting effect” (Goffman 12) of the stigma but, as the article suggests, by virtue of Borakove’s “unmarking” the falling people as “jumpers” another binary is formed: “somebody who goes to the office in the morning knowing that they will commit suicide” vs. what the authors surmise towards the end of their article as “those jumping appeared to make a conscious choice to die by falling rather than from smoke, heat or fire.” Rather than choosing either extreme, the authors drive a wedge between the two components of the binary by pointing to the “how,” as opposed to the “whether or not” thus creating an interstitial space as a semiotic niche for the falling bodies. Even if they seem to challenge the fall/jump binary by re-contextualizing the choice as one pertaining to the “how,” not the “whether or not,” this in-between path remains beset by the fall/jump binary. At stake here is a manifestation of a deeply

unsettling liminality of the "Falling Man," structurally similar to what Giorgio Agamben describes in connection with the *Muselmann,* "living dead"[22] of Auschwitz, as an "emergence of an absolute biopolitical substance that cannot be assigned to a particular bearer or subject, or be divided by another caesura" (*Remnants of Auschwitz* 85).

Laura Frost's 2008 article "Still Life: 9/11's Falling Bodies" offers one of the most recent accounts which registers this crisis of signification in the context of the burgeoning glorification of the victims in the wake of 9/11. She contends that

> Both accounts involve an imposition of an explanatory narrative upon the falling people: "These people were forced out" or "They were choosing to die." Unlike the deaths of passengers on United 93, which sources such as *The 9/11 Commission Report,* A&E's drama *Flight 93,* and the film *United 93* narrated as a proactive deed of heroism, the falling people present a catch-22. If they were victims of horrendous circumstances, driven to act out of blind instinct, then their story is one of pure loss, nightmare, passivity, victimhood. If they had some degree of agency, then there is a possibility of heroism, but also an excruciating choice to jump or to burn. […] The falling bodies have been seen, but they have not been understood; and their representations, by news sources and artistic forms alike, suggests a general desire that they remain beyond the reaches of understanding. (188-189)

To extend Frost's argument, I would add that these "explanatory narratives" are not merely imposed for the sake of "understanding" but it is *by virtue* of these narratives that the falling people are produced as subjects in discourse. Understanding, in other words, is not simply an "innocent" effort of approximation but rather a process of signification through which the falling people come about through routinized discursive practices. In this sense, the contours of the falling bodies are formed by signifying processes that empower the binary opposition of "falling" vs. "jumping." As the components of this binary constantly deconstruct each other, the falling bodies constitute blind fields that reject assimilation into pre-existing narrative schemes.

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[22] Agamben focuses on the *Muselmann* as the "core of the camp," inhabiting a liminal state between life and death, human and non-human. He is the one "whom 'no one wants to see,' and who is inscribed in every testimony as a lacuna […] He is truly the larva that our memory cannot succeed in burying, the unforgettable with whom we must reckon" (*Remnants of Auschwitz* 81).

The composed posture of the man in Drew's photograph thus reveals yet another *punctum,* one that arises not from Barthes's "anterior future" but rather from what I would call an *anterior past*—a past which remains radically open-ended within the photograph. Where Barthes reads "*[t]his will be* and *this has been*" in the Gardner's photo of the boy before his execution, I read in the "Falling Man" my inability to find the *proper word* for what has been. As much as both signifiers produce their subjects *as* jumpers and *as* falling bodies, a painful lack of a better word manifests itself. It is through this lack, through this "gap that separates 'reality' from the Real," as Allen Meek puts it in a Lacanian sense, that the Falling Man emerges as a specter (190). In spatial terms, the image is traumatizing not simply because it connotes suicide but because there is no way to give meaning to what we see in the photograph. To reiterate Foucault's definition in *The Order of Things,* heterotopias are unsettling "because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that" (xviii). It is precisely this anxiety that seems to have prompted Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to describe the 9/11 jumpers as an "uncharted territory" (qtd. in Hirschkorn). In Rebecca Schneider's pertinent recollection: "The body fell not only down the tower but across our collective eyes—again and again it fell without resolution" (22). This crisis of lingual representation is what defines the second layer of heterotopia.

Falling without resolution is thus not only falling out of the "order of things" but also revealing that order as a machinery of signification that produces, rather than describes, its subjects (Bollobás, *They Aren't* 73-85). By extension of Barthes's differentiation of the *punctum* of detail and the *punctum* of time, a new type of *punctum* can be identified here, one that emerges from the conflict of simultaneously activated significations that cancel out each other and manifests itself in a marked absence of the proper word. This *punctum* is thus not exclusively pertinent to a detail or the passage of

time, but it stems from the convolution of signifying processes which, much like a boomerang turning against its user, retroactively deconstructs the "tabula" that empowers these performatives. Although these binding norms, as Barthes would argue, belong in the realm of connotations—the culturally grounded field of the *studium*—their collision results in a crisis of semiosis, whereby the *studium* folds back on itself, becomes an agent of its own disturbance, and emerges as a *punctum*. In the case of the falling people, it is my own uneasiness of using either of the two terms that discourse offers to describe what I see in the photograph that marks this *punctum.* Once the taboo against suicide emerges as a script that compels me to choose either of the two signifiers—the "falling people" or "the jumpers"—they "fall" under erasure in Derrida's sense: the ~~fall~~ing people, the ~~jump~~ers.[23] The line of erasure marks the treacherous void (in the sense of the "*lack* of a better word,") stretching between the signifier and the signified, the difference that undermines not only the words themselves but also the whole machinery of signification by which they operate. This is what Barthes calls the "obtuse meaning" which resists description and "is outside (articulated) language while nevertheless within interlocution" ("The Third Meaning" 61). It is in the obtuse meaning, the "signifier without a signified" (61), that the power of this *punctum* lies. And if stigmatization is a discursive act through which the subject is constituted as a result of a foregrounding of certain characteristics believed to be discrediting, this *punctum* "discredits" the discrediting mark.

It is in the "blinded" signifier, which remains uncannily visible behind the line of erasure, that Derrida's reading of Barthes most lucidly comes to the fore. Manifest in the "homogeneous objectivity of the framed space," the *studium* is, as Derrida reiterates, "always coded" ("The Deaths" 41), it operates by analogies and referentiality. The

[23] On a detailed discussion of Derrida's notion of *sous rature,* see: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology*.

punctum is literally contrapuntal to the *studium* in that it punctures "the surface of reproduction—and even the production—of analogies, likenesses, and codes" (39). Because the *punctum* is the "uncoded beyond" (41), it cuts through the field of the *studium* as a mark of erasure, which destabilizes and defamiliarizes the order of reference precipitated by the *studium.* Where the "Falling Man" is simply shocking or distasteful but nevertheless beautifully composed on the level of the *studium,* it emerges as a striking incongruence between form and content and becomes *punctum.* And where the image's "verticality and symmetry" makes the man in the photograph resemble a performer in the field of the *studium,* the same posture emerges as a signifier of agency, making the discursive schemes that operate behind the terms "falling" and "jumping" collapse into what Foucault calls the "non-place of language" (*OT* xvii) or the "x" in his reading of Magritte's *Megalomania*. The catalyst of this collapse, the metonymic force that literally undermines the discursive coordinates that overwrite "jumper" by the name "Falling Man," is the *punctum.*

It remains to be seen, however, that what actually stares back from the photograph is not simply the "unclaimed body" of the man himself, but also the particular relationship between the body and the building, which requires an examination of the way the building of the World Trade Center is "built" into the iconography of the photograph.

1.5. The Vanishing Point

The binary opposition of jumping vs. falling, as we have seen, is illustrative of a translation that produces the falling bodies according to a script in which the taboo against suicide is activated in the service of stigmatization. If photography, as well as the tabooing of photographs, function as a virtual laboratory where the making of image

worlds and their translations take place at multiple levels of taking, selecting, viewing, and tabooing, it is expedient to ask what role the depictions of the World Trade Center play in these meaning-making mechanisms.

In his recent essay on the structural morphology of the architectural image, Andor Wesselényi-Garay takes Benjamin's "Work of Art" essay as a vantage point and, (similarly to Ariella Azoulay's reading of the same essay in her *Death's Showcase* 21), predicates his argument on the notion that images constitute realities severed from their models. Rather than merely reproducing their subjects, they constitute what Benjamin calls an auratic "here and the now" in and of themselves (244). Detached from the buildings that they depict, architectural images, Wesselényi-Garay argues, also create their own signifiers that need to be studied in their own right. Gesturing toward an approach to architecture from the perspective of iconography, he introduces the term "two-dimensional architecture" denoting an architecture that exists *by virtue* of the architectural image itself.[24] To illustrate this, he refers to Etienne-Louis Boullée's Newton Cenotaph, a visionary building that had never been built, nonetheless, discourse on architectural history has ensured that the cenotaph is part of an architectural heritage that is not perceived and evaluated in terms of the iconography of Boullée's rendering but in terms of its architectural ramifications, yielding an in-between realm between

[24] In Andor Wesselényi-Garay's words, "Az építészeti kép ontológia [sic] státusa nem építészeti, hanem képi mivoltában áll, ennek megfelelően – amennyiben műalkotássá válik – auratikus létezőként; illetve fordítva: auráját érzékelvén esetleg műalkotásként tekintünk rá. [...] A kép így új realitássá változik, amely a 'modelljétől' függetlenedve és időben egyre távolodva szuperrealitássá alakul. A képsorozat által teremtetett szuperrealitásnak sohasem volt 'eredetije' csakis 'modellje' így nem is nélkülözheti 'eredetijét' – legfeljebb 'modelljét' –, ekként tehát szimulakrummá sem válhat. […] Az a vélekedés, hogy egy rögzített – vagyis szakmédiumban megjelenő – képsorozat örökké változó, provizórikus valami, az épület pedig kőnél és ércnél maradóbb [sic], a múló idő emlékműveként felfogható realitás – az eddigiek alapján belátható: súlyos tévedés" (244).
"The ontological status of the architectural image lies not in its architectural but in its pictorial essence whereby it becomes an artifact with an aura, in an inverse fashion, once we sense its aura, we may recognize it as an artifact. […] The image thus transforms into a new reality which, temporally dissociated from its 'model,' becomes a super-reality. Created by the image sequence, this super-reality never had an 'original' only a 'model' wherefore it cannot be void of an 'original,' only its 'model,' which is why it cannot operate as a simulacrum either. […] The presumption which stipulates that an image sequence, published in a professional journal, is a mutable thing, whereas the actual building is an immutable monument, is therefore a serious misconception" (244, translation mine).

image and architecture (241).

In much the same way as two-dimensional architecture creates a reality which catalyzes the dissemination of architectural knowledge, one could argue that the photographs of the falling people constitute a "two-dimensional architecture" of the World Trade Center. The various depictions of the towers in these photographs therefore do not merely reproduce but *create* an architectural space that is, in Wesselényi-Garay's sense, two-dimensional. The signifying processes that construct the subjectivity of the falling bodies are therefore intimately tied to the signifying practices that construct the architecture behind them. In other words, if these photographs constitute sites for the discursive production of "jumpers" and/or "falling bodies," the towers in the pictures should be studied as two-dimensional landmarks placed in the context of that photographic site.

In iconographic terms, the façade of the towers serves as a point of reference on the level of the *studium* by anchoring the images in the context of 9/11. The towers' total extension, however, are never shown in these photographs. One only sees fragments of vertical lines of steel, set against the clear blue sky and, in some cases, identifiable signs of devastation are visible.[25] In Drew's "Falling Man" the towers' girders fill the entire background. These iconographic settings configure the relationship between body and building in multiple ways. Unlike those images that show the site of explosion as an identifiable context that "explains" why jumping was a feasible reaction, the ones that render the towers' "wounds" invisible configure the bodies *against* the abstract monotony of corporate minimalism, as though still standing intact.

[25] In the photograph of the "Cell-Phone Jumper," which shows a man in a pose giving the illusion of him holding a phone onto his ear while falling, we see the immense gaping hole in the façade, enveloped in fire and smoke, as though the man had just jumped out of the inferno behind him. Other images, such as the one showing two people falling hand in hand, show a fragment of the intact façade of one of the towers filling one-third of the photograph with the sky behind the two falling bodies.

The invisibility of the destruction and the foregrounding of the body in Drew's photograph also subvert the pictorial conventions of representing the dead of 9/11 *in terms* of the "wounded" buildings. As we have seen, the flourishing trend of anthropomorphizing the towers in many textual and visual representations, as well as the production of anthropomorphic kitsch items of the towers (Sturken, *Tourists* 222) correlates with what George Lakoff theorized as derivates of the People Are Buildings conceptual metaphor.[26] This metaphorical substitution of the buildings for the bodies was, as Marita Sturken argues, conducive to inscribing the towers with the narrative of innocence. To perceive the towers as victims "is to disavow the most harrowing images of that day, that of people falling/jumping to their deaths because they were trapped by the buildings themselves" (Sturken, "Tourists" 31). Situating both the body and the building in the same field, the "Falling Man" withholds the possibility of the metaphoric substitution of building-for-body by making the former stand *against,* rather than *for,* the latter.

But once the body is configured *against* the abstract monotony of the façade, a line of demarcation between the inside and the outside is formed. This boundary induces significations that not only produce the bodies as spatially *outside* the buildings—as opposed to those whose bodies are invisible *inside*—but also evokes an extended system of binary oppositions: invisibility/inside/unmarked vs. visibility/outside/marked. As Judith Butler argues in her use of Kristeva,

> "Inner" and "outer" make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability. And this stability, this coherence, is determined in large part by cultural orders that sanction the subject and compel its differentiation from the abject. Hence, 'inner' and 'outer' constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject. (*Gender Trouble* 182)

[26] Within the dynamics of introjection and projection, we can interpret this change as a metaphorized inscription of pain in Lakoff's sense, projected unto the absence of the towers, and screened out on alternative means of representation.

What the "jumper photos" configure as *outside* in spatial terms, becomes the site for the discursive production of the falling people as *outcasts* from the visual narrative woven around the metaphoric formula of anthropomorphization and architecturalization. Paradoxically, it is by virtue of being outside that the abject body, "from which one does not part" (Kristeva, *The Powers* 4), is enabled to re-write itself *into* the towers and deconstruct this metaphor. Therefore, if the images of the jumpers depict "impersonal ghostly silhouettes lacking in substance and biography" as Albert Boime suggests (200), then it is precisely this lack of substance and biography that makes these bodies uncannily inseparable from the architecture from which they part (by leaping to their deaths) and, at the same time, cannot part (in the context of "death by architecture"). Here, the fall is not allowed to be imagined *in terms* of the building's fall but body and building form a haiku in two-dimensional architecture, that refuses to be read as a metaphor. The body as *not* building and the building as *not* body are contiguous and yet indigestibly incongruous, recalling the uncanny similarity of the stack of logs and human bodies in Resnais' *Night and Fog* (Wilson 101) and foreshadowing the symptom of the five girls in Greenberg's example, who could not swallow what they believed was body *or* building. Richard Bernstein captures this ambiguity thusly: "The forms, sometimes not much more than specks against the gleam of the skyscraper, tumbled downward almost indistinguishable from the chunks of debris, the airplane parts, the vapors of flaming aviation fuel that filled the air like fireworks" (1).

If the "Falling Man" holds up the mirror of heterotopia to the discursive schemes applied to control it, the pictorial properties of the photograph leave the desire for perspective equally unsatisfied. Unlike in filmic representations where the victims' fall is recorded as a continuous sequence allowing the viewer to assume a fixed vantage, the iconography of Drew's photograph turns the vertical and diagonal lines of the steel

girders into a dazzling hologram, in which the body's distance from the tower, as well as the camera's vantage point vis-à-vis the body and the tower, remains unfathomable. The geometrical texture of the background not only relativizes the man's position in relation to the building but also his perspective as a viewer. In its holographic vibration, the background texture decentralizes the gaze, resulting in an *aporia* of vantage points that allows "no passage"—as the word's original Greek meaning suggests—for the viewer to the Falling Man.[27] Offering no vanishing point in the pictorial sense, the photograph renders the body an inverse vanishing point, one that protrudes from the image and pulls the viewer into its own vanishing as the one and only point of reference. As much as it centralizes the gaze, it subverts iconic representations of the "wounded towers" by positioning the body itself as a wound on the face of the towers, a wound that inhibits the cognitive process of metaphoric substitution of building for body as described by Lakoff. What we have here is a superpositioning of man over building (whose "fall" is similarly waylaid by the photo) in a photographic haiku that refuses to morph into a single metaphor.

The comfort of distance that uni-perspectival representations have afforded ever since Antiquity, here collapses into the space of Piranesi's *Carceri* which Andreas Huyssen describes as an "infinite inner space that no longer has any outside" ("Nostalgia for Ruins" 19). In a similar fashion, the resemblance of body and building that informs representations from Leonardo's "Vitruvian Man" through Le Corbusier's "Modulor," is punctured by the similitude of body and building in the "Falling Man." While Leonardo and Le Corbusier posit the body as an ideal measure for building, the man in Drew's image is defined by an architecture that consumes him, a place he can only practice, in

[27] I use the term *aporia* in Derrida's sense, who defines it as "the difficult or the impracticable, here the impossible, passage, the refused, denied, or prohibited passage, indeed the nonpassage…" (*Aporias* 8).

Michel de Certeau's sense,[28] by extracting himself from it. The *punctum,* attesting to the third layer of heterotopia, emerges from the interstice separating, and at once "cementing" the corporeal and the architectural. It consists in a gestalt in which the viewer perceives the human body as alien and at the same time inalienable from the architecture behind it.

As a site of heterotopia, the photograph therefore operates at three levels of crisis: gruesome content vs. aesthetic composition, falling vs. jumping, body vs. building. The juxtapositions of these conflicting sites are, of course, not reduced to these binary oppositions *per se* but are played out at multiple levels through the shifting roles of the *studium* and the *punctum.* Through these tectonic shifts the "Falling Man" delineates a vacuum of signification not unlike Deleuze's interpretation of the "formula" recited by Melville's Bartleby: "I prefer not to:"

> The formula is devastating because […] it not only abolishes the term it refers to, and that it rejects, but also abolishes the other term it seemed to preserve, and that becomes impossible. In fact, it renders them indistinct: it hollows out an ever expanding zone of indiscernibility or indetermination between some nonpreferred activities and a preferable activity. All particularity, all reference is abolished. (*Essays* 71)

Similarly to Bartleby's formula, the "Falling Man" delineates a "zone of indetermination" (73), a territory of the Foucauldian "x," the unknown, the illegible, the unintelligible, as well as the censored, the repressed, and the tabooed. The language of Bartleby is "deterritorialized" (72), it not only runs underneath English but also wounds it; it "carves out a kind of foreign language within language" (71). Likewise, the "Falling Man" attests to a spectral body, an open wound *within* the trauma of 9/11 itself. The journalistic efforts to identify the man in the picture, which I will discuss in the

[28] In his *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Michel de Certeau, rather paradoxically, defines space as "practiced place" (117). For de Certeau, *place* correlates with panoptic spatiality while *space* denotes "pedestrian speech acts" (97) that challenge panoptic rule.

following section, can therefore be perceived as a quest for fixity, an effort to mitigate the image's spectrality by integrating it into well-entrenched narrative frames.

1.6. Bringing Home the Falling Man

First, let me reiterate Susan Lurie's reading of Drew's photograph. Lurie points to the tension between the image's capability of eliciting "empathetic identification" and, by virtue of the anonymity of the individual that it depicts, of offering a way to keep the horror at a remove in order to ensure "safe spectatorship" (45). The anonymity of the man, Lurie implies, is thus conducive to keeping the unspeakable horror at bay. However, more recent reflections on the photograph made by Allen Meek and Karen Engle demonstrate that it is precisely through the man's anonymity that the photograph gains spectral power. "The work of mourning—for this man, for this day—is permanently disrupted by the impossibility of recognition, the failed identification of a victim," Meek writes (39). In other words, the man constitutes a trace of a silenced trauma, an excess that is "grounding" in that it permanently defers understanding.

The narratives of identity which I will explore in the following two subsections are instances of what Kalí Tal calls "mythologization" in her taxonomy of strategies of cultural coping. Mythologization, Tal maintains, "works by reducing a traumatic event to a set of standardized narratives (twice-and-thrice-told tales that come to represent 'the story' of trauma) turning it from a frightening and uncontrollable event into a contained and predictable narrative" (6). First, I will turn to Peter Cheney's article and demonstrate how he constructs the Falling Man's subjectivity through familiar tropes of the "rags to riches" script.

1.6.1. "Together Forever"

Assigned by the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Peter Cheney commenced his investigation into the identity of the Falling Man by scrutinizing the so-called "missing posters" that covered New York's walls and lampposts following the tragedy. By accident, Cheney came across an image of a man named Norberto Hernandez, in whose countenance he recognized some resemblance to the man in Drew's photograph. Upon Cheney's presentation of the photo to the Hernandez family, a sister and one of the man's brothers felt a "shock of recognition" (Cheney). The man's wife and one of his daughters, however, refused even to look at the photo. Cheney's article, published eleven days after the catastrophe, was titled "The Life and Death of Norberto Hernandez."

The text begins with an "establishing shot" of the Hernandez family in the midst of preparations for Norberto's funeral. In the center of this opening image is the "Falling Man" photo, placed on the living room table. Then, by dint of legitimizing his quest into the man's identity as an ethical imperative, Cheney posits that "[i]t is a private image, one many people felt should not be shown on television and in newspapers. Until now, though, no one really knew whom it was private to" (Cheney). Obviously the second sentence, which serves to justify Cheney's investigation by satisfying the public's desire to identify the individual in the photograph, is a performative statement insofar as it *produces,* rather than describes, this desire as an already existing demand that needs to be satisfied. This gesture allows Cheney to bridge the gap between respecting privacy and, as a servant of those readers objecting to the publication of the photograph, revealing the family of which the Falling Man was a member. What follows in Cheney's article is a narrative of Norberto's life interspersed with descriptions of the events of the day of his death.

Cheney's presentation of the man's life is not without familiar patterns. Born in Puerto Rico, Norberto was still a child when he came to Manhattan with his family, who left their home in hope of a better life. In the account of his younger brother, Norberto comes through as "a humble, humble man […] so trustworthy that they nicknamed him 'Bible'" (Cheney). We then learn about Norberto's last phone call to his family from the Windows on the World restaurant in the North Tower where he worked as a pastry chef, just about to land a job at an even more prestigious restaurant. Behind Cheney's presentation of biographical details a familiar trajectory takes shape. Work, religion, material prosperity, and the unity of family are foregrounded as foundational values that Norberto's life exemplified. Buttressed by clearly identifiable markers of the rags to riches narrative, Cheney delivers Norberto's life as a passage from humble beginnings to prosperous ends, brought to an untimely end by 9/11.

Nevertheless, Cheney's narrative obviously does more than simply describing Norberto's life and death. On the one hand, the identification of the Falling Man subscribes to the long-standing Western—particularly American[29]—cultural practice of reciting the names of the victims as the linguistic sign of the individual. As much as it integrates the Falling Man into the culture of commemoration, Cheney's narrative is at once a commemoration of culture, a reiteration of well-embedded practice of framing death as a cultural event. On the other hand, through the familiar markers of the rags to riches narrative, the journalist skillfully inscribes the Falling Man into a subtext that tells more about the prevailing legacy of the system that made it possible for Norberto to find work in a top New York restaurant, than about Norberto himself. By dint of constructing a past that preceded the taking of the photograph Cheney's gaze represents the inverse of

[29] In the US, ordinary soldiers who perished in the battles of Lexington and Concord of April 19, 1775 were among the first ones to be commemorated by name. In Britain, it was not until the mid 19th century that the names of ordinary soldiers were listed on memorials—particularly in churches (Simpson 24-29). Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington DC, as well as the memorial to the Oklahoma City Bombing follow in the trail of listing all the victims by name (Stow 226).

Barthes's melancholic pondering of death (*punctum* of time) in photography. By foregrounding the ascending trajectory of Norberto's career before 9/11, Cheney's article textually reverts the man's headfirst fall and re-inscribes him into the World Trade Center as the place of his achievement—the building that, in turn, inscribes him into the fabric of American society. It is in this sense that Norberto Hernandez's alleged favorite saying, "Together Forever," which Cheney discloses in his opening line, uncannily echoes patriotic slogans that proliferated after 9/11. Therefore, it is not through the Falling Man's anonymity, as Lurie suggests, but through his identification and inscription into a national myth that the spectral power of the photograph is mitigated.

There are, however, several blind spots that disturb the mitigating force of the narrative. Most notably, if one can identify a *punctum* to the article, it most certainly comes when Cheney describes the family's ambivalent reaction to the photograph: "Not everyone in the family believes it is Norberto in the picture. His wife would not look at the photograph, but one of his daughters did, and delivered her assessment: 'That's not my dad'" (Cheney). In Junod's article, which I will discuss later, the girl's sentence reads as "That piece of shit is not my father" ("The Falling Man"), giving an even more pronounced identification of the man with the abject. This statement undoubtedly constitutes a blind spot to the article's sub-headline, which proudly announces, "This week, *The Globe*'s Peter Cheney was reporting from the rubble of New York when he met a woman who is sure the falling man in this horrifying image is her brother, Norberto Hernandez—one of two family members she lost that day. She and her family want his story told" (Cheney). The daughter's obdurate resistance to recognizing her father as the Falling Man bespeaks the taboo against suicide. The identification of the Falling Man thus proves to be a double-edged sword: the very same effort that transforms voyeurism into paying tribute and symbolically re-inscribing the man into the

fabric of society is simultaneously perceived by Norberto's wife and daughter as a mark that stigmatizes not only Norberto but the whole family. In this context, the motto "Together Forever" becomes suffused with the "discrediting effect" of the stigma of suicide (Goffman 12).

Cheney's text thus constitutes a performance of memory whereby the familiar tropes of the "rags to riches" narrative are employed as a frame to accommodate the Falling Man: Cheney's description of the family's ambivalent reaction serves to situate the body into a familiar context while "localizing" its subversive power as a family issue. Identification, in this sense, is a performative move towards the establishment of "safe spectatorship," to use Lurie's term. Let me now turn to Tom Junod's text and explore how his performance of memory overwrites that of Cheney.

1.6.2. The Unknown Soldier

While Cheney was busy writing his article for the *Globe and Mail,* Tom Junod from *Esquire Magazine* was already following another clue. Through contacting Richard Drew, Junod learned that the "Falling Man" photo was indeed only one of twelve frames shot by Drew, and that in all other frames the composed posture of the man was nowhere to be seen. "[T]he Falling Man fell with neither the precision of an arrow nor the grace of an Olympic diver," Junod writes. "He fell like everyone else, like all the other jumpers—trying to hold on to the life he was leaving, which is to say that he fell desperately, inelegantly" ("The Falling Man"). The rest of the images of the sequence led Junod to recognize the man as African-American rather than Hispanic.

Unlike Cheney, who predicates his search with the assumption that people want to know the person behind the Falling Man, Junod anchors his quest with the imperative to bear witness to the traumatic yet collectively tabooed aspect of 9/11. In the course of

the realization of this imperative, certain discursive schemes that delineate the boundaries of stigma become apparent. Although Junod's article instigates confrontation with the image, when he visits the Hernandez family and shows them the rest of the frames in Drew's sequence, the wife and sister's undisguised relief upon *not* recognizing Norberto in the pictures vindicates the stigmatizing force of the photograph.

> "That is not my husband," she [Norberto's wife] says, handing the photographs back. "You see? Only I know Norberto." She reaches for the photographs again, and then, after studying them, shakes her head with a vehement finality. "The man in this picture is a black man." She asks for copies of the pictures so that she can show them to the people who believed that Norberto jumped out a window, while Catherine sits on the step with her palm spread over her heart. "They said my father was going to hell because he jumped," she says. "On the Internet. They said my father was taken to hell with the devil. I don't know what I would have done if it was him. I would have had a nervous breakdown, I guess. They would have found me in a mental ward somewhere…" (Junod)

Upon Junod's departure from their home, Norberto's wife says, "Please clear my husband's name." It is perhaps for this reason that, at the outset, Junod decides to bring the stigma to the fore: "From the beginning, the spectacle of doomed people jumping from the upper floors of the World Trade Center resisted redemption. They were called 'jumpers' or 'the jumpers,' as though they represented a new lemming-like class" (Junod). Junod's comment hints at the performative power of othering, grafted onto the term "jumper," yet at another point in his text, he criticizes the New York Medical Examiner Office's repudiation of the term as a reluctance to bear witness to the truth.

The act of looking, which has been dismissed as an act of voyeurism, is here re-signified as an ethical imperative to look:

> More and more, the jumpers – and their images – were relegated to the Internet underbelly, where they became the provenance of the shock sites that also traffic in the autopsy photos of Nicole Brown Simpson and the videotape of Daniel Pearl's execution, and where it is impossible to look at them without attendant feelings of shame and guilt. In a nation of voyeurs, the desire to face the most disturbing aspects of our most disturbing day was somehow ascribed to voyeurism, as though the jumpers' experience, instead of being central to the horror, was tangential to it, a sideshow best forgotten. (Junod)

By registering a "desire to face the most disturbing aspects of our most disturbing day," Junod's choice of the word "desire" poignantly implies that the use of images of falling people in turn renders them *objects of desire*, viewed with an illicit pleasure that stems from transgressing the "morality of looking" in Karen Engle's term (31). Junod transcribes the code of illicit pleasure with a different morality of looking: the imperative of bearing witness. Unlike Cheney, who grounds his quest in an alleged public desire to reveal the Falling Man's identity, Junod discloses self-doubt regarding the ethical grounding of his quest:

> But should those calls be made? Should those questions be asked? Would they only heap pain upon the already anguished? Would they be regarded as an insult to the memory of the dead, the way the Hernandez family regarded the imputation that Norberto Hernandez was the Falling Man? Or would they be regarded as steps to some act of redemptive witness? (Junod)

Camouflaged as a question, this last sentence retroactively dispels the concerns posed by the preceding ones by way of establishing a link between identification and bearing witness—and granting redemptive power to both.

Concerning the ambivalent reactions to the vertical position of the person in Drew's photograph, Junod remarks: "Some people who look at the picture see stoicism, willpower, a portrait of resignation; others see something else—something discordant and therefore terrible: freedom" (Junod). Indeed, freedom is "discordant" and "terrible" because it constitutes a transgression of the norm informing the viewer's gaze. For, as we have already seen, the Falling Man is never simply perceived but, by virtue of being perceived, is also *produced* as an object of the gaze, rendering his act discordant with the norm. At stake here is a discordance of discordance: a transgression of the suicide taboo

on the one hand and, simultaneously, a destabilization of the discursive mechanism that activates this taboo as a norm to be applied.

Although Junod's article cancels out Cheney's results, it does not relinquish the urgency to identify the Falling Man. Nevertheless, when Junod's investigation leads him to identify Jonathan Briley, a sound engineer employed by the Windows on the World restaurant, as the new most likely candidate of the Falling Man, Junod realizes that the man's true identity will never be revealed for certain, due to the blurred contours of the man's face in the photograph. Thus, while Cheney invests the falling man with the narrative of the life and death of Norberto Hernandez, Junod's emphasis is less on the details of Briley's biography than on contextualizing the Falling Man as an everyman. The goal of creating a bearable context, rather than simply bearing witness, emerges as a motive behind his text—an objective which becomes most conspicuous in the final paragraphs. Leaving the man's identity uncertain, Junod concludes his article by re-reading the photograph as a memorial to the Unknown Soldier:

> One of the most famous photographs in human history became an unmarked grave, and the man buried inside its frame—the Falling Man—became the Unknown Soldier in a war whose end we have not yet seen. Richard Drew's photograph is all we know of him, and yet all we know of him becomes a measure of what we know of ourselves. The picture is his cenotaph, and like the monuments dedicated to the memory of unknown soldiers everywhere, it asks that we look at it, and make one simple acknowledgment. That we have known who the Falling Man is all along. (Junod)

By constructing the man as an emblem of the Unknown Soldier, Junod (re)inscribes him as a hero of a war "whose end we have not yet seen." Therefore, even if the article instigates bearing witness, it does so by contextualizing the Falling Man within the narrative of war, in which the disturbing ambiguities that make the picture a "zone of indetermination" (Deleuze, *Essays* 73) are domesticated as a meaningful, heroic sacrifice. Junod's performance of memory thus gestures toward such performatives as

mayor Rudolph Giuliani's definition of Ground Zero as a "battlefield" in his farewell address as mayor of New York City (Simpson 47), or Thomas E. Franklin's photograph of three firefighters raising an American flag amid the buildings' ruins, an inscription of 9/11 into the well-known iconography of the Iwo Jima flag raising, which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter.

Junod's article was also the prime source of inspiration behind Henry Singer's documentary film *9/11: The Falling Man* (2006). In the film's last scene Jonathan Briley's older sister Gwendolyn talks about the individual in the photograph as follows: "I hope we're not trying to figure out who he is and more figure out who we are through watching that." This statement poignantly replicates the visual dynamics of the photograph: the absence of perspective, the reverted gaze, the destabilized standpoint of the viewer. In this sense the real challenge of looking at the picture is that of introspection and self-reflection; a confrontation not so much with the Falling Man *per se* as with those cultural mechanisms that legitimize the need for identification as a promise of closure. Like the photograph itself, Gwendolyn's remark short-circuits the quest into the man's identity and renders the spectator, rather than the Falling Man, as the photograph's true referent. Although Gwendolyn's words do not make the image palatable, they elicit empathy for the man in the photograph.

Junod's re-reading of the photograph as the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which he repeats in an interview used as a conclusion to Singer's documentary as well, evokes an array of meanings of the word "missing." On the one hand, the trope serves as an acknowledgment that Junod's quest misses its target, an acknowledgement of the possible *difference* between the Falling Man and Jonathan Briley. On the other hand, his use of the image of the Unknown Soldier performs a ritual of closure by transforming the

"missing referent" into a soldier "missing in action," as a way of giving meaning to the irretrievability of his identity.

The article operates at two levels simultaneously. While his investigation disproves Cheney's identification of the Falling Man as Norberto Hernandez, the trope of the Unknown Soldier does not subvert the reading of Jonathan Briley as the Falling Man but renders this identification ambiguous: "Yes, Jonathan Briley might be the Falling Man. But the only certainty we have is the certainty we had at the start: At fifteen seconds after 9:41 a.m., on September 11, 2001, a photographer named Richard Drew took a picture of a man falling through the sky—falling through time as well as through space" (Junod). By questioning the reliability of the narrative that produces Briley as the picture's true referent, Junod's text folds back on itself and, implicitly, renders identification a process of inscriptions that performatively produce, rather than simply describe, their subjects. It is this aspect that Kevin Ackerman hinges at in his film which I will discuss in the final section of this chapter.

1.7. Deconstructing the Falling Man

A finalist in *Esquire Magazine*'s *Celluloid Style Competition* in 2006*,* Kevin Ackerman's short film entitled *The Falling Man* offers a reading of Junod's article in which the performative construction of the Falling Man most lucidly comes to the fore. Although admittedly "inspired" by Junod's text, the film does more than simply use the article as a source of inspiration. Ackerman's Falling Man, as I will show, is built up of an ensemble of identity-constructions salvaged from both Cheney's and Junod's narratives. It is this aspect of the film that I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

In the opening scene we see a young man putting on a white jacket over his orange T-shirt, just about to start his day shift in a restaurant. As he walks by the counter,

he is immediately sent to deliver a bag of food to "Cantor-Fitzgerald, 103rd floor." For the viewer unfamiliar with Cheney and Junod's articles, this may appear merely as the beginning of a narrative of the Falling Man's last day; however, it is a narrative replete with intertextual allusions. The orange T-shirt, a detail revealed in the unused frames of Richard Drew's sequence of twelve images, serves as a trace that leads Junod to rule out Norberto Hernandez as the Falling Man. Instead, as we have seen, his quest leads him to Jonathan Briley. In the opening scene of Ackerman's film, however, the person wearing the telltale orange shirt is not a light-skinned black man as Briley would have been, but rather a man with Latino features akin to Hernandez.

As the man departs to attend to his duties, a young waitress smiles and turns to the chef who has just sent him off: "Cute… What's his name? I can never pronounce it … I thought it was Norbert or Norberto or something…" Busy and disinterested, the chef shakes his head and responds, "I don't know." What Ackerman performs in this short scene is a deconstructive reading of Junod's article. By way of using the article as a *studium*, the film establishes an *aporia* of Junod's and Cheney's readings and constructs the Falling Man as a palimpsest of *textual* traces. Therefore, it is not so much the "repressed" narrative of Norberto Hernandez emerging here as a *punctum*, but rather the confluence of both narratives. Whereas the orange undershirt should cancel out the Latino features of the character playing the Falling Man, the film absorbs these "inconsistencies" by retroactively destabilizing the textual coherence of the *studium.* In other words, drawing on the void of signification that leaves the identity of the Falling Man unconfirmed, Ackerman constructs him as a palimpsest of inscriptions gleaned from the two journalistic narratives.

Upon reaching the 103rd floor, the task of delivering the bag to its destination turns into an odyssey through vacant corridors and abandoned offices that employees

seem to have vacated in haste. Sheets of paper scattered across the floor, pieces of toppled furniture, and echoes of voices whose source remains hidden all lend an uncanny atmosphere to the office interiors. In a desperate effort to find any human being, the deliverer nearly panics before coming across a fax machine that prints a single line in endless repetition: "He was trying to come home." This line, coming from Norberto's daughter Catherine, is quoted in Junod's article: moments before viewing the images and realizing that the man captured was not her father, Catherine told Junod, "He was trying to come home to us, and he knew he wasn't going to make it by jumping out a window" (Junod "The Falling Man").

As an intertext, Catherine's line also functions as a dissonant echo of Junod's ruminations on Jonathan Briley's jump towards the end of his article: "Is Jonathan Briley the Falling Man? He might be. But maybe he didn't jump from the window as a betrayal of love or because he lost hope. Maybe he jumped to fulfill the terms of a miracle. Maybe he jumped to come home to his family" (Junod). Ackerman's appropriation of Catherine's remark, which renders homecoming irreconcilable with jumping, is thus filtered through the resolution of jumping as a *means* of coming home, which Junod ponders in connection with Briley. When Ackerman's Falling Man sees the endlessly repeated sentence coming out of the fax machine he does not simply recognize himself as the subject of the sentence but, more significantly, he sees himself *written* by that sentence in which conflicting interpretations of his jump are at stake.

He then sees the shadows of people cast on the milky glass of an office but upon opening its door finds only a chair revolving in the corner. Turning sideways, however, he sees a wall-surface draped in flags, T-Shirts, baseball hats, teddy bears, and posters of the missing, all reminiscent of the ones blanketing the walls and lampposts of the city in the aftermath of the attacks. As the camera zooms in on the wall and zigzags from one

face to another, the viewer is made to inhabit the man's gaze as he recognizes the young waitress and the chef—now appearing amongst the missing. Once he finds his own picture, showing him in the company of his little daughter, he finally recognizes himself amongst those missing. By the same token, the viewer also recognizes him as a *text* written by Cheney who, in a similar fashion, "recognized" Norberto Hernandez in one of the missing posters.

Partially covered by posters and memorial objects, a sign "Together Forever" appears for a glimpse. In the context of the memorial wall the sign reads as a patriotic slogan, fitting well into the culture of commemoration of 9/11 in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. At another level, however, the wall is also a screen in which the Falling Man recognizes himself as one of the victims. In this sense, the sign evokes Norberto Hernandez's motto reiterated by both Cheney and Junod. The *punctum* here does not merely consist of the recognition of the sign as an intertext, but also in that the film uses the sign to graft the private onto the public, thus inscribing the motto of a Puerto Rican family into the rhetoric of post-9/11 patriotism. Moreover, behind the utopian dimensions of the words "Together Forever" the dystopia of traumatic linkage may also be present. Thus the public and 9/11 are linked together forever in the tabooed zones of the event that may never be trespassed, and which result in a cycle of reenactment.

Ackerman's film partakes in this cycle. Instead of constructing a filmic version of the cenotaph that Junod's text embodies, Ackerman undermines metaphoric substitutions and makes his film inhabit the tabooed zones of the event. In the concluding scene, the dystopia of traumatic linkage between the public and the tabooed zone of the photograph is complemented by the link between the terrorists' suicidal act and the Falling Man's dilemmatic agency in his own death, as we have seen earlier with Frost. The scene of his

jump, framed by a devastating fire concludes in an overexposed image, which cuts into an imaginary non-place[30] defined by whitewashed surfaces and neon light. It is in this voided landscape that he touches his own corpse as his Other—foreshadowed by his confrontation with his own image among the missing—and at once meets the terrorist Other. The Falling Man hands the bag he was supposed to deliver to Cantor-Fitzgerald over to the terrorist whereupon the latter gives him the Koran with Drew's photograph enfolded within its pages as a bookmark. What Junod monumentalizes in the metaphor of the Unknown Soldier is here de-monumentalized by an architectural depiction of the tabooed zone, a space which inserts Drew's photograph as an "intertext" into the Koran and engulfs the Falling Man and the terrorist in a traumatic non-place, which I will revisit in Chapter 3 in my discussion of Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man.*

The multi-layered implications of the slogan "Together Forever" thus replicate the palimpsestual dynamics of Ackerman's film as a whole. For what is offered for the viewer to recognize as a screen of identification is, most of all, the missing referent, the "x" behind the construct known as the Falling Man. Gwendolyn's comment in Henry Singer's documentary comes to mind again: "I hope we're not trying to figure out who he is and more figure out who we are through watching that." The search for the man's identity is in fact the search for a vantage point that would allow us to put the Falling Man "in perspective." If the establishment of this perspective is contingent upon the nexus between the signifier and the signified, Ackerman's film destabilizes this nexus by rendering the subjectivity of the Falling Man an effect of the signifier only. Viewed as a palimpsest, Ackerman's film lends agency to the Falling Man as a spectral body, a trace of the past that always already manifests itself as unavailable, yet unavoidable.

[30] I am using the term in Marc Augé's sense, denoting spaces with "neither singular identity not relations; only solitude and similitude" (103). In Chapter 4, I will return to Augé's notion and explore how non-places, which Augé sees as antithetical to Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* (Augé 55), may become counter-sites of memory.

1.8. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to unravel the juxtapositions of incongruous narrative layers that are at work in the "Falling Man" photograph. I studied the image as a site of heterotopia that destabilizes the meaning-making mechanisms that define it as a "site of otherness" in relation to the heroic narratives in which 9/11 has been wrapped. My primary concern was to map the multiple constellations of man and building as a palimpsest of mutually exclusive narrative schemes that collapse in the signifying void of the image. I have used Benjamin, Barthes, and Derrida's theories to unpack the "x" within three incarnations of heterotopia: a) the incongruence between the photograph's content and its aesthetics dimensions, b) the crisis of lingual representation, and c) the pictorial characteristics of the photograph.

Counteracting the spectral power of the image, Cheney's "rags to riches" script and Junod's metaphor of the Unknown Soldier cement the Falling Man into narrative monuments; positive forms that centralize memorial practices and facilitate the process of working through grief and trauma. While the former enacts a script that has been monumentalized in countless literary and filmic narratives, the latter expresses a long-standing tradition of memorial architecture that gives recognition to the nation's dead by way of transforming the unidentified Falling Man into the Unknown Soldier and the "Falling Man" photo into his cenotaph. Because the cenotaph as a monument offers a vocabulary that helps us translate trauma into mourning, one might argue that such discipline is necessary; nevertheless, the application of collectively recognized signifiers, such as the "rags to riches" script and the trope of the Unknown Soldier poses an ethical problem as to *how* to bear witness to the photograph.

By dint of putting constituents of Cheney and Junod's narratives into play, Ackerman's filmic construction of the Falling Man denaturalizes Drew's photograph as a monument and reinstates it as a heterotopia. By showing us that the journalistic narratives do not simply describe, but rather *produce* the Falling Man, the film becomes a performance of memory whereby these journalistic productions are deconstructed. Through this deconstruction the film restores agency to Drew's tabooed photograph, obligating the viewer to contend with the image without the comfort of naturalized narrative. The ruins of the towers, which will be the focus of the next chapter, yield a similarly heterotopic constitution of body and building with extensive implications for the material remains of the day.

CHAPTER TWO

RUINS THAT MATTER

"Piranesi's engraved visions of fantastic classicism should be required study for those now gazing on ground zero." (Herbert Muschamp)

"We have our own ruins. But I don't think I want to see them." (Don DeLillo)

In the previous chapter I have argued that the "Falling Man" can be regarded as a site of heterotopia consisting of incompatible systems of signification that mutually deconstruct each other. What Foucault marks with an "x" in Magritte's *Megalomania* manifests itself in aporia: when trying to "read" the photograph, we are not allowed to read the "x" as adding up to suicide and neither can we read the agency exhibited by the man's pose as heroic or simply beautiful. We try to perform the "x" as a particular person but are thwarted because the conventions needed for performance are defamiliarized in the mirror of heterotopia.

This chapter undertakes an archeological excavation of the ruins of the World Trade Center. Similarly to the previous chapter, my underlying concern here is to identify heterotopic constellations of the corporeal and the architectural. However, with the ruins long ago cleared from the site and the construction of the memorial and the new tower well underway, one may rightfully wonder what archeology is left to be done at Ground Zero after all. The layers I intend to unravel are not restricted to the debris of the towers themselves, although the materiality of the ruins will constitute the vortex of this chapter. The ruin's "afterlife," either in photographic representations or in the discourse about what to do with them, yields so many additional layers that cannot be discussed in isolation from the actual content of the debris itself. My contention is that the material constitution of the ruins is comparable to the layers of the "Falling Man" in that they

both configure body and building in such ways that challenge and subvert pre-existing patterns of signification within the culture of commemoration of 9/11.

Reiterating my argument on the similitude of body and building discussed in the Introduction, I will problematize the inseparable unity of body (value) and building (waste) in the debris of the towers as my point of departure and trace manifestations of this relation in the so-called “missing posters” that proliferated all over New York after the catastrophe. I will then proceed to examine conflicting views on the preservation of the arcaded entrances to the towers whose grid-like structures remained standing for weeks after the attacks. After contextualizing the discursive patterns that underpin the arguments for preservation vs. obliteration, I will discuss how photographic representations *construct* the ruins of the World Trade Center by making them conform to aestheticizing and jingoistic narratives. In the final section, I will deconstruct these narratives by tracing the afterlife of the ruins through three ships; each emblematizing the ruins in particular ways: one recovered as an archeological find in Ground Zero, one responsible for shipping the ruins overseas, and one whose bow stem contains steel from the WTC. As each of these ships are related to the ruins in different ways, my purpose is to trace how the buildings’ debris as waste inseparable from human bodies gets re-signified once the ruins are sold for scrap in Asia.

2.1. Fortuitous Combinations

Before delving into the sedimentation of the wreckage itself, let me first situate the ruin within the context of architectural identifications. As already discussed, the spatial practices that we habitually perform in a given environment are key to our identification with that environment as home. Within the dialectical process of architectural identifications, as we have seen with Lakoff and Leach, we unconsciously read ourselves

into the built environment around us and, in turn, literally incorporate that environment as a taken-for-granted background to our spatial practices. Any damage to this background is necessarily registered as damage to the lived body, as Sartre explains through his example of the bombed house.[31]

In consonance with these notions, recent scholarship on the phenomenology of the contemporary ruin lays emphasis on our habitual reproduction of the "material order" (Edensor "Waste Matter" 313) that we appropriate as a familiar setting to our lives. Drawing on Bachelard's phenomenology of the home, Dylan Trigg sees the power of contemporary ruins in their potential to expose "in an especially visceral way the vulnerability at the heart of our memories of places. More precisely, what the ruin discloses is that 'permanency' is a value conferred upon a place, rather than a quality residing in the object itself" ("Architecture and Nostalgia" 6). Tim Edensor goes even further by claiming that the ruin subverts this sense of permanency by presenting a "defamiliarized landscape in which the formerly hidden emerges and the building regresses to a state which recalls its own construction" (318). Resonating with Freud's definition of the uncanny, the ruin exposes "something that should have remained hidden" (*The Uncanny* 148) and reveals not only of the evanescence of objects that surround us but also unravels their material components. In the ruin, Edensor asserts, "objects become unfamiliar and enigmatic, they contravene our usual sense of perspective, rebuke the way things are supposed to assume a position in regimented linearity or are separated from each other at appropriate distances" (321).

Edensor's phenomenological formulation of the ruin offers a fruitful conjunction with Foucault's identification of similitude in Magritte's paintings. If similitude "reveals what recognizable objects hide" (*TNP* 46), so does the ruin, by way of exposing the

[31] I am referring to Sartre's famous statement in his *Being and Nothingness* that I discussed in the Introduction: "My body is everywhere: the bomb which destroys my house also damages my body insofar as the house was already an indication of my body" (325).

"building blocks" hidden by the façade, yet indispensible to the structural stability of the building. The metaphor underpinning the term "façade" is illustrative of an anthropomorphic impulse, which catalyzes the symptoms Lakoff and Leach describe in connection with the collapse of the Twin Towers as "bodies." In Edensor's formulation, however, the ruin's materiality comes to the fore as a spatial configuration that makes us confront the constructedness of the order that we reiterate in our spatial practices. The ruin, in this formulation, is illustrative of the dynamics of similitude insofar as it destabilizes the cathexis of identity as a continuous narrative of the body image and rearranges the constituents of well-embedded spatial orders by foregrounding voids and alternative configurations that do not lend themselves to be identified according to pre-existing models. If the phenomenology of the ruin is traceable in Magritte's palimpsestual compositions, Benjamin's interest in Surrealism, which he lauded for exposing the "ruins of the bourgeoisie" (*Reflections* 161), or Deleuze and Guattari's reference to the quilt as an illustration of "smooth space" (474), resonate with Trigg and Edensor's observations. The ruin is therefore an in-between realm in which familiar objects engage in what Edensor calls "fortuitous combinations which interrupt normative meanings" (323). It is in these combinations that the heterotopic spatiality of the ruins of the WTC is most palpable.

The hasty removal of the towers' ruins from Ground Zero is largely indicative of such an interruption of normative meanings. In her essay written shortly after the attacks, Patricia Yaeger describes the rubble of the towers as an "archive" containing human remains and architectural debris whose mixture resulted in a poisonous residuum. While confrontation with such a scale of bodily vanishing is daunting in itself, another source of discomfort, Yaeger says, is the dilemma "to keep the fact of waste and its re-creation as value constantly in mind" (191). The discarded detritus of the towers—literally a

refuse—thus stares back as a container of human remains that refuse to rest in peace: "This is dirt that bites back, that does not lend itself to the cleanliness of ceremony" (189).

When Yaeger wrote her essay, Ground Zero had already been turned into a vast gaping hole, devoid of the wreckage of the World Trade Center:

> The materials of the World Trade Center have been coercively discarded: the remaining two-million-ton pile of debris forced us to encounter a formally built environment as its components—as lost labor, lost structure. But to think of the bodies of the dead mingling with this debris, to think of the results of the 9/11 explosions as detritus, gives one a pause. (187)

In an act of reverence, family members of the unidentified victims received urns filled with ashes and dust retrieved from Fresh Kills[32]—an uncontainable material mitigated by the symbolism of ritual (Yaeger 187; Sturken, *Tourists* 165-166; Seeley 77-79). What Yaeger does not mention is that the dust handed out to family members did not only include debris and body parts but also the remains of the terrorists as the third component "out of place." We have seen that this uncanny mingling of the victims and the perpetrators also recurs in the context of the jumpers whose agency in their death, as Laura Frost points out, relates them to the "other suicides" of 9/11 (188). Here, however, it is not the dilemmatic nature of agency but the materiality of the ruin that yields this "fortuitous combination," which indubitably adds to the sense of discomfort Yaeger registers in the *Times'* description of the highly ritualized, symbolic act of separation of value and waste: "An officer scoops a large spoonful of soil into a plastic bag. The soil, brown with a slightly grayish cast, is unhealthy in appearance. It crunches slightly when the spoon is placed in it, and it is thick enough that the spoon stands on its own" (qtd. in Yaeger 189).

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[32] What may sound like a morbid term in fact speaks to the Dutch past of New York. Fresh Kills is a landfill on Staten Island and its name means "fresh creeks."

As the WTC was one of the last buildings in New York fireproofed with asbestos (DePalma 16), the fact that the soil contained contaminants such as powdered cement and asbestos, which claimed the lives of many workers involved in the rescue operations, adds yet another layer to the heterotopic palimpsest of dust. Although the book primarily focuses on the on-going lawsuits by workers and their families concerning the health hazards caused by exposure to the dust that have been largely overlooked by authorities, Anthony DePalma's description of the architectural components of the dust in his current book *City of Dust: Illness, Arrogance, and 9/11* reveals toxic hazards "built into" the towers and unleashed by the 9/11 attacks. It is in this sense that Edensor's words on decaying modern industrial ruins read uncannily acerbic in the context of 9/11: the "erosion of singularity through which the object becomes 'un-manufactured' remembers the process by which it was assembled: the materials that were brought together for its fabrication, the skilled labour that routinely utilized an aptitude to make similar things, the machines and tools which were used to shape it" (320).

But as much as the dust reveals the materials of construction, it also divests objects of their "objecthood." As dust levels out difference between objects into entropy, there is no way to differentiate between the ashes of the bodies and the dust of the buildings, let alone the remains of the victims and the perpetrators; the material at hand shows too much and too little at the same time. Conceived in the alchemy of terrorism, heterotopia does not merely operate at the level of the confluence of body and building but also in the entropic mingling of architectural materials that yield toxic contaminants as well as the uncanny presence of the bodies of the terrorists within the remains of the victims. At stake here is a heterotopia whose constituent "sites" are largely akin to the incompatible layers of the "Falling Man" photograph—a composition both material and photographic, which performs the "x" as the unknown, the unclean, and the unspeakable

all at once. In the dust, it is in the uncanny similitude of incompatible layers that refuse to be sorted out in an orderly manner that the “x” is most discernible.

Besides the disintegration of borders within objects and bodies, the binary of inside vs. outside, traditionally associated with architectural space, is similarly challenged by the materiality of the ruin. In tandem with the dynamics of the Freudean uncanny, places formerly hidden by the building’s façade come to the fore as the building, reduced to ruin, ceases to separate inside from outside. In the context of the “Falling Man” we have already seen how the appearance of the man outside the building—as opposed to the invisible victims inside—thwarts the metaphoric substitution of building for body and makes the building stand *against*, both in the pictorial and literal senses, rather than *for* the bodies that perished inside.

Figure 2.1. The “missing poster” of Manny Lopez indicating his workplace on the 98th floor of the North Tower. Photo by Mike Caine.

A similar dynamic can be identified in the so-called “missing posters” that Ackerman’s film incorporates as a trope, as we have seen in Chapter 2. Posted in public spaces

immediately after the attacks, the countless posters depicting the faces of people missing attest to the uncanny exposure of the inside in the realm of the outside. As it gradually became clear that the site would not yield survivors, nor the bodies of the dead, the posters featuring photographs of the missing soon turned into spontaneous shrines[33] for the unburied dead. Inasmuch as the posters represent the victims in culturally constructed forms of the family photograph—most feature peaceful, familial settings and smiling faces not only antithetical to the gravity of their context but, as private images, their "exhibition" in public space also subverts normative boundaries between the private and the public.

Besides the posters' potential to merge private and collective trauma and turn mourning into a communal activity (Santino 12), their combination of word and image poignantly articulates the ruin's subversion of inside and outside. Next to personal data, most of the posters would indicate the floor and office number where the missing person worked in the World Trade Center (Miller 40) (see figure 2.1.). Through the indication of these locations the towers, which Michel de Certeau famously described as the "totalizing eye" of the urban panopticon making "the complexity of the city readable" (92), are exposed as a surrealistic montage of the corporeal and the architectural laid over the city. Similarly to the dust that covered the streets of Manhattan, the posters mapped the interior of the towers onto the level of "pedestrian speech acts" (97). What these missing posters offer as performative commemoratives is therefore not merely an interface between the private and the public as well as the living and the dead, but also a

[33] As the poet Charles Bernstein puts it, "[t]hey say "missing," not in the sense of "looking for" but, rather, of *feeling the loss*" (Bernstein). The photographs posted on the walls also functioned as an interface where intimate objects of the private sphere, such as family photographs, descriptions of people, telephone numbers, entered the realm of the public. Ethnologist Jack Santino refers to this merger of the private and the public in the practice of memory as "performative commemoratives." Due to the spontaneity of this practice of memorialization, such unofficial performatives engage the public on various levels. As the posters evolve into shrines, Santino asserts, they "insert and insist upon the presence of absent people. They display death in the heart of social life" (Santino 12).

glimpse into the cacophony of floors, corridors, offices, companies, bosses, and employees inseparable from the architecture that consumed them. Indeed, these posters are uncannily similar to and yet very different from those posters of missing people that indicate locations as existing places thus providing reference points to assist investigation. Here, the actual place of these people's disappearance is concomitant with the disappearance of the place itself—a disappearance that is still deferred by the posters, or rather by the *culture* of creating such posters which necessitates the indication of the place where the missing person was last seen. They expose the interior of a building which no longer exists but persists in the posters as a virtual site of both corporeal and architectural disappearance.

The indication of the victims' workplaces within the towers was significantly lacking from the *New York Times'* 9/11 obituary section entitled "Portraits of Grief."[34] For weeks, short biographies appeared in the *Times*, accompanied by snapshots similar to the ones on the posters of the missing. Besides enacting the convention of commemorating each and every victim by name, these biographical notes, as David Simpson points out, are very much alike, attesting to a rhetoric which portrays the dead as "regimented, even militarized, made to march to the beat of a single drum" (23).[35] The uniformity of the descriptions of the victims' lives, in which "the subtle nobility of everyday existence" as well as the "ordered beauty of quotidian lives" are celebrated, as chief editor Howell Raines asserts (qtd. in Simpson 22), is indeed indicative of the same patriotic sentiment that infuses Cheney and Junod's narratives of the Falling Man. The

[34] The "Portraits of Grief" ran for fifteen weeks in the *New York Times* and came out in two book editions in 2002 and 2003 respectively. It is also available on the *New York Times* website at: <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/newyorkandregion/series/portraits_of_grief/index.html>

[35] Although the "Portraits" undoubtedly draws on the tradition of paying homage to every victim by listing their names, Simon Stow goes as far as to argue that the alleged democratic nature of this form of commemoration is in fact *anti*-democratic insofar as it permits "private grief to intrude upon the anonymous public mourning considered essential to the well-being of the city" (224). He reiterates ancient Greek mourning conventions and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as a counterpoint to what he sees as the melodramatic quality of the "Portraits" (233) which renders the dead "attractive to the living" (235).

conspicuous absence of specific locations in the "Portraits of Grief" suggests that their mention would have made the site of corporeal vanishing all too palpable and the contiguity of body and building too overt. In its overall homogeneity of details the "Portraits of Grief" is imbued with the power of what Paul Virilio calls the "*phatic image*—a targeted image that forces you to look and holds your attention" as a result of "an ever-brighter illumination, of the intensity of definition, singling out only specific areas, the context mostly disappearing into a blur" (14). It can be argued that the absence of floors and office numbers in the biographical notes "dematerializes" the location of death by illuminating the "ordered beauty of quotidian lives" so as not only to commemorate the victims, but, similarly to Cheney and Junod's articles on the Falling Man, to assert the legacy of an American way of life they are made to emblematize.

A phatic image, the "Portraits of Grief" inscribes the missing posters into pre-existing codes of commemoration in which the building as a material *site* of loss, a place of fortuitous combinations, is eclipsed by the metaphorical architecture of American values as a grand monument. The materiality of the ruins, which encompasses an uncanny amalgam of body and building, victim and terrorist as incompatible juxtapositions, is obviously irreconcilable with the monumentality of the "Portraits of Grief." For all their unsettling heterogeneity, the ruins' potential preservation has not been completely outlawed in the wake of 9/11. In what follows, I will explore arguments for and against the ruins' preservation and discuss the ideological frames underpinning these discourses.

2.2. Nostalgia for the Future

When Patricia Yaeger wrote her essay, the fate of the emblematic Gothicizing arcades of the towers' remaining arcades was still uncertain. In his *New York Times* article written

within two months after the attacks, architectural critic Herbert Muschamp vociferously argued for the preservation of the walls by reiterating, above all, their aesthetic value: "[i]f you believe that beauty begins in terror, then it is not sacrilege to speak of the beauty of the remaining walls" (Muschamp). By claiming that Piranesi's engravings should be "required study for those now gazing on ground zero," Muschamp transfigures the ruins into a disembodied architectural form that offers itself for aesthetic judgment, a problem Yaeger anticipates in the closing paragraph of her article. If the walls are preserved, she ponders, "will we also find space to remember the everyday world of detritus that these lost buildings, so filled with lost people, became?" (193) In other words, if the arcades survive as icons, what meanings will be conferred upon them as "figures of memory" in Assmann's sense? How could their aesthetic quality be reconciled with the heterotopia of dust that still claims victims among the workers who have been exposed to it?

Without doubt, Muschamp's mapping of Piranesi's ruinscapes upon the arcaded walls of the WTC inscribes the ruins of yesterday into the realm of classical ruins or the fantasy-ruins of Piranesi's *Carceri.* The beauty of the towers' ruins is, however, comparable to the aesthetic pleasure I registered in the impeccable composition of the "Falling Man"—a gaze incongruent with the gruesome details of death that it keeps out of focus. Apart from the ruins' aesthetic qualities, to which I will return later in this chapter, Muschamp's argument also points to their commemorative value. He perceives the ruins as a "piece of our own place and time," that ought to be preserved as "eloquent reminders" of the catastrophe, most of all because they do not "spin the forms into a

limited framework of meaning. Rather, like the void left by the collapse of the twin towers, the Walls invites an infinite number of projected associations" (Muschamp).[36]

In his definition of the "counter-monument" James Young emphasizes a similar potential. As opposed to the narrative that a conventional memorial would graft onto a traumatic event, the counter-monument, Young maintains, embodies the "perpetual irresolution" of memory ("Memory and Counter-Memory" 2) by functioning as a "dislocated sign," that withholds closure. I will return to Young's argument on the counter-monument in further detail in Chapter 4. Suffice it here to propose the problem that if the ruins of the World Trade Center were able, as Muschamp believes, to invite multiple readings without putting a cap on the memorialization process, they indeed resonate with Young's definition of the counter-monument. For Young, however, the preservation of ruins amounts to a monumental, rather than a counter-monumental, gesture. In his meticulously researched *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993) he studies Holocaust memorials around Europe and the United States. As for the preservation of the ruins of the camps, he warns us of the ruins' potential to make viewers confuse material reality with the event they are meant to stand for. In the context of Majdanek he writes:

> Too often, however, these remnants are mistaken for the events from which they have been torn: in coming to stand for the whole, a fragment is confused for it. Authentic historical artifacts are used not only to gesture toward the past, to move us toward its examination, but also to naturalize particular versions of the past. [...] In the subsequent fetishization of artifacts by curators, and of ruins by the "memory-tourist," however, we risk mistaking the piece for the whole, the implied whole for unmediated history. Moreover, our veneration of a place leads to its consecration as holy site, sacred and transcendent in its significance. (127)

[36] Weeks after the disaster the idea of building a tall structure on Ground Zero seemed to have reached absolute consensus in architectural discourse; nevertheless, a few articulated their reservations about such a project. Most notably, two architects, Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, did not shy away from expressing their doubts: "Let's not build something that would mend the skyline, it is more powerful to leave it void. We believe it would be tragic to erase the erasure." (qtd. in Sturken, *Tourists* 231)

In other words, the sanctity of ruins as material traces of trauma may reduce the complexity of the event that they stand for to the actual veneration of that trace. He fears that when we mistake ruins for the events that they represent, "we lose sight of the fact that they are framed for us by curators in particular times and places" (128).[37]

In the context of the World Trade Center-site, Young's point about the ideological roots of ruin-preservation may explain his aversion towards preserving the ruins of the World Trade Center, which he voiced on a number of occasions as member of the jury of the Ground Zero memorial competition ("The Memorial Process" 161). Nevertheless, his argument in the latter case is steeped into an ideological frame that differs from the one he applies to the ruins of the concentration camps. In the same volume of essays that includes Patricia Yaeger's text on the "rubble as archive" and Judith Greenberg's essay on "Wounded New York," Young stipulates the following:

> All cultures preserve bits of relics and ruins as reminders of the past; nearly all cultures remember terrible destructions with the remnants of such destruction. But Americans have never made ruins their home or allowed ruins to define—and thereby shape—their future. The power of ruins is undeniable, and while it may be fitting to preserve a shard or a piece of the towers' façade as a gesture to the moment of destruction, it would be a mistake to stop with such a gesture and allow it alone to stand for all those rich and varied lives that were lost. For by

[37] In his "The Topography of Memory" Péter György takes a different position. In consonance with Young, he sees the "aesthetisizing dramaturgy" of visual spectacles representing the Holocaust as a tendency which, in the "paradigm of moral universal trauma," absoluticizes and de-historicizes the Holocaust (12). In this sense, reconstructed locations equally constitute visual spectacles serving a universalizing ideology as Spielberg's or Koltai's filmic representations. Where György's argument differs from Young's is in his evaluation of the meaning-making mechanisms embodied in the materiality of the actual sites. Whereas Young warns against the dangers of the veneration of historical artifacts, György calls for archeological precision to excavate and decipher the palimpsest of the sites in their local contexts so as to replace the universalizing, neutralizing tendencies of recycled Holocaust-narratives. He adopts "moral geography" as an ethical imperative of unearthing the stratified layers and contexts of the individual locations aimed at *demystifying* the concentration camps. In the predominant didacticism of the Holocaust-paradigm the specific details of the camps' histories had been eclipsed by the prevailing notion of a universal moral trauma. The shift of focus, which György traces in the moral geographical stance, challenges the perception of the camps as monuments and renders them "sites of remembering" instead (57). Although moral geography's stance on reconstruction is dubious as it does not dispense with the desire to recreate the vegetation and the ecology of the sites, György's archeological gaze takes a definite stance against the universalizing and romanticizing view of the Holocaust, which, recalling Marita Sturken, we can identify with the tourist gaze. Young's concept does not incorporate this distinction and considers the preservation of the ruins just as reductive and misleading as their selection and display in museums. Where Young sees the power of aesthetic as a distancing factor, György sees its weakness. Where György sees a potential for demystification, Young sees yet another imposition of ideology.

> itself, such a remnant (no matter how aesthetically pleasing) would recall—and thereby reduce—all this rich life to the terrible moment of destruction, just as the terrorists themselves would have us remember their victims. ("Remember Life with Life" 217)

Young's assertion that Americans "never made ruins their home" reiterates a cultural myth the roots of which can be traced back to the early days of the Republic. The cult of ruins (both real or folly) in 18th century Europe found no fertile ground in a country infatuated with its own (manifest) destiny as a rising nation (Kammen 54) and, if there is a ruin-aesthetics to be located in early 19th century America, it is primarily reserved to representations of the Indians as an archeological memory of a prehistoric past, underpinning narratives of national progress (McNutt 6-11). The second part of Yong's sentence, pertaining to Americans' refusal to allow ruins to "define—and thereby shape—their future," speaks to a particular aversion towards ruins whose roots are similarly traceable in the urban culture of early 19th century America. Not only were the new materials of construction such as iron and concrete incompatible with conventions of ruin-gaze that fetishized stone, the ruin, whose appearance traditionally marks the end of a cycle of civilization, was an anachronistic as well as an anatopistic phenomenon in the American city. As Nick Yablon puts it, "[i]t was to convey their disruption of traditional conceptions of time that nineteenth-century witnesses coined such oxymoronic terms as *day-old ruins, temporary ruins,* or simply *modern ruins*" (12). And even though the skyline of cities was continuously subject to transformation in the dialectical processes of demolition and construction, the ruin conveyed the ominous connotation of "premature decline" (12) which permeates Young's words in the context of Ground Zero.

The second half of his argument, however, in which the role of ruins is criticized in relation to memorialization, stands as a further illustration of the conception of ruins

as antithetical to belief in progress, which he employs here as a national myth. Young believes that the preservation of the ruins would be counterproductive because they signify the instance of destruction and therefore simplify the interpretation of 9/11. In this sense, the preservation of the ruins would entail the action of surrendering to the terrorists. Therefore Young posits rebuilding and preservation as a binary opposition and renders memorialization an act of reprisal:

> Instead of consecrating this site as a graveyard only, one forced upon us by the killers, let's dedicate the New World Trade Center complex to everything the terrorists abhor: our modernity, our tolerance, our diversity, our egalitarianism. If they hate our buildings, let's rebuild them here; if they hate our lives, let's live them here; if they hate our culture, let's celebrate it here; if they hate our prosperity, let's prosper here. (221-222)

Young's sonorous rhetoric presents the issue reduced to a series of overarching binary oppositions loaded with metaphoric entailments: life vs. death, modern vs. anti-modern, destruction vs. building, tolerance vs. fundamentalism. He obviously identifies modernity with progress, openness, tolerance—reiterating an entrenched episteme of progress Benjmain famously criticizes in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Young's view ominously echoes the ambitious words of the towers' designer, Minoru Yamasaki: "What I decided to do, the only thing I would get fun out of doing, was the beautiful thing; *beauty through structure and technology, because that's* <u>*our*</u> *culture*" (qtd. in Darton 122, italics and emphasis in original). While he opposes the preservation of the ruins of concentration camps on grounds of the potential fetishization of the relic to the detriment of memory-work, here he construes the ruins as antithetical to progress and equates their preservation with consent to defeat.

Once exposed to the binaries presented in his argument, one is compelled to take a stance between two sides where choice is always reduced to one of the extremes. The preservation of the ruins would constitute an act of acquiescence into defeat and,

metaphorically, the fragility of the values Young deploys in his list of binaries. Therefore, Young claims, "… we will come to regard the New World Trade Center as the ground zero of a renewal and the ultimate expression of modernity so abhorred by the terrorists" ("Remember Life with Life" 216). In the rhetorical tradition of the Gettysburg Address, in which Lincoln performatively hallows the ground of the battlefield by claiming that he *cannot* do so,[38] Young legitimizes something that he claims is already there, namely that the presence of ruins would reduce the interpretation of 9/11 to the experience of loss (therefore defeat). By saying this, he implies that doing the opposite, that is erasing the ruins, would open up the field of interpretation. At the same time, his rhetoric works exactly against that openness: remembering life with life compels us to take "democracy's side" and thus engage in a reductionist reading of the complexity of 9/11.

Seemingly, Muschamp and Young take opposite sides concerning the future of the emblematic parts of the towers' ruins. Still, looking at the nature of difference between preservation and obliteration through the lens of the heterotopic constitution of the ruins, what appears to be a difference is in fact turns out to be two sides of the same coin. Viewing the World Trade Center through the lens of Piranesi's drawings, Muschamp's gaze reiterates the idea of a group of British architects who, shortly after World War II called for the preservation of six bombed out churches—a proposal which Christopher Woodward sees as "the last great fling of the British Picturesque, summoning the spirit of Stourhead and Stowe[39] to soothe the trauma of high-explosive bombs" (212). Unlike in Dresden, where the heap of rubble was preserved within the burnt-out facades of the city center (until its complete reconstruction in 2005), many of the British churches were supposed to be turned into *garden ruins* "haunted by birds and

[38] As Lincoln says, "[b]ut in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground" (qtd. in Burgan 33)
[39] Two of the most prominent examples of the English garden.

soft with greenery, places that children would be thrilled to explore" (212-213).[40] Similarly to the mysterious groves of the English garden, the use of natural elements for the preservation of bombed churches was expected to "cushion" the imposing traumatic memory that the sight of ruins would elicit. The ruins, Woodward reports, ended up being "tidy, accidental leftovers with all those features of the corporation aesthetic—mown grass, KEEP OFF signs and trim shrubberies" (215). By way of incorporating them into traditional iconographies of ruin-aesthetics, the churches as *modern ruins* were packaged so as to resemble their medieval counterparts scattered around the English countryside. The English archetype of the ruined cathedral, relished by poets and painters during the heave of Romanticism, thus serves as a *tabula,* a pre-existing order, in which new ruins can be inscribed. Such an "upgrading" of bombed churches into war memorials amounts to a mode of investing ruined space with what Mark Crinson calls "memories with the pain taken out" (ix). In this mode, the picturesque is superimposed over sites of trauma so that "the blitz may begin to seem unreal not only to visiting tourists but to new generations of Londoners as well," as an open letter signed by such illustrious members of the establishment as Kenneth Clark and T.S. Eliot proposed in the 15 August 1944 edition of the *Times* (qtd. in Webster 8).

For all the efforts to divest these modern ruins of the painful memories of the war, they were not unanimously embraced as "gardens." In her 1953 book *Pleasure of Ruins,* Rose Macaulay pays veneration to picturesque ruins as a mode of escape from the ruins left behind by World War II. "Ruin pleasure," she claims, must be at remove, softened by art, by Piranesi, Salvator Rosa, Poussin, Claude, Monsù Desiderio, Pannini, Guardi, Robert, James Pryde, John Piper, the ruin-poets, or centuries of time" (454). By

[40] In his article "Beauty, Utility, and Christian Civilization: War memorials and the Church of England, 1940-47," Peter Webster examines the interlocking discourse of architects, artists, governmental organizations, and the clergy on ways of using ruined churches in England as war memorials in the wake of World War II.

contrast, new ruins bespeak “a time stark and bare, vegetationless and creatureless; blackened and torn, they smell of fire and mortality” (453). Recalling the bombed churches of Europe, Macaulay recognizes in them “nothing but resentful sadness, like the bombed cities” (454). Operative here is an aesthetic hierarchy in which the fragment mediated by art and enfolded by the patina of time is privileged over the one that is “vegetationless” and suffused with the memory of destruction. It is in the former category of the ruin that Macaulay finds a sense of “wholeness” (455)—a term akin to Georg Simmel’s notion of *Einheit,* developed in his 1911 essay on ruins. For Simmel, *Einheit* is a quality of the ruin, arising from a dialectics in which the man-made (*Geist*) gradually succumbs to the forces of nature (*Natur*). Time therefore plays a crucial role here. Visible signs of man-made destruction, for instance, disrupt Simmel’s dialectics and detract from the pleasure of ruins (Simmel). Harmonizing with Simmel and Macaulay’s affirmation of the legacy of the picturesque in ruin aesthetics, the “English gardening” of the bombed churches envisaged by British architects in the aftermath of World War II can be viewed as an effort to recast sites of recent destruction as ruins of bygone times. With their predominantly Gothic architectural vocabulary, cathedrals like the ones in Coventry and Liverpool certainly more easily lend themselves to the illusion of a Simmelian dialectics than modern edifices.

It is not surprising then, that Herbert Muschamp identified the Gothicizing arcades of the World Trade Center as a part of the building worthy of preservation. Even if made out of metal and aluminum instead of stone, the shape of the pointed arches offers a familiar signifier, an architectural morpheme that allows aesthetics to play a role in preservation. When Muschamp describes the ruins as “eloquent reminders” of the catastrophe, he certainly does not think of the dust that Yaeger foregrounds in her essay. Rather, the uncanny “wholeness” that Yaeger locates in the irrevocable mixing of the

corporeal and the architectural, as well as of victim and perpetrator, morphs in Muschamp's vision into a Simmelian wholeness of *Geist* and *Natur,* making the ruins eloquent reminders not so much of what happened on 9/11 but of the legacy of American modernity of which the World Trade Center was an icon. It is in this sense that Muschamp's argument for preservation and Young's admonishment against letting the ruins speak for themselves come to represent two dialects of the same language: while the latter renders ruins incompatible with the idea of progress and modernity, the former construes them in the tradition of the picturesque, rendering the modern ruin a cipher of a "nostalgia for the future," to adopt Dylan Trigg's term. This seemingly paradoxical form of nostalgia, Trigg maintains, "informs the endurance of the unfinished present and makes that present bearable (*The Aesthetics* 229). With the ruins of the Twin Towers framed as a Piranesian space, the wreckage of steel and concrete come to serve as signifiers of what Andreas Huyssen calls "utopia in reverse" ("Nostalgia for Ruins" 7), rather than harbingers of a precarious and dystopic future.

Muschamp and Young's arguments buttress thus utopia in ways that can be best described through Svetlana Boym's distinction of two forms of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia, Boym maintains, "puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps." Nostalgics of this category "do not think of themselves as nostalgic; they believe that their project is about truth. This kind of nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths…" (*The Future* 41). Reflective nostalgia, in contrast, "dwells in *algia,* in longing and loss, […] it lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time" (41). Young's argument subscribes to restorative nostalgia albeit with a peculiar twist. What would constitute an

"antimodern myth-making of history" in Boym's sense, turns into a fetishization of the modern as a national myth in Young. Consequently, it can be argued that Young does not tolerate ruins because "the past is not supposed to reveal any signs of decay; it has to be freshly painted in its 'original image' and remain eternally young" (49).

As opposed to Young's stance against preservation, Muschamp's veneration of the ruins thrives on decay but he can only do so with Piranesi's drawings serving as a model which allows for the temporalization of space (49) whereby the present of Ground Zero is perceived *in terms* of a mythologized time. Muschamp's aesthetization of the ruins is, however, not without the touch of contemporary Western culture's fascination with ruins. Dethroned by modernity's aversion to the past, the cult of the picturesque ruin is on the rebound as a result of postmodernity's renewed interest in the relics of the past. Paradoxically, potential targets of nostalgia may now include many of the ruins from which Simmel and Macaulay would have averted their eyes. In New York, the preservation of the rusty remains of the 69th Street Transfer Bridge and Pier D (Figure 2.2) standing along the bank of the Hudson River at Riverside Park South (placed on the national register of historic places in 2003), as well as the ongoing preservation of the 19th century ruins of Elmhurst Hospital on Roosevelt Island illustrate this tendency and challenge Young's conviction about Americans' stance toward ruins. In fact, geographer J.B. Jackson registered an increasing tendency to save old buildings and designate them as historic monuments already in the 1960s and 70s. Most of these monuments and such reconstructed historic environments as Williamsburg, however, as Jackson writes in his essay "The Necessity for Ruins," "do not remind us of any obligation, they suggest no particular line of conduct" (94). Instead, they construe the past as a "remote, ill-defined period or environment when a kind of golden age prevailed, when society had an innocence and a simplicity that we have since lost" (98). The lure of modernity as an

object of contemporary nostalgia is, as Huyssen claims, lies in its “power to imagine other futures” (“Nostalgia for Ruins” 7). These alternative futures, however, cannot be envisaged without a modicum of amnesia effacing the dystopias of the 20th century of which the ruins speak, in Barthes’ terms, in the anterior future. Such places as the so-called “ruin-bars” in Budapest facilitate what Jackson, preceding Marita Sturken’s later appropriation of the term, calls the “tourist instinct” (99).

If the tourist finds pleasure in “scenes of unreality, places where we can briefly relive the golden age and be purged of historical guilt” (102), photographic representations of Detroit’s urban ruins are perhaps the finest examples of this pleasure that has been widely labeled as “ruin porn” (Rosenberg, Chayka). Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre’s series of photographs taken between 2005 and 2010 is a case in point. Their picturesque use of light and shadow turns many of Detroit’s Beaux-Arts interiors into a forsaken place of bygone splendor where nature will sooner or later get the upper hand, and subject the grandiose structures of the once prosperous city to a Simmelian dialectics. Even though many of these disheveled buildings are inhabited by the homeless and are sites of crime as well as a host of other problems burdening the city, these undercurrents are carefully kept out of sight in Marchand and Meffre’s photographic still lifes. The gaze of Simmel and Macaulay acquires performative force in these images as they simultaneously acknowledge loss but visually overwrite it as a utopia in reverse. For, by way of perceiving the ruins of Detroit as “splendid decaying monuments” that are “no less than the Pyramids of Egypt, the Coliseum of Rome, or the Acropolis in Athens,” as their statement reads on their website (Marchand and Meffre), the photographers indeed *construct* them as such in both text and image.

Marchand and Meffre’s images absorb the gravity of contemporary urban blight by framing the ruins as objects of reflective nostalgia. The buildings featured in their

photographs predominantly Beaux Arts, Neo Gothic, and Art Deco interiors that already speak the language of nostalgia in their stylistic vocabularies. For instance, the pronounced Beaux Arts interior of the ballroom of the Lee Plaza Hotel draws heavily on 19th century French neoclassical interiors which, in its decay, endows the building with the aura of bygone splendor (see figure 2.2.). The elaborate decoration of the vaults, which the photographers skillfully accentuate with their use of light and shadows, takes the viewer into a mythic past that unfolds within the palimpsest of architectural quotations delivered by the formal language of Beaux Arts, the "international style" of the late 19th century. As much as it is located in the Detroit, the interior is already a simulacrum of pre-existing European forms and so is its decay as construed by the photograph. In much the same way the particularity of the debris that covers the floor of the ballroom is engulfed by the decorated vaults occupying the upper half of the picture

Figure 2.2. "Ballroom, Lee Plaza Hotel." Photo by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre.

(counterpointed by the undulating contours of the upended piano in the foreground), the particularity of the location dissolves into an illusory "wholeness" of the iconography of decay that maps the aesthetics of Simmel and Macaulay over the ongoing demise of the Motor City. The allure of reflective nostalgia also manifests itself in the increasing popularity of tours showing visitors—mostly white suburbanites—the highlights of Detroit's ruinscapes (Steinmetz 296). The power of the tourist gaze, which divests the ruins of their "corporeal content" by rendering their inhabitants undesired elements that spoil the nostalgic feel of the sight is "reflected in a widespread conspiracy theory" among African Americans about whites planning to "depopulate and recolonize Detroit" (296)—a concern not at all unfounded if one considers socio-photographer Camilo José Vergara's proposal to turn downtown Detroit into an urban ruins park which he would call "American Acropolis."[41]

But even at such a large scale of urban decay, certain buildings lend themselves more easily to the Simmelian conventions of the ruin gaze than others. Stylistically, the Beaux Arts interior of the Lee Plaza Hotel, as well as predominantly Gothic or Neo-Gothic churches that have been scheduled to be preserved as garden ruins in post-World War II England yield the potential to inscribe ruination into preexisting schemes of ruin-aesthetics. Herbert Muschamp's call for the recognition of the aesthetic significance of the ruins of the towers is similarly focused on their resemblance to *other* buildings, which he locates in Piranesi's drawings. Even though Muschamp's proposal for the

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[41] Besides his undisguised criticism of the fallouts of industrialization, Vergara's introduction to his album entitled *American Ruins* (1999) speaks to the recent resurgence of nostalgia for the ruins of modernity. He perceives modern urban ruins as the unacknowledged byproducts of American resilience, modernity, and progress and reminds the reader that, "while the US remains a leader in industry and technology, it also now leads the world in the number, size, and degradation of abandoned structures" (12). But what sounds like a critical tone in this sentence, is quickly "softened" by a romanticizing gaze. Through his gaze Vergara inhabits the ruins of Detroit as the place of dream-memory, construing dilapidated buildings in the manner of Bachelard's oneiric house, as places he "could have lived in" (23). The undercurrent of poverty, crime, ghettoization, and racism, which receives significant attention in many of his works, is kept at a remove by an iconography that exhibits the buildings as disembodied shells of bygone splendor similar to Marchand and Meffre's compositions.

preservation of the arcaded walls has not been realized, the ruins survive in a number of photographic representations that conform to particular criteria. In the following section I will examine salient examples of these photographs as visual performatives designed to mitigate the heterotopic spatiality of the towers' ruins.

2.3. Melting the Ruins of the World Trade Center

In Chapter 2, we have seen how Cheney and Junod's narratives of the Falling Man activate well-embedded cultural symbols that not only inscribe the "spectral body" with familiar markers of the rags to riches narrative and the trope of the unknown soldier but, as performatives, also legitimize the norms that these narratives reiterate. In similar fashion, the "Portraits of Grief" series of the *New York Times,* discussed earlier in the current chapter, presents a uniform set of life-narratives that construe a homogeneous image of an American way of life. Details that do not fit this image are carefully glossed over or left unmentioned. In the case of the architectural ruin as a site of trauma, photographic representations are similarly performative, as Marchand and Meffre's photo-series of Detroit's ruins attest. Representations of the ruins of the World Trade Center can be subsumed under two major categories; aesthetization and jingoism, which I will address in the following subsections.

2.3.1. Aesthetization

If the "verticality and symmetry" of the "Falling Man" brings forth an aesthetic dimension ethically incompatible with the gruesome content of the image, the aesthetic quality of the arcaded walls of the Twin Towers that remained standing on Ground Zero for weeks after the attack, is no less problematic. In her book entitled *Regarding the Pain of Others,* Susan Sontag probes this problem by claiming that

> the landscape of devastation is still a landscape. There is beauty in ruins. To acknowledge the beauty of photographs of the World Trade Center ruins in the months following the attack seemed frivolous, sacrilegious. The most people dared say was that the photographs were 'surreal', a hectic euphemism behind which the disgraced notion of beauty cowered. But they *were* beautiful, many of them ... (67)

Joel Meyerowitz's photographs of the ruins were among those to which Sontag alludes. The only photographer permitted entrance to the site after 9/11 Meyerowitz had the opportunity to document aspects of the recovery operations no other photographer could capture. A selection of his roughly 8000 frames of high-resolution large-format color photographs became part of a traveling exhibit shown in 64 countries in 2002 (*After September 11*). In 2006, his images of Ground Zero were published in an album entitled *Aftermath: The World Trade Center Archive.* If, as Sontag insists, these photos of the ruins were beautiful, what are those qualities that account for this judgment? And if these compositions indeed meet aesthetic criteria, to what extent do they serve as an "archive" of the ruins, as is suggested by the title of Meyerowitz's album?

Art historian Albert Boime regards Meyerowitz's immense collection of images as "the antithesis of the image-monument that distances viewers through its self-sufficiency; as comments by visitors to Meyerowitz's exhibitions demonstrate, it makes them feeling participants in the event, vicarious sufferers of the devastation" (200). Without doubt, Meyerowitz's frames are rich in documentary detail, yet even if his depictions seem to be exempt from "heroic gestures," as Boime suggests (199), one could argue that the very same compositional elements that pull the viewer into the sheer details of devastation, also keep the "anatomy" of devastation at a remove.

The iconic power of Meyerowitz's compositions lies in its ambivalent claim to constitute an "archive" of the ruins and at once producing that archive in conformity with entrenched conventions of ruin-aesthetics. Marita Sturken and Miles Orvell have

observed that Meyerowitz's photos draw on the long tradition of Romantic imagery of ruins (Sturken, *Tourists* 196, Orvell 214) to which Meyerowitz also admits in an interview with Lawrence Weschler (Weschler 74-75). As Meyerowitz says of the image entitled "Wintergarden, World Financial Center," in which Weschler finds an echo of Piranesi's *Carceri*,

> I stood there and I thought, well, not so much of Piranesi as of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome, those huge vaulted ruins, how they must have looked to people in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and then later, all the ancient ruins, those great collapsed structures in the landscape. And I felt like a visitor in that romantic moment, but here it was this horror. (75)

A heterotopic juxtaposition of two paradigms of representation, comparable to Marchand and Meffre's photos of Detroit, surfaces in Meyerowitz's words: one is of the modern, post-industrial ruin of steel and concrete mutilated by the force of total destruction and

Figure 2.3. "A Vision of Sir John Soane's Design for the Rotunda of the Bank of England as a Ruin." Painting by Joseph Gandy, 1798.

replete with human remains, while the other is a romantic evocation of a golden age which inscribes steel and concrete into the sublime aura of classical ruins. "It's hard to come to terms with the awful beauty of a place like this," Meyerowitz writes elsewhere, "[a]nd yet the demolition at Ground Zero was also a spectacle with a cast of thousands, lit by a master lighter and played out on a stage of immense proportions" (qtd. in Sturken, *Tourists* 196). His zealous effort to document the ruins and create an "archive" is therefore intimately tied to his perception of the site as a spectacle. Exhausted and dirty, the faces of the workers in Meyerowitz's images are rich in detail, yet they exude a sense of purity which manifests itself in the universal value of resilience as a master-narrative, constructing an imagined community between the workers and the viewers of the photographs. By unconsciously becoming members of this community, one may feel,

Figure 2.4. "The Wintergarden, World Financial Center." Photo by Joel Meyerowitz, 2001.

as Albert Boime does, like "feeling participants in the event" (200). From what *they* see, however, the viewer of the photographs is kept at a remove (Kennedy 321-322).[42] Thus

[42] Even if Meyerowitz's original purpose to set up a team for the documentation of the site (in the spirit of Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange during the Great Depression) was not realized, certain similarities between his and Evans' work can be traced. In his analysis of Evans's photographs Peter Schneck traces how the compositions allow the aesthetic field to absorb that of the documentary, which provides for a

the “rubble as archive,” in Patricia Yaeger’s sense, remains out of sight in Meyerowitz’s archive.

Insofar as the specificity of their high-resolution detail “dissolves” in the aesthetics of composition, Meyerowitz’s depictions of the ruins feed on the same visual conventions that inform Marchand and Meffre’s images of Detroit. In the photograph entitled “The North Wall,” Meyerowitz captures the arcades Muschamp would have preserved for posterity, and does so by allowing the last beams of the setting sun to trickle through the steel lacework of the ruined wall. But even more intriguing is his image of the Wintergarden, which he compares to the Baths of Caracalla in his interview with Weschler (Figure 2.4.). The placement of light in this photograph is very much akin to the practice of such proponents of the picturesque as Joseph Gandy, particularly in his 1798 painting of the rotunda of the Bank of England depicted as a ruin (see figure 2.3.). However, a significant difference between the ruin-gaze of the two artists is that while Meyerowitz projects a modern ruin into an idealized past, Gandy depicts a brand-new building, designed by John Soane and still under construction in Gandy’s time, by adopting the painterly technique of Romantic representations of classical ruins—an aesthetic of the picturesque which Simmel and Macaulay would reiterate in the 20th century. In his depiction of the Bank of England Gandy inscribes the bank’s rotunda into the archetypal shape of the Roman dome applied primarily in bathhouses. Although the cause of ruination is undisclosed by the painting, its iconography suggests a slow, gradual process of decay over the centuries, with its massive stone blocks gesturing

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“story” to evolve to which viewers can relate. Despite the deplorable conditions of the sharecropper family that the photographs in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* depict, “here we see the family united in religious activity, devoted to reading and singing praise—an activity, in short, that most of the visitors of the exhibition could easily relate to even if they had absolutely no knowledge about tenant farming and the inhumanity of sharecropping” (158). Although dissenting from the heroic narrative of Franklin’s photograph, Meyerowitz’s depictions of the workers at Ground Zero bear similarities to Evans’s superimposition of purity over poverty in his documentation of the sharecroppers’ plight in Oklahoma.

toward a great civilization that even in its ruins provides shelter for rudimentary, pastoral life.

Similarly to the Beaux Arts interior of the Lee Plaza Hotel in Detroit, whose pastiche ornaments amplify the patina of time, the neoclassical forms of the rotunda of John Soane's Bank of England provide a perfect architectural setting to transport the imaginary decay of the building into to the realm of the ancient past. The postmodern architectural elements of the damaged Wintergarden at Ground Zero also gesture toward classical forms, primarily its vaulted arcades featured in a mysterious light in the left part of Meyerowitz's picture. With the image of the Roman dome serving as his model, Gandy constructs the new Bank of England as a future ruin "in reverse"—a representation less dystopic, as the scenario of future decline would inevitably imply, than narcissistic in that it facilitates nostalgia for the present and thus legitimizes the edifice of the new bank as a structure on a par with its ancient predecessors.[43] Although in a much less pronounced manner, the Roman arch is a clearly recognizable element of the pastiche in the Wintergarden to which Meyerowitz grants a significant role in his photograph. Unlike the stone blocks in Gandy's painting, which elicit the illusion of an antique setting, the materiality of the Wintergarden's ruins does not cater to such fantasies. The exposed steel and vaporized concrete that dominate the lower section of the photo are obviously antagonistic to the ruin-aesthetics that Gandy pursues. Nevertheless, as the ongoing preservation of the remains of New York's industrial remains along the Hudson indicates, iron and steel have acquired a sense of "ruin value" they significantly lacked in Simmel's and Macaulay's time.[44]

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[43] In an ironic twist of fate, the Rotunda was demolished in 1925, documented by photographs devoid of the sentiment of Gandy's painting (Wood 163).

[44] I am using the term in the sense of Nazi architect Albert Speer's infamous theory of "ruin value" predicated on the perception of the modern ruin as "ugly" as opposed to the austere grandeur of the remains of ancient civilizations. Speer's theory postulates that the monumental edifices of the Third Reich to be built out of stone, marble, and brick because these materials age in a more picturesque manner than

The iron and glass framework of the arcades is thus not simply a neoclassicist gesture but one that fetishizes these "new" materials in an iconography that evokes representations of the Crystal Palace of 1851, as well as its ruination by fire in 1936, as a subtext unfolding behind the sunlit ribs of the Wintergarden. Unlike the sunbeams in Gandy's painting that trickle through the arched opening of the dome to reveal members of an imaginary future generation preparing their meal in the midst of the magnificent ruins, the sunlit arcades in Meyerowitz's composition indicates a path leading *out* of the physical evidence of devastation. In the manner of what Celeste Olalquiaga defines as "nostalgic kitsch," the photograph "oscillates back and forth between the glorified experience and its subject, without transformation" (122). The iconography of the image guides the viewer's gaze through the wreckage towards the light. Although sublime representation of the half-circular metal framework that upholds the roof is in stark contrast with the metal columns and girders in the foreground, the similarly half-circular cantilever in the upper part of the picture echoes the shape of the vaulted arcades and thus counterpoints the sight of disintegration below.

If reflective nostalgia, as Boym maintains, dwells in longing rather than the actual restoration of the lost home, both Gandy's painting and Meyerowitz's photograph are undoubtedly imbued with this kind of nostalgia. Instead of regarding it as a material trace of the past, they use the ruin as a cipher to temporalize space (Boym 49) and thus construe it in terms of other (architectural) spaces framed by different temporalities. As much as they document the ruins in high-resolution detail, the picturesque iconographies of the images sustain what Dylan Trigg senses in Gandy's painting as an "inaccessible remoteness" (*Aesthetics* 106) of materiality. In Meyerowitz's frames, it is through this

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steel and ferroconcrete (Wood 29). Ruin pleasure, in this sense, emanates from the fetishization of the past which, paradoxically, morphs into a nostalgia for the future. In turn, this nostalgia becomes conducive to the construction of Nazi identity in the present. The insatiable desire to return home is thus channeled into a narcissistic vision of an anterior future in which the Third Reich is construed as a civilization equivalent to the empires of the ancient past.

holographic interplay of the ruin as documentary archive and sublime fantasy that it becomes a catalyst for reflective nostalgia which manifests itself in the narcissistic classicization of American modernity as a ruin. Effacing the inherent ambiguities of the rubble, Meyerowitz's archive "domesticates"[45] the heterotopic spatiality of the ruins by aesthetic means. In the manner of architectural identification described by Lakoff and Leach, the object of nostalgia that emanates from Meyerowitz's images is the body *of* the ruin made whole by conforming to romantic aesthetics of the ruin, rather than the heterotopia of body *and* ruin. Once transposed as an awesome spectacle, the workers excavating bodily remains are transfigured into archeologists studying the "anatomy" of the ruin in the metaphorical, rather than a metonymical, sense. Besides their aesthetic lure, which Meyerowitz utilizes to the full, other emblematic representations of the ruins contextualize them within the rhetoric of war.

2.3.2. Jingoism

Appropriating civilian deaths as a justification for military retailiation has been a common practice ever since ancient times. The loss of lives on 9/11 has been no exception to this practice as the immediate heroization of the victims, discussed in Chapter 2, well indicates. Representations of the ruins of the World Trade Center play a significant role in the performative transformation of victims into heroes as well as the site of the terrorist attacks into a battlefield. In the following, I will explore this transformation through three salient examples: a new battleship, a photograph, and a speech by the mayor of New York in the aftermath of 9/11. This subsection will also set the stage for my deconstructive reading of the ruins' afterlife in the last section.

[45] I am using the word in the sense of Michael S. Roth and Charles G. Salas's argument on the absorption of the extremity in trauma in memorial practices (Roth et al 10).

Launched in 2006 and "fittingly" christened USS *New York,* the Navy's new battleship incorporates 7.5 tons of steel from the ruins of the WTC in her bow stem (*USS New York*). Destined to "play an important role in the war on terror," as Governor George Pataki predicted in his speech at the launching of the vessel (qtd. in *USS New York*), the ship partakes in the ritual of handing out urns filled with dust retrieved from Fresh Kills to family members. In the face of a catastrophe that left a great many families without bodies to burry, the ritual, for all its awkwardness that Yaeger registers in her article, was meant to give a sense of closure to what Karen M. Seeley calls "ambiguous loss" (74-80)—death unconfirmed by physical evidence. The incorporation of steel from the towers in the new battleship complements, as well as complicates this ritual.

What is at stake in both rituals is the symbolic transformation of the semantically uncontainable material into culturally sanctioned modes of remembrance. As a conventionally recognized container of human ashes, the use of the urn reiterates a familiar choreography of mourning and thus provides a fitting context for the transformation of debris into the corporeal remains. In a similar vein, the incorporation of steel from Ground Zero into the prow of the USS *New York* gives meaning to loss by making turning the ruin as a signifier of loss into a vital component of a war machine. As the ruin *becomes* the ship, the destroyed towers morph into a weapon of revenge resonating with the way Young envisions memorial activity at Ground Zero: the ruins must not stand alone, he argues, because they would anchor the interpretation of the attacks into loss and defeat. Once metamorphosed into a warship, the ruins become tokens of revenge and evoke the long-standing tradition of writing messages and tying dog-tags and badges of soldiers killed in action on bombs to be dropped on the enemy (Own and Evans).

The jingoistic narrative that underpins the ritual of building the USS *New York* is not without resonances in the field of photography. Thomas E. Franklin's Pulitzer prize-winning image of the three firemen raising the American flag in the midst of the rubble (see figure 2.5.) exceeds the fame of even Meyerowitz's picturesque representations of

Figure 2.5. Firefighters raising the flag amidst the ruins of Ground Zero, 2001. Photo by Thomas E. Franklin.

Figure 2.6. Soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima, 1945. Photo by Joe Rosenthal.

Ground Zero. Reproduced on countless occasions since 9/11 (Sturken, *Tourists* 189-196), the photograph evokes Joe Rosenthal's world-famous picture of three American soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima (see figure 2.6.)—later cast in a gigantic bronze sculpture in the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. Through such a recognizable historical reference Franklin's photo contextualizes activates well-embedded collectivities: situated in the context of the Pacific theater of World War II, the ruins at Ground Zero simultaneously evoke Pearl Harbor and the battlefield of Iwo Jima, where Japanese aggression was avenged by American victory.[46] With the firefighters transposed as soldiers and the site of destruction anchored in the imaginary of World War II, the iconography of the photograph performs a heroic narrative expedient

[46] The media's application of such historical precedents as Pearl Harbor is discussed in Benjamin Bergen insightful cognitive linguistic analysis of newspaper illustrations about 9/11 entitled, "To Awaken a Sleeping Giant: Cognition and Culture in September 11 Political Cartoons."

to mobilize support for retaliation. The ruins of the towers are blurred in the background as Franklin focuses on the actual ceremony which inscribes victory (Iwo Jima) into the landscape of catastrophe (Pearl Harbor). Thus the same gesture that inscribes Ground Zero into a heroic narrative simultaneously blurs the ruins by melting them into a historical horizon.

The visual dramatization of historical continuity, which defines the sentiment of Franklin's photograph, is reinforced by Rudolph Giuliani's farewell address as mayor of New York in December 2001 in which he situates the commemoration of 9/11 in the context of memorializing casualties of war: "Long after we are all gone, it's the sacrifice of our patriots and their heroism that is going to be what this place is remembered for. This is going to be a place that is remembered 100 and 1000 years from now, like the great battlefields of Europe and the United States" (qtd. in Simpson 47). In other words, the death of civilians is not only translated into military sacrifice, but also inscribed into the larger context of world history. Through the simplification of this context, however, Giuliani does precisely the opposite: he isolates Ground Zero from the complexity of world politics by way of producing it as a battlefield on a par with those of the previous wars. Giuliani's performative speech act resonates with both Franklin's photograph and the USS *New York*. Nevertheless, such gestures do not merely historicize the event but, paradoxically, evoke nostalgia for the future by inscribing Iwo Jima and the other "great battlefields" as sites of victory. By extension of Svetlana Boym's interpretation of Vladimir Tatlin's unrealized monument to the Third Internationale as a "virtual monument for the virtual capital that could have become the pioneer of twentieth-century experimental architecture" (*The Future* 133), the paradox of Franklin's photograph, as well as Giuliani's speech, is that they constitute virtual monuments that nostalgically commemorate a victory that never happened.

2.4. Three Ships

In the previous sections we have seen how the ruins of the World Trade Center come to serve particular ends in various photographic representations. While Meyerowitz frames the ruins in conformity with ingrained traditions of ruin-aesthetics, Franklin's evocation of Iwo Jima situates the ruins into the narrative of war. The symbolic ritual underpinning the construction of the USS *New York* (see figure 2.9.) further illustrates the sense of bellicosity that permeates Franklin's image. Expanding my discussion of the USS *New York* in the previous section, I will now focus on two other ships, each related to the ruins of the World Trade Center in particular ways. Through the interrelations that unfold between the three ships I will propose an alternative way of examining the towers' ruins, one that follows in the trail of Patricia Yaeger's notion of the rubble as an archive. However, rather than focusing on the ruins prior to their displacement from Ground Zero, my purpose here is to demonstrate how the "x" of heterotopia can be traced in the ruins' *absence* from the site. In so doing, I will reiterate James Young's argument on the ruins incompatibility with the spirit of American modernity and criticize this conviction by unraveling the fate of the ruins in a larger framework of industrial production which, as Tim Edensor maintains, "does not symbolize linear progress but can represent a circular process through which things become obsolete, are thrown away, later recycled or replaced in pursuit of the always new" (316). I will use Walter Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image as a theoretical tool for piercing through the layers of nostalgia imposed by jingoistic and aestheticized representations and undertake an archeological reading of Ground Zero as a site of heterotopia. What I intend to promote in this section is therefore a radical materialism that replaces the tourist "lens" with an archeological one in order to escape the pitfalls of nostalgia.

When Patricia Yaeger observed that the ruins "have been coercively discarded" (187), she did not know that what she described as *waste* inseparable from the remains of human flesh would actually be recycled as *value* once the wreckage was sold for scrap in Asia—primarily in China and India. What is uncanny here is not simply the confluence of debris and human carnage, in which the remains of the terrorists are also mingled, but the recycling of this abject material as a commodity in the capitalist system of exchange—the same system that underpinned the construction of the World Trade Center in the first place. In this sense, the ruin emerges as a material not at all antagonistic to the linear trajectory of progress, as Young's argument against their preservation implies, but rather as an integral part of it, which reveals an interrelation to which the "tourist of history" has to be "nostalgically" blind.

The first ship that I will use as a point of departure for this section is an archeological find revealed during the construction of the memorial at the footprints of the towers in July 2010 (see figure 2.7.). Research has found that the ship was built in the 18th century and was presumably used as part of the debris in a landfill to extend the island of Manhattan into the Hudson River (Mustain). The ship, I would like to suggest, is more than an archeological find "anchored" in the debris of the past. Rather, what makes the ship particularly unique is its very location in Ground Zero, close to the slurry wall that was built to keep the Hudson River at bay as part of the foundations of the World Trade Center. The particular relationship between the ship and Ground Zero can be grasped by Benjamin's concept of the dialectical image, which he describes as follows:

> It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. […] The image that is read—which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability—bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded. (*Arcades* 463)

Figure 2.7. The hulk of an 18th century vessel unearthed at Ground Zero in 2010.

In the context of Ground Zero, it is not so much the ruins of the World Trade Center as the ruins' *absence* from the site that flashes up, in Benjamin's sense, in the "now of its recognizability" (463). More specifically, the 18th century vessel not only "voices the void" of the buildings' ruins but also brings to the fore a silenced aspect of their fate. As archeologists point to the vessel's incorporation into the landfill of the expanding harbor of Lower Manhattan, the ship's secondary function as recycled matter underpinning the expansion of what would become one of the largest commercial hubs in the world becomes just as important as her role as a merchant vessel. In this sense, the ship's reuse as part of the landfill gestures toward what Edensor describes as obsolete items being "recycled or replaced in pursuit of the always new" (316). Once this aspect of the ship's history is read in the context of Ground Zero, the 18th century vessel transcends its role as a trace of the past and her recovery in the landfill comes to reveal, in the form of the

dialectical image, the recycling of the towers' ruins as scrap-metal. If the heterotopic materiality of the ruins made it extremely difficult to separate corporeal remains from architectural debris, the uncanny congruence of the 18th century landfill and the "landfill" of capitalist exchange as the final resting place of the towers' remains bring to the surface an "x" which marks an incongruence as to what constitutes value and waste in the ruins.

This incongruence becomes manifest at multiple levels. Besides her wooden hulk, which has survived in a relatively good condition, archeologists have retrieved grains, staple items, and pieces of clothing that made part of the ship's cargo. In one photograph, an archeologist holds up a mud-filled leather shoe found in dozens in the wreckage (see figure 2.8.). Apart from the inestimable archeological value that such a find represents, it also uncovers something from the *anterior future* pertinent to its very location at Ground Zero. It exposes something about 9/11 as a spectral *punctum*: the contiguity of the corporeal and the architectural in the remains of 9/11. Juxtaposed with the marked absence of images of the carnage amid the ruins after the terrorist attacks,[47] the 18th century shoe held up for the camera hits a nerve because it simultaneously serves as a trace of 18th century life and 21st century death. As much as it *belongs* to the 18th century landfill, the shoe evokes the uncontainable "landfill" of 9/11, which Meyerowitz and Franklin's photographs keep out of sight. The *punctum* arises from the dialectical interrelation of the two historical layers. The mnemonic function of the dialectical image illustrated by this interrelation could be described as a "voided *déjà vu*" insofar as it compels us to "remember" things that we have been withheld from seeing. As such, this *punctum* deconstructs resemblance which "reveals the clearly visible" and, in an uncanny manner, brings forth "what recognizable objects, familiar silhouettes hide" (Foucault,

[47] See: Slavoj Žižek and Susan Sontag's remarks in Chapter 2.

Figure 2.8. Leather shoe recovered from 18th century ship at Ground Zero.

TNP 46): the abject metonymy of body and building in the 21st century ruin that emerges—in a heterochronic way—from *beneath* the archeological value of the 18th century find.

Although it unveils something that remains hidden in nostalgic constructions of the ruins, this *punctum* alone would not amount to a new layer of heterotopia because it simply recalls, in the form of the dialectical image, what we have already "seen" with Yaeger. A new layer of heterotopia can only be revealed once corporeality, encapsulated by this voided *déjà vu,* is brought into conjunction with the incorporation of the ruins into the "corpus" of corporate capitalism—targeted by the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the first place. In the dialectical image forged by the "Ground Zero ship" and the absent ruins, the uncanny confluence of value (victims' bodies) and waste (debris) turns into its inverse once the steel of the towers, inextricably bound to human remains, becomes a commodity in the global market of scrap-metal. The transformation of waste into financial value thus constitutes a process antithetical to the symbolic role of the urns

filled with dust and handed out to family members of the deceased. While in the latter case the conventional role of the urn as a container of human ashes re-signifies the unidentifiable particles of its content as bodily remains (and symbolically provides a "body" to mourn), the former re-signifies the remains into construction debris ready to be reused in new constructions.

This transformation of the ruins into scrap-metal is epitomized by another ship, the Turkish *Osman Mete,* which transported the ruins overseas to be sold for scrap and, by no means a surprise, received minimal media coverage (see figure 2.10.). On the last pages of his book discussing the recovery efforts at Ground Zero, William Langewiesche describes the fate of the ship's cargo:

> Turkish shippers were said to be less sensitive than others to the damage that could be done to their vessels by such ultra-heavy scraps. At the very least, they were accustomed to such cargoes, since Turkish mills had been among the first to acquire and melt down some of the Trade Center's structure. With this load now, however, the *Osman Mete* was heading in the opposite direction, forty days through the Panama Canal on to China, which along with India had turned out to be the principal destination for the Twin Towers. […] The crew was filthy, and obviously indifferent to the meaning of this load. The hatches lay wide open. Seen from above, the holds were cavernous and badly battered. (204-205)

Despite the unsentimental tone of Langewiesche's account of the clearing of Ground Zero, his implied disdain for the ship and her crew transporting the metal to distant corners of the world speaks to his resentment at the improper handling of the towers' remains. The dust that emanated from the holds of the ship, he recalls, "had the old sweet smell of the pile" (205). However, instead of problematizing the discursive context that legitimizes the commoditization of the ruins, Langewiesche projects his unease about the process onto the (foreign) "other," ignorant of the "meaning" of the material at hand. The actual "meaning" of the load, however, remains unresolved by his account. This irresolution is manifested by an *aporia* of value and waste as reverence and commerce

are pitted against each other. This *aporia* reveals an "x" where the heterotopic constitution of the ruins within the system of commerce becomes most manifest.

Through the two ships we have uncovered two layers of heterotopia: in the first layer, reverence is thwarted by the indigestible "wholeness" of victims, terrorists, and

Figure 2.9. The USS *New York*

Figure 2.10. The *Osman Mete*

architecture, necessitating the ritual with the urns as a narrative inscription of mourning. In the second, the discursive construction of the victim's remains as value and architectural debris as waste is undermined as the value of scrap metal takes precedence over the human remains in the realm of commerce. The "filthy" crew of the battered *Osman Mete* in Langewiesche's disparaging description thus seems to cover for another filth, one that resides in the interstitial blanks of the myth of linear progress—a conviction Young reiterates when he claims that "Americans have never made ruins their home or allowed ruins to define—and thereby shape—their future" ("Remember Life with Life" 217). The abundance and inevitability of ruins as defunct traces of production undermine the formulation of ruins and progress as antithetical. As Dylan Trigg maintains in his reading of Benjamin,

> Ruins remain marginalized from the space of production and commerce and so appear surplus. But by dint of their wasted constitution, ruins shatter the myth of rational progress and permanency, in their abundance and in their necessity. Whereas the capitalist logic classifies things in terms of their productive value, thereby rendering entire industries obsolete not long after they began, the logic of the ruin contests this assumption. In dereliction, the ruin attests to the

> inherently tenuous foundations of the logic of capitalism: what was once built to testify to a singular and eternal present becomes the symbol and proof of its mutability. (*Aesthetics* xxviii)

By way of this logic, Walter Benjamin's famous reading of Klee's painting entitled "Angelus Novus" may be placed in a new perspective. In Benjamin's interpretation, the angel faces the past and witnesses history as a pile of wreckage accumulating in front of his feet. Much as he would like to linger on the ruins and "make whole what has been smashed" (*Illuminations* 249), he is propelled into the future by the wind of progress. The archeological lens reveals, however, that pile of debris consists not simply of what has been smashed but also what will be recycled as value in new constructions—rising *behind* the angel's back. Therefore, in the context of the *Osman Mete,* it is not the improper handling of such meaningful matter that seems "filthy" but the fact that such an improper handling is perfectly proper once made meaningful in the context of commerce as the most essential component of the landfill upon which the city of New York has been constructed.

The nexus between the "Ground Zero ship" and the *Osman Mete* thus sheds new light on the USS *New York* as well. While the battleship monumentalizes loss in a way similar to Tom Junod's narrative construction of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier for the Falling Man, the "sacred" content of the ship's prow is haunted by the cargo of the *Osman Mete* as her abject "other," the *surplus,* which rings disturbingly unfit and at once disturbingly fitting once the ruins are put to use. Moored to the "pier" of heterotopia, the two ships' destinations are revealed as mutually incompatible at the level of reverence and at once uncannily compatible as far as the ruins' use value is concerned in the context of war and commerce.

2.5. Conclusion

We have seen how debris, the victims, and the terrorists mingle in the rubble of Ground Zero as a palimpsest of incompatible sites that has been re-signified through various symbolic inscriptions. While the urns distributed among family members of the dead symbolically transform the unidentifiable particles of the dust into human ashes, thereby offering a narrative frame for mourning, the photographic performances of aesthetization and jingoism serve to domesticate the ruins by inscribing them into pre-existing iconographies of ruin-aesthetics. Buttressed by these aesthetics, these constructions of nostalgia crumble once the heterotopic spatiality of the ruins' afterlife is uncovered by the "cargos" of the three ships I have examined. If the 18th century vessel, recovered from the mud of Ground Zero, unravels the unsettling corporeality of the ruins, the *Osman Mete* completes the dialectical image by pointing at the landfill of global commerce. Within the kaleidoscopic montage of this image, we have seen how heterotopia manifests itself in the reversal of value and waste whose ramifications are most palpable once the ruin reveals progress as a cyclical process, rather than a linear progress. Viewed as a palimpsest, in much the same way as the "Ground Zero Ship" haunts the *Osman Mete* as a spectral *punctum,* so does the *Osman Mete* (as well as the new constructions in which the towers "reincarnate") haunt the USS *New York* as her "filthy" other.

CHAPTER THREE

THE OUTER EDGE OF MEMORY
LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS

"With every breath Lucas took the dead inside him. This was their bitter taste; this was how they lay—ashen and hot—on the tongue." (Michael Cunningham)

"That was him coming down, the north tower." (Don DeLillo)

Throughout the previous two chapters I have explored sites of trauma in which the corporeal and the architectural engage in heterotopic configurations within the context of 9/11. As salient manifestations of these configurations I have focused on Richard Drew's "Falling Man" photograph and the ruins of the World Trade Center. In this chapter I turn to representations of these particular instances of heterotopia in post-9/11 literature by concentrating on two novels: Michael Cunningham's *Specimen Days* (2005) and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007).

The cataclysm of 9/11 has inspired an abundance of literary responses over the past ten years. After the first wave of poems and short stories collected in various anthologies,[48] novels followed in quick succession, featuring such seminal works as Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004), Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* (2004), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), Ken Kalfus's *A Disorder Peculiar to the Country* (2006), and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man.* Although the list could be continued, as to what works may be labeled "9/11 novels" and, ultimately, what criteria the category entails are, of course, problematic.

[48] The first (and so far the only) anthology of 9/11 poetry was published in 2002 under the title *Poetry After 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets,* while in the same year two anthologies of short stories were also published, *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11,* edited by Ulrich Baer, and *September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond,* edited by William Heyen.

My choice of *Specimen Days* (2005) and *Falling Man* as case studies for close-reading has been informed by several factors. *Falling Man* is one of the most famous novels addressing 9/11 to date, while *Specimen Days,* with only one of its sections referencing Ground Zero, is mentioned only marginally, if at all, in critical discourse on 9/11 literature. Part of my objective has been to unravel the pertinence of Cunningham's novel on 9/11 by using DeLillo's acclaimed work as an interface. More specifically, I will argue that both novels attest to heterotopia in such ways that are particularly relevant to my discussion in the preceding chapters. Cunningham's *Specimen Days* comprises a multilayered palimpsest of interlocking stories. Within the layers of the novel, as I will demonstrate, the Twin Towers' ruins and the tabooed images of the falling bodies are reflected as an emphatic absence formed by a convoluted network of intra- and intertextual relations. In *Falling Man,* DeLillo delves into the towers' ruins by extending their negative spatiality to the domain of language. He inhabits the ruins by dismantling representational language in an effort to suspend meaning and thus create a "counter-narrative" of 9/11.

If *Specimen Days* operates by *absence* and *Falling Man* by *suspense*, the two novels, as I will show by the end of this chapter, dovetail in their effort to undermine redeeming narratives of trauma. As such, they follow in the trail of Kevin Ackerman's subversion of the two journalistic narratives devised to mitigate the spectrality of the Falling Man, as well as my excavation of the ruins' afterlife through the three ships in Chapter 2.

***3.1. The Form of Absence* – Specimen Days**

Celeb Cain, reviewer of Michael Cunningham's *Specimen Days* describes the three tales that make up the novel as three interlocking "novellas:" a ghost story (*In the Machine*), a

detective story (*The Children's Crusade*), and a science fiction story (*Like Beauty*) (Cain). The term "novella," which Cunningham himself also uses in interviews to refer to the stories in *Specimen Days,* is particularly significant in the light of the formal structure of the novel. As a form-within-a-form, each novella is built up of recurring images that intersect through multiple intratextual relations in the novel as a whole. Most conspicuously, following in the vein of *The Hours,* the novellas are interlocked by three characters that appear and reappear in various disguises and timeframes, with Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* weaving them together as an overarching intertext.

At first glance, the novel's relevance to 9/11 is most obviously indicated by the second story, *The Children's Crusade,* set in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks when the towers' ruins were still visible at Ground Zero. This historical allusion, however, is inserted into a fictional world of teenage suicide terrorists who, inspired by Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass,* randomly blow up people and themselves in the act of a loving embrace. In his comprehensive study of the emerging novel of the 9/11 novel Kristiaan Versluys focuses on this particular element of Cunningham's novel and treats it as a "parable [that] goes a long way toward recognizing the Other, even in the terrorist." The story, Versluys argues, pits the "Whitmanesque vision of wholeness" against a United States where responsibility is reduced to a choice between binary oppositions, manifest in the "polarity of crime and punishment" (166-167).

Notwithstanding Versluys's pertinent insights into Cunningham's application of Whitman as a code of responsibility on which the US has faltered, in this subchapter I will trace 9/11 in the novel at a register that locates the "other" not so much in the terrorist *per se,* as in those heterotopic constructions that I have investigated in the previous two chapters. In order to demonstrate how Cunningham approximates these heterotopias, I will foreground the intertextual nature of the novel, as well as the role the

repetition and recycling of similar images play in showcasing the structure of traumatic reenactment catalyzed by particular juxtapositions of the corporeal and the architectural. Instead of limiting my discussion to the scope of the second novella, which involves 9/11 at the level of content and timeframe, I will extend my focus to the first one, *In the Machine,* where Lucas, a 12-year-old boy is traumatized by his brother's loss to an industrial accident. Even if Lucas is placed in a New York of more than a hundred years before 9/11, his brother's dismemberment by a machine delineates a heterotopic juxtaposition which multiplies in a series of fractals—images that recycle this juxtaposition in an array of forms that not only dovetail with images in the subsequent novellas but arrange them as palimpsests in which timeframes and plotlines collapse into the "materiality" of imagery.

Although the three novellas are closely intertwined through such intratextual references, in this subsection I will primarily focus on interrelations between the first two, *In the Machine* and *The Children's Crusade* because it is in the overlapping textual spaces of these two stories that the heterotopia of the 9/11's material remains as well as the falling bodies can be most overwhelmingly felt as an emphatic absence. Cunningham never mentions these particular instances explicitly in the novel but offers textual traces in which their absence from the novel becomes a haunting presence. In his psychological account of "phantoms," secreted traumas passed on within families from generation to generation, Nicolas Abraham talks about verbal traces that indicate the phantom's incessant presence in the psyche of the traumatized person. "What haunts," Abraham argues, "are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others" (287), secrets that have not been verbalized. Thus the phantom embodies secreted traumas and is sustained by what Abraham calls "phantomogenic words [that] become travesties and can be acted out or expressed in phobias of all kinds (such as impulse phobia),

obsessions, restricted phantasmagorias…” (292). In the context Abraham applies the phantom, these phantomogenic words are the ones “that rule an entire family’s history and function as the tokens of its pitiable articulations” (292). In *Specimen Days* the act of reading the “other” as a repository of phantomogenic words is a recurring motif. My purpose in this subsection is to apply this motif as an apparatus for reading the novel and thus excavate and follow through the haunting presence of 9/11’s heterotopias as a textual negative space indicated by phantomogenic words.

In order to do so, I will first problematize the double meaning of Lucas’s “speaking fits” of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass,* which consists in the boy’s uncontrolled eruptions of lines from the poem that seemingly come to his mind at random. By way of contextualizing Lucas’s “condition” as a symptom of traumatic reenactment, I will proceed to discuss the way Lucas transforms Whitman’s poem into a trauma narrative that justifies his own unwitting reenactment of his brother’s death. Finally, I will address the metafictionality of Cunningham’s text and examine how this element subverts narrative-formation in connection with 9/11.

3.1.1. Speaking in Fits

Lucas’s compulsion to recite lines from the *Leaves of Grass* obviously exceeds mere fascination with Whitman’s poetry. “He hadn’t meant to speak as the book. He never did, but when he was excited he couldn’t help himself” (Cunningham 4). The overwhelming excitement that prevents him from speaking his own words allows Whitman’s poem to flow into his speech in an undifferentiated fashion. Whenever in Catherine’s company, he feels the urge to say

> … something he felt but could not describe: porous and spiky, shifting with flecks of thought, with urge and memory; salted with brightness, flickerings of white and green and pale gold, like stars; something that loved stars because it

> was made for the same substance. He needed to tell her it was impossible, it was unbearable, to be so continually mistaken for a misshapen boy with a walleye and a pumpkin head and a habit of speaking in fits.
>
> He said, "I celebrate myself, and what I assume you shall assume." It was not what he'd hoped to tell her. (4-5)

Here, we cannot read the sentence as Lucas's *sentence* but must hear Whitman's *line* underneath. At the same time, we also hear Lucas "saying" Whitman as part of his own speech act, attesting to the Bakhtinian notion of *heteroglossia* and, more pertinently, to Julia Kristeva and later Linda Hutcheon's reworking of this notion into theories of intertextuality. It is in this sense that we can register in Lucas's *sentence* a "permutation of texts" that "intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva, *Desire* 36). The line from "the book," as *Leaves of Grass* is referenced throughout the novel, is thus an intertext which Lucas unwittingly transforms into a speech act.

As much as Lucas's "misshapen" body is in*formed* by the corpus of the book, the intertextual intrusion of Whitman, the voice of the narration, assuming Lucas's gaze as a viewpoint character, is similarly imbued with a Whitmanesque gaze. Lucas perceives the city as myriads of constellations he yearns to absorb all at once. As we read in free indirect speech, "[w]hat he wanted was the raucousness of the city, where people hauled their loads of corn or coal, where they danced to fiddles, wept or laughed, sold and begged and bartered, not always happily but always with a vigor that was what he meant, privately by soul" (Cunningham 13). The pronoun "he" delineates a site of ambiguity: we are made to see through Lucas's eyes and yet we hear Whitman "cataloging" what Lucas sees. However, what manifests itself as an incongruence of voices at one level may turn into an uncanny congruence once Lucas unwittingly translates Whitman into speech acts. Uttered as a sentence, the Whitman-line "Every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you" (5) fits well to express what remains unspeakable to him: his adoration for Catherine. Likewise, when he receives his payment by the end of his shift

in the works, he happily shakes his supervisor's hand and says, "Prodigal, […] you have given me love—therefore I to you give love" (21). His speaking in fits, therefore, has a double meaning. On the one hand, the word "fit" refers to his inability to control "his Whitman," while on the other hand, it also denotes his ability to apply Whitman fittingly, albeit unwittingly.

Both meanings are present in the Freudean notion of the "compulsion to repeat." In the Introduction to the dissertation I defined trauma as a crisis of understanding, an event which remains unavailable as a memory for the traumatized person. As we have seen, the inability to assimilate the traumatic experience is concomitant with its instantaneous repression. In the absence of a believable narrative to facilitate understanding or mourning, the subject, Freud argues, is "obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 12). Unremembered as a memory, nevertheless inextricably embedded in the subject's psyche, the traumatic experience reveals itself in various forms of reenactment of which the person who produces the symptom has no knowledge whatsoever. The dynamics of the compulsion to repeat trauma are therefore intricately tied to the relationship between what we could describe in terms of content and form. Whereas the content of trauma remains buried into the recesses of the unconscious, it nonetheless takes form in symptoms of reenactment.

The Freudean notion of the unconscious repetition of the traumatic event bears heavily on the palimpsestual dynamics of Cunningham's text. The traumatic experience that takes hold of Lucas is the death of his brother, Simon. Lucas has no facility to mourn his brother (Cunningham 13), which indicates his loss as an experience "withdrawn consciousness" (Freud, *Mourning* 205), a loss that does not allow for mourning as a path

towards closure. Obliged to replace Simon in the works to provide for his incapacitated parents, Lucas is made to perform the same movements at the exact same machine that caused Simon's death. His work thus amounts to both a physical and a psychic reenactment in which the machine gains central stage. First, by operating the machine Lucas is made to produce "housings" (Cunningham 19), the function of which remains a mystery to him even after he inquires into it. Read metaphorically, he produces forms that will "fit" a content of which he has no knowledge. However, the machine as a physical catalyst of his movements reveals that the content of his trauma has to do less with his brother's death *per se* and more with the very method of his "death by the machine." It is therefore the *how,* rather than the *what,* that resists understanding on the part of Lucas. This aspect of his brother's loss is revealed when Lucas's sleeve accidentally gets caught in the machine's clamp, pushing him to the very edge of death: "Lucas looked with mute wonder at the end of his sleeve. This was how. You allowed your attention to wander, you thought of other things, and the clamp took whatever was offered it. That was the clamp's nature." As he succeeds in removing his sleeve from the grip of the clamp, he realizes that "[t]he cloth still bore the imprint of the clamp's tiny toothmarks" (20). This imprint, which Lucas's shirt preserves as though a negative of a photograph (resonating with Freud's use of the photographic imprint as a metaphor for trauma [Meek 50]), amounts to a transmission of the wound, inflicted on his brother by the machine that "stamped" and "expelled" (47) him, onto Lucas's body.

While the free indirect speech of the narration ascribes anthropomorphic dimensions to the machine, Simon, in turn, is mechanized. This heterotopic juxtaposition of the body and the machine as a site of trauma is illustrated by the voice Lucas hears emanating from the machine: "It might have been the squeak of an unoiled bearing, but it sounded more like a voice, a tiny voice, though its words were indistinguishable. The

song wasn't sung in a language, not in a language Lucas recognized, but gradually, over time, the song began making itself clear, even though its words remained obscure" (47). Similarly to the housings Lucas produces, the song is a "product" of his traumatic reenactment—a form indicating content as an absence. For Lucas, the song is vaguely familiar, recalling a "time and place that hovered on the outer edge of memory" (47). The site that these words denote, of course, is the site of trauma which asserts itself in the form of the song as the "voice of the other" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 8), which returns to haunt the traumatized subject precisely because it cannot be remembered. The "other" in Caruth's phrase refers to the content trauma itself which has been "othered" by way of repression. The song signifies what Freud describes as the contemporariness of trauma and establishes a nexus between Simon's physical and Lucas's psychic wound. What pulsates at the vortex of this nexus is the hum of the machine, the melody of the technological sublime, into which Lucas projects the traumatic loss of his brother: "This seemed, in fact, to be Simon's voice, rendered mechanical" (47). Undecipherable and cryptic, the song attests to the unspeakability of Simon's physical body "stamped and expelled" (47) by the machine as an industrial product which amplifies the particular nature of Simon's death that Lucas seeks to assimilate into his Whitman-corpus.

The assimilation of the *how* of Simon's death into the all-encompassing transcendentalist "machinery" of the *Leaves of Grass* which, in a reflexive way, stamps and expels Lucas, is highly problematic. As the first line of *In the Machine* reads, "Walt said that the dead turned into grass, but there was no grass where they'd buried Simon" (3). Again, the word "said" gains particular significance in terms of translating Whitman's lines into speech acts. Now, in the same way Lucas *says* Whitman in his speaking fits, he expects Whitman to *say* why there was no grass on Simon's grave. What he expects from "the book" is nothing less but a narrative of trauma, an all-

encompassing model to justify the machine as the source of Simon's voice. Whitman's poetry, however, is anything but narrative. On the contrary, the organic, inflated catalogs of the *Leaves of Grass* absorb the unintelligibility of death without interpreting it (Bollobás, *Az Amerikai Irodalom* 156, 161).

This is not say, however, that the machine plays no role in Whitman's poetry. Traditionally perceived as the antithetical "other" of the pastoral image of America—the archetypal antagonism Leo Marx traces in his *Machine in the Garden*—the machine is not at all a "counterforce" to nature in Whitman's oeuvre (Marx 222). For instance, in his "To a Locomotive in Winter," included in the 1900 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, he details the particles of the steam engine as meticulously as he catalogs the natural landscape or the bustle of cities (Nye 56). His candid interest in technological advance notwithstanding, it is nature that Whitman identifies as the place of rebirth, the ultimate site for the reincarnation of the dead. What he perceives as "the beautiful uncut hair of graves" in "Song of Myself" (101) makes the absence of grass on Simon's grave a marker of difference unaccounted for in Whitman's metaphysics. Although the personification of the grass in "Song of Myself," which Desirée Henderson regards as a sacrilegious move towards "unmasking the ground, peeling off the surface and revealing the bodies underneath" (102), it does not offer the form necessary for Lucas to justify his brother's reincarnation in machinery. In Foucault's terms, the undecipherable song, symptomatic of Lucas's reenactment of trauma, exemplifies the operation of heterochrony, a temporal equivalent of heterotopia, marking an "absolute break with […] traditional time" ("OS" 24). For Lucas, the machine is a site of traumatic deferral, at once heterochronic (in terms of the cyclical return of Simon's voice) and heterotopic (marking a juxtaposition of corporeality and machinery as a site of trauma).

To circumvent heterotopia, Lucas expands the scope of the *Leaves of Grass* so as to turn it into an explanatory narrative of Simon's song: "It seemed, as he loaded the plates onto the belt, that the machines were not inanimate; not quite inanimate. They were part of a continuum: machines, then grass and trees, then horses and dogs, then human beings" (Cunningham 20). Extending Whitman's definition of the grass in section 6 of "Song of Myself" to the machine as a narrative frame, Lucas produces a "housing" for the inassimilable contiguity of body and machine convoluting in Simon's death. Personification is one such housing device: "He wondered if the machine had loved Simon, in its serene and unthinking way. He wondered if all the machines at the works, all the furnaces and hooks and belts, mutely admired their men, as horses admired their masters" (20-21). Incorporating machines into the continuum, Lucas creates a lens through which to perceive them as animate things that kill out of affection—a motif which recurs in the second novella, *The Children's Crusade,* in the form of teenage suicide terrorists blowing up their victims by embracing them.

Thus Lucas "re-tunes" the *Leaves of Grass* so as to make it rhyme with Simon's song and applies Whitman's poetic vision of the reunion of the living and the dead in nature as a fitting narrative of traumatic displacement. If Whitman's poem, with its all-inclusive scope of multitudes, is an intrinsically heterotopic text, it comes to serve Lucas as an "operating table" that affords, like a surrealistic painting, the juxtaposition of machine and the body in the context of death. This *tabula*, to reiterate Foucault's explication of the performative power of discourse, "enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and differences" (*OT* xvii). Whitman's poetics of space, essentially catalyzed by the phenomenology of detail, is thus reconfigured by Lucas to serve as a *model* of traumatic epistemology, a *tabula* that

accommodates death by machine—markedly absent from the catalogs of the *Leaves of Grass—*into a transcendentalist dynamics of life and death, welding the technological into the Whitmanesque image of grass as a "uniform hieroglyphic" (Whitman 96).

3.1.2. Voices from the Outer Edge of Memory

We have seen that the song Lucas hears emanating from the machinery is one whose words he does not understand yet recognizes them as vaguely familiar from "elsewhere." This "elsewhere," hovering on the "outer edge of memory" (Cunningham 47), as we have seen, points to the very content of trauma as a site uncharted and unremembered, nevertheless constantly revisited. In Nicolas Abraham's terms, Simon's death by machine thus constitutes a foreign body "lodged within the subject" (290), addressing him through the "phantomogenic words" (292) of the song. In this subsection I will argue that Catherine's recognition of her own trauma being "spoken" by Lucas during one of his speaking fits should be addressed as a mode of reading which, in turn, offers us, readers, a lens to read Cunningham's work as a repository of phantomogenic words that speak to 9/11's tabooed traumas.

On the occasion of presenting Catherine with a bowl to express his naïve adoration, Lucas utters two Whitman-lines in which the girl "recognizes" Simon's voice addressing her:

> He said, "The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel."
> […]
> "The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck. The nine months' gone is in the parturition chamber, her faintness and pains are advancing."
> Catherine paused. She looked at him with a new recognition.
> "What did you say?"
> He didn't know. She had never before seemed to hear him when he spoke as the book.
> "Lucas, please repeat what you just said."
> "I've forgotten."

> "You spoke of a spinning-girl. You spoke of a bride, and … a prostitute. And a woman about to give birth."
>
> "It was the book."
>
> "But why did you say it?"
>
> "The words come through me. I never know."
>
> She leaned closer, gazing into his face as if words were written there, faint but discernible, difficult to read. (Cunningham 54, 55)

The "new recognition" that Lucas's utterance elicits is in fact the uncanny recognition of the self in the other. By unknowingly speaking in a fit, Lucas performs a text that "fits" Catherine's own trauma. Lucas's utterance, in this sense, is doubly performative insofar as he unwittingly produces his Whitman-lines as fits that Catherine simultaneously produces as a reader reenacting and thereby confronting her repressed secret in them. Lucas's speaking fit consequently becomes an interface of Catherine's compulsion to repeat her own trauma. In Abraham's terms, it can be said that Lucas acts like a "ventriloquist" (290), a voice "saying" not only Whitman but Catherine as well. Suspecting that Simon had confided a secret in him, Catherine collapses and discloses to Lucas what she perceives as her complicity in Simon's death: "'I told your brother he must marry me. I don't know if the child is his. It probably isn't. But Simon was willing.' […] 'I suspect. He had his accident because he was unhappy. He may have been so distracted by the thought of our wedding that he allowed it to happen'" (69). This silenced trauma is thus not merely the wound that the loss of her fiancé inflicts on her but rather the haunting suspicion of her own agency in Simon's death—a realization of guilt that informs her reading as a performance of traumatic reenactment.

Catherine's reading of Lucas thus replicates Lucas's listening to Simon's song, as well as Lucas's eagerness to look for a narrative in Whitman. What she models for us, readers, is a narrative of cause and effect so as to mitigate the "x," the missing element, by forging a narrative of Simon sharing a secret with Lucas, even though the nature of the secret remains unfathomable for the boy. Like Lucas, Catherine needs a *tabula* which

the intertextual stratification of Cunningham's writing reveals as constructed, born of psychological trauma. What lies beneath these trauma-narratives is the unsettling effect of the "x" which disrupts relations based on resemblance, the "x" which reveals the constructed nature of reading the machine *in terms of* the grass as well as reading Simon's death as an *effect* of Catherine's imposition on him.

Catherine's reading of Lucas, however, also gives us a model as to how to read Cunningham's work as a voice emanating from the outer edge of *our* memories, but without giving us a way to translate it into a narrative of cause and effect. I would like to suggests that in the same way the words "spinning girl," "prostitute," "nine months," and "bride" are (mis)read by Catherine and construed in her reading as reverberations of her trauma, Cunningham's work presents us with words "faint but discernible" exposing the phantomogenic contours of 9/11's tabooed traumas.[49]

In order to identify these contours let me focus on the last scene that concludes *In the Machine*. To divert Catherine from going to work, Lucas self-mutilates himself by allowing his hand to be devoured by the machine so that Catherine would take him to the hospital instead of going to the factory. Waiting for treatment with Catherine at his side, Lucas suddenly succumbs to the pull of an irresistible drive and, with his mangled hand soaking in blood, dashes out of the hospital and runs to the site where the Mannahatta Company is already on fire. The "house in the sea of grass" (98), where he imagines himself running to, ultimately materializes in its dialectical opposite: a factory on fire, a "building blazing" (100). This illumination is buttressed by the continuum of the machine and the garden Lucas establishes to explain the source of Simon's voice emanating from machinery. As a result, his gaze turns horror into an awesome spectacle, an apocalyptic carnival of the flesh orchestrated by the "machine God" (101).

[49] Similarly to Paul Berman's comment about Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America,* the "foreign body" in Cunningham's novel can be perceived as "a second novel, something from our own time […] locked inside and […] banging furiously on the walls, trying to get out" (quoted in Lewis 246).

This calamitous fire, taking place at the fictitious Mannahatta Company, acquires new meanings once read in the light of the second novella. Set in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, *The Children's Crusade* recycles imagery familiar from *In the Machine*, which instantiates a retroactive reading of the first novella in the light of the second. If, in the wake of the terrorist attacks, as we read in *The Children's Crusade,* "it was impossible not to be struck by the emptiness where the towers had stood" (113), it is just as impossible for the reader not to re-visualize Lucas's apocalyptic vision of the "unspeakable beauty" (101) of the catastrophe at the Mannahatta Company in terms of the spectacular events of 9/11. The ambiguity of the term "unspeakable beauty" is, as we already have seen, particularly pertinent to 9/11 as Richard Drew's selection of the "Falling Man" frame for publication and Joel Meyerowitz's intoxication with the "awful beauty" of the ruins (qtd. in Sturken, *Tourists* 196) vividly illustrate. Likewise, using *The Children's Crusade* as a retrospective vantage point, Lucas's perception of the calamitous fire that left onlookers "horrified and excited" (99) reads uncannily germane to the aftermath of the collapse of the Twin Towers: "[t]he dead had entered the atmosphere. Lucas knew it as surely as he had known Simon's presence in the pillow. With every breath Lucas took the dead inside him. This was their bitter taste; this was how they lay—ashen and hot—on the tongue. […] The dead filled Lucas's mouth and lungs" (100). Similarly to Catherine's reading of her own trauma in Lucas's Whitman-words, we recognize the uncanny content of the dust of 9/11 emerging in the form phantomogenic words embedded in Cunningham's text. It is thorough these words, or sentences rather, that Cunningham brings us to heterotopic constitution of the dust we have discussed in the previous chapter.

However, while we read 9/11 *into* these sentences, we are unable to read 9/11 *through* the narrative lens Lucas applies to the catastrophe at Mannahatta. What

crystallizes in his Whitmanseque perception is a perfect continuum of the living and the dead, body and debris—a *tabula* which manifests itself as abject matter in the context of 9/11, as Judith Greenberg example the five girls demonstrates. If the burning building of the Mannahatta Company is construed by Lucas's gaze as part of the continuum, a building-machine metonymic of the machinery it houses, the sight of the *how* of death at the Company is already met with a narrative on the part of Lucas. Because the sight phantomogenically recalls 9/11 we find ourselves simultaneously looking at and reading Ground Zero through Lucas's eyes—a heterotopic gestalt which posits viewing and reading as mutually incompatible. Insofar as the gestalt, in Wolfgang Iser's sense, "arises from the meeting between the written text and the individual mind of the reader with its own particular history of experience, its own consciousness, its own outlook" (219), it is through the recognition of abject material (literally) incorporated into a narrative that Cunningham brings us to heterotopia. In other words, we are pulled into (re)witnessing a traumatic moment without being provided with a sustainable perspective. In a paradoxical way, the narrative that evokes the dust of Ground Zero through phantomogenic words is therefore the very same narrative that collapses, reinstating heterotopia as the very ground of witnessing.

Read from the viewpoint of *The Children's Crusade,* where the telos of becoming part of "something vaster and more marvelous than the living can imagine" (101) is achieved by teenagers as suicide terrorists, Lucas's vision of sublime beauty in the disastrous fire brings forth the terrorist in an uncanny light. "The danger," as we read in *The Children's Crusade,* "that had infected the air for the last few years was stirred up now; people could smell it. Today they'd been reminded, *we'd* been reminded, of something much of the world had known for centuries—that you could easily, at any moment, make your fatal mistake" (113). The italicized pronoun "*we*" constitutes an

extradiegetic address, an exchange of glances between the narrator and the reader, which infuses a familiar trope of post-9/11 paranoia into a counterfactual context, rendering the suicide attacks not so much a consequence but rather a recycling of the devastation of 9/11 channeled through Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. The lines that Lucas unwittingly utters in his conversations with Catherine in the first story echo in Luke's responses to Cat's questions in the second one. As Catherine's trauma comes to be spoken by Lucas's speaking fits, so do Cat's telephone conversations with the terrorist teenagers, as well as her "recognition" of her lost child in Luke, amount to an act of bearing witness through the voice of the other. The "forearm" and the "half a sneaker, with half a foot inside" (108), which the police collect as evidence after one of the bombings retroactively evoke Simon and Lucas's dismembered bodies consumed by the machine and, as a gestalt formed by the two allusions, the corporeal disintegration caused by the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The effect Cunningham achieves here is similar to what I described in connection with the excavation of the "Ground Zero ship" in the previous chapter. Once we recognize the shoe filled with mud as a "voided *déjà vu*" recalling the uncanny materiality of the ruins, we do not simply divest the precious find of its archeological context but also construe archeology as a narrative context incongruous with the ruins of the towers. Similarly to the phantomogenic words recalling 9/11 as intertextual echoes behind Cunningham's sentences, the dozens of shoes recovered from the 18th century ship can be regarded as phantomogenic objects that, as Abraham says, "wreak havoc from within the unconscious, in the coherence of logical progression" (291). Indeed, these phantomogenic objects do not merely recall what has been repressed but, to adopt Michel de Certeau's remark on the operation of memory, "[t]he manner in which they are recalled corresponds to that in which they were inscribed" (87). If trauma, as we have

seen, consists in the disruption of meaning, in the same way the *form* of trauma becomes manifest in these archeological finds, the object is recalled as a find with a "double voice," at once affirming the site as an archeological excavation and, by way of recalling the inscription of the traumatic imprint, rendering archeology unfit for "housing" the find. In a similar fashion, what I identified as phantomogenic sentences in Cunningham's description render Lucas's reading of the catastrophe a perspective unfitting to "contain" the dust of 9/11.

If Lucas's ritualistic inhalation of the dead is underpinned by a comprehensive order galvanized by his appropriation of Whitman's poem, reading his *tabula* calls to mind Foucault's reaction to Borges's Chinese Encyclopedia:

> That passage from Borges kept me laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness that I found hard to shake off. Perhaps because there arose in its wake the suspicion that there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous,* the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry… (*OT* xvii)

Similarly to the unease Foucault registers upon reading Borges's enumerations of unlikely species of animals, Lucas's all-encompassing vision of the "house in the sea of grass" (Cunningham 98)[50] enfolding the flames of the Mannahatta Company hits a nerve once read through the lens of the second novella because the "geometry" of Lucas's continuum is not only unavailable for the girls in Greenberg's example but it applies Whitman's metaphysics to a site "out of place," a smoldering Ground Zero incompatible with Lucas's transcendentalist reading. Through the "book," Lucas has produced a "housing," a narrative geometry, to contain Simon's voice—a geometry significantly

[50] The pastoral idyll suggested by this image recalls Komar and Melamid's proposal for the redesign of Ground Zero in which they envisioned a farm with two silos uncannily gesturing toward the absent towers (Sturken, *Tourists* 229).

lacking in the effort to hold sway over the "voice" of the dust emerging from Ground Zero.

All these instances attest to the dynamics of repetitions that catalyzes the reading of *The Children's Crusade* as a narrative layer "deposited" on *In the Machine*, whereby a palimpsest of inter- and intratextual relations are formed. Although the spatiotemporal framework of *The Children's Crusade*, which the ruins of the World Trade Center anchor in a historical setting outside the text, seeps into fiction once the teenage terrorists appear on the scene, it is precisely this apparent *difference* between historical fact and fiction that wraps the former into the latter and allows Cunningham's text to articulate the "unbelievable" through phantomogenic words installed into a historiographic scaffolding. It is in this sense, then, that the narrator's extradiegetic "*we*" (113) becomes a vehicle to activate a reality outside the text and simultaneously defamiliarize that reality as a textual construct. Linda Hutcheon subsumes novels that subscribe to this technique under the term "historiographic metafiction" which "works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction" ("Historiographic Metafiction" 4). Historiographic metafiction thus forces the reader to acknowledge the "inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past," as well as the discursive constructedness of that knowledge (8). In this sense, if Catherine's reading of Lucas/Whitman gives us a model for reading Cunningham, Cunningham, in turn, reveals the constructedness of Lucas and Catherine's efforts to incorporate the voice of the other into narratives. In Cunningham's hands, metafiction works as a mnemonic device reenacting the "voice" of 9/11's heterotopias without offering narrative closure.

3.1.3. Four Buildings

In order to examine the mechanics of this mnemonic device, let me return to the industrial catastrophe at Catherine's workplace which concludes *In the Machine*. Cunningham's description of the fire at the fictitious Mannahatta Company seems uncannily congruent with the historical event of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of March 25, 1911, which took the lives of 146 garment workers, many of whom jumped to their deaths from the top floors of the building (von Drehle 152-156). *In the Machine,* however, is set in a New York of some 20 years before the fire, when an accidental (if not magical) meeting between Lucas and Walt Whitman on Broadway was still possible.[51] In a self-referential manner, Cunningham accounts for this temporal discrepancy in his authorial note to the novel. The note, however, serves as a disclaimer in which he politely refers the reader to yet another text as a source of truth: "Anyone interested in the absolute truth about New York in the mid to late nineteenth century would be well advised to consult *Gotham* by Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, which was the primary source from which I spun my own variations" (xiv). But if this "absolute truth" is located in another text, Cunningham's ironical remark confers historical truth on the very text that produces it. By foregrounding the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, the "authority" of the author's note as a paratext conventionally expected to guide the reader to a reality outside the novel is thus destabilized. Cunningham's reference to *Gotham* as "absolute truth" wherefrom he spins his own variations is, nevertheless, not without an intratextual reference. His words echo Lucas's own way of spinning his variations from "the book" whose constructed nature is echoed by Cunningham's own book, as well as the ultimate source he pins down as

[51] In a serendipitous instance, as Lucas is looking for coins on Broadway he bumps into Walt Whitman's "gray-white cascade of beard" (72). Their dream-like conversation is crucial for Lucas because Whitman confirms him in his belief that the dead can return in machinery as well: "They are in machinery too. They are everywhere," answers Whitman. "Lucas had been right, then. If he'd harbored any doubts, here was the answer" (73-74).

"truth." Through these multiple layers of textual fractals Cunningham dramatizes the cyclical structure of traumatic reenactment and allows the voice of 9/11's "phantom," in Abraham's sense, to echo within the interstice between *In the Machine* and *The Children's Crusade* without quenching it by a sustainable narrative. The textual formation of the phantom as an absence is most conspicuous in Cunningham's treatment of architectural spaces which I will demonstrate through the interrelations formed among four buildings, the NYU building, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, the Mannahatta Company, and the ruins of the World Trade Center

As *The Children's Crusade* gestures back to *In the Machine* an intratextual relation is formed between the Mannahatta Company and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. The nexus between the two buildings is established by Cat's visit to New York University, the present-day owner of what used to be the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. In an effort to gain information about the poem that she presumes to be the "language" (Cunningham 153) of the teenage terrorists with whom she converses on the phone, Cat sets up an appointment with a Whitman-specialist at NYU. Upon her entering the building, the narration gestures toward a historical reality outside the text (the NYU building is indeed identical with the old Triangle Factory),[52] through the textual coordinates of the horrific fire at the Mannahatta Company:

> One of these buildings, Cat had never been quite sure which, had been that sweatshop, where the fire was. She knew the story only vaguely—the exits had been blocked to keep the workers from sneaking out early. Something like that. There'd been a fire, and all those women were trapped inside. Some of them had jumped. From one of these buildings—was it the one she was entering?—women with their dresses on fire had fallen, had hit this pavement right here or the pavement just down the street. Now it was all NYU. (156)

[52] The building is indeed NYU property (von Drehle 327) and there is a plaque on its façade commemorating the fire of 1911 (Foote 295-297).

The historical event reiterated in this section functions both as an intertextual reference to a historical event as well as an intratext retroactively superimposed on the Mannahatta Company. Cat's rumination on the story, which she "only vaguely" remembers, inserts the historical link between NYU and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911 as an intertext, while her entering the NYU building offers an intratextual gateway for the reader to "recognize" Cat as Catherine and "re-read" the fire of the Mannahatta Company in terms of the disaster of the Triangle catastrophe (and vice versa) and, by extension, recognize 9/11 in 1911 as a "numerical intertext."

By the same token, the ominous presence of the ruins of the World Trade Center in *The Children's Crusade* as yet another historical intertext interacts with both the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and the Mannahatta Company at an intratextual level. The dialectical image of the machine and the garden, epitomized by the name of the Mannahatta Company, also resonates with an intertextual allusion to Ground Zero as a contested site of memory: one of the suicide bombings in *The Children's Crusade* kills Dick Harte, a fictitious developer at Ground Zero "pushing for more retail and office space in the rebuild in opposition to those "who favor a memorial and a park" (155).[53] The dynamic interaction of these textual traces is imbued with the presence of *genius loci,* which, paradoxically, gains its aura by being detached from and at once intimately tied to Lower Manhattan as a metafictional palimpsest. In this sense, Cat's ruminations on the fire, which she presumes had happened "right here" (156), certainly does more than identify the NYU Building as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory inserted as a historical intertext. Being "right here" constitutes a spatial counterpart of the Benjaminian *Jetztzeit,* a nexus of textualized traces, in which the Mannahatta Company and Ground Zero are

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[53] The idea of the park that surfaces in this quote reads as an implicit reference to developer Larry Silverstein, who became leaseholder of the World Trade Center buildings shortly before 9/11 (Goldberger 37-45).

"entered" as part of the same act of entering the NYU building and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

If reading Cunningham's work demands the recognition of these constellations, it also requires something more. While facing the textual nature of our knowledge of the past a clearly identifiable gestalt flashes up in these constellations. For the industrial catastrophe described in *In the Machine* does not merely interact with the Ground Zero evoked in *The Children's Crusade* as nodes in a nexus of intertextual relations but also creates a virtual site, a gestalt in which the uncanny constellation of body and building, the animate and the inanimate explode in an emphatic absence. Cat's vague recollection of "women with their dresses on fire [who] had fallen, had hit this pavement right here or the pavement just down the street" (Cunningham 156), gives textual form, a textual *genius loci* to what remains a taboo once transported into the context of 9/11: the people that jumped/fell from the towers.

As we have already seen, the "words [that] come through" Lucas stage a reenactment of Catherine's own trauma which she recognizes as a text "faint but discernible, difficult to read" (55). In a similar fashion, one could argue that Cunningham's novel replicates Lucas's "book" in that it reads as a mnemonic device for 9/11's falling bodies to be recognized as a gestalt which nevertheless refuses to be read as a text. What is articulated in the following passage is thus less a fragment of a broken narrative, and more a form that is essentially counter-narrative in its reenactment of a tabooed memory of 9/11. As the Mannahatta Company is burning, Lucas looks up at one of the workers:

> The woman stood in the window, holding to its frame. Her blue skirt billowed. The square of brilliant orange made of her a blue silhouette, fragile and precise. She was like a goddess of the fire, come to her platform to tell those gathered below what the fire meant, what it wanted of them. From so far away, her face was indistinct. She turned her head to look back into the room, as if

> someone had called to her. She was radiant and terrifying. She listened to something the fire told her.
>
> She jumped.
>
> […]
>
> The woman's skirt rose around her as she fell. She lifted her arms, as if to take hold of invisible hands that reached for her.
>
> When she struck the pavement, she disappeared. She'd been a woman in midair, she'd been the flowering of her skirt, and then in an instant she was only the dress, puddle on the cobblestones, still lifting slightly at its edges as if it lived on. (98)

Lucas's perception of the jumper bespeaks a transcendentalist geometry into which death by machine is inscribed. In much the same way his brother was "stamped and expelled" by the machine, it is now the tall building that devours and expels the workers. For Lucas, the industrial catastrophe unfolds as a rite of passage from life to death, realized in accordance with the *Leaves of Grass* as a filter. Perceived in her fall as "the flowering of her skirt" and then becoming "the dress, puddle on the cobblestones," the woman's death is inscribed into what Lucas conceptualizes as "a huge and mesmerizing wholeness" (100), a continuum that brings the machine (metonymically represented by the factory building and the cobblestones of the city) and the garden (the flowering of her skirt) to an equilibrium in the moment of death. It is this equilibrium, this enactment of the narrative that is reflected in the instance of Lucas's death: "He wanted to say, I am large, I contain multitudes. I am in the grass under your feet. He made as if to speak but did not speak. In the sky, the great celestial horse turned its enormous head. An unspeakable beauty announced itself" (101).

Once the 9/11 jumpers are recognized as a spectral *punctum* emerging from the palimpsestual layers of the text, the reader is denied the "comfort" of the transcendentalist geometry that turns the falling woman into the "flowering of her skirt." The more the model comes to the fore in Lucas's delirious vision which Cunningham conveys in free indirect prose, the more poignant its resonance with the 9/11 jumpers. The continuum of "machines, then grass and trees, then horses and dogs, then human

beings" (20) inflates into a kaleidoscopic vision of apocalypse in which the fire speaks to the woman who listens and understands what it means.

Another passage of the same event, however, yields an even more distressing configuration of the dilemma of aesthetics I discussed in connection with Richard Drew's photograph in Chapter 1. As Lucas catches sight of another woman just about to jump out of the building, he translates the fall into flying:

> She looked down. She looked at Lucas.
> […]
> He returned her gaze. He could do nothing else. His heart raged and burned, full of its own fire. […] She said (though she did not speak in words), We are this now. We were weary and put-upon, we lived in tiny rooms, we ate candy in secret, but now we are radiant and glorious. We are no longer anyone. We are part of something vaster and more marvelous than the living can imagine.
> […]
> The fire woman spread her wings and flew.
> […] He saw the woman cross the sky. […] He knew that his heart had stopped. He wanted to say, I am large, I contain multitudes. I am in the grass under your feet. (100-101)

Similarly to the passages cited earlier, Whitman's "Song of Myself" pulsates behind Lucas's "reading" of the catastrophe. The aesthetic turn, however, which transforms falling into flying—remediated in *Like Beauty* in Simon's dream of "flying women wearing dresses of light" (284)—bears echoes of Tom Junod's description of the composed posture of the Falling Man. "Although he has not chosen his fate," Junod writes, "he appears to have, in his last instants of life, embraced it. If he were not falling, he might very well be flying. […] Some people who look at the picture see stoicism, willpower, a portrait of resignation; others see something else—something discordant and terrible: freedom" (Junod, "The Falling Man"). The "unspeakable beauty" (Cunningham 101) that envelops Lucas in the closing scene of the story resounds the "terrible freedom" that suffuses Drew's photo, but while Lucas perceives the fall in terms of becoming part of "something vaster," Junod talks about a "discordant"

aesthetics, a freedom suffused with the unsettling *aporia* of jumping and falling, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Lucas' death also echoes the unvoicable nature of 9/11, and the narrative roundabouts discussed in connection with the ruins in the previous chapter: his function as projecting screen for his environment (the city, the inhabitants, Catherine, and her trauma) fails at the end, as he is overburdened by having to reflect the Mannahatta Company fire. Through dying he inscribes himself into a heroic narrative and constructs the unvoicable nature of the traumatic experience to which he has been subjected in terms of teleology. This echoes the need to construct the falling bodies into comprehensible, culturally appropriate and appropriable narrative schemes. However, the exchange of glances between the "fire woman" and Lucas brings about meaning as a fulfillment of the script provided by the *Leaves of Grass*. In contrast with Lucas's "reading" of the woman and inscribing himself into his reading by dint of *becoming* dead in a Whitmanesque way, the "Falling Man" speaks a language of contradictions, which, as a site of heterotopia, deconstructs the discursive patterns devised to contain it. The viewer of the photograph is caught up in the machinery of pictorial and semiotic disintegration—heterotopias that Lucas smoothes out by his appropriation of Whitman.

If Cunningham's palimpsest operates by the logic of fractal geometry centered on the dialectics of listening to the voice of the other and the construction of a narrative to rationalize that voice, the reader of *Specimen Days* is positioned as a reader of phantomogenic words, reenacting Lucas's listening to Simon and Catherine's listening to Lucas. The same fractal geometry can be traced in the four buildings that dovetail within a complex web of intra- and intertextual nexuses. The core formation that defines this geometry is, of course, the machine that devoured Simon, his "death by machine" that echoes in the dust of the World Trade Center and the 9/11 jumpers—both recalled as

fractals without content, delineating the outer edge of the reader's memory of 9/11 as a gestalt of trauma. Even though we recognize 9/11 *in terms* of the fire at the Mannahatta Company/Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, we cannot read 9/11 *in terms* of Lucas's continuum. The heterotopia that Cunningham formulates here dovetails with his archeological stance toward narrative as a discursive construct, which he demonstrates in much the same way Ackerman deconstructs Cheney, and Junod's narratives of the Falling Man's identity in his film. Instead of forging a narrative of 9/11, Cunningham thus positions the reader in the midst of heterotopia by allowing the voice of the other to be heard in between his lines as a haunting absence.

3.2. The Suspended Signifier – Falling Man

Inflating the "Falling Man" into an over-arching image emerging from the open wound of 9/11, Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* settles deep into the absence that *Specimen Days* pries open. Although Drew's photograph is referenced already in the title, DeLillo's approach is, however, precisely the opposite of Cheney and Junod's redeeming narratives. *Falling Man*, Kristiaan Versluys suggests, represents a "counterdiscourse to nationalistic interpretations" in that it sustains September 11 as "the symbol of irreclaimable melancholy" (23). Rather than offering a narrative, the novel unfolds as "counter-narrative" whose relevance to 9/11 DeLillo already emphasizes in his essay "In the Ruins of the Future," published by *Harper's Magazine* in December 2001. "The Bush Administration was feeling a nostalgia for the Cold War. This is over now. Many things are over. The narrative ends in the rubble, and it is left to us to create the counter-narrative" (34), he writes. In Cunningham's *Specimen Days,* the negative space of trauma that unfolds in his metafictional deconstruction of narrative-formation subscribes to the kind of counter-narrative DeLillo talks about. His *Falling Man* constitutes a

counter-narrative in a different way. While the former activates the apparatus of historiographic metafiction in which the repressed traumas of 9/11 emerge as an emphatic absence, the latter starts from within the "ruins of the future" and unfolds as a counter-narrative predicated on suspense, withholding meaning and judgment.

Exuding the same phenomenological sensibility that gives the edge of Cunningham's insertion of Whitman into Lucas as a "foreign body," *Falling Man* posits as a foreign body a mysterious performance artist called David Janiak who mimics the pose of the man in Richard Drew's photograph by attaching himself to a harness and executing jumps at various points in the city. Like Lucas, David Janiak, known as the Falling Man, "speaks" phantomogenic words that "point to a gap, that is, to the unspeakable" (Abraham 290), which, in this case, is a collectively tabooed trauma. In doing so, his performance is comparable to a central motif of model-building in Walter Abish's *How German Is It / Wie Deutsch Ist Es* which I will use as a platform to problematize the ambiguities that underpin Janiak's performances and discuss how his performances will become not merely a representation of the 9/11 jumpers but, in DeLillo's hands, an uncanny cipher for the permeable borders between terrorist and victim, body and building, evidenced by the trope "organic shrapnel." Finally, I will trace how the ruin suffuses the novel both as a motif and a site of heterotopia which DeLillo phenomenologically inhabits through his writing.

3.2.1. Jumps or Falls

Pierre Nora defines *lieux de mémorie* as sites that emerge out of a communal deliberation to "create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally." These sites are significant because "[w]e buttress our identities upon such bastions …" (12). These

bastions centralize communal practices of memory around rituals, memorials, and monuments which Jan Assmann calls "figures of memory" (129). By contrast, Richard Drew's photograph, as we have seen in Chapter 1, offers a figure that is collectively willed away but nevertheless prevails as a "grounding image" (Vree 276) leaving an indelible mark in the memory of those who have seen it. To modify Nora's term, the "Falling Man" is at the very least a counter-site of memory, not in the sense Marc Augé defines *non-lieu,* a place of transition that does not cater to inscriptions of identity, but a counter-site, in the sense that it obstructs identification (both by relating *to* the photograph and relating the photograph as a representation *of* a particular person). It asserts itself as a site by means of refusing to be identified as a site of memory in Nora's sense. Through Benjamin and Barthes's apparatuses, we have seen how the photograph's iconographic features invite conflicting patterns of signification that simultaneously cancel out each other. Janiak's repeated performances in public spaces attest to an embodied voice of a collectively repressed trauma that, as a phantomogenic word, wreaks havoc in the city. He is a "foreign body," who renders his performance and the place that it transforms a "counter-site of memory."

Apart from its intertextual reference to Drew's photograph, the literary construct of the image of Janiak also resembles a real-life performance artist, Kerry Skarbakka, whose uncannily similar performance in 2005 wreaked havoc among New Yorkers. I discuss his performance in detail in the next chapter. Although DeLillo claims he had no knowledge of Skarbakka in the time he was working on *Falling Man* (Melnick 91), the iconographic congruence between fictional and the real recalls Skarbakka's scandalous performance of 2005 as part of the mnemonic palimpsest DeLillo's image of Janiak induces. Like in Cunningham, where we are literally reading Whitman, here we are reading the image in the story of DeLillo's book and, at the same time we are also

remembering the performance artist, Kerry Skarbakka. It is in the texture of repressed memory, then, that we as readers are led to remember the man in Drew's photograph referenced as an intertext. Cognizant of the fact, however, that even Drew's photograph is a performance of choice, the photograph's act of choosing this particular frame, which went through editing before publication, referring to Drew's photograph as the "original" can only happen in quotation marks.

Through choreographically mimicking the pose of Drew's Falling Man, Janiak builds a three-dimensional "model" of the photograph every time he executes a jump. But inasmuch as the *optical unconscious* of Drew's photograph pries open "image worlds" (Benjamin, "Little History 512) that call for narrative interpretation, Janiak's performances also have their own image worlds whose terrains are no less treacherous than the meaning of the unlikely pose of the man in Drew's photograph. Why does he do this? And why does he choose this particular photograph? As Lianne catches sight of the artist dangling on his harness at Grand Central Station, she recognizes the "original" of Janiak's model: "There was the awful openness of it, something we'd not seen, the single falling figure that trails a collective dread, body come down among us all" (DeLillo, *Falling Man* 33).

A similarly "awful openness" can be traced in Franz's construction of the matchstick-model of the concentration camp of Durst in Walter Abish's *How German Is It / Wie Deutsch Ist Es.* As Zsófia Bán points out, the poignancy of Franz's "pastime activity" derives from its unremitting ambiguity as to the goal of his project. We do not know whether the model is meant to replicate an architectural complex that is no longer in place or intended as a design for the future replication of the past epitomized by that complex. It is this sense of ambiguity that reflects in the following passage of the novel: "He [Franz] was not merely replicating a period of disaster. […] He was not merely

replicating in every detail, and to scale, something that in its day had been familiar to the people in Daemling as the cows in the barn. What he was doing was to evoke in the people he knew a sense of uncertainty, a sense of doubt, a sense of disgust" (158). Abish's characterization of the subversive nature of Franz's hobby is particularly pertinent to the obscure intentionality behind Janiak's performances. As his fall induces a "body come down among us all" (DeLillo, *Falling Man* 33), the performer's *punctum*-like appearance in public space resonates with Franz's model which brings to the surface a design that is seemingly incongruent with the idyllic German town of Brumholdstein and at the same time uncannily congruent in that the town was literally built on a former concentration camp.

Similarly to Franz's "rebuilding" of the camp, Janiak not only replicates the "original" but activates and reconfigures the public space in which he situates his model. In so doing, onlookers are encapsulated in a diorama in which they themselves are made to bear witness to a familiar but repressed aspect of 9/11 through Janiak's mediation. As he imposes a counter-site of memory onto public space, the point of convergence of the public and what the public expels results in a heterotopic spatiality insofar as he juxtaposes in "a single real place several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault, "OS" 24). By doing so, he disturbs the coherence of the urban environment as a screen of identification. On one occasion he performs at the subway station at 125th Street. Lianne sees him standing still, preparing for his jump, and speculates on his purpose:

> She thought of the passengers. The train would bust out of the tunnel south of here and then begin to slow down, approaching the station at 125th Street, three-quarters of a mile ahead. It would pass and he would jump. There would be those aboard who see him standing and those who see him jump, all jarred out of their reveries or their newspapers or muttering stunned into their cell phones. These people had not seen him attach the safety harness. They would only see him fall out of sight. Then, she thought, the ones already speaking into phones, the others groping for phones, all would try to describe

> what they've seen or what others nearby have seen and are now trying to describe to them. (164-165)

In line with the dazzling texture of Drew's photograph in which the Falling Man paradoxically constitutes the only fixed point of reference, here Janiak's performance renders the fall a sequence of still images framed by the windows of the subway. As such, his performance reenacts the dazzling effect of Drew's sequence suspended by the well-known frame. In a paradoxical fashion, while his pose is controlled, the passengers catching sight of him are made to "fall," as they continue their ride irreversibly to the next stop. The setting, in this case the subway, is thus a screen that Janiak fully incorporates in his model: by inscribing himself into public space as a performer, his performance phantomogenically puts Drew's image back into circulation.

One might be tempted to suggest, as Kristiaan Versluys does, that in DeLillo's novel Janiak stands in "for the people who had no choice but to submit to their fate" (23). However, Lianne's fixation on the work of the performance artist demonstrates that, rather, he stands in for the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding their choice to take the fall. In Lianne's eyes the "flash" of the performance is punctured by a spectral *punctum* which compels her to reconnect with an experience predating 9/11. For her, Janiak's jump is an embodied yet hollow cipher for the suicide of her own father. If Janiak translates Drew's photograph into a performative speech act similar to Lucas's "saying" of Whitman, by watching Janiak's performance of Drew's photograph, Lianne is visually confronted with her own silenced trauma in much the same way Catherine reads herself in Lucas's Whitman-lines. Upon witnessing his jump at 125th Street, Lianne's ponderings are conveyed in free indirect speech: "Jumps or falls. He keels forward, body rigid, and falls full-length, headfirst, drawing a rustle of awe from the schoolyard with isolated cries of alarm that are only partly smothered by the passing roar

of the train" (DeLillo, *Falling Man* 168). Then she starts running as if losing control over her body:

> She thought, Died by his own hand.
> She stopped running then and stood bent over, breathing heavily. She looked into the pavement. When she ran in the mornings she went long distances and never felt this drained and wasted. She was doubled over, like there were two of her, the one who'd done the running and the one who didn't know why. (169)

Like Catherine in *Specimen Days,* Lianne reads a text "faint but discernible" (Cunningham 55) into Janiak's performance. In a deferred fashion, the performance activates a repressed memory that surfaces in the form of a fragment, "Died by his own hand" (67, 218)—perhaps written in the coroner's report upon her father's death. As a recurring textual trace, the sentence becomes a catalyst of traumatic displacement evidenced by her psychosomatic drive to run without a logically comprehensible reason, indicating her body, and not her mind, as the "knower."

For Lianne, as well as for the reader, the words "Jumps or falls" give a thrill when juxtaposed with the conflict of signification in the iconography of Drew's photograph. In Chapter 1, we have seen that, apart from denying the viewer the sight of the man's death, which Barbie Zelizer identifies as a poignant edge to "about-to-die" photographs in general, it is the dilemmatic nature of the man's agency, signified by the words "jump" and "fall," that renders the "Falling Man" a site of undecidability. This particular problem is addressed by the preceding sentence: "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" (167). It is, therefore, not simply the reenactment of the posture of the man but rather what remains invisible in Drew's photograph that is at stake in Janiak's performances. He performs choice, the act of decision that instigates the jump as opposed to "death by fire." If, in *Specimen Days,* the song Lucas hears from the

machine indicates the contemporariness of “Simon’s ongoing death” (31), by bringing agency to the fore, Janiak (unwittingly) embodies the “ongoing suicide” of Lianne’s father, Jack Glenn, as an unresolved, secreted trauma.

As part of her reenactment of this trauma, the term “muzzle blast” (41, 130), which Lianne associates with the method of her father’s death, “carried over the years. The news of his death seemed to ride on the arc of those two words. They were awful words but she tried to tell herself he’d done a brave thing. It was way too soon” (41). Like Janiak’s public appearances, “muzzle blast” functions as a memory trigger that takes her to “counter-sites” that she has failed to inhabit as narratable memories. Situated in the context of the “Falling Man,” the expression “brave thing,” which Lianne devises as a narrative to contextualize her father’s suicide, reverberates the rhetoric of heroism burgeoning after 9/11 and yet falters once applied to the jumpers. DeLillo’s novel inhabits this counter-site by mapping the suicide of Lianne’s father onto David Janiak’s performance, thus turning the traumatic memory of the suicide into a gateway for Janiak’s performances to retroactively inscribe the taboo of suicide into the “Falling Man” photograph. What Janiak models is not so much the image *per se* but, with DeLillo allowing us to see the performance only through Lianne’s eyes, he comes to model *why* the image is inassimilable. Therefore, to modify Versluys’s remark, rather than standing in for those who had “no choice but to submit to their fate” (23), Janiak’s model stands in for the ambiguous category of choice itself.

3.2.2. Three Men

We have seen how Janiak’s performance of the “Falling Man” functions as an embodied voice of Lianne’s repressed trauma rooted in her father’s suicide. Through the superimposition of Janiak and Jack Glenn, the connotation of suicide is retroactively

injected into the context of 9/11. Suicide, however, has further implications that involve a third man with whom Lianne's mother, Nina, started dating after Glenn's suicide over twenty years ago. The man is known as Martin Ridnour, although his real name is Ernst Hechinger, a former member of a German terrorist organization of the 1960s and 70s, "Demonstrating against the German state, the fascist state," as Nina explains to Lianne, who finds the man's mysterious past ever more alarming in the face of 9/11.

Describing Kommune One, the anarchist organization of which Martin was a member, Nina tells Lianne that "First they threw eggs. Then they set off bombs. After that I'm not sure what he did. I think he was in Italy for a while, in the turmoil, when the Red Brigades were active. But I don't know" (DeLillo, *Falling Man* 146). Nina's disinterest in or, more precisely, disavowal of Martin's past instills a sense of uncertainty about the terrorist "other" and puts to the test the prevalent rhetoric of "Us versus Them"—one of the watchwords of the Bush Administration after 9/11. Literally a "foreign body" (as Janiak himself seems to be as well)[54] Martin speaks a language that inscribes the "other" into the texture of Lianne's family. As Nina remarks, "He thinks these people, these jihadists, he thinks they have something in common with the radicals of the sixties and seventies. He thinks they're all part of the same classical pattern. They have their theorists. They have their visions of world brotherhood" (147).

Martin's "otherness" and Glenn's suicide are conjoined by a textual echo played out between two paragraphs separated by a break. Pondering the term "muzzle blast" and her father's suicide, Lianne "wanted to believe that the rifle that killed him was the one he'd braced against her shoulder among the stands of tamarack and spruce in the plunging light of that northern day" (41). The next paragraph, separated from the previous one by a textual break, starts with Martin's return to the United States after

[54] Janiak's "foreignness" is vaguely suggested by the following passage in which Lianne googles the artist after hearing about his death: "She read a few remarks, then stopped reading. She clicked forward to entries in Russian and other Slavic languages. She stared into the keyboard for a time" (220).

9/11: “Martin embraced her in the doorway, gravely. He’d been somewhere in Europe when the attacks occurred and was on one of the first transatlantic flights as schedules resumed, erratically” (41). From the first paragraph the word “brace” is carried over to the second one where it appears in the form of “embrace.” Her father’s act of bracing against her shoulder what would later become the weapon of his suicide morphs into Martin’s embracing arms as he gets off the airplane in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Suicide as an unresolved trauma is thus textually “braced” against Martin’s terrorist past—with the details of both kept hidden: Lianne did not call the local police for details about her father’s death, just as Nina did not inquire into the details of Martin’s activities in Germany in the sixties and seventies. After all, “What detail might there be that was not unbearable?” (41) Lianne ponders in connection with her father’s suicide. As the two paragraphs “embrace,” what surfaces as unbearable is the figure of Martin as the “terrorist kind,” woven into the texture of the family and reconfiguring Glenn’s suicide as a “kind of death” inextricably tied to terrorism.

From the abyss of the textual break that separates the two paragraphs, David Janiak’s performances emerge as an uncanny link between the terrorists and the Falling Man. For the jumpers’ choice is not merely unbearable because of the cultural taboo against suicide *per se* but, as we have seen with Laura Frost in Chapter 1, it also “braces” them against the terrorists in the very method of their death (188). Upon learning about Janiak’s death (apparently of natural causes) Lianne googles the performance artist and learns that his brother, Roman Janiak, assisted him with the jumps. Most poignantly, however, “Plans for a final fall, according to him, did not include a safety harness” (De Lillo, *Falling Man* 221). Janiak’s project, in other words, entailed suicide as its ultimate conclusion, which Linda Kauffmann poignantly describes as a “suicide mission” (370).

DeLillo's "trialectics" of Janiak, Glenn, and Martin destabilizes the dichotomy of "us and them" and brings forward an utterly disconcerting wholeness of victim and terrorist, body and building. In this light, Lianne's recollection of the "Falling Man" photograph foregrounds an essentially contiguous relationship between the man and the tower behind him:

> She did not read further but knew at once which photograph the account referred to. It hit her hard when she first saw it, the day after, in the newspaper. The man headlong, the towers behind him. The mass of the towers filled the frame of the picture. The man falling, the towers contiguous, she thought, behind him. The enormous soaring lines, the vertical column stripes. The man with blood on his shirt, she thought, or burn marks, and the effect of the columns behind him, the composition, she thought, darker stripes for the nearer tower, the north, lighter for the other, and the mass, the immensity of it, and the man set almost precisely between the rows of darker and lighter stripes. Headlong, free fall, she thought, and his picture burned a hole in her mind and heart, dear God, he was a falling angel and his beauty was horrific. (221-222)

The perplexing iconography of the photograph, which I discussed in Chapter 1, here manifests itself in the oxymoronic juxtaposition of beauty and horror which not only "elevates" the Falling Man as "falling angel" but also echoes in its homophonic "other," the Biblical "fallen angel." Also, the description phantomogenically echoes DeLillo's pre-9/11 depictions of the World Trade Center, particularly in *Players* (1977), *Mao II* (1991) and *Underworld* (1997). These earlier works, as Randy Laist suggests, inscribe the towers' immense size and abstract minimalism with "symbols of latent catastrophe" inscribed in what DeLillo calls in his 9/11 essay the "high gloss of modernity" bespeaking "the power of American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life, and mind" (33).

The "terroristic" aspect of the towers that DeLillo registers in is pre-9/11 works, returns with a vengeance, so to speak, in the figure of Martin, whom Lianne incorporates into the texture of the family as "a terrorist but one of ours, she thought, and the thought chilled her, shamed her—one of ours, which meant godless, Western, white" (DeLillo,

Falling Man 195).[55] The confluence of chill and shame which results from the recognition of the other as an integral part of the body—both physically and metaphorically—is most lucidly expressed by the term "organic shrapnel"—a trope which I will explore in the following.

3.2.3. Organic Shrapnel

"The man falling, the towers contiguous," as Lianne reads the iconographic texture of Drew's photograph, appears in an inverse constellation already at the very beginning of the novel. Shortly after her ex-husband Keith stumbles out of the building, "He heard the sound of the second fall, or felt it in the trembling air, the north tower coming down, a soft awe of voices in the distance. That was him coming down, the north tower" (5). Here DeLillo registers a strong sense of corporeal displacement represented linguistically. The pronoun "him" simultaneously refers to Keith escaping and the personified tower falling and vice-versa: him becoming the tower and the tower becoming him. Although such a transcription undoubtedly recalls the dialectics of anthropomorphization and architecturalization we have explored in Lakoff and Leach's theories, the metaphor that the sentence entails "falls into pieces" once juxtaposed with the contiguity of body and building in Drew's photograph. The term "organic shrapnel" well indicates this contiguity.

Shortly after his escape from the North Tower, Keith learns about a peculiar phenomenon that takes place in the aftermath of suicide bombings. As his doctor informs him, "In those places where it happens, the survivors, the people nearby who are injured, sometimes, months later, they develop bumps, for lack of a better term, and it turns out

[55] The hypnotic power of the towers DeLillo registers in *Underworld* resonates with architectural theorist Charles Jencks's comment on the towers made long before 9/11: "Repetitive architecture can put you to sleep. Both Mussolini and Hitler used it as a form of thought control, knowing that before people can be coerced they first have to be hypnotized and then bored" (qtd. in Darton 128).

this is caused by small fragments, tiny fragments of the suicide bomber's body. […] They call this organic shrapnel" (16). The term recalls the meaning of heterotopia in the context of anatomy, from where Foucault originally adopts the term. In anatomy, the term refers to "parts of the body that are either out of place, missing, extra, or, like tumours, alien" (Hetherington 42). Although the doctor assures Keith that he does not have any "organic shrapnel" in his skin, the concept has both physical and psychical ramifications throughout the novel.

In terms of architectural identifications, the symptom of the five girls who could not swallow because they believed that a body part or a piece of debris clogged their throats attests to the abject quality of organic shrapnel—the presence of a foreign body within one's organism. In line with the Freudean dynamics of the uncanny, DeLillo's application of organic shrapnel is most transparent in the way the familiar is defamiliarized and construed as a "foreign body" in both its physical and metaphorical senses. As Keith stares out the window, "[h]e thought of something out of nowhere, a phrase, *organic shrapnel*. Felt familiar but meant nothing to him. Then he saw a car double-parked across the street and thought of something else and then something else again" (66). A trigger that recalls the two towers, or their overwhelming absence rather, the image of the car "double-parked" is a theme explored in "In the Ruins of the Future," as well where DeLillo writes that "[w]e may find that the ruin of the towers is implicit in other things. The new PalmPilot at fingertip's reach, the stretch limousine parked outside the hotel, the midtown skyscraper under construction, carrying the name of a major investment bank—all haunted in a way by what has happened, less assured in their authority, in the prerogatives they offer" (39). Moreover, Martin's presence in the texture of Lianne's family as a person who "replaces" her father is just as much an organic

shrapnel as Janiak's performances that inscribe a tabooed icon into the texture of public space.

His inscription of the "other" into public space and thereby obstructing reiterated patterns of identifications with the built environment in a way similar to Franz's inscription of the concentration camp on the *site* of Brumholdstein constitutes an organic shrapnel which conjoins with DeLillo's closing image in the *Harper's* essay. DeLillo takes the reader back to the days preceding the attacks and presents the hustle and bustle of New York as a colorful collage of cultures and ethnicities accommodating "every language, ritual, belief, and opinion" (40). In the midst of all this, he takes notice of a young Muslim woman laying down her prayer rug without any difficulty in identifying the direction of Mecca: "The only locational guide the young woman needed was the Manhattan grid" (40). A similar image of the Muslim woman appears in *Falling Man.* Lianne takes notice of a peculiar music trickling into the apartment—a tone she identifies as an Islamic one: "A woman named Elena lived in that apartment. Maybe Elena was Greek, she thought. But the music wasn't Greek. She was hearing another set of traditions, Middle Eastern, North African, Bedouin songs perhaps of Sufi dances, music located in Islamic tradition, and she thought of knocking on the door and saying something" (67). In both instances, the relational nature of heterotopia becomes manifest. In the same way as Martin emerges as a "foreign body" only in the context of 9/11, the Muslim woman, and so is the music whose cultural background Lianne cannot identify, are part and parcel of *lived space* (indicated by the Manhattan grid in the first case and the interior of the apartment block in the second) whose complex and polyvalent textures are construed as heterotopic in the face of the tabula of "us versus

them."[56] It is in the motif of the ruin that the distabilization of this binary is most palpable in DeLillo's writing.

3.2.4. Writing in Ruins

Although the ruins of the towers are only mentioned once in the novel,[57] they are imposingly manifest in the texture of DeLillo's novel as a whole. In Chapter 2 of my dissertation, we have seen how the ruins of the towers constitute a heterotopia by containing the remains of not only the towers and the victims but also the terrorists, disturbing the "cleanliness of ceremony," to reiterate Patricia Yaeger's expression (189). In *Falling Man,* this unclean material is trickled into the nooks and crannies of the text itself. Most characters, Keith and Lianne in particular, are stripped of their names for the bulk of the story and are only referred to by the pronouns "he" and "she," making it tremendously difficult at certain points to identify who is talking. This difficulty of identification is uncannily punctured by chapters written from the viewpoint of the terrorists. In the last chapter, entitled "In the Hudson Corridor," the narration brings us back to the beginning, specifically to the point when the first plane hits the North Tower. As the plane crashes into the building, the terrorists' viewpoint seamlessly shifts into Keith's gaze where he, just like at the very beginning, is referred to by his full name:

> He fastened his seatbelt.
>
> A bottle fell off the counter in the galley, on the other side of the aisle, and he watched it roll this way and that, a water bottle, empty, making an arc one way and rolling back the other, and he watched it spin more quickly and then skitter across the floor an instant before the aircraft struck the tower, heat, then fuel, then fire, and a blast wave passed through the structure that sent Keith Neudecker out of his chair and into a wall. (239)

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[56] In response to this tabula, as Michael Rothberg suggests, DeLillo presents "an understanding that our well-being—whoever 'we' are—is intertwined with that which *seems* most 'foreign,' most dangerous" (130).

[57] The only instance the ruins of the towers are referenced in the novel is when Nina remarks in a conversation with Martin that "[w]e have our own ruins. But I don't think I want to see them" (116).

The terrorists, previously consigned to separate chapters, are textually and physically incorporated into the space of the tower and explode into shrapnel of "he" and "she" as the story returns to the very beginning, merging both terrorist and victim in the impersonality of the pronoun. The pronoun, in this sense, is the very site of heterotopia where "he" can equally refer to terrorist, victim/survivor, and building.

In architectural terms, the novel is "unbuilt," rather than built space. The heterotopic enumeration, which we have seen in Lucas's extension of Whitman's catalog in the *Leaves of Grass* here surfaces in "fortuitous combinations" (Edensor 323) that allow matter out of place to mingle seamlessly and, by virtue of the porousness of borders, rendering the text "illegible" as a narrative. Conversations are frequently broken off and resumed pages later (Versluys 40) and even when they flow, they often seep into streams of consciousness and follow an entropic trajectory indicating the rampancy of trauma. The "ruins of the future" as it appears in the title of the *Harper's* essay, in which DeLillo delineates the notion of the counter-narrative as one that needs to emerge from the "rubble" (34), bear heavily on the texture of the *Falling Man* insofar as it subordinates the future to an unfinished present[58] and at once defamiliarizes the taken-for-granted trajectory of progress once emblematized by the towers' modernity.

Reiterating Benjamin's Angel of History, the narrative, DeLillo asserts, "ends in the rubble" and what the counter-narrative needs to absorb is the "hundred thousand stories crisscrossing New York, Washington, and the world" (34). The counter-narrative should therefore be a kind of *Trümmerliteratur,* a literature of the ruins,[59] which lingers on and delves into the piles of wreckage in an act of taking a stance against the storm of

[58] As a visual manifestation of traumatic deferral, I am using the term in consonance with "Simon's ongoing death" in Cunningham (31) and Mr. Tuttle's expression in DeLillo's *The Body Artist* "His chin was sunken back, severely receded, giving his face an unfinished look, and his hair was wiry and snagged, with jutting clumps" (45).

[59] The word *Trümmerliteratur* literally means "literature of the rubble" and primarily refers to literary works written in the aftermath of World War II and dealing with the destruction of German cities. In his book *On the Natural History of Destruction* W.G. Sebald addresses these works in great detail.

progress "blowing from Paradise" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 249). In *Falling Man,* DeLillo becomes the "archaeologist" of the 21st century ruin in Foucault's sense. If, as Foucault contends, archeological discourse works toward a diversifying, rather than a unifying effect" (*The Archaeology* 160), DeLillo, like Janiak himself, excavates what cannot be contained by language. As Dylan Trigg's argues the relation between ruins and trauma,

> [T]he ruin, considered phenomenologically, gathers the nightmare of trauma through its own materiality before resituating it in the everyday world of sense and sensibility. In light of this emergence, the appearance of the site shocks the attempt at placing the past through the confluence between memory and imagination. What is experienced is less a direct fragment of a broken narrative, and more a *murmur* of the place where that narrative once existed.
>
> In testimonial terms, we discover a parallel to the impossibility of witnessing trauma. Indeed, insofar as the ruin creates the necessary spatial and temporal conditions for the past to be articulated, then precisely through that gesture the same past prohibits articulation. ("The Place of Trauma" 99)

Correspondingly, DeLillo's *Falling Man* suspends the articulation of the "what" and delves into the archeology of the "how" instead. Paraphrasing Gertrude Stein, one might argue that DeLillo's novel asserts that "the ruin is a ruin is a ruin" and, no wonder, Tom Junod, the "builder" of the metaphoric cenotaph for the Falling Man, finds this method ethically questionable. For Junod, as he says in his review, the novel is "a portrait of grief, to be sure but it puts grief in the air, as a cultural atmospheric, without giving us anything to mourn" ("The Man Who Invented 9/11").

A fitting answer, on DeLillo's part, would be that of Bartleby: "I would prefer not to." For it is precisely by not giving anything to mourn that DeLillo's prose simultaneously defies and demands our act of witnessing. His formula, like David Janiak's performances, is a formula of potentiality which delineates a "zone of indistinction" (Agamben 255) to suspend meaning—as Janiak's body is suspended by a harness and Drew's camera suspends the Falling Man's fall—in an act of responsibility.

Marco Abel observes in connection with the *Harper's* essay that "[s]uspending the event to defer judgment is not avoiding taking a stance; rather it is taking a stance that, paradoxically, is no stance at all" (1237). Taking a stance, in other words, consists in the very act of suspension which allows heterotopia to unfold as a site of trauma where "fortuitous combinations" of body and building, victim and terrorist abound. Rather than resorting to metaphor and simile, as Junod does in an attempt to put heterotopia into perspective and efface its "dangerous mixtures" (Foucault, *OT* xv), DeLillo's language operates by sequence and metonymy, geared towards serializing "the ontological eventness of 9/11" (Abel 1240). Alienating as DeLillo's movie-like image sequences may seem, it is by way of "ruining" representational language that he enables his prose to pull the reader into the Deleuzean "smooth space" of the ruin where, as Trigg contends, the past is articulated always already as an absence. Rather than filling in this absence with meaning, DeLillo undertakes a phenomenology of absence, an archeology without the imperative to classify and musealize.[60] It is through the deferral of ordering, in the sense of Freud's *Nachträglichkeit,* that *Falling Man* becomes a textual site of heterotopic and heterochronic juxtapositions as well as a novel that serializes and repeats, rather than represents, 9/11.

Certainly, if Junod is disappointed by DeLillo's novel, his disappointment stems from his failed expectation to be offered, in spatial terms, a positive form of 9/11. To reiterate Foucault's reading of Magritte's *Megalomania,* Junod demands the "missing element" that would make the painting a representation of the female torso and, accordingly, *Falling Man* a due representation of 9/11. The novel, however, relentlessly takes the reader back to the "x" or, more precisely, repeats the "x" by way of similitude

[60] Derrida's notion of "aporetic duty" underpins this ethical standpoint: "… a responsible decision must obey an 'it is necessary' that owes nothing, it must obey a *duty that owes nothing, that must owe nothing in order to be a duty,* a duty that has no debt to pay back, a duty without debt and therefore without duty. […] In order to be responsible and truly decisive, a decision should not limit itself to putting into operation a determinable or determining knowledge, the consequence of some preestablished order" (*Aporias* 16-17).

which "circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar" (44). Ultimately, the question Lianne ponders when she sees Janiak perform for the first time prevails throughout: "Why is he doing this, she thought" (DeLillo, *Falling Man* 160). The harness that suspends him and, ultimately, defers his suicide, is what DeLillo performs textually by suspending the signifier in the realm of potentiality as an ethical stance.

3.3. Conclusion

In his blurb to *Underworld,* Michael Ondaatje, paraphrasing Walt Whitman, praises DeLillo's work as one that "contains multitudes" (Duvall 43-44). Insofar as "multitudes" embraces the "zone of indistinction," the remark holds true for *Falling Man* as well. Looking back on the present chapter, however, Ondaatje's comment points out a way to revisit Cunningham's work *through* DeLillo's.

In *Specimen Days* Lucas embodies Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* as a language that speaks through him and at the same time gives verbal form to what he is unable to express. The "book" is also a language of trauma which speaks Catherine's repressed secret via Lucas's speaking fits as well as a language that Lucas adjusts to wrap his brother's death into a narrative that gives shape to his reenactment of trauma. By doing so, Lucas appropriates the "book" as a metaphysical model that not only gives voice to what he cannot know but, as we have seen, "hammers" the horror of death by machine into the "multitudes" of Whitman's transcendentalism. In a dialectical fashion, the same way Whitman's lines turn into phantomogenic words in which Catherine recognizes the voice of her own trauma, Cunningham's metafictional palimpsest is similarly phantomogenic in its potential to bring forth tabooed traumas of 9/11 in the form absence.

What comes forth as absence in Cunningham's multi-layered prose, works in the form of suspense in DeLillo. The instance of Janiak looking back "into his death by fire" (167) before he jumps at 125th Street is complemented by the jumper woman in *Specimen Days,* as she looks "back into the room, as if someone had called to her. […] She listened to something the fire told her" (98). By way of repeating the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory catastrophe in the fictitious construct of the Mannahatta Company, Cunningham's metafictional model operates as a sequence of two superimposed images with the third one—the *punctum—*emerging as an absence, indicated only by the post-9/11 setting of *The Children's Crusade.* The personification of the fire, in light of the *punctum,* is ever more unsettling in that it marks the corporeality of the event as a lack. In DeLillo, the fire is bracketed as an intersection of a reality that Janiak replicates but inasmuch as his model is performative in the sense that he performs what is absent from Drew's photograph, DeLillo brings forth the *punctum* of what we read in Cunningham, albeit in a form that suspends narrative understanding.

If absence is a structuring principle in *Specimen Days,* suspense is the condition that permeates *Falling Man.* It brings to the fore what remains absent from *Specimen Days* but by the same gesture it keeps it in the realm of the uncoded *punctum* so that "it can invade everything, objects as well as effects," to reiterate Derrida's reading of Barthes ("The Deaths" 57). In the former, heterotopia surfaces as an empty space beyond the system Lucas fabricates because we still "see" what he no longer sees at Mannahatta; we hear Whitman's heterotopic agglomerations of detail "out of place" in Lucas's vision. Dovetailing with Cunningham's palimpsestual absences, DeLillo's "imagistic poetics" of 9/11 articulates the phantom in Cunningham's text as an "organic shrapnel." Although certainly not in a transcendentalist mindset, the multitudes of DeLillo's "poetics of 9/11" in *Falling Man* thrust Whitman into Cunningham's palimpsest.

CHAPTER FOUR

ICARUS AT THE RUINS OF BABEL

VISUAL AND ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATIONS

"The photograph appeared in a newspaper Klein created on November 27, 1960, in Paris—a day he appropriated as a Theater of the Void. A body is leaping from a building. I have trouble thinking between the then and the now of falling bodies and media deployments. Is this confusion an error of origin?"
(Rebecca Schneider)

"We may find that the ruin of the towers is implicit in other things."
(Don DeLillo)

Over the recent years, the tabooed images of the jumpers have resurfaced in several disguises in a wide range of visual performances. One of the first was Eric Fischl's *Tumbling Woman,* a classic bronze statue of a naked female body depicted in an upside-down falling position. Exhibited in the concourse of Rockefeller Center, the artwork immediately came in for fierce criticism by onlookers who dismissed it as obscene and too graphic (Engle 11; Frost 182). The statue was draped from view for a while and then quietly moved to a gallery upstate New York (Meier). No less controversial was artist Sharon Paz's display of silhouettes of falling people on the windows of the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, which she was made to remove instantly (Frost 183). Certain other representations, however, did not raise eyebrows among viewers. For instance, the opening sequence of the acclaimed TV series *Mad Men* features a man falling from an office building but, apart from one single blog,[61] its relation to 9/11 has not been discussed.

The reasons behind the diverse reaction of the public to these representations are rooted in a number of factors the discussion of which falls beyond the scope of this work. What the recurrence of these images in visual culture evinces, however, is the difficulty of inscribing them into prevalent heroic narrative of 9/11. As such, they constitute

[61] See: Gary Edgarton's blog: "Falling Man and Mad Men." *In Media Res: A Media Commons Project.*

unassimilated, "foreign" traumas embedded in what is generally referred to as the "traumatic events of 9/11." As Jenny Edkins remarks, "pictures of people falling to their deaths from the burning towers were not shown after the first day, and such remains as were found at Ground Zero were removed discreetly, well away from the gaze of the cameras. This form of concealment does not reduce the traumatic impact of the event but increases it" (225).

Specimen Days and *Falling Man,* the two novels I studied in the previous chapter, subtly operate with what both of their authors recognize as concealed traumas. The texture of these novels are "scarred" by emphatic absences, *aporias,* inter- and intratextual reflections that echo these unresolved and unvoiced traumas through phantomogenic words. In this chapter I will adopt Abraham's "lens" to visual and architectural representations, focusing on particular instances that sustain heterotopic configurations of the corporeal and the architectural in performance, film, and architecture, which I will address in three respective subchapters. I will start with performance artist Kerry Skarbakka's scandalous appearance in Chicago in 2005, which earned him bad fame for allegedly reenacting the 9/11 jumpers. I will then proceed to film and discuss James Marsh's 2008 documentary entitled *Man on Wire* which focuses on aerialist Philippe Petit's legendary tightrope walk between the Twin Towers. Challanging the prevalent critical view of the film as a work eliciting nostalgia for a pre-9/11 world, I will demonstrate those phantomogenic traces that the film, like the novel *Specimen Days,* employs to recall the 9/11 jumpers and the towers' ruins. This latter aspect will be the focus of the third subchapter dedicated to Ground Zero where I will trace phantasmatic apparitions of the discarded ruins inscribed into new construction on the site.

4.1. Photographic Performances – Kerry Skarbakka

Chicago, June 14, 2005. A cantilever structure equipped with pulleys and wires protrudes from the roof of the Museum of Contemporary Art to keep Kerry Skarbakka from hitting the ground as he gets ready to jump off the museum's roof over 30 times in his first public performance. With each jump suspended in midair, Skarbakka assumes various body positions as though captured in a freeze frame witnessed by a sizable group of onlookers and journalists, many of them taking photographs of the event. Almost immediately after the event, however, he finds himself in the crossfire of harsh criticism—primarily from New York. Mayor Michael Bloomberg denounces the performance as "nauseatingly offensive" and Governor George Pataki calls it "an utter disgrace" (qtd. in Camper) All the charges raised against Skarbakka seem to give the same reading to his performance: a distasteful and irreverent reenactment of the horrors of 9/11.

In his apology, Skarbakka acknowledges that images of people falling from the Twin Towers on 9/11 have partially inspired his work but no work art, he claims, can be reduced to one single message. "In the past few years," he writes, "I have fallen from trees, porches, bridges, train trestles, stairways, ladders, roofs, mountains, volcanoes, water towers, fences and billboards—without anyone ever mistaking my work for a representation of our national tragedy" (qtd. in Camper). There is, however, obviously more at stake here than the public simply "mistaking" Skarbakka's work for something that it is not. In the previous chapter we have seen how David Janiak, the fictitious performance artist in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* inscribes the abject image of Drew's "Falling Man" into the texture of public space. Although the resemblance between Janiak and Skarbakka is striking, Lianne's "reading" of Janiak's performances as a phantomogenic sign of her father's suicide serves us with a model of reading—one that

also resonates with Catherine's reading of Lucas in *Specimen Days*—in which "mistaking" something for something else, that is, *misreading* Skarbakka's performance, constitutes in fact an act of listening to the voice of the other, the uncanny surfacing of repressed trauma in an iconography of "disquieting familiarity," to adopt Michel de Certeau's words (87). Misreading, in this sense, is the act of reading what resists integration into memory and yet refuses to be forgotten.

In this subsection, I will first problematize the interrelation of performance and photography in the context of Skarbakka's art. I will then proceed to explore what he calls "constructed visions," a combination of performance and photography involving the digital manipulation of the image taken of the performance. The artworks he produces can therefore be described as "photographic performances" that entail Skarbakka's performative use of photography as well. I will use the image entitled "Sarajevo" as a case study to demonstrate "photographic performance" not only as a technique but also as a mnemonic device which evokes the tabooed memory of the 9/11 jumpers in the form of phantomogenic traces—a technique similar to what Cunningham uses in *Specimen Days*. Lastly, I will return to the ominous Chicago-performance and examine the photo-series entitled "Life Goes On" that concluded Skarbakka's controversial project.

4.1.1 Photographs That Matter

In their work on performance art, Amelia Jones and Peggy Phelan, among others, have demonstrated the relevance of context and the plurality of inscriptions invited by the performing body. In body art, Jones asserts, the "modernist assumption of authorial plenitude," shifts toward the conception of the body as a "loss or lack" ("Presence" 14) of self-sufficient meaning, foregrounding the role of the interpretive context in which it is construed as a meaningful subject. Accordingly, emphasizing the metonymic, as

opposed to the metaphoric relationship between body and self, Phelan contends that in performance "the referent is always the agonizingly relevant body of the performer" (152) in which the body frames "the lack of Being promised by and through the body—that which cannot appear without a supplement" (151). Rather than "mistaking" Skarbakka's performance for a representation of 9/11's falling bodies, it is thus more fitting to say that viewers construed his work as irreverent, which bespeaks the particular relationship between memory and the performative power of the gaze employed in the act of watching the "show."

Operative here is a triangular interrelation among traumatic memory, the performer's body as an infinite "narrative horizon,"[62] and the gaze of the viewer. If the falling bodies, as we have seen in Chapter 1, constitute a site of heterotopia, an "uncharted territory" as Giuliani said, which delineates a realm of trauma that had been silenced before long, it materializes in the form of Skarbakka's performance as a phantom, which "*bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other*" (Abraham 291 [italics in original]). If the performance at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago stages the unassimilated trauma of 9/11's falling bodies in its choreography, Skarbakka's body was construed as a screen for the projection of repressed trauma.[63] More specifically, what is at issue here is not merely the horror of the falling bodies that the performer evokes, but rather the very interface between the choreography of the performance (in which the artist intentionally throws himself off of the roof of the museum) and the iconography of the tabooed images whose heterotopic uncertainty as to the jump/fall binary wells up in Skarbakka's *jump* as not only unsettling

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[62] I use the term in Gail Weiss's sense as she explicates in her essay "The Body as a Narrative Horizon" (25-38)

[63] Phelan argues, "Performance is the attempt to value that which is nonreproductive, nonmetaphorical. This is enacted through the staging of the drama of misrecognition (twins, actors within characters enacting other characters, doubles, crimes, secrets, etc.) which sometimes produces the recognition of the desire to be seen *by* (and within) the other. Thus for the spectator the performance spectacle is itself a projection of the scenario in which her own desire takes place" (152).

but also unacceptable as an interpretation. As a family member of a 9/11 victim reacted, "What kind of a sick individual is he? Tell him to go jump off the Empire State Building and see how it feels. […] He's an artist? Go paint a bowl of fruit or something" (Lisberg). The "nauseatingly offensive" nature of the performance thus lies in two overlapping issues: first, it brings to the fore a repressed trauma of 9/11 and, second, it does so in the context of performance art which, particularly in its resonance with the pose of the man in Drew's photograph (suggestive of an artistic performance whose unsettling repercussions we have discussed in Chapter 1), is ever more problematic.

One aspect of this problem is that Skarbakka's performance, unlike Janiak's, is not simply mimetic of one particular photograph; what pushes it beyond mimesis is that the viewer witnesses the event in time and makes the connection: it is "like" watching the people fall from the WTC—similarly to reading the Mannahatta Company/Triangle Shirtwaist Factory catastrophe in Cunningham as almost "like" 9/11. In addition, what lies at the core of the indignation of the 9/11 family member is artistic medium's incompatibility with the gravity of what it evokes, again recalling our reading of Lucas's continuum as incompatible with what we read *into* the image of Mannahatta.

Figure 4.1. Kerry Skarbakka's performance in Chicago in 2005. Photo (and digital manipulation) by Daniel Nash.

Although the images that Skarbakka has created out of this performance can be viewed on his website under the title "Life Goes On," the public nature of his performance—the first and so far the only public performance in his career—allowed bystanders to take their own photographs and make them available on the Internet. Daniel Nash, one of the onlookers who happened to be in Chicago at the time, documented Skarbakka wearing a black suit and a white shirt with a tie assuming the pose reminiscent of the Falling Man (see figure 4.1.). Not only did he upload his own pictures of Skarbakka's jumps in a Yahoo Flickr file but, to further complicate things, removed the harness in some of his takes in an attempt to improve his Photoshop skills, thus mimicking the technique Skarbakka is known for. Certainly, however, Skarbakka's project in Chicago did not conclude with the actual jumps he performed. Similarly to his earlier work, in which he carried out leaps of faith and breathtaking jumps in isolation from the public eye, his performance in Chicago was photographed by one of his associates. The images would then be doctored by making the harness invisible, and finally uploaded onto the artist's website under the title "Life Goes On". Nash's "intervention" into Skarbakka's project as an unofficial or unplanned documenter thus adds an extra layer, however undesired by the artist, to the palimpsest of his own work as far as its representation in the field of Google images is concerned.

In her book *Unmarked,* Phelan famously argues for the ontological prevalence of performance over its documentation by claiming that "[p]erformance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (146). Contesting the tenability of this ontological relationship, over the recent years a growing number of scholars have laid emphasis on the performative function of photography with Diana Taylor (2003), Susan Ash (2005),

Philip Auslander (1999, 2006), and Ariella Azoulay (2001, 2008),[64] defining the main line of discourse. In his 2006 essay entitled "The Performativity of Performance Documentation" Auslander reconfigures the relationship between performance and documentation in terms of J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts and situates documentation into the realm of performatives, rather than constatives. The wide accessibility of Nash's photographs of Skarbakka's performance on the Internet—a simple Google search for "Skarbakka 'Life Goes On'" would yield one of Nash's photos as the first hit—is illustrative of the performative function of documentation.

Even if the media, to the detriment of Skarbakka's reputation as an artist for some time, focused solely on the jumps as perceived by onlookers and even if Skarbakka's selection of images in "Life Goes On" are significantly different from those circulated by such bystanders as Nash, his official images that he placed on his website constitute photographic performances that entail a number of other constellations of 9/11 that can be productively read as an artistic response to the heterotopias explored in the previous chapters. In order to lay the technological groundwork necessary to delve into "Life Goes On," I will first address the continuum of body-performance-photography in Skarbakka's work and explain the "mechanics" of his photo-performances through examples from his earlier work.

4.1.2. Constructed Visions

In the photographs included in his first photo-series entitled "The Struggle To Right Oneself" (2003), we see Skarbakka slipping, jumping, and falling in various circumstances giving evidence of the artist's compulsive return to the experience of

[64] In my discussion of Richard Drew's "Falling Man" in Chapter 1, I have already referred to Azoulay's rereading of Benjamin's "Work of Art" essay in connection with Wesselényi-Garay's notion of two-dimensional architecture, both accentuating the performative, rather than constative, role of photography in cultural practices.

falling.[65] Nevertheless, no matter how convincingly "real" the accidents may appear, Skarbakka's performances are staged leaps and jumps, mostly secured by a safety harness which he later digitally removes from the photographs. In her essay "Anxiety and Remediation: The Photographic Images of Kerry Skarbakka," Corey Dzenko explains how Skarbakka uses digital manipulation in order to remediate the illusion of photographic immediacy, while simultaneously redirecting attention to the image's constructedness. Technology would certainly allow Skarbakka to avoid the risks of bodily performance by constructing his images completely through digital means but, as Dzenko argues, being aware of the entire process of Skarbakka's work "allows for a dynamic understanding of the ambiguity of his images as they shift between transparent documents of his body projection and digitally altered photographic constructs" (87) that tend to be clearly self-referential, as evidenced by his image "Reflected," in which we see the artist in "midflight" over an armchair with one of knees reflected in a mirror on the wall which also reflects one of his another photographs, "Blue Tree" (also part of *The* "Struggle to Right Oneself" series), posted on the opposite wall. By extension of Linda Hutcheon's term "metafiction," which I applied to *Specimen Days* the previous chapter, we could call this technique "metaphotographic," whereby the constructedness of the photographic performance is revealed.

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[65] Skarbakka's statement for his series *The Struggle to Right Oneself* reads: "Philosopher Martin Heidegger described human existence as a process of perpetual falling, and it is the responsibility of each individual to catch ourselves from our own uncertainty. This unsettling prognosis of life informs my present body of work. I continually return to questions regarding the nature of control and its effects on this perceived responsibility, since beyond the basic laws that govern and maintain our equilibrium, we live in a world that constantly tests our stability in various other forms. War and rumors of war, issues of security, effects of globalization, and the politics of identity are external gravities turned inward, serving to further threaten the precarious balance of self, exaggerating negative feelings of control…" (Skarbakka). Skarbakka's statement strongly resonates with Laurie Anderson's poem "Walking & Falling" in which she construes walking as a mode of falling: "You're walking. And you don't always realize it, / but you're always falling. / With each step you fall forward slightly. / And then catch yourself from falling. / Over and over, you're falling. / And then catching yourself from falling. / And this is how you can be walking and falling at the same time" (Anderson).

At work here is a process of "re-mediation," a digital camouflage designed to feign immediacy, which, in a self-referential gesture, becomes revealed as a staged performance. Immediacy, a central constituent of both Benjamin's and Barthes's approach to photography, here becomes not an intrinsic quality of the image, as Benjamin's notion of the *optical unconscious* would suggest, but a mediated surface of representation—a series of "Constructed Visions," as the general title to Skarbakka's work on his website also indicates (Skarbakka). In Benjamin's terms, as we have seen, the *optical unconscious* constitutes a portal to an instance of reality which remains inaccessible to the human eye but is registered by the camera. If, as Ulrich Baer asserts, "[p]hotographs can capture the shrapnel of traumatic time" (7), Skarbakka's photographs dramatize that instance by approximating it through multiple layers of mediation. By way of simultaneously constructing and deconstructing the illusion of immediacy, the images expose themselves as palimpsests of re-mediated performatives—a path paved by the work of such artists Yves Klein and Cindy Sherman, among others.

Klein's "Leap into the Void" (1960) (see figure 4.2.) is perhaps the most obvious parallel to Skarbakka's technique. As Klein's original performance remained undocumented, the photographic "document" of his jump is a manipulated image depicting a reenacted performance. In this sense, Klein's leap visible in the photograph was a reenactment of his earlier performance directed toward a future audience who would only have the photograph as "evidence" of his leap which, even when it was originally performed, was assisted by mattresses and judokas. As Rebecca Schneider points out, it is "a record of a re-enactment that never arrives at the 'real' it sought to cite via repetition, even as it strives to make that act *present* for witness" (31). Like Klein's "Leap," Skarbakka's images constantly defer and render ambiguous what Barthes termed as the "that-has-been" engrained in the photograph. While Barthes perceives the

photograph as a trace of the past which “has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred” (*Camera Lucida* 77), through digitally manipulating his images Skarbakka projects his body into a virtual space replacing the “that-has-been” with a constructed vision of what has never been. However, unlike Klein’s “Leap,” Skarbakka’s photographic performances subscribe to the Baudrillardian notion of simulacra in the sense that they are not aimed at reenacting an original undocumented leap into the void but are designed for the photograph itself, without a pre-existing “original” performance.

Figure 4.2. “Leap into the Void,” Yves Klein, 1960.

Figure 4.3. “Sarajevo,” Kerry Skarbakka, 2003.

Even so, the image worlds that Skarbakka’s photographs yield are familiar terrains. Some of his images capture banal accidents in the home (“Kitchen,” “Naked,” “Stairs,” “Studio,” “Shower”). In one image, entitled “Naked,” Henry Thaggert recognizes the iconography of Rubens’s “Abduction of Ganymede.” While in Thaggert’s reading Rubens’s painting flashes up as an “intertext” from the banality of the bedroom setting of “Naked,” many of the other images of the series “The Struggle to Right Oneself” (“Engulfed,” “Fence,” “Interstate”) recall chase-scenes from Hollywood action

movies. In these images Skarbakka stages a familiar type making it virtually impossible to look at these images without reading the attendant narratives and inscribing his body with the action hero type. Staged exclusively for the purpose of being photographed, these images evoke a similar kind of *déjà vu,* a familiar narrative that Cindy Sherman condenses in her series of "untitled film stills." As Phelan observes, Sherman's performances—the assembly of clothes, the constructed set, the lighting, the precise gesture—compress and express the life story of someone we recognize, or think we recognize, in a single image" (62). In much the same way we identify a Hitchcockian or a Godardian vocabulary of the female *type* as a construct in Sherman's stills, Skarbakka's choreographed settings render the performing body a palimpsest of multiple narratives featuring the same type of what Thaggert denotes as an "allegorical Everyman's physical and metaphorical struggle with gravity's pull" (Thaggert).

Of all the images loaded with narratives reminiscent of films and everyday scenarios in the series "The Struggle to Right Oneself" one photograph, entitled "Sarajevo" (see figure 4.3.) stands out with regard to the narrative that it evokes. I will now use this photograph as a platform to return to the photo-series that concluded Skarbakka's infamous performance in Chicago. "Sarajevo" depicts an architectural setting featuring a massive cantilever structure built out of concrete. What was once a robust superstructure supported by the cantilever is now in ruins. In the foreground a man falls at such a speed that the contours of his flailing arms and legs are blurred but his white shirt and tie can be clearly discerned. He seems to be screaming in panic and looking straight into the camera.

Even though the building might be under demolition, the title of the photo activates another narrative which contextualizes the ruin as an architectural trace of violent destruction from the Bosnian War of 1992-1995. Nevertheless, the iconography

of the image complicates the historical reference intimated by the relationship between the title and the modern ruin. The man's shirt and tie, for instance, can be recognized as signifiers of the business-related function of the building he is falling from, and even if the deformed chunks of thick ferroconcrete and the gigantic cantilever are architecturally alien to the World Trade Center, the businessman captured in freefall with the ruin behind him strongly resonates with the iconography of the images of the 9/11 jumpers, particularly those in which the impact of the airplanes are visible. Although his face remains indiscernible, the man in "Sarajevo" looks straight into the camera in a gesture of acknowledging our presence as witnesses. And herein lies the uncanny power of the image. Similarly to the other photos in the series, it is laden with narratives evocative of escape-scenes from action movies; only the narrative that it elicits is one that rejects to be perceived as a narrative *per se*.

The suit and tie, which appear as a signifier that led many to relate Skarbakka's project in Chicago to 9/11, conjoins with the ruin, which the title invests with a memory of violence more recent than that of the Bosnian War. The constellation of the corporeal and the architectural in the iconography of the photograph constitutes a phantomogenic image allowing the unassimilated wound of trauma, to revert our gaze while we seem to be "falling" short of a narrative to hold the picture. Moreover, the familiar film-narratives that come "packaged" in "Sarajevo" similarly to the other photographs of the series are juxtaposed with the photo's uncanny evocation of the jumpers. If this juxtaposition recalls the way eyewitnesses ubiquitously described the terrorist attacks in terms of a Hollywood movie, it also recalls, inversely, the jumpers' incongruence with Hollywood's heroic narratives. To reiterate *Specimen Days* again, what we read into the image as "still life," does not correlate with the narrative offered as a "film still."

At a structural level, “Sarajevo” fits well with Skarbakka’s project as an artist. Because his staged falls are digitally remediated to create the illusion of photographic immediacy, his performances can be viewed as approximations of the inaccessible, a language that defies, even as it demands, a working through of trauma. In the context of the other photographs, “Sarajevo” thus attests to an entropic repetition of traumatic experience. For “Sarajevo” is not a reenactment of 9/11 *per se*, not even of the tabooed images of the jumpers, but a palimpsest of potential configurations that, like the ruin itself, operates through voids and hauntings and rejects to be read as a logically comprehensible narrative. Using the groundwork delineated above, I will now turn back to Skarbakka’s Chicago-project and offer a reading of the photographs that have been published in the sequence “Life Goes On” on his official website.

4.1.3. “Sarajevo” to Chicago

Before his scandalous performance in Chicago in 2005, Skarbakka had been quite open about identifying the traumatic sight of people jumping to their deaths on September 11 as an inspiration behind his work. In an interview made shortly before his performance in Chicago, he said: “I wanted to be able to respond intelligently, conceptually, responsibly to what was going on. … They had released themselves completely. They left the constructs of society, they left their family, they left their bills they had to pay. They left everything but the choice of what they were going to do in their final moments” (qtd. in Marlan). After the Chicago-event though, such references would completely vanish from Skarbakka’s statements.

We have already examined the controversy surrounding Skarbakka’s jumps at the Museum of Modern Art. In the light of my argument on his artistic technique, I will now return to the series of photographs that emerged from his performance in Chicago.

Entitled "Life Goes On" this series is the first in Skarbakka's oeuvre in which onlookers appear in his manipulated images. In fact, the last two pictures of the seven-frame sequence do not show the artist at all, but only the crowd watching and photographing his performance. These photographs are collectively entitled "Ratings" and generate rather ambiguous meanings. On the one hand, the presence of the wide-eyed onlookers staring at something we do not see but know from context (*studium*) serves an as evidence for the event as a public spectacle. On the other hand, in the context of the other photographs, which show Skarbakka falling from the top of the museum with the safety harnesses digitally erased, the gaze of the onlookers in "Ratings" is similarly manipulated, insofar as they are "made" to witness a horrific sight (even if we know from the *studium* that Skarbakka survived the performance). In this sense, these photographs also evoke the journalistic method of making the spectators' facial expressions euphemistically stand in for the shocking experience that *they* see but the

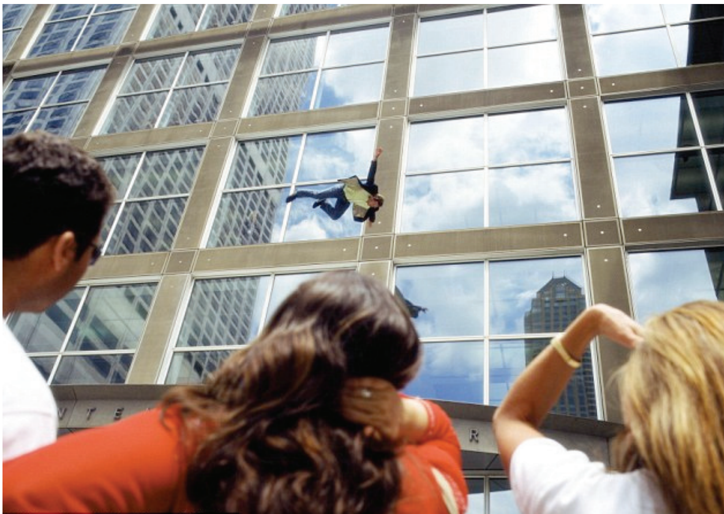

Figure 4.4. "Onlookers," Kerry Skarbakka, 2005.

viewer of the photograph cannot.[66]

Similarly to the role of the ruin in "Sarajevo," the museum's façade in each photograph of "Life Goes On" defines the background texture of Skarbakka's performance. On the one hand, as part of the *studium,* the museum "houses" his performance as art—both physically and metaphorically. But the negative press he received after his performance suggests that his jumps at the museum created a virtual screen for the 9/11 jumpers to emerge as a spectral *punctum*. For instance, in "Onlookers" (see figure 4.4.) and "Con-emporary," the camera's gaze gives us the illusion that we see what everybody else does but, because Skarbakka digitally retouches the photographs, the viewer sees the "horror" (the absence of the safety harness) that the

Figure 4.5. "Office," Kerry Skarbakka, 2005.

[66] The inclusion of these photographs evokes a journalistic method of implying the presence of horror by euphemistically showing the facial expressions of the spectators. Barbie Zelizer describes this technique in connection with media representations of 9/11 ("Photography, Journalism and Trauma" 62-63).

onlookers cannot. The *différance* that the artist exerts by manipulating the photographs is in fact symptomatic of his compulsion to project himself into a *different* fall, one that irreversibly leads to death, with which the photographs are never "contemporary," so to speak. The rigging that suspends his fall thus serves as an uncanny simulation of the shutter of the camera like that of Richard Drew, whose unconscious optics "caught" the falling man in a freeze frame. The application and the subsequent erasure of the safety harness in the photographs attests to a layer of mediation which simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the illusion of reality. Even if the body positions he assumes in "Onlookers," "Freefall," and "Office" seem perfectly plausible by dint of giving the illusion of photographic immediacy, in the context of the *studium* they reveal themselves as hypermediated images.

Similar instances of hypermediacy can be traced in "Office" (see figure 4.5) in which the cross-shaped mullions of a window divide the picture into four squares of equal size. An office-worker typing on her computer in the lower left quarter looks completely unaware of the man falling outside her window, occupying the upper right quarter of the image. Obviously staged, the picture operates with clearly identifiable visual emblems. Rather than belonging to the museum, the transparent office space is projected into the skyline of soaring skyscrapers visible in a distance. This gesture, in turn, anchors Skarbakka's fall into an environment imbued with signifiers of corporate capitalism no longer anchored in the specificity of Chicago as a site. Situated in a hypermediated context, the modern skyscraper, the office equipped with computers and telephones constitute synecdochic signs of the experience of modernity, a *studium* punctured by the obtrusive presence of the falling man as an uncanny other yet absolutely part and parcel of the indefatigable progress with which he is rendered contemporary. The four equal squares defining the background of "Office"

metonymically replicate the Cartesian grid of the American city and at once rationalize the fall as isolatable to a single "block," as if in a single picture or "frame" out several one. The imposition of the grid is similarly palpable in "Freefall," where the artist's body is "wedged" in between two buildings, photographed from underneath. Even more significantly, however, the unremitting logic of the grid also resonates with the title of the series "Life Goes On". Similarly to the cliché "so it goes" in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five,* where it is dislocated into an alien context as a phrase originating with the Tralfamadorians, the platitudinous expression "Life Goes On" simultaneously implies and overwrites death by absorbing it into "business as usual."

"Housed" in a box of the grid, to recall Lucas again from *Specimen Days,* the falling man is simultaneously rationalized and rendered completely unnoticed by the office worker (like Icarus in William Carlos Williams's famous poem to which I will presently return) in the iconography of Skarbakka's photograph. For the viewer of the photograph, however, the grid "reads" like Borges's Chinese Encyclopedia in which the order that rationalizes the falling man as part of the grid is revealed as "inappropriate" (Foucault, *OT* xvii), unbearable to be contained in a block. Herein lies the heterotopia of "Office" with all its architectural repercussions: as a structural component of modernist planning capable of automatically reproducing itself and rationalizing the topographies of uncharted territories (also indicated by the computer which the office worker uses to carry out tasks), the grid as the geometry of progress is rendered incompatible and yet uncannily *compatible* with the falling body as a "byproduct" of the tall office building. This gesture implies a critique of modernity which invites the recognition of 9/11's falling bodies not so much in the context of terrorism but rather as an "intertext" dovetailing with the falling bodies of such earlier events as the Stock Market Crash of

1929, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, and even invoking the Fall of Man as such.[67]

This brings me to “Con-emporary” (see figure 4.6.), the lead photograph of the series. In this image, unlike in the others included in “Life Goes On,” Skarbakka is construed as a businessman levitating above the museum’s entrance doors in an upright position. As I have noted before, none of the poses that appear in Daniel Nash’s takes are visible in Skarbakka’s series. The erasure of the safety harness features Skarbakka in such an improbable pose that it immediately reveals his fingerprint on the image’s *optical unconscious*. The artist even gives textual manifestation of this *différance* in the doctored photograph. From the museum’s name, written on the overhang above the entrance, the words “museum” and “art” have also been digitally removed, leaving only “contemporary” in place. But even in this word, a photographer’s head blocks the letter

Figure 4.6. “Con-emporary,” Kerry Skarbakka, 2005.

[67] Concomitantly, the modernist skyscraper invokes the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel—an image that has been haunting skyscrapers ever since their dawn in the early 20th century (see Leeuwen 4-7).

"t" which the artist marks with a hyphen in the picture's title. When viewed in the sequence of the other letters, the absence of the "t" is hardly noticeable but, in a way comparable to William Carlos Williams's incorrect spelling of "unsignificantly" in his "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus,"[68] a gesture by which Icarus's fall is signified, the absence of the "t" becomes a marked hiatus in the typographical sign of the hyphen. Even if it reads like "contemporary," it is not so, because reading it as such already constitutes an imposition of a semantic grid, in which the "t" is inserted in the performative act of reading. The hyphen, which marks the void of the letter as negative space, also becomes a structuring element—one that self-reflexively exposes the layers of mediation that Skarbakka implements to create the illusion of immediacy. Like the "x" in Foucault's reading of Magritte's *Megalomania* the hyphen, as much as it allows, it also cuts through the identification of the word via resemblance by foregrounding the "x" as the unknown, the unknowable, the void instantiating similitude which represents nothing. In much the same way as the falling man in "Office" cuts through the grid as a body "rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object," to reiterate Kristeva's definition of the abject (*The Powers* 4), the "x" unsettles identification by virtue of undermining the contemporariness of "this with that" and allowing for the "play of transferences" (Foucault, *TNP* 48) as opposed to assertions.

Through digitally erasing the evidence of harness, Skarbakka probes death-by-falling, from which the harness keeps him at a remove. What Benjamin identifies as photography's potential to reveal "image worlds, which dwell in the smallest things" ("Little History" 512) appears as an uncharted territory, which Skarbakka relentlessly constructs and deconstructs in his photographic performances. The act of manipulating the photographs thus evinces the structure of traumatic reenactment resulting from the

[68] As the pertinent lines in Williams' poem read: "unsignificantly / off the coast / there was // a splash quite unnoticed / this was / Icarus drowning" (Williams 16-21).

traumatized person's repetition of the repressed experience as a "contemporary experience" in Freud's terms (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 12). For Skarbakka, what remains contemporary is his compulsive projection of his body into the *optical unconscious* of *other* images, images of people leaping to their deaths, where the problem of simultaneously abandoning and exercising control[69] is most lucidly put to the test. It is this ambiguity that he articulates in his artistic statement, which becomes uncannily pertinent in the light of Drew's photograph—a phantomogenic image lurking in the midst of Skarbakka's words: "The captured gesture of the body is designed for plausibility of action which grounds the image in reality. However, it is the ambiguity of the body's position in space that allows and requires the viewer to resolve the full meaning of the photograph. Do we fall? Can we fly? If we fly then loss of control facilitates supreme control" (Skarbakka).

4.2. Icarus at the Ruins of Babel – Philippe Petit

The centrality of the experience of falling, which gives the essential inspiration to Skarbakka's art, is similarly crucial to the work of another performance artist, Philippe Petit, a French tightrope walker. I will focus on his most famous performance—one that took place 37 years ago. The towers of the World Trade Center were still under construction when Petit stepped on his wire which he and his associates had strung illegally between the two towers the night before. It was 7:15 am, August 7, 1974. Holding a balance beam in his hands, Petit walked the wire for 45 minutes and made 8 crossings, including a salute and lying down on the wire to take a rest all to the amazement of the bystanders down in the streets, as well as the police, who were

[69] As Tori Marlan writes in the *Chicago Reader* days before Skarbakka's infamous performance, "The jumpers became a catalyst for a photographic exploration of the idea of control, an important factor in Skarbakka's own life and one he believed both spoke to the human condition and had political resonance" (29).

dispatched to the top floor of the building once Petit was spotted walking across the sky between the towers. The performance had required years of preliminary practice and preparation both on the part of Petit and his fairly international group of associates. His breathtaking tightrope walk, dubbed by newspapers as "the artistic crime of the century," instantly earned him recognition worldwide.

On the fifth anniversary of 9/11, the cover page of the September 11, 2006 issue of *New Yorker Magazine* featured a drawing of a man with a balance beam set against a blank white background (see figure 4.7.). Turning a page, one finds the same figure but

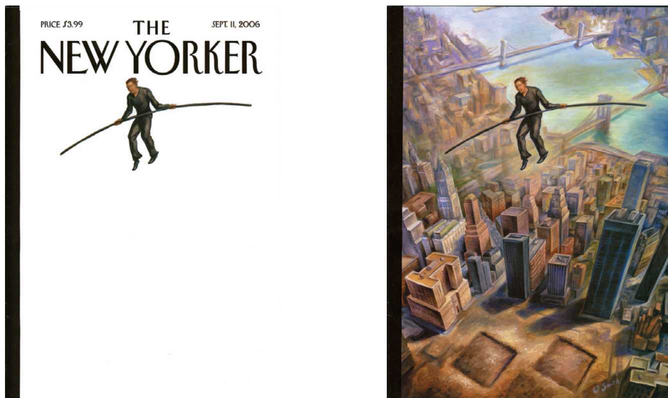

Figure 4.7-8. Illustration of Philippe Petit's performance in the *New Yorker,* 2006.

this time set against a drawn depiction of downtown Manhattan with the footprints of the Twin Towers visible as negative spaces on the ground underneath (see figure 4.8.). At the vortex of the dialectics of presence and absence, past and present that the two images project onto the site that came to be known as Ground Zero stands the tightrope walker as an epigone of perfect equilibrium without a wire but holding his balance beam nevertheless. The performance, which allegedly "humanized" the towers at a time when their monstrous dimensions were largely unpopular among New Yorkers (Goldberger

32; Darton 129), is recalled by the drawings in *New Yorker Magazine* as a memory associated with the "birth" of the towers. With the representation of Petit placed in the foreground, the pain of traumatic loss, signified by the marked absence of the buildings, is thus imbricated in an aura of nostalgia, a painful longing for a lost home, a pre-9/11 New York emblematized by Petit's legendary performance. In 2008, two years after the commemorative issue of the *New Yorker,* James Marsh's Academy Award-wining documentary entitled *Man on Wire* brought Petit back into the limelight once again.

The *mise-en-scene* of the documentary features a large amount of original 8mm footage from the early 1970s showing Petit and his little team surreptitiously cooking up plans to sneak into the towers with their equipment and execute what they call the *coup*.[70] These filmic images are interwoven with another set of archival footage, which documents the individual phases of the Twin Towers' construction. As the buildings' steel skeletons soar higher and higher, so does the team's plan become increasingly intricate and elaborate, so that finally the towers, having reached their planned height at a quarter of a mile, are in a position to offer space for the performance. What is missing from the film, as many viewers also point out in blogs, is any mention of the fact that the towers no longer exist. Not that it would be "mandatory," especially in light of the fact that Marsh's is a documentary about Philippe Petit's achievement and not about the towers *per se*, still, as I will show, it is this uncanny silence, this visual ellipsis, that gives a deeply poignant edge to the film.

For all the critical acclaim that it received, reviewers rarely move beyond the documentary's representation of 9/11 as a strange absence. In this section, I will

[70] Although Petit's *coup* was certainly the first but definitely not the last of this sort in the history of the World Trade Center. In 2000, the Austrian artist collective *Gelatin* entered the building illegally and, after having removed the window, installed a balcony on the 91st floor only to stand their for ten minutes (McCormick 37). If Petit's performance helped people embrace the towers as part of the city, *Gelatin*'s performance can be perceived as an infusion of the pastoral ideal (recalling Lucas's vision of "a house in the sea of grass" in *Specimen Days* [Cunningham 98]) into an icon of modernity while risking falling in the abyss.

undertake an "archaeology" of that absence and scrutinize images that "voice" a phantasmatic return of heterotopic constellations of body and building that I discussed in the previous two chapters. In other words, it is not simply the absence of 9/11 that interests me here but rather those configurations of image and sound which sustain 9/11's silenced traumas.

4.2.1. Wire Walking Rhetorics

In his review of the film, BBC reporter Neil Smith remarks on 9/11's absence from the film but, in his search for an answer, he satisfies himself with Marsh's explanations: "It would be unfair and wrong to infect his [Petit's] story with any mention, discussion or imagery of the Towers being destroyed." And, as he says in the same interview, "I think it is possible to enjoy those buildings for the duration of the film, hopefully without that enjoyment being too infected by an awareness of their destruction" (Smith). The nostalgic sentiment of Smith's review is slightly nuanced by Bryan Appleyard of the *New York Times* who goes a step further by characterizing *Man on Wire* as the most "poignant" film made on 9/11 to date exactly because "[i]t says nothing and, as a result, says a very great deal" (Appleyard). With reference to Petit's description of his stepping onto the wire, he senses a resonance with the 9/11 jumpers:

> "Death," says Petit of the moment he steps onto the wire, "is very close." But "what a beautiful death" it would be, not the despairing plummet of one of those jumpers from the burning towers. At every step, Marsh draws our attention to the redemptive power of Petit's walk. From the moment he sees the plan for the WTC, Petit sees it as the occasion of a wonderful dream. (Appleyard)

His insightful recognition of the film's relevance in the growing series of works on 9/11 notwithstanding, Appleyard reduces the film's poignancy to its ability to evoke nostalgia

for a pre-9/11 world (not unlike the drawings in the *New Yorker* discussed earlier) by remaining silent about the tower's fate.

I would suggest, however, that this ellipsis be theorized differently. Like the missing "t" in Skarbakka's "Con-emporary," the absence of 9/11 in the film's narrative becomes not only a catalyst for nostalgia (as apparently most viewers felt about the film) but also an emphatic void delineated by phantomogenic images. Petit's phrase "what a beautiful death" and, perhaps more significantly, Marsh's choice to include this phrase in the film while remaining silent about 9/11, is not simply to divert attention from the "despairing plummet of one of those jumpers" and celebrate the "redemptive power" of the astounding performance as Appleyard suggests, but also to create a situation in which it is impossible *not* to think about the jumpers when Petit talks about "beautiful death" and "steps onto the wire." It is indeed the dissonance of the word "beautiful" juxtaposed with Appleyard's description of the jumpers' fall as "despairing" that allows for the phantasmatic resurfacing of Drew's "Falling Man" in which beauty and despair, falling and jumping coalesce in an iconography of heterotopia.

Both Skarbakka and Petit are "men on wire," performance artists whose body projections challenge and at once approximate death by falling. While Skarbakka employs and manipulates photography so as to produce "constructed visions," Petit's wire walking did not include photographic hypermediation as an added layer to his project. Nevertheless, it is only in photographs that his performance survives, in the photographs taken by his friend, Jean-Louis Blondeau, from the North Tower. As documents of Petit's live performance, Blondeau's photographs,[71] to reiterate Auslander's argument, do not merely represent but produce the performance as such. By extension, Marsh's documentary is similarly performative because it incorporates the

[71] Although the team's preparation for the *coup* is abundantly documented on film, of Petit's performance on the top of the WTC there are only Blondeau's photographs. His photo-series of Petit's performance at the WTC is available at: <http://jlblondeau.com/en/detail/159.html>

photographs in a narrative frame made up of interviews, music, the *mise-en-scene* of the reenactments, and of course the editorial work of the producers. An ontologically nonreproducible event, as Phelan would insist, Petit's 1974 performance thus comes through multiple layers of mediation and framing whose stratification produces "something other than performance" (146). If we go along with Auslander's argument, which claims, as we have seen, that it is the documentation of an event *as* a performance that constitutes it an act such (5), it is safe to say that it is precisely through these "documentary" layers that Petit's performance is disseminated as an artistic event. Blondeau's photographs, in this sense, are not simply documents thereof but, similarly to Marsh's documentary, which incorporates them as pieces of evidence, are performatives that construct Petit's performance as such. More pertinently, however, the confluence of the temporality of these images, the interviewees comments that we hear in the background, and the film's temporal context as a post-9/11 artwork yields heterotopic and heterochronic configurations that reveal the film's mnemonic role in connection with 9/11.

To demonstrate these mnemonic layers, let me return to Barthes's *Camera Lucida,* particularly to Barthes' reading of Alexander Gardner's photograph of Lewis Payne, the boy awaiting his execution in prison. In Chapter 1, we have seen how Barthes's *punctum* of time, which he locates in the realization of the irrevocable pastness of what the photograph speaks as a future applies to Drew's "Falling Man" in the viewer's knowledge of the outcome of the man's fall. I extended Barthes's notion of the "anterior future" (96) to the jump/fall binary and defined the image's "anterior past" as the locus of horror. In Marsh's film, Barthes's *punctum* of time operates by a different mechanism. Towards the climax of the documentary, when the narrative reaches the point of Petit's wire walk between the two towers, Blondeau's photographs appear one

after the other, interspersed with images taken from the ground. With Michael Nyman's music score playing in the background, we hear Petit's friends recollecting their memories of that morning. One them, who ultimately dropped out of the team that went to the top of the towers, describes the events in the following way: "Beyond anything you can ever imagine. This was just mindboggling. The awe of the event, the overwhelming largeness of the scale of the situation took my mind into a place where I really wasn't that concerned about him. It was just … magical … it was just … profound." Once the word "mindboggling" is uttered, a photograph appears which depicts the Frenchman balancing between the towers from underneath with a silhouette of an airplane flying over the buildings (see figure 4.9.). Of course, the words pertain to the performance but, in the context of Marsh's documentary, they also *do* something else: as the photograph appears, we simultaneously see what happened on August 7, 1974 and what *will* happen on September 11, 2001 in the anterior future. Set against this particular photograph, the expression "awe of the event" uncannily resonates with the "spectacular" events of 9/11, recognized (and thus performatively produced) as a subtext, a *punctum* that defamiliarizes Petit's performance as a *studium*.

Figure 4.9. Philippe Petit crosses between the WTC towers, 1974.

This particular instance, however powerful, would not be phantomogenic as such, because it resonates with 9/11 in general terms, evoking its magnanimous scale rather than its particulars. Nonetheless, if 9/11 is evoked through the juxtaposition of the photograph and the reminiscence of Petit's American associate, this *punctum* multiplies

itself and settles into the other images of the series. To reiterate Derrida's reading of Barthes, the *punctum* lends itself to metonymy: "[a]s soon as it allows itself to be drawn into a network of substitutions, it can invade everything, objects as well as affects ("The Deaths" 57). In doing so, what Appleyard sees as an "occasion of a wonderful dream" in Petit's performance may as well sustain its dystopic "other," the nightmare of trauma. The confluence of dream and nightmare, relief and angst is particularly present in Marsh's contextualization of Blondeau's images of Petit's wire walk.

As Blondeau's images appear one after the other with Michael Nyman's piano

Figure 4.10. Petit lying down on the wire. Photo by Jean Blondeau, 1974.

music playing the background, the film elicits an emotional release on the part of the viewer, a transition from angst to awe as we confront "evidence" of Petit's success and the fact that he survived the performance. Although this moment of catharsis is indubitably redemptive as Appleyard remarks, it is not without a backlash. For the artist's body pitted against the monotonous verticality of the tower's columns and the hazy sky configures an essentially non-metaphorical relationship between the corporeal

and the architectural at a particular height which, as the photographs are shown in a sequence, inevitably recalls the same relationship between body and building in the context of 9/11—as our latest memory of such a relationship. It is not so much the posture of the body (although the image which shows him lying down on the cable shares a lot in common with the position of the Falling Man) as the very proportionality of body and building that interlines and at once pulls against the image of the body "outside the building"—a sight "out of place" in the context of 9/11, as we have seen in Chapter 1 (see figure 4.10.).

The cathartic moment of redemption, which one may register at the level of the *studium,* is thus counterpointed by the phantasmatic return of falling bodies invoked by Petit's body projection in the anterior future of the photographs. Had the film made explicit mention of 9/11, this phantomogenic subtext may have found its way to dissolve into the *studium.* In the absence of any explicit reference, however, its "redemptive power" (Appleyard) is haunted precisely by what it echoes as an unredeemed and silenced trauma, engrained in the same (virtual) site as a heterochrony, a palimpsest of two temporal planes. In this relation, the images depicting the instance of Petit's stepping onto the wire and occupying the space in between the towers settle into the *punctum* of the "anterior past," which I traced in the *aporia* of "jumping vs. falling" in Drew's photograph. Petit's leap evokes what we cannot see and, more specifically, cannot conceptualize in the case of the "Falling Man." The anterior future of Petit's step onto the wire (a moment reenacted in the poster design of the film) thus resonates with the anterior past of Drew's photograph, an image world which Petit's performance "inhabits" as it is represented in Marsh's documentary. Perceived as a phantomogenic "word" gesturing toward the unredeemed, the irresolvable, and the tabooed, Petit's "pedestrian speech act," to adopt de Certeau's phrase (97), of stepping onto the wire

echoes from a pre-9/11 past that remains unspeakable and "wireless" in a post-9/11 future.

Relating de Certeau's notion of "pedestrian speech acts" to Petit's wire walk sheds light on yet another aspect of the performance. Short for the French *coup d'état,* the word *coup,* which Petit's team playfully uses as a cipher for their plan, entails the violent overthrow of a regime, reflecting the air of illegality as a central component of Petit's work as an artist. In the context of the World Trade Center, however, de Certeau's term is particularly apposite. In a famous section from his *The Practice of Everyday Life,* he imagines looking at New York from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center and assuming a panoptic view of the city that expands in front of his eyes as a gigantic urban text. As "the most monumental figure of Western urban development" (93), he maintains, the towers constitute an all-seeing eye that "makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text" (92). Hidden within the nooks and crannies of the "Concept-city" (95), the rationalized grid of corporate capitalism, is the lived space (96),[72] of pedestrian practices which he conceives of as speech acts realized in urban space:

> The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be: it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them (social models, cultural mores, personal factors). (101)

Petit's wire walking constitutes one such poem except that he writes it not at the level of the street, which de Certeau perceives as the space of pedestrian practices, but into the space defined by the two towers. "Jaywalking" in the void between the two towers, Petit produces an anti-text "foreign to the 'geometrical' or 'geographical' space of visual,

[72] Here de Certeau reiterates Henri Lefebvre's term from his trialectics of space, which I mention in the Introduction.

panoptic, or theoretical constructions (93). And "foreign" it is in all senses of the word. Petit is French and also an intruder, who "looks down on the city" from the eye of the panopticon and whose performance nonetheless gives the towers a "human referent" (Darton 129) and thus contributes to their popularity among New Yorkers.

In the context of Marsh's documentary, however, the *coup* acquires new connotations that map over the ones traditionally attributed to Petit's "mischief." The opening scene of the film makes these connotations clear at the outset. We see a reenactment of the team disguised as a group of engineers travelling in a van bound to the underground garage of the WTC. No original footage of the individual members and the towers is used in this scene. Instead, as we see two of Petit's partners, dressed as architects, getting out of the van at the street level to get through the main entrance of the North Tower, we realize that the façade of the tower is also a reenactment, albeit a rather peculiar one. Instead of digitally remaking the Trade Center's emblematic faux Gothic arcades, we see a surface of grayish vertical lines reminiscent of the curtain wall of newer office buildings. Upon closer inspection, however, one may recognize that the curtain wall "mimicking" the arcades of the WTC is in fact the blast-proof cover of the new 7 World Trade Center just north of Ground Zero. As digitally remaking the arcades of the North Tower would certainly not have posed any difficulty for the filmmakers, the inclusion of a particular detail of a new building adjacent to the site is obviously not accidental.

Even if one does not recognize the façade as that of the Twin Towers, it is diegetically produced as such, suturing the viewer into the "reality" of the reenactment. Nonetheless, once the façade is recognized as that of another building, the cinematic superimposition of the two architectural layers yields new meanings that retroactively inform the team's entering the tower. The function of the wall of the new 7 WTC shown

in the film is to secure the building from potential car bombs—a precaution necessitated by the terrorist alert ever since 9/11. An emblem of the architecture of paranoia, this blast-proof wall of the new 7 WTC "stands in" for the old 1 WTC as a diegetic part of the film's *mise-en-scene* while simultaneously inscribing Petit's (rather playful) *coup* into the context of the threat that the wall is meant to withhold: terrorism. The juxtaposition is thus both heterotopic and heterochronic. And it is through this particular juxtaposition of temporal and spatial planes that Petit's entering the building by deceit and embarking on a venture that, in the eyes of many, was suicidal at the least, evokes the deeply unsettling confluence of the jumpers and the terrorists we explored in Chapter 1. The slogan, which advertises Petit's achievement as "The artistic crime of the century," is thus doubly poignant from our present-day point of view.

Driven by interviews, original footage, and reenactments, Marsh's documentary unfolds on the big screen as a Magritte painting in which we are tempted to recognize the "human referent" *documented* by the film. But as much as the interviews and the archival footage irresistibly suture us into the magic of trace, the Barthesian "that-has-been," we are also sutured into our own memories that those traces phantomogenically recall. As Malin Wahlberg argues in connection with the temporality of the trace encountered in documentaries, "[t]he trace opens up to time experience and recollection; it designates the transcendental impact of an image-memory, the aporia of memory and imagination, the now of reminiscence, and the then and there of the historical referent" (xiv). It is this sense that what Marsh documentary presents as the "then and the there" of Petit's performance opens up to the "now" or, to use Freud's term, the "contemporariness" of tabooed memories of 9/11 that map over the historical referent of the film. Because memory, as de Certeau claims, is "mobilized relative to what happens" (86), it is inserted as an "organic shrapnel" into the narrative texture of the film. "Coming out of its

bottomless and mobile secrets," de Certeau writes, "a '*coup*' modifies the local order" (85). Situated in the texture of *Man on Wire,* Petit's *coup* thus instigates another *coup,* one that disrupts the narrative trajectory of the film referential to Petit and settling into the "x" between referent and reference. Viewed in this light, the "missing element" in Marsh's "painting" of Petit becomes the catalyst for the visual and textual narrative of the documentary to explode into multiple shards of conjunctions, "ruining" the narrative of the film by prying open image worlds inhabited by "othered" images. In what follows I will turn to the image world that unfolds in the archival footage depicting the construction of the World Trade Center incorporated in the documentary.

4.2.2. Ruins in Reverse

The iconography of the movie's poster, which features the slogan "The Artistic Crime of the Century," is no less ambiguous than the slogan itself (see figure 4.11.). In the image, the wire is depicted from up close with the wirewalker stepping forward with one of his black shoes and part of his black performing dress visible. In the upper left corner we see one of the towers and the abyss underneath the artist's feet amplified by the converging lines of the towers' vertical beams. The view of the ground is shrouded by mist, making the shapes of objects between the building difficult to identify. Knowing, however, that the World Trade Center was still unfinished at the time of Petit's performance, we may instantly recognize those shapes as signifiers of a construction site. Still, the iconography of the image allows for more layers to unfold beyond this *studium*, especially in a post-9/11 context.

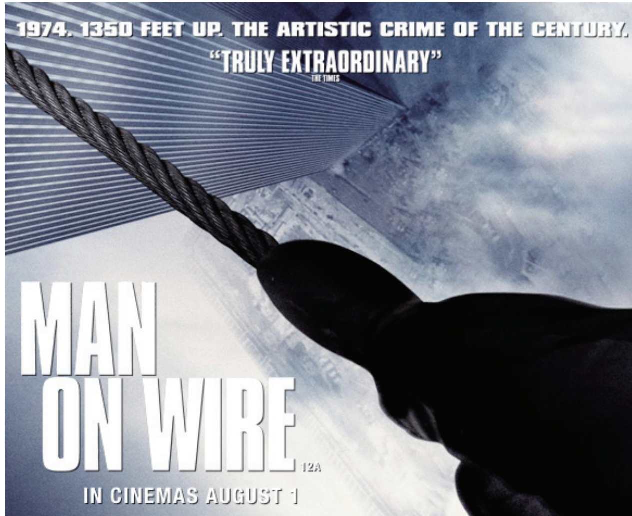

Figure 4.11. Film poster of *Man on Wire,* 2008.

The position we are made to assume as viewers rhymes with a particular scene in the film, when Petit, describing the experience of his walk, says the following: "… on one of my crossings … I actually looked all the way down to look at something that I'll never in my life see again." The implied reference to the absence of the towers that can be inferred from this sentence resonates, of course, with our historically informed gaze at the image. For it is not simply the historical context of 1974 that we map onto the poster but also what came after September 11, 2001. Consequently, the haze that covers the site at the bottom of the towers may as well be recognized as smoke emanating from the debris—a reading which the blurred details in the poster's iconography generously invite. My concern here, however, is less with the recognition of the debris as a *punctum* that undermines the historically anchored order of the *studium* and more with the way Marsh's application of archival footage of the towers' construction foreshadows their destruction in the anterior future.

Archival footage of the towers' construction is shown already at the beginning of the film, sharing the screen with photographs of Petit's childhood, as though man and building were growing hand in hand. While in the right half of the screen we see Petit in various poses as a child and then as a young street performer, the left side is dominated by moving images depicting the laying of the foundations, as well as workers assembling prefabricated parts of the towers' steel skeleton and fitting them into their places. Apart from the air of nostalgia that such images might generate, they have the potential to evoke an uncanny sense of *déjà vu* in the viewer. Watching the gigantic gaping hole of the construction site with workers pouring concrete into the foundations and then welding together the perimeter columns as the towers rise higher and higher, it is impossible not to recall the sight of exactly the same architectural components as ruins (see figures 4.12-13.). In other words, we witness the materiality of the building's internal organs that 9/11 turns "matter out of place." In one particular take, the so-called slurry wall, which was meant to withhold the Hudson River from flooding the site, is

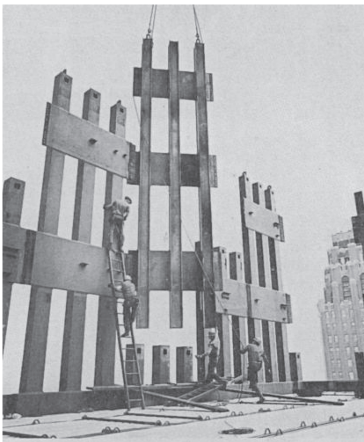

Figure 4.12. Archival image of emplacing exterior columns during the construction of the World Trade Center, 1968-1974.

Figure 4.13. "The North Wall," 2001. Photo by Joel Meyerowitz.

clearly visible, only to reemerge as a kind of "archaeological find" that survived the collapse of the towers, captured in many of Joel Meyerowitz's emblematic images. Again, according to Barthesian dynamics, we see these images with hindsight and instantly map our memories of destruction over them as the film progresses.

There is, however, more to the incorporation of archival footage in *Man on Wire.* Insofar as they speak of a future that has already happened, they configure the inverse of what Don DeLillo talks about in his essay "In the Ruins of the Future." While DeLillo, as we have seen in the previous chapter, sees new constructions haunted by the ruins of the towers (39), in *Man on Wire* we see the materiality of the old WTC as both built and unbuilt space. Similarly to the way the dust of 9/11 trickles through Cunningham's description of the Mannahatta-fire in *Specimen Days,* in the archival footage as a trace of the "then and there," we recognize the "there" infused with a different "then," forming a palimpsest of heterochronic juxtapositions.

Land artist Robert Smithson's notion of "ruins in reverse" is fitting to throw new light on this juxtaposition. In his 1967 essay entitled "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" Smithson describes one of his excursions into the bleak terrains of suburban sprawl in Passaic. What stretches out before his eyes is a landscape interspersed with monuments of a "prehistoric Machine Age"—a set of pipes, pumping derricks, parking lots, sandboxes, a highway under construction, and rows of suburban houses:

> Actually, the landscape was no landscape, but "a particular kind of heliotypy" (Nabokov), a kind of self-destroying postcard world of failed immortality and oppressive grandeur. […] That zero panorama seemed to contain *ruins in reverse,* that is—all the new construction that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the "romantic ruin" because the buildings don't *fall* into ruin *after* they are built but rather *rise* into ruin before they are built. This anti-romantic *mise-en-scene* suggests the discredited idea of *time* and many other "out of date" things. (72)

Here, Smithson unravels the temporal dimension of architecture which subjects built space to what he describes in another essay as an "all-encompassing sameness" ("Entropy and the New Monuments" 11).[73] In this entropic trajectory of development difference between construction and demolition levels out in an equilibrium to which the ruin bears witness as "evidence for a radical critique of the myth of universal progress driven by the supposedly innovative power of capitalism and technology" (Edensor 316). Entropy settles into the model of linear progress as an "x," a space of both heterotopia and heterochrony in which the border line between the new and the obsolete is rendered porous. In tandem with my argument on the trialectics of the three ships in Chapter 2, DeLillo's juxtaposition of the ruins of the Twin Towers with new buildings under construction in Midtown bespeaks not only the "ruins of the future" but, by extension of his argument, the future of the ruins of the World Trade Center as *recycled* into new constructions abroad.

Perceived as "ruins in reverse," the original footage of the towers' construction in *Man on Wire* thus indicates two layers of heterotopia. First, it juxtaposes construction with destruction and reveals an uncanny congruence between the two (virtual) sites that are, by definition, incongruent. Unlike Meyerowitz's classicization of progress through his framing of the ruins, the "zero panorama" that unfolds in the archival footage of the construction in *Man on Wire* short-circuits progress by phantomogenically "staging" the ruins as a "matter" of construction. Second, as part of the film's *mise-en-scene,* the footage also prefigures the ongoing construction of the memorial and the new tower at Ground Zero. This is the focus of the next section.

[73] For a detailed treatment of Smithson's notion of "ruins in reverse" in conjunction with Gordon Matta-Clark's film cuttings, see: "The Disappearance of Architecture as an Artistic Theme" by Kai Vöckler.

4.3. Virtual Ruins

How can the site of trauma be reconciled with commercial interests? How could architecture simultaneously serve mourning and business? Once these questions were raised in the wake of the attacks it became evident that Ground Zero was a site of heterotopia encompassing a palimpsest of conflicting layers. Weeks after the disaster, however, the idea of building a tall structure where the old towers used to stand seemed to have reached absolute consensus in architectural discourse.[74] With architect Daniel Libeskind's 2002 masterplan selected as winner,[75] the idea of leaving the place of the old towers a void also became imperative. Libeskind's original plan has been modified several times over the past years to an extent that his fingerprint is hardly recognizable in the new tower and the memorial that are now being built on the site. Although construction is now in full swing, due to acrimonious lawsuits and fierce battles between various interest groups, not to mention the daunting effects of the recent financial crisis, the planned complexes are rather far from being finished for the 10th anniversary.

In my discussion of the ruins in Chapter 2, I left Ground Zero as a vast gaping hole devoid of the remains of the towers. While Meyerowitz's and Franklin's images give evidence of photography's potential to invest the ruins with aesthetizing and jingoistic narratives, we have also traced heterotopic juxtapositions of "value" and "waste" in various venues of the ruins' recycling. In the current chapter, I have attempted to challenge readings of *Man on Wire* that reduce the film's import to a nostalgic tribute to Petit's achievement by foregrounding the archival footage of the tower's construction as an uncanny site of memory of their destruction. In this final section of the dissertation,

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[74] Still, a few articulated their reservations about such a project. Most notably, two architects, Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, did not shy away from expressing their doubts: "Let's not build something that would mend the skyline, it is more powerful to leave it void. We believe it would be tragic to erase the erasure" (qtd. in Sturken, *Tourists* 231).

[75] For information on the competition and the individual proposals submitted, see Suzanne Stephen's *Imagining Ground Zero: Official and Unofficial Proposals for the World Trade Center Competition.*

I will revisit Ground Zero and explore the ongoing construction as an extension of my application of Smithson's "ruins in reverse" to *Man on Wire*. In so doing, I will observe the site along a vertical and a horizontal axis. First, I will move along the vertical one and examine the relationship between the two voids marking the towers' footprints and the new 1 World Trade Center rising up from Ground Zero and overlooking the voids. Although the idea behind the use of negative and positive space here is to inscribe the rising trajectory of renewal and progress, I will argue that minimalism, as a governing style of both the memorial and the tower, destabilizes the down-up trajectory by subjecting linearity to entropy. My vertical axis will be supplemented by a horizontal one which connects two structures at the ground level: the reinforced concrete base of the new 1 World Trade Center and the deconstructivist exterior of the museum wedged between the two voids of old towers' footprints. At the intersection of the two axes, as I will show, the ruin manifests itself not merely as a memory of the past but as a "matter" of the future.

4.3.1. The Monumentality of the Counter-Monument – The Vertical Axis

In his presentation of his masterplan entitled *Memory Foundations,* Libeskind anchors his project on the immigrant narrative: "I arrived by ship to New York as a teenager, an immigrant, and like millions of others before me, my first sight was the Statue of Liberty and the amazing skyline of Manhattan. I have never forgotten that sight or what it stands for. This is what this project is all about" (Libeskind). Being aware that "[t]o acknowledge the terrible deaths which occurred on this site, while looking to the future with hope, [were] like two moments which could not be joined," he turns his own story as a Jewish immigrant from Poland into an over-arching trauma-narrative acted out in architectural form. Libeskind envisioned a tower mimicking the Statue of Liberty with

hanging gardens on its top and soaring 1776 feet high as spatial expression of the symbolic date of American independence. This tall structure would have translated the loss, which he intended to represent by a massive void exposing the bedrock underneath Ground Zero, into sacrifice for freedom. "Those who were lost have become heroes," he says (Libeskind). The so-called slurry wall in the foundations that survived the attacks—and are visible in the archival footage in *Man on Wire*—Libeskind would have re-signified as an architectural symbol of perseverance:

> The great slurry wall is the most dramatic element which survived the attack, an engineering wonder constructed on bedrock foundations and designed to hold back the Hudson River. The foundations withstood the unimaginable trauma of the destruction and stand as eloquent as the Constitution itself asserting the durability of Democracy and the value of individual life. (Libeskind)

Although the final version dispenses both with the idea of the Statue of Liberty and the overall dominance of the void whose perimeter would have been defined by the slurry wall, the overall arch of Libeskind's vision, as well as the symbolic height of the tower have been preserved.

In general terms, Libeskind's interest in architectural voids as an expression of trauma strongly resonates with James Young's advocacy of the counter-monument as a catalyst of what he ubiquitously calls "memory-work"—a dialogic confrontation with the past resisting to succumb to a single explanatory narrative. Criticizing traditional memorials' tendency to reduce the memory of events to ready-made narratives of the past, both Libeskind and Young endorse negative space as a means to instigate public engagement with trauma as an unfinished process that demands participation and dialogue. As he makes clear in his argument against the preservation of the remaining walls of the WTC to stand as a memorial to the attacks, Young does not see ruins as conducive to memory-work. Instead, he identifies the negative spatiality of the counter-monument as a fitting architectural response. In his extensive work on memorials Young

has dedicated particular attention to the memory of the Holocaust in Germany where counter-monuments have evolved into a radical practice of instigating visitors to bear witness to trauma without "traditional forms of *Wiedergutmachung*" ("The Counter-Monument" 272). Central to these new memorials that Young examines is their capacity to

> […] embody the ambiguity and difficulty of Holocaust memorialization in Germany in conceptual, sculptural, and architectural forms that would return the burden of memory to those who come looking for it. Rather than creating self-contained sites of memory, detached from our daily lives, these artists would force both visitors and local citizens to look within themselves for memory […] ("Memory and Counter-Memory" 9)

Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Monument against Fascism* in Hamburg, which consists of a sinking column that invites visitors to inscribe it with whatever they see fit, as well as Horst Hoheisel's negative-form monument to the Aschrott-Brunnen in Kassel exemplify memorial practices in which the monument literally cannibalizes itself by inhabiting a negative spatiality (*Texture* 27-48). In the United States, Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC is perhaps the most salient example of the counter-monument—a memorial widely criticized for its defiance of heroic vocabulary of neighboring monuments and memorials on the Mall (Sturken, "The Wall the Screen," 118-129). In Foucault's terms, one could argue that the counter-monument withholds the comfort of (figuratively affirmed) meaning by foregrounding the "x" as the insoluble, problematic matter. In Lin's memorial, the black granite reflecting the gaze of visitors that look at the names of soldiers well illustrates the uncanny potential of the "x." Libeskind's interest in artistic ways to tap into the "abyss no architecture can finally bridge" (Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* 138) is similarly counter-monumental in its scope. His design for the Jewish Museum in Berlin, which he described as a building

"always on the verge of Becoming—no longer suggestive of a final solution" (qtd. in Young, *At Memory's Edge* 163), is a case in point.

Guided by the centrality of the void, the museum is a counter-monument in and of itself. Interspersed with spaces defined by crooked wall surfaces and angled corners unfit to hold anything, Libeskind digresses from the time-honored Sullivanian precept of "form follows function" and offers instead voided spaces that cannot be tamed by filling them with pre-existing functions and meanings. The centrality of the void in the design of the museum, as Charles Jencks notes, constitutes a "non-place to which one continually returns but on which one cannot walk, a space to go towards but never be in" (62). The void defines a central core which multiplies in numerous fractals and fractures throughout Libeskind's building, defining a *structuring* absence. "If modern architecture," Young says of the museum, "has embodied the attempt to erase the traces of history from its forms, postmodern architecture like Libeskind's would make the traces of history its infrastructure, the voids of lost civilization literally part of the building's foundation, now haunted by history, even emblematic of it" (180).

In the context of Ground Zero, Libeskind's original aim to preserve the slurry wall and leave the space where the towers once stood an open void indubitably reveals the hallmarks of his design (see figure 4.14.). However, his masterplan for Ground Zero largely diverts from the voided spaces of the Jewish Museum. By ascribing symbolic meaning to the old slurry wall, this part of the towers' remains is not only construed as symbolic of the perseverance of American values but also as a transition to the new tower, which Governor George Pataki was quick to christen Freedom Tower. Unlike the unbridgeable void of the Jewish Museum, the void of Ground Zero is thus "abridged" by the Freedom Tower—an architectural metaphor which centralizes, rather than decentralizes meaning. Although the void of the Jewish Museum and that of Ground

Zero obviously denote essentially different historical events, Libeskind and Young's celebration of American modernity as an *unquestionable* cornerstone that demands a monument in the form of a skyscraper. Indeed, the function of the skyscraper here is not so much to maximize office space through the efficient technology of the steel skeleton and the elevator but to monumentalize the culture that celebrates the skyscraper as its own icon. Its symbolic height and gesture to the Statue of Liberty are elements of both "nostalgic kitsch" (Olalquiaga 122) and "restorative nostalgia" (Boym, *The Future* 41) that make the Freedom Tower a monument to an idealized past, indeed a monument to the culture of skyscrapers, rather than a "tall office building" in Sullivan's sense.

Over many years of bitter lawsuits and skirmishes between various interest groups and developers involved in the project, the Freedom Tower's patriotic anthropomorphism has yielded to a more abstract and minimalist shape which led to

Figure 4.14. Rendering of *Memory Foundations* by Daniel Libeskind, 2002.

Figure 4.15. Rendering of modified version of 1 World Trade Center (David Childs, SOM) with *Reflecting Absence* (Arad and Walker) in the foreground, 2004.

Libeskind's gradual exclusion from the design process. The tower that is now under construction at Ground Zero has been designed by David Childs representing one of New York's greatest architectural firms, Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM) (see figure 4.15.). Abandoning Libeskind's reference to the Statue of Liberty but preserving the symbolic height, Childs' tower embodies an obelisk-like appearance and, with its uniform glass curtain wall, subscribes to the legacy of late-modernist corporate design.[76]

The memorial, the construction of which is drawing to completion, is the work of Michael Arad and Peter Walker. Entitled *Reflecting Absence* (see figure 4.16.), it diverts from Libeskind's proposal to expose the bedrock under the old WTC site and consists of two negative spaces marking the footprints of the Twin Towers. Conceived in a simple, minimalist language, embraced by both James Young and Maya Lin, who were present in the selection of Arad and Walker's rendering as jury members, the memorial will feature waterfalls cascading down all along the perimeter. Although the final design for the memorial and the tower is, in general terms, in line with Libeskind's original vision

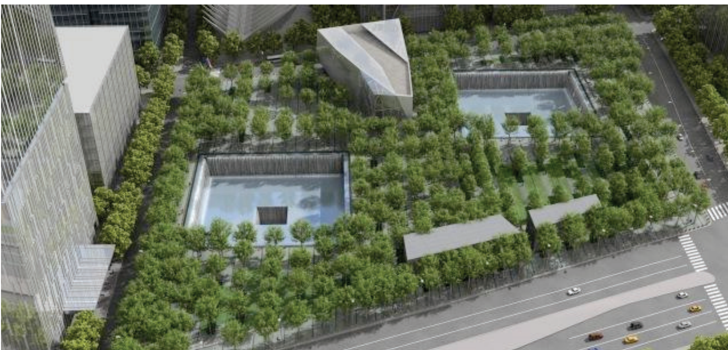

Figure 4.16. Rendering of *Reflecting Absence* by Michael Arad and Peter Walker. Construction started March, 2006.

[76] One of Childs' most remarkable recent designs, the Warner Building at Columbus Circle, features a twin shape uncannily reminiscent of the World Trade Center. As construction of this building started in 2000, it is likely that DeLillo had this particular building in mind when he talked about the ruins of the WTC implicit in the "midtown skyscraper under construction" ("In the Ruins of the Future" 39).

of the site, it is more than evident that the stylistic changes that have been implemented exhibit a gradual shift from postmodernism to modernist minimalism. Although part of the original slurry wall will be preserved and exposed in the underground museum area, a more pristine and traditional *Reflecting Absence*—adamantly resented by Libeskind (Nobel 251)[77]—has come to replace the "archeological" sentiment of the original concept of *Memory Foundations*.

For *New York Times* architecture critic Michael Kimmelman, however, this shift in styles is by no means surprising. Already in January 2002, he predicted that minimalism would ultimately hold sway over constructions at Ground Zero. His major concern is not the formal language of the new tower but that of the prospective memorial. "A memorial as part of a mixed-use project," he writes, "will in some way turn out to look Minimalist, Minimalism, of all improbable art movements of the last 50 years, having become the unofficial language of memorial art. […] Once considered the most obstinate kind of modernism, Minimalism has gradually, almost sub rosa, made its way into the public's heart" (Kimmelman). Indeed, as Kimmelman demonstrates in his article, memorials from Lin's work in Washington to Peter Eisenman's Holocaust memorial in Berlin, the legacy of minimalist art, established by such artists as Richard Serra and Donald Judd has become a mainstream trend of memorial design.

Ironically, the counter-monument, conceived as a site-specific instrument of memory work has, over the past three decades, become a cipher of what Andreas Huyssen calls the "globalization paradox" with respect to the "totalizing dimension of Holocaust discourse" (*Present Pasts* 13). "It is precisely the emergence of the Holocaust as a universal trope," Huyssen argues, that allows Holocaust memory to latch on to

[77] In her article "The Aesthetics of Absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero," Marita Sturken emphasizes that the World Trade Center towers never really had "footprints" because they part of a massive underground mall complex. "The festishizing of the footprints of the towers," Sturken claims, "demonstrates a desire to situate the towers' absence within a recognizable tradition of memorial sites" (318).

specific local situations that are historically distant and politically distinct from the original event" (13-14). In a paradoxical sense, the counter-monument's original insistence on the site of memory as an essentially *unheimlich* place seems to have evolved into a transnational language of architectural mnemonics which uses voids and absences as "common places" of contemporary memorial design—absorbing such disparate events as the Oklahoma City bombing and the Jewish Ghetto in Krakow in the same vocabulary of empty chairs applied as a signifier of loss in both memorials. As such—via constant reiteration—the counter-monument inevitably becomes the routine it wants to avoid to be. It becomes a recurring motif, rather than a site-specific catalyst of memory-work, as Dominick LaCapra also points out (698). After a time the viewer identifies with the counter-monumental script, and maps its ideological schematics onto the "body" of the individual site.

Accordingly, the "recurring tropes and techniques" of *Reflecting Absence* at Ground Zero, as Joel McKim points out, risks "covering over the assumptions that underpin our conception of what it is a memorial—and this memorial in particular—is intended to be and do" (84-85). Yet, for all its clichés, the memorial's counter-monumental aesthetics emerge as eerily congruent with the—similarly cliché—monumentalism of Childs' tower, which induces a dynamics certainly undesired by the designers. If the memorial reflects the absence of the WTC, it just as well reflects—at least stylistically—the office tower as part of the same continuum in which it partakes. The ascending trajectory of progress, which the tower is intended to ensure, is thus challenged by a universal sameness of design conceived under the auspices of minimalist aesthetics. By permeating the overall concept of the site, as Kimmelman insinuates, the uncanny sameness of tower and memorial unsettles the linear movement from negative to positive space (both in terms of working through trauma and celebrating the legacy of

American modernity through the iconic form of the skyscraper) and levels them out in an entropic equilibrium. The counter-monument is thus monumentalized while the monument is counter-monumentalized as part of the same fractal geometry.

As a result, the “x” is not the negative space of the memorial signifying the absence of the towers but entropy itself, the element which severs the counter-monument and the monument from their models and renders them “different affirmations, which dance together, tilting and tumbling over one another,” to quote Foucault’s pertinent words (*TNP* 48). The uncanny congruence of construction and destruction which I located in the archival materials in *Man on Wire* is here reflected by the stylistic uniformity of the memorial and the new tower. Entropy inexorably grinds the memorial and the tower against each other, yielding an unsettling continuum the cipher of which is the ruin.

4.3.2. Virtual Ruins – The Horizontal Axis

In my reading of the vertical axis of Ground Zero, negative and positive spaces no longer define endpoints of a progressive trajectory but rather foster an architecture of entropy in which the tower is just as much a voided space as the counter-monument is a monument—with the footprints of the WTC paradoxically “rising” into a positive void within the massive gaping hole of what Ground Zero once was. The standstill of the dialectics of positive and negative spaces is punctured by a horizontal axis stretching out at eye level. Along this axis I identify two points of reference: the new tower’s base, which is a 200-foot-high reinforced concrete pedestal designed to protect the building from potential car bombs, and second, the 9/11 museum which is now under construction at the east side of Ground Zero. At the intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes forms what I would call a *virtual ruin*, which constitutes a conceptual category defined

by the phantom of an earlier ruin, in this case that of the World Trade Center, transferred not simply into new construction sites, as Smithson's "ruins in reverse" suggests, but rather into the very functions and forms that those constructions are intended to serve.

Let me start with the fortified base of 1 World Trade Center, the new-old name for Libeskind's Freedom Tower. All safety measures bear the memories of earlier catastrophes. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911 was as inevitable to the improvement of fire escapes as was the catastrophe of the *Titanic* to the improvement of watertight compartments in subsequent ocean liners. The new tower at Ground Zero will stand on a concrete podium—a safety measure that inscribes the memory of 9/11 into the very foundations of the new skyscraper intended to restore the skyline of Lower Manhattan. In *Man on Wire,* we have already seen how the blast-proof metal latticework of the new 7 World Trade Center "stands in" for the old WTC by simultaneously

Figure 4.17. View of the reinforced concrete base of 1 World Trade Center with the deconstructivist façade of the 9/11 Museum in the background. Photo by Karla Kelsey, August, 2011.

evoking and contrasting its arcaded, transparent lobby. The heterotopic juxtaposition of the two layers in Marsh's film has never been more pertinent than it is now when the camouflaging of the bunker-like structure, which has already received a significant amount of flak from architecture critics,[78] poses a serious problem both financially and structurally. In his recent *New York Times* article Charles V. Bagli reports that the manufacturing of the panels of a prismatic glass cladding for the concrete walls has ultimately come to a standstill due to the insufficient quality of the glass (Bagli).

The installation of reinforced concrete for such purposes is, of course, nothing new. Le Corbusier's implementation of "béton brutal" as well as the concept of urban decentralization manifested in his vision for the *Ville Radieuse* bespeak the lurking menace of the air war, just as Alison and Peter Smithson's Brutalist structures in post-World War II England (with their *House of the Future* in particular) reconfigure the bunker into a place of dwelling. But whereas Brutalism exposes rough concrete surfaces in an act of honesty of form to the building's structure, the prismatic glass on 1 World Trade Center (once completed) will "subtextualize" concrete as a feature incompatible with the defiant transparency of the rest of the tower. Here, the use of concrete bespeaks a bunker-mentality that, instead of contextualizing 9/11 as an event of the past, projects it into the future, destabilizing the spatiotemporal boundary between the negative space of the memorial and the positive form of the tower. In this sense, the two voids of the memorial do not merely gesture toward the past but also toward a gruesome future inscribed into the base of the building. Once the glass cladding prismatically refracts the sun, the concrete underneath will still remain, as it looks now, a phantasmatic apparition of the ruin of the past infused into the landscape of the future, a *virtual ruin.* Although it is undeniably laden with the fantasy of imagining new buildings as ruins—as

[78] For instance, *New Yorker* architecture critic Paul Goldberger regards the fortified base of the tower as a "concrete bunker" (qtd. in Chung).

characterized by ruin-representations from Joseph Gandy's romantic vision of the Bank of England to Hollywood-generated scenarios of post-apocalyptic urban decay allowing us to recognize buildings that define the background to our everyday practice of life as the remains of a glorious civilization—the *virtual ruin* is devoid of the narcissism and nostalgia that these images induce. It is more akin to what Anthony Vidler's describes in the context of post-World War II architecture as the "anticipatory fear of future loss" ("Air War" 32), kept alive by the memory of an earlier catastrophe. The concrete base of 1 World Trade Center is phantasmatic not only because it is laden with the traumatic past of the site, but also, to reiterate Abraham's theory of the phantom, because it marks a heterotopia that must remain a secret; it needs to be given a "face" so as to make it resemble something else, to make it conform to the utopian dimensions of the project (see figure 4.17.).

At the other end of the horizontal nexus is the memorial museum whose exterior cladding is now partly in place. Designed by the Norwegian architectural firm Snøhetta, the museum stands in stark contrast to the modernism of the memorial and the tower (see figure 4.18.). In its appearance, the building resurrects the deconstructivist aesthetics of Libeskind's design for the site, especially his museum and transportation hub, by featuring a web-like exterior supported by a maze of girders counterpointing the sheer symmetry of the tower and the memorial. In the hall of the museum two of the Twin Towers' original tridents that once formed their emblematic arcades will be exhibited in such a way that they will be visible from the outside. The intention of the designers was to create a "transitional architectural link" that would connect the individual structures at Ground Zero. In this effort, the tridents are meant to "form a harmonious link to the surrounding shrub oak trees of the Memorial Plaza" and exude "strength, fortitude, survival, and hope" (Snøhetta). With the sharp angles of the network of structural beams

that cut across the glass panes, however, there is obviously more to the building's architectural vocabulary.

Counterpointing the rigid symmetry of the tower, the museum resonates not only with the deconstructivism of Libeskind or the catastrophism of the Austrian Coop Himmelbau but also harkens back to the post-World War I expressionism of Bruno Taut and Erich Mendelsohn. "For was not the language of expressionism," Vidler ponders, "also the language of trauma, unmitigated terror, pathological mental states, tormented screams and sexual fears—in popular terms, the language of Caligari?" (31) Indeed, the museum features an uncontainable shape, a "*bizarre foreign body*" (Abraham 291, italics in original) wedged between the tower and the memorial. Its tilted volumes as well as the dynamic web of mullions and girders that cut across its glass surfaces exude a sense of incompleteness and movement. Whereas such tilted angles are recognizable elements of Snøhetta's design, as evidenced by such buildings as the Oslo Opera House, the

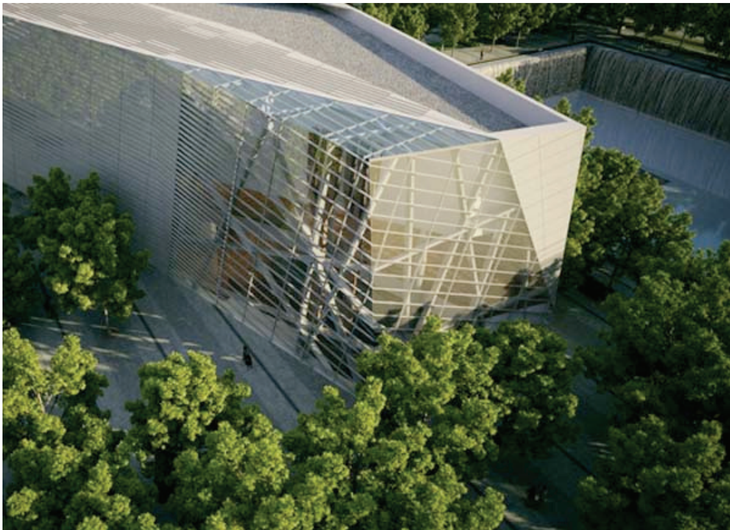

Figure 4.18. Rendering of 9/11 Museum by Snøhetta.

application of these shifting planes in the context of Ground Zero infuses the illusion of incompleteness with the connotation of ruination in line with Libeskind's vision. The application of the striated mosaic surfaces intended to evoke the emblematic texture of the World Trade Center's façade (Snøhetta) amplifies this connotation and renders the building's exterior an architectural reenactment of what it will house as a museum: physical remains of the attacks as well as objects *in situ,* such as the slurry wall and original foundations laid in the bedrock. The ultimate function of the above-grade building of the museum is to lead visitors down to the "the archeological heart of the World Trade Center site" (*9/11 Memorial*).

It remains to be seen how the exhibition space will be organized and what narratives will be woven around the "archeological finds" of Ground Zero, making Patricia Yaeger's concern whether visitors will find a space to "remember the everyday world of detritus that these lost buildings, so filled with lost people, became" (193) ever more pertinent. As for now, both the tower and the museum are under construction, though their main structural features and parts of their cladding are already visible. And, in Smithson's sense, the process of construction yields insights that will vanish once the structures will be completed. Now that the fortified base of the tower is without its camouflage, the horizontal axis between the museum's deconstructivist reenactment of the ruins dovetails with the "bunker" of 1 World Trade Center, reconfiguring it as virtual ruin. At the intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes, the virtual ruin emerges as a cipher of entropy unsettling the narrative of progress that the rebuilding of the site is meant to represent.

4.4. Conclusion

Skarbakka's photographic performance, Marsh's *Man on Wire,* and the new constructions at Ground Zero constitute multi-layered sites that illustrate the variety of ways in which repressed traumas of 9/11 can be implicit in contemporary visual culture. In Chapters 1 and 2 we have seen how images of the jumpers and the unsettling content of the ruins have been hastily taken out of sight and out of site. By employing Abraham's concept of phantomogenic words, we have traced the uncanny surfacing of these repressed contents in literary representations. In this chapter, Abraham's concept remained helpful to unravel the phantasmatic return of heterotopic combinations of body and building in visual and architectural representations.

In the photo-series "Life Goes On," Skarbakka's photographic performance evokes 9/11 as a virtual site projected onto another building, at another time. In Marsh's documentary, 9/11 enters and claims its site in the uncanny "double" of Petit's performance and the original footage of the towers. Similarly to Skarbakka's pose in "Con-emporary" the choreography of Petit's performance constitutes a text with which the towers' ruins and Drew's tabooed photograph retroactively converse. While Petit's walk is a performance involving the risk of death, the Falling Man's impending death in Drew's photograph is kept at a remove from us by the ultimate control that the verticality and symmetry of his pose suggest. The very same element of control that lends this iconic "look" to Drew's picture reenters as a signifier of suicide, which Petit's remark on the beauty of death-by-art amplifies in the context of the film. In this sense, the redemptive beauty of Petit's tightrope walk in the film has been revealed as not at all antithetical to the "despairing plummet of one of those jumpers from the burning towers," as Appleyard suggests, especially not if the redemption that their jumps epitomized is perhaps their most traumatizing aspect. The construction site depicted in

archival footage is “doubled” by the on-going construction at Ground Zero where the phantasmatic image of the ruin disturbs the narrative of progress by forecasting the future as a virtual ruin.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters I applied the Foucauldian notion of heterotopia to 9/11 in order to delineate particular constellations of the corporeal and the architectural that challenge and subvert preexisting systems of signification. Heterotopias always exist relationally, and their "otherness" lies in their potential to uncover underlying laws of discourse that define the sites to which they are related. The sanctification of 9/11 in American culture has obviously transformed the event into a *lieu de mémoire* that is necessarily centrifugal in its capacity to centralize public performances of memory and ascribe an overarching narrative to the attacks and their aftermath. Heterotopias are inherently centripetal in their tendency to destabilize the narrative inscriptions of the past by foregrounding counter-sites of memory that have been expelled from the canonized version of the past.

Richard Drew's "Falling Man," as well as the ruins of the Twin Towers, discussed in the first two chapters of the dissertation, provide several manifestations of these counter-sites by disclosing incompatible juxtapositions of body and building that reveal the malleability and instability of such categories as "falling" and "jumping," "value" and "waste," "hero" and "victim," as well as "victim" and terrorist." Shattering the "touristic" lens on the past which frames the events as a heroic conflict between "us and them" and recycles deeply entrenched cultural narratives to justify particular ends, heterotopias unsettle and deconstruct binary oppositions, demanding us to assume an archaeological gaze in Foucault's sense, geared towards uncovering those discursive formations that underpin these constructs. Observed through an archaeological lens, constellations of the corporeal and the architectural are metonymic, rather than metaphoric, decentralizing, rather than centralizing.

The individual artworks comprising films, performance, and fiction, that I examined as case studies in the dissertation, showcase particular performances of such

counter-sites of memory where the Foucauldian "x," which he reveals as an emphatic absence in Magritte's *Megalomania,* surfaces in an array of different formations. The "x" is a modality of heterotopia, the "missing element" as Foucault says, that would make the painting a representation of a preexisting model, a coherent body image. Instead, the "x" disrupts such identifications by foregrounding the particular that disrupts and deconstructs the universal. Ackerman's deconstruction of Cheney and Junod's narratives of the Falling Man, Cunningham's textual absences in *Specimen Days*, DeLillo's ruin-textures in *Falling Man*, the missing "t" in Skarbakka's "Con-emporary," and the haunting absence of 9/11 in Marsh's *Man on Wire* are all performances of the "x" as the site of the unknown, the unspeakable, and the abject that cannot be "swallowed." It is therefore not so much the loss *per se* but its materiality that my readings of these performances attempted to bring forward. If architectural identifications are, as pertinent studies in cognitive linguistics and phenomenology illustrate, fundamentally governed by metaphoric models wherein the built environment is anthropomorphized and the person inhabiting that environment is architecturalized, the configurations of the corporeal and the architectural that I explored cut through the shield of the metaphor and delineate a metonymic topography of trauma defined by the processes of "immurement" and "incorporation."

The materiality of the ruins of the Twin Towers, which I excavate in Chapter 2, constitutes a major landmark in this topography. It haunts *Specimen Days* as an ominous intertext infusing descriptions of other disasters with an uncanny touch of familiarity, just like Skarbakka's "Sarajevo" as well as his performance in Chicago project tabooed traumas on other surfaces, in other sites. In the temporal horizon of Marsh's documentary the ruins emerge as the uncanny other not only in archival images of the

towers' construction, but also as "virtual ruins" evoked by the reinforced concrete base of the new tower and the deconstructivist aesthetics of the museum.

As I write these lines, preparations for the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks are well under way at Ground Zero. Although the cascade of water at the memorial has been tested a number of times to work flawlessly during the commemoration ceremony, it will be shot down shortly afterwards due to the fact that the site will be under construction for long years to come. As such, Ground Zero speaks of 9/11 just as much as it does of the vicissitudes of the post-9/11 world marked by a prolonged war on terror and an economic recession. Once finished, however, Ground Zero will be among the first memorial sites to combine the aesthetics of the counter-monument and the monument at such a grand scale—and in such a uniformly minimalist vocabulary. Despite their oppositional spatial forms, the entropy of style that holds sway over the design of the tower and the memorial, as I insinuated in the last chapter, outlines an uncanny similarity between the two, which disturbs the rising trajectory of the design intended by architects at the outset. Although further discussion of this problem might yet to wait until the site reaches its final shape with the underground museum, the transportation hub, and the surrounding office buildings becoming operational, Ground Zero may call for a reinterpretation of both the aesthetics and the ethics of the counter-monument in an ever more globalized world.

Similarly intriguing is the increasing visibility of the "Falling Man" photograph through multiple artistic representations including Harry Santiago's short film *The Falling Man* (2010), which turns Drew's image into an emblem for those undocumented immigrants who died on 9/11 without their name listed on the memorial. In addition, Thomas Small's brand new dance performance inspired by Tom Junod's article and featuring performer Tom Pritchard, is now touring with great success in Scotland

(Smallpetitklein). Beyond doubt, the tabooed icon is on its way to become an icon, if not *the* icon of 9/11. Although the discussion of these recent tendencies falls beyond the scope of the present dissertation, if my work has laid the path toward these new directions, it has at least partly achieved its goal.

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Introduction

Figure 1. *Matteson Art,* Web, 4 Sept. 2011; <http://www.mattesonart.com/1949-1960-mature-period.aspx>

Chapter One

Figure 1.1. *Anne Darling Photography,* Web, 4 Sept. 2011; <http://www.annedarlingphotography.com/the-falling-man.html>

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Chapter Two

Figure 2.1. Mike Caine, "9/11 Missing Person Manny Lopez," *PBase,* April 2004, Web, 4. Sept. 2011. <http://www.pbase.com/mikecaine/image/45936493>

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