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Ground Zero: Tourism, Terrorism, and Global Imagination

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Ground Zero: Tourism, Terrorism, and Global Imagination

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Honors Thesis

International Studies Department

ABSTRACT

At Ground Zero, the transnational phenomena of tourism and terrorism intersect. In this thesis, I introduce the concept of global imagination, and analyze how tourism and terrorism affect this process of global imagination for Americans, arguing that tourism plays an important role in constructing a globe, while terrorism – particularly the 9/11 attacks – works to interrupt imaginative process itself. I then explore how tourism of terrorism at Ground Zero influences global imagination, containing the events of 9/11, allowing for the construction of only a very specific globe in which the U.S. is an innocent, benevolent actor in world history.

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INTRODUCTION

As Americans came to in the wake of witnessing the searing televised violence of the September 11 terrorist attacks, they were faced with a number of pronouncements about the meaning and consequences of the event. This was the end of irony; there were people out there in the world whose only goal was to kill us; this was the definitive event of our times; the world would never be the same again. Indeed, the images of the burning Twin Towers and ash-covered lower Manhattan did not seem to *fit* into the world in which we had previously been living, the world we only seemed able to look back on – something must have changed. It was not long, of course, before the news stopped replaying images of the attacks, replacing them with images and reports of the United States invading Afghanistan in retaliation. And only a couple of years later, evoked through the specters of al Qaeda and weapons of mass destruction, 9/11 was justifying the invasion of Iraq. Today, nearing the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, neither of these wars has fully ended. Meanwhile, in lower Manhattan, Ground Zero has become a site where people can engage 9/11 – the event that seemed, for Americans, to change the course of global history, and that prompted a violent corresponding change in American geopolitical strategy – through the practice of tourism. Somehow, the Ground Zero tourist site makes sense to its visitors, fitting into the collective American understanding of the globe that has emerged since 9/11. But how?

In this thesis, I pursue the question of what exactly is going on, culturally, in the tourism of terrorism at Ground Zero. That is, what meanings does this intersection of the global processes of tourism and terrorism create, what does 9/11 look like as a tourist object, and what global reality does it help the tourist to imagine? This leads me, of course, discuss the cultural,

meaning-making functions of both tourism and terrorism in relation to what I call “global imagination,” the process by which Americans (or others) imagine the globe, its characteristics, and its possibilities as a cohesive whole. I first introduce and briefly theorize this idea of “global imagination,” and then argue that tourism aids this process of global imagination by lending the authority of authentic experience to certain images and symbols upon which the globe is imagined. I then argue that terrorism, in general, works to interrupt collective imaginative process, and that 9/11 interrupted the collective American process of imagining the globe. Finally, I argue that tourism of terrorism at Ground Zero works to contain and manage the event of 9/11 through representational strategies of isolation, freezing and re-narration, so that the event can only function as a symbolic coordinate in the imagining of a globe in which the United States is an innocent, benevolent actor in world history.

My approach in this paper might reasonably be categorized as “transnational media and cultural studies.” It is transnational insofar as it concerns the process by which the globe is understood, but from a decidedly American point of view, so that the analysis involves interactions between national and global narratives and ideologies. I include the word “media” because much of my analysis, although it does not primarily focus on what is traditionally defined as media text, nonetheless draws heavily upon the theory and methodologies of media analysis. Both tourism and terrorism are heavily involved in media, so a treatment of either subject that ignores the role of media in either is sorely lacking. Finally, the project perhaps qualifies best as cultural studies; to start with the obvious, tourism and terrorism are cultural phenomena, at the very least in their effects, and a whole iconography and set of practices surrounds both. Beyond the cultural nature of tourism and terrorism, though, this paper’s attention to textuality and structures of meaning aligns itself with the cultural studies camp. Put

simply, if investigating how tourism of terrorism at the site of one of the most mediated events in recent history affects how global political and social realities are constituted for the American subject does not qualify as transnationally-focused media and cultural studies, I'm not sure what does.

I would like to offer a quick note on the position and scope of this thesis: taking the former first, I am writing as a white American male who was 12 when the planes hit the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. I am part of the generation that started to come of age immediately after the attacks. I experienced 9/11 through the images on the television screen, and I did not lose any friends or family in the attacks. All of these things likely affect my analysis, but not, I believe, to the detriment of the overall thesis. On the subject of scope, this thesis is based primarily on engagement with a wide variety of texts about tourism, terrorism and Ground Zero, as well as a semiotic reading of Ground Zero tourist sites, which I visited in December 2010. The global imagination section falls mostly into the realm of theory, as I synthesize the works of a number of theorists to articulate the concept. My writing on terrorism is based on engagement with writing on the subject, as is my writing on tourism, which is also based on research I have done on tourism in Tunisia. This is not a deeply anthropological work, and there is no ethnography (although these would be wonderfully useful contributions to this area of study). I instead focus, in my analysis of Ground Zero, on the sites themselves, their textuality, their ability to create meaning, and the strategies at play that work to represent 9/11.

In the first chapter I introduce the concept of global imagination as relevant to discussions of culture and social articulation in the era of globalization. Drawing upon the concept of social imaginaries, I posit global imagination as the process by which a cohesive, thing-like globe is constructed and then used as a background unit for social articulation. Though

globalization is a broad and contested term, one relatively uncontroversial condition of the globalized world is that social reality is increasingly constituted in relation to a globe, in addition to other units like nations, communities and families. Even when driving in your car, you are often reminded by other cars' bumpers to "Think Global, Act Local;" on a related note, reducing one's carbon footprint is a practice enacted directly in reference to something called global warming, considered to be a condition of the world. As a social unit, though, the globe needs to be imagined; it obviously cannot be sensually experienced in its entirety, so a process of imagination is required to fill in the gaps (which are more numerous than the not-gaps) in order to make the globe a cohesive thing. I examine this process of imagination with particular deference to Benedict Anderson and Jacques Lacan, noting that the process of imagination works in tension with a network of symbols in order to generate a cohesive reality. Because of the relative removal of the imagined globe from everyday experience, the symbols involved in the process of global imagination appear primarily in various mediated forms, and the ordering and shape of the symbolic matrix affects the contours and qualities of the imagined globe. Finally, I defend my terminology, arguing that imagination is a useful term because it implies social construction as well as possibility.

In the second chapter I address tourism and its role in the process of global imagination. This allows me to both dwell on the specific processes involved in the practice of tourism and further explain certain aspects of global imagination. I make use of the theories of tourism advanced by Dean MacCannell in *The Tourist* and John Urry in *The Tourist Gaze* to argue that tourism plays an important role in the process of global imagination. MacCannell argues that tourism involves a consumption of experience in which the object of tourism works to mediate an ideal model to the tourist, a pleasurable influence. A definitive feature of tourism, for

MacCannell, is the ability of the tourist object to mediate what he calls “staged authenticity.”¹ Urry, meanwhile, understands tourism in terms of a Foucauldian gaze, in which the tourist constitutes the object of tourism as he/she gazes upon it. Urry also crucially theorizes tourism as a practice which happens in explicit contrast to work, or normal daily life. After outlining and synthesizing MacCannell and Urry’s theories of tourism, I argue that tourism works to shape and constitute the symbols upon which the process of global imagination takes place. By lending the authority of authenticity to ways of seeing global sites, tourism influences what kind of global reality can be built upon them. The role of the image is paramount here, as the images that tourists bring to tourist sites are every bit as important as, and in fact work to influence the form of, the images the tourist encounters. I end the chapter by addressing Urry’s contention that the tourist gaze is increasingly diffuse, suggesting that the tourist gaze is a global gaze.

The third chapter is devoted to terrorism and it’s the way it interrupts the process of global imagination. This chapter, I hope, can serve not only as a part of the larger argument, but also as a contribution to the ongoing discussion about how terrorism should be regarded as a cultural, political, social, and global phenomenon. I spend the first part of the chapter working through various definitions of terrorism, as no clear consensus seems to exist about what exactly qualifies as terrorism, or how terrorism should be defined. I advocate for under-defining terrorism, arguing that because terrorism is such a politically charged word, it is more productive to analyze terrorism in terms of its effects, as opposed to essences of actions. I argue that terrorism produces social and political effects, impacting realities by generating spectacular, symbolic violence. This violence, then, manages to alter realities by interrupting the imaginative process by which reality is constituted. I then go on to analyze the 9/11 terrorist attacks in terms

¹ Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 91.

of how they interrupted the functioning of global imagination, even disrupting the means by which narrative, or diegesis, in filmic media is maintained as separate from the world of the viewer. I then explore the contours of the post-9/11 imagined globe; it is a constructed world in which an ontological category, “the terrorists,” exists, and the United States, as the innocent victim of the evil murderous terrorists, is justified in embarking upon the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The fourth chapter, the centerpiece of the argument, is a case study which deals with the intersection of tourism and terrorism; specifically, it asks what meanings and processes are at play in tourism at Ground Zero. Based on a critical reading of several Ground Zero tourist sites, I argue that tourism of terrorism at Ground Zero works to contain 9/11, managing the event so as to facilitate the imagining of a specific globe. It does so, I argue, through several representational strategies: the first, crucial to tourism, is the construction or staging of authenticity. Ground Zero tourism purports to get the tourist as close as he/she can get to the real deal, the authentic 9/11, and the mediation of authenticity pervades Ground Zero tourism. Second, Ground Zero tourism removes 9/11 from its original spatial context, giving it its own spatiality which makes it more accessible and meaningful to the tourist. Authentic artifacts from 9/11, for example, are found in museums behind display cases, and in certain cases, the artifact is only meaningful by virtue of its location in a museum. Third, Ground Zero tourism arrests the temporality of 9/11, freezing the moment so that it can be engaged by the tourist. This is, in a way, another type of removal, as it grants 9/11 its own spatial and temporal world, even a diegesis. Finally, Ground Zero tourism makes use of constant replay, or reenactment; once 9/11 has been temporally and spatially sealed in its own world, it can be narrated and re-narrated in a way that suits the tourist mode of consumption. Important, here, is the extent to which 9/11

removes Ground Zero from history, representing it as though it has had no causal past and no global consequences. I also address the ubiquitous narrative of American innocence deployed in the Ground Zero tourist sites. I end the chapter by examining how the representation of 9/11 at Ground Zero tourist sites affects the process of global imagination, arguing that Ground Zero tourism inflects how 9/11 can function as a symbol in the process of global imagination in such a way as to choke off its ability to contribute to the imagining of any other globe than the one described at the end of Chapter 3; it is a globe without the possibility that 9/11 could have happened as a result of global conditions which the United States helped to produce, a globe in which America, an innocent victim of evil terrorist violence, is justified in spreading democracy, one war at a time, without regard for the consequences.

I conclude by asking whether Ground Zero has to represent 9/11 the way it does, and by suggesting further directions for scholarly inquisition. The three representational strategies – isolation, freezing and re-narration – offer the tourist a means of dealing with trauma by re-narrating the traumatic event, thus re-inscribing it into a symbolic order so that it fits into a cohesive reality. Does this mean, then, that in order for Ground Zero to work as a site where visitors can work through collective trauma, 9/11 must be represented the way it is, as a history-less icon in the mythology of American exceptionalism? My answer is an emphatic no; the process of working through trauma does not have to be comforting, and a narration of 9/11 that actually involves history would be just as effective in this process, if not more so, than the ahistorical narration of the event as it appears at Ground Zero tourist sites. Finally, I highlight some areas of my thesis that would be worthy of further study.

CHAPTER ONE

Introducing Global Imagination

Globalization is the word of the day. When I have to explain to family members what my International Studies major involves, I typically say that International Studies centers around the question of globalization and tries to figure out exactly what the globalized world is; this is generally a sufficient answer, met with head nods and “Oh.” And while it is true that scholars from all sorts of disciplines are working to discover the specificities of the world under globalization, not much attention seems to be paid to the idea of a globe. That there is such a thing as a globe, in fact, is typically assumed in your average discussion of globalization; it just exists as a thing, and the question of how it exists as a thing belongs to geologists and physicists. But the globe, as a social category, cannot just exist; it has to be constructed, or imagined. In this section, I probe the concept of the globe as a unit involved in social life, examining it as a social imaginary. I advance the idea of global imagination as the process of imagining the globe as a cohesive whole with specific characteristics, with particular deference to frameworks laid out by the likes of Benedict Anderson, Jacques Lacan, and Edward Said. My arguments throughout this thesis about tourism, terrorism, and tourism of terrorism at Ground Zero will all be responsive to this idea of global imagination.

Manfred Steger, in *The Rise of the Global Imaginary*, argues that the most prevalent ideologies in the contemporary world are articulations of what he calls the “global imaginary.” He argues that the global imaginary is a truly new type of social imaginary, a term which refers

to the implicit background of communal social practice. “[A social imaginary] offers explanations of how ‘we’ – the members of the community – fit together, how things go on between us, the expectations that we have of each other, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations,” Steger writes.² Social forms and articulations, then, occur in the context of, and in relation to, various social imaginaries. A birthday party or a wedding, for example, might happen in the context of a family imaginary (weddings, especially, are often treated as family affairs) while Steger discusses how a national imaginary allows one to effortlessly navigate a Fourth of July Parade by providing a “background aura of normality.”³ National imaginaries, Steger contends, have been the dominant social imaginaries of the last 200 years or so; social positioning of groups and individuals has happened primarily in reference to nations and nationality, and “we’s” have been organized heavily around the unit of the nation. Steger views World War II as the major shifting point at which a global imaginary began to emerge, when social articulations (political ideologies specifically) began to appear in the context of a globe, and he sees this global imaginary as developing through the Cold War and certainly into the Information Age. Relying on this narrative, then, Steger is able to assert that what he sees as the dominant political ideologies of today – Market Globalism, Justice Globalism, Jihadist globalism (interestingly applied to Muslims and Christians alike), and Imperial Globalism – are articulations of a global imaginary.

Because Steger concentrates solely on the articulation of political ideologies, there is only so far that I can go with his argument, but the idea of the global imaginary must give us pause. Indeed, while I would not imply that some kind of global “we” is in the making, the globe and

² Manfred Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 7. These examples may be obvious or lack some nuance, but they do illustrate how a social imaginary allows social activity to happen the way it does. The parade floats are red, white and blue because those are the colors of the United States, that’s just the way it is, and we sing at birthday parties because that’s just what we do.

the global do increasingly lurk as a background unit of social articulation; after all, bumper stickers tell us to “Think Global, Act Local,” American politicians argue about the existence of something called global warming,⁴ and buying certain clothes at Gap supposedly helps fight the global spread of AIDS.⁵ This is, perhaps, a major tenet of that ever-so-ambiguous process-thing called globalization: the positing of social reality more and more in relation to and in the context of a unit called the globe. Steger devotes his whole argument to making clear how contemporary political isms are an articulation of a global imaginary – because political ideologies have such a strong normative aspect to them, they are particularly explicit in their connection to social imaginaries – but a global imaginary also underpins all sorts of social and cultural articulations. In America under globalization, at least, social practices are increasingly global practices, or practices with meaning in relation to a globe. Again, this is not to argue for some kind of cosmopolitan global-consciousness in which all peoples increasingly think as a global community of global citizens, but rather to suggest that social realities and processes – in all of their multiplicity and difference – are increasingly constituted in the context (conscious or not) of a globe.

This globe, though, has to be imagined. It cannot be a unit of social imaginary based on the social subject’s ability to sensually experience it; the globe is, after all, a unit that implies everything that isn’t outer space, so it could never be completely experienced. And even if one were to physically, sensually experience every inch of the globe, it would still not exist as a unit without some sort of imaginative process, some construction, to put it all together. For example, you can experience your entire house with most of your senses, but still, you would not understand the unit as a unit without some sort of imaginative process. For a wider example,

⁴ Global warming is particularly instructive because it places everyday local activities in a directly global context; when I drive my car or eat meat, it has a direct impact on the globe itself.

⁵ Join(Red) website. http://www.joinred.com/red/#shopred_52 (accessed April 5, 2011).

take the city of St. Paul: I have seen parts of it, but could never experience the whole city, and yet I know that it is some sort of a cohesive unit, a city, and I know that as I head west on University Avenue, despite an indecipherable blur of urban landscape, there will be a point where I will have left the city of St. Paul. In order to become this bounded unit, the city has to be imagined beyond actual experience, and there must be some imaginative process going on. The same can be said for the globe: in order for there to be a globe and a global imaginary, there must be an element of construction, a process global imagination.

There are some comparisons to be made here. First, the concept of global imagination is related to Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities. In his landmark text, *Imagined Communities: On the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson advances the idea that nations are imagined communities, that they exist not because of face-to-face interaction with the other members of the community (as in, for example, a family), but because of a process of imagination beyond physical experience.⁶ There are, of course, other types of imagined communities other than the nation; the example of St. Paul above is one. For Anderson, though, the particular aspects of the nation as an imagined community are its boundedness and its sovereignty. There is a definite similarity between Anderson's imagined communities and an imagined globe: both refer to social imaginaries that have to be constructed through mechanisms other than sensual experience, because the whole of the unit could not possibly be fully experienced. What is also important and relevant about Anderson's imagined communities, though, is the mechanisms through which the unit – nation or globe or whatever – is constructed and imagined. Anderson argues that print media was one of the most profound influences on the development of the nation-state that has so dominated social and political reality for the last 200

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2006), 6.

years, as print-capitalism standardized certain vernacular languages and allowed people to imagine that they could have an identity in common with someone beyond their immediate, experienced community.⁷ In a similar vein, global imagination is made possible primarily through media technologies and practices that have developed in the last 20-30 years. Modern print and television news practices in America, for example, have led to a circulation of more and more images from the “rest” of the world, making it appear as though the entire globe is fully representable; it thus seems inconceivable that something newsworthy could happen somewhere in the world that would prevent the event from being reported to the American people.⁸ At the same time, the mythology surrounding the internet holds that people on opposite sides of the world are just a click away, and that someone in the U.S. could access a page hosted in Angola, and vice versa. Similar to print media for Anderson, these technologies allow something called the globe to be imagined and represented.

The main distinction to draw between Anderson’s imagined communities (primarily the nation) and the imagined globe is that while the globe is imagined as a thing, it is not typically imagined as a community; there is no inherent “we” in the process of global imagination, no “horizontal comradeship.”⁹ If we were to take Anderson’s argument about nations and extrapolate it to the globe, the relationship between imagined nations and the imagined globe would be something akin to the relationship between a provincial community and a national community, so that just as a Wisconsinite may feel connected to a Californian as a citizen of America, then, an American would feel connected to a Tanzanian as a member of the

⁷ Ibid 37-46.

⁸ I’m less concerned with whether or not this is true (it probably isn’t), and more concerned with the fact that it appears so. Even from a skeptical academic perspective, it’s hard to imagine not knowing about something important in the world, even when faced with examples of the American news media ignoring significant global events, like the protest movement in Tunisia (which was only really covered once Ben Ali left).

⁹ Anderson 7.

global community. Lovely as this cosmopolitan reality sounds, we don't live in it. Global capitalism and contemporary social movements have indeed formed transnational communities, but the nation is still the primary unit against which an imagined "we" is formed and articulated, particularly in relation to the globe. Additionally, it is worth noting that while the nation is imagined as a bounded and sovereign entity, the globe cannot be bounded in the same way; nations are bounded so that they stand in opposition to other nations, while the globe is bounded by gravity, so that it is a unit which incorporates various imagined communities and organizes them into a logical whole.

The second, and most important, comparison to make is between the process of global imagination and the concept of the Lacanian imaginary. For Lacan, the imaginary, which works in tension with the symbolic order and the Real, has to do with the perception of coherence and wholeness out of fragmentation. This is outlined most clearly in the mirror stage of development, in which (roughly) a child encounters an image of itself in a mirror, and takes that image reflected in the mirror as a whole self, an ideal ego. This is the first time that the child recognizes itself as a whole and bounded self, as prior to the mirror stage, the child has experienced only a fragmented reality.¹⁰ Friedrich Kittler argues that film is the penultimate medium of the imaginary, as it takes fragmented remnants of optical reality (film frames) and projects them to create a whole, continuous, moving image.¹¹ The mirror stage has also been used in film studies, most notably by Laura Mulvey, who argues that pleasure in narrative cinema derives from a mirror stage identification with the (male) figures on the screen as ideal

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," trans. Alan Sheridan, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, et al (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2001), 1285-1290.

¹¹ Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop Young, Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford, 1999) 15, 119.

egos.¹² Importantly, Lacan argues that the formation of the ideal ego as demonstrated in the mirror stage provides the image of cohesive reality that allows for the infant to experience subjectivity and enter into the symbolic order of reality and its representation through language.¹³

The idea of global imagination resembles the Lacanian imaginary in several important ways: first, Lacan's contention that imagining a whole, ideal ego is required for the subject to enter the symbolic order is not dissimilar to Steger's formulation of how social articulations like political ideologies require social imaginaries. The most important aspect of the Lacanian imaginary for understanding the process of global imagination, though, is the idea of creating cohesion out of fragmentation. The globe, as a unit of social imaginary which undergirds and allows certain social articulations, must be imagined as a cohesive thing. Lacan, in explicating the mirror stage, remarks that the process of subject formation outlined in the mirror stage parallels the way in which knowledge resembles paranoia; that is, knowledge (and mirror stage subject-formation) creates connections and cohesiveness where none actually exist.¹⁴ This is, more or less, what global imagination does: it makes the globe from a reality that is fragmented, lacking the structures of physical experience or community, into a cohesive whole, logical and bounded in its thing-ness, observable and representable. It is also a means of producing knowledge about the globe. The iconic image of the globe, the 1968 Earthrise photograph taken from Apollo 8, appears to capture this wholeness, presenting the earth in two dimensions as a spectral, closed sphere against the background of black, empty space. It indicates that the entirety of the globe can be seen, and that it looks like a certain way. Certainly, this image of the earth parallels the reflected image of the child in the mirror in that it is imagined as a whole,

¹² Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 342-352.

¹³ Lacan, 1286.

¹⁴ Lacan, 1286.

when prior to its representation it would have been a collection of unintelligible, fragmented reality.

I have thus far ignored the issue of subject-formation in the mirror stage, but there is an important element of subjectivity and positioning involved in the process of global imagination. The global imaginary is not, after all, the only social imaginary in existence; it is not even the dominant one of our moment. Thus, in a situation where multiple social imaginaries undergird various social articulations – some of them imagined communities, some of them imagined units – the process of imagining a globe, a unit uniquely able to subsume all of these in its imagined form, must involve an element of organizing and positioning. This is most easily demonstrated in relation to nations, still the dominant social imaginary: global imagination not only creates the world as a cohesive globe, it also makes nations fit together as a part of that globe. More than that, though, it positions nations in relation to one another and in relation to the globe, so that the United States can articulate a sense of global responsibility in bombing Libya,¹⁵ while Qatar flies jets over Libya as a regional actor, and Djibouti is not part of the conversation.¹⁶ In other words, nations are imagined as parts of the globe with specific attributes and roles to play in the logical functioning of that globe. Global imagination, then, in addition to creating a cohesive globe, also does this job of positioning nations and other entities within the globe.

The primacy of the nation as a unit of social imaginary, though, complicates this process of positioning entities within the imagined globe; for one, the process of imagining the globe does not actually take place from above the globe, as the photograph from space might imply, but from within a social situation, particularly from within a nation. This means that there is a

¹⁵ CNN Wire Staff, “Obama: Not acting in Libya ‘would have been a betrayal of who we are,’” CNN.com, March 28, 2011, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-03-28/politics/us.libya_1_libya-mission-libya-policy-libyan-leader-moammar-gadhafi?s=PM:POLITICS (accessed April 13, 2011).

¹⁶ I’ve used a geopolitical example because, as Steger’s work indicates, political ideologies often provide the most overt and clear-cut examples.

“here/there” element to the process of global imagination; at least in the American context, the globe, despite being imagined as a closed and inclusive system-thing, is not “here,” it is part of “there,” not unlike the distinction between Self and Other that undergirds the Lacanian subject’s integration into the Symbolic Order.¹⁷ For evidence of this distinction, one need look no further than the structure of news media: almost every major newspaper has separate sections or subsections for world news, indicating that all of the other news, likely organized around local and national categories, is not world news. If it weren’t for some sort of here/there distinction in global imagination, all news would be world news. This means, then, that the process of “making whole” in global imagination does not erase difference and otherness; rather, global imagination takes experiences and images of difference and otherness and arranges them symbolically to fit into a unit called the globe. It subsumes them into the globe, so that global imagination is a process by which the subject can imagine that he/she does understand difference and otherness (“there”) as part of a system-thing; a retail chain with a name like “Global Market” can sell the consumer commodities specifically engineered to dwell on cultural difference and otherness, because they are part of a system called the globe. In this instance, the term “global” can be seen as a means of managing cultural difference.

Global imagination, at this point, starts to resemble Edward Said’s Orientalism, insofar as global imagination is a process by which cultural difference is appropriated into a system of knowledge, wherein something is made and constructed. Said argued that Orientalism, both as an academic discipline and a Foucauldian discourse, produced knowledge of the Orient that allowed it to serve as an Other to the Occident.¹⁸ There is a definite discursive element to global imagination, particularly as knowledge is generated about specific parts of the imagined globe

¹⁷ Mulvey 345.

¹⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2003).

(i.e. Tahiti is tropical, France is European, Iran is oppressive – all typically global unquestioned “facts,” circulated and mediated to the American subject). Indeed, it is important to understand global imagination not just as the process of imagining the globe as a unit, but as the process of imagining the globe as a unit with specific characteristics. This is in line with Steger’s argument, in which differences in the specific characteristics of the imagined globe (and thus global imaginary) between groups allow for the articulation of different globalisms.¹⁹ It does make sense, then, that while Justice Globalism and Jihadist Globalism might be articulations of a global imaginary, they stem from different fundamental understandings of the shape, or characteristics, of the globe. Put another way, they all stem from a global imaginary, but different specific knowledges of the globe.

There are several important distinctions to make between Said’s Orientalism and the process of global imagination: first, global imagination is not as overtly institutionalized, nor as old, as Said’s Orientalism, which was reproduced over centuries into an entire academic discipline. Second, as I have stated already, global imagination is a process, not a thing; whereas one can assign traits and characteristics to Orientalism, and point to certain representations or tropes and declare them Orientalist, one cannot quite do the same for global imagination.²⁰ Third, Said’s Orientalism served the function of creating an Other, an Oriental as a counterpoint to the Occidental. Global imagination includes otherness, but in a different way: it creates a unit which can subsume otherness into a cohesive, systemic logic of the entire globe. In other words, otherness is not the point, as it is in Orientalism. Finally, Orientalism was, in Said’s exposition of it, a discourse which referred to a bounded geographical region, although the tropes

¹⁹ Steger 230.

²⁰ One could, though, do so in regard to something like the American imagined globe.

perpetuated by it did tend to leak out.²¹ Global imagination, on the other hand, takes all geographical regions and their sum as its object. Whereas Orientalism produced knowledge about a certain section of the world in contrast to another section of the world, global imagination produces knowledge of the entire world.

In this way, global imagination does involve a global gaze. Going back to the image of the earth from space, Masahide Kato argues that it “manifested the totality of the globe eloquently to First World eyes,” marking the “triumph of an ‘absolute’ strategic gaze.”²² Though Kato makes his statements about the globe as part of a larger argument about discourses of nuclear politics, his comments are relevant to the topic of global imagination. Kato argues that the image of the globe from space, endowed with the authority of photography and mechanical reproduction, allows for the production of the “fiction of the globe as a unified whole,”²³ which allows for the entire globe to be gazed upon by the First World in terms of economic and geopolitical strategy. This image and the fiction of the earth as a totality, Kato argues, coupled with the logic of late capitalism, suppresses realities that cannot fit into this mode of representation,²⁴ limiting possibilities, and essentially allowing the global North to constitute the world to its advantage.²⁵ While Kato might be a bit of a pessimist, his argument is useful insofar as it demonstrates how the process of imagining the globe as a cohesive whole with specific characteristics is inherently involved in power/knowledge dynamics, at least partially rooted in political economy. Global imagination truly does take on the form of a gaze, insofar as the process of seeing or imagining the globe is simultaneously a process of constituting it. This goes

²¹ Richard G. Fox, “East of Said,” in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Sprinker (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1992).

²² Masahide Kato, “Nuclear Globalism: Traversing Rockets, Satellites and Nuclear War via the Strategic Gaze,” *Alternatives* 18 (1993): 340.

²³ Kato 346

²⁴ Kato 346

²⁵ Kato’s argument has much more nuance than I can provide here.

beyond fantasy; the phantasm of the globe, imagined from a set of images, is the global reality for the subject. Going back to Steger's global political ideologies, Imperial Globalism and Jihadist Globalism appear as the only ways to act, the appropriate (even if contested) responses to the reality of the imagined globe. The process of global imagination thus undergirds practices with real, constitutive material impacts on the world, from tourism to imperialistic warfare.

I would like to conclude this section by explaining and defending my terminology. As I have shown above, the process of global imagination is best explained in relation to terms such as discourse, knowledge, ideology, gaze, and imagined communities. This begs the question of why I chose not to designate a term like "global discourse," "global ideology," "global gaze," "global mythology," or "constructed globe." I consciously chose the term "global imagination" for a several of reasons: first, it seems to encompass these other terms. Discourse, knowledge, construction, mythology and gaze all imply an element of imagination. In this sense, Lacan's choice to designate the imaginary as a precursor to involvement in the symbolic order which structures social life has been instructive for me; imagination is fundamental to representation. But I also chose to use the term "global imagination" because it connotes possibility. Speaking of global imagination as a discourse similar to Orientalism, for example, implies a sense of stasis and fixedness, whereas speaking of global imagination implies constant process, and thus possibility; on a gut-check level, an imagined globe seems to require reproduction more so than a constructed globe.

This connection between imagination and possibility also then involves itself in the production of realities and situations. Herbert Marcuse, in *An Essay on Liberation*, theorizes imagination as a critical aspect in the production of ideological and political economic situations,

both alternative and status quo.²⁶ For him, the possibility of the creation of a new, more just society relies on the power of critical imagination. In the same vein, the term “global imagination” can be involved in the reproduction of existing global realities as well as in the generation of new ones, in a way that can bring together materiality and more abstract structures of meaning. In the same vein, global imagination is an important and useful term for its role in the production of possibilities for political, economic and social reality in relation to the globe. Global imagination, then, could potentially be both the guardian of the current global system and the vanguard of the new one.

²⁶ Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1969), 19.

CHAPTER TWO

Imagined Bricks: Tourism and Global Imagination

I have thus far written of global imagination and the imagined globe, imagined in the sense that it exists as a real unit of social life (a world, in fact) without day-to-day, sensually immersive experience. But do people not travel? Certainly, American college students tend to study abroad, and Americans travel across borders for all kinds of reasons, for church service missions, for Peace Corps duty, for military deployment, etc. For the most part, though, when Westerners go out from “here” to physically experience a “there,” it is called tourism. Tourism, as a prevalent transnational meaning-making process inherently involved in colonial or postcolonial power dynamics, deserves a good amount of scholarly attention.²⁷ Much of the existing literature on tourism deals primarily with the economics of tourism – trends in tourist consumption, the effects of certain phenomena on the profitability of tourism, the merits of tourism for economic development – rather than on the culture and subjectivity of tourism. I plan to make a contribution to this last point. In this section, I theorize the role that tourism plays in the process of global imagination. In explicating the workings of tourism – that is, the structures and conventions through which tourism creates meaning – I argue that tourism aids in the process of global imagination by providing seemingly authentic, substantial reality upon which to build a globe. The nature of tourism, though, is such that it is likely to reproduce existing, dominant versions of the imagined globe.

²⁷ If tourism is not the primary mode in which former colonists have face-to-face interactions with the formerly colonized in formerly colonized territory, it is certainly one of the most prevalent.

How Tourism “Works”

It would be useful to start by, if not defining tourism, then describing it. The U.N.’s World Tourism Organization, which gathers statistics on tourism and promotes global tourism development, defines tourism as “the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes.”²⁸ This is an incredibly broad definition that could conceivably encompass distinctly non-touristic activities – visiting relatives in another state, for example, is not generally thought of as tourism – but it offers a useful starting point with some notable terms. The first, “outside their usual environment,” illuminates a key dynamic of tourism: tourism is not what one normally does. The touristic experience, then, is an experience distinct from ordinary experience. This ties in with the second key term: “leisure.” Tourism, as a practice, is tied up in the divide between work and leisure that was developed during the industrial revolution; it is typically a leisure activity, or at least is definitely not a “work” activity.²⁹ While the UNWTO definition includes the word “business,” this is a point where it uses too broad a stroke; imagine, for example, a Canadian on a business trip to Malaysia. Would this Canadian be a tourist while sitting in meeting-rooms and negotiating deals and doing work for their company? No. Business and tourism certainly can and do blend together (from corporate retreats to entertaining your firm’s clients when they’re in town), but gut-check reactions, which are useful in feeling out that which is ideological common-sense, indicate that the Canadian’s leisure activities – perhaps sightseeing or bartering for souvenirs – would be his/her tourist activities. This is because tourism is ultimately a leisure activity, an activity that stands specifically in contrast to work.

²⁸ World Tourism Organization, “Study on the Concepts and Realities of Social and Solidarity Tourism in Africa” (Madrid, Spain: World Tourism Organization, 2007), 1.

²⁹ Although there is labor in it, as in all things.

Tourism is actually defined by several dichotomies. John Urry, in *The Tourist Gaze*, also stresses the work/leisure distinction that I have already mentioned: through an analysis of English seaside resorts, he argues that modern tourism was originally defined as explicitly opposite of “regulated, organised work.”³⁰ Related to this, though, is the ordinary/extraordinary binary at play in tourism; for example, none would mistake me sitting on my couch watching *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for organized work, but few would also mistake such an action for tourism. Thus, tourism is not just any leisure activity, but an extraordinary leisure activity, one that stands in contrast to normal leisure. The emphasis on travel in tourist practice is a manifestation of this dichotomy, as well as exemplary of the third, and most important one: the here/there dichotomy. Tourist activity usually happens in a “there,” as opposed to the ordinary “here” of everyday, typical life. The spatiality of tourism is constructed as the opposite of ordinary spaces like home and work. To go back to gut-checks, this is why a New Yorker visiting the Statue of Liberty would not generally be regarded as a tourist; they are, after all, still somehow home.³¹ In this context, it makes sense that the most common image of the tourist (yes, the tourist itself is often deployed as an imagined trope) is that of the loud, khaki-shorts-clad outsider; to be a tourist is to be outside of the one’s normal environment.

The UNWTO definition also fails to include (or perhaps just thoroughly assumes) the consumptive aspect of tourism. Dean MacCannell, in *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, identifies tourism as a consumption of experience.³² This means a couple of things: first, it means that there is a tourist commodity, or an object of tourism that is traded. This goes beyond the obvious, which is that typically the practice of tourism involves some kind of sale or

³⁰ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), 2.

³¹ Or, New Yorkers only go to the Stature of Liberty with out-of-towners, as hosts.

³² Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, (Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 20-21.

exchange of capital, whether for transportation, lodging, admissions, or some combination of the three (and more). More than this, understanding tourism as the consumption of experience involves recognizing that tourism turns experience into a commodity; that is, tourism reifies experience into a thing, an object that can stand in relation to other objects and commodities. Put into the terms of traditional economic analysis, in tourism, the experience of material objects is an excludable good. Going to the movies is an analogous form of the consumption of experience: when one goes to see a movie, he/she pays for the experience of a specific form of audiovisual stimulation. That experience of sitting in a darkened theater and losing oneself in a world created by a conventionalized set of visual and auditory materials is the commodity. By the same token, when one engages in tourism, the experience of seeing and being in a place that is extraordinarily outside of one's normal habitat is the commodity. Note that I have described both tourism and going to the movies as the "experience of" something; we are talking about the consumptive experience of a thing that is treated as the central commodity. The consumer at the movies, for example, focuses on the film and the diegesis as the primary object to experience.³³ The same goes for tourism. The striking difference, though, is that whereas the audience at the movies takes a film designed to be a commodity as its object – that is, the audience consumes *Die Hard*, or *Toy Story*, or *Inception* – tourism takes the physical materialities of *place and culture* as its commodity-object; the tourist consumes the experience of France, or the rainforest, or an Arab medina as a commodity, and whether these places are lived-in or not only affects the type of experience the tourist consumes.

Framing tourism as the consumption of experience also implies a sense of trade based on sign value. Jean Baudrillard, in "The Ideological Genesis of Needs," argues that the nature of

³³ If someone goes to the movies, you ask them "How was the movie?" True, they could respond with a comment about the general experience, such as, "It was ok, but this kid next to me kept talking really loudly," but the primary object of the consumptive experience is still the movie itself.

consumption goes beyond the exchange of capital.³⁴ At the point where a car is bought because the buyer needs to get from one place to the other, for example, it is not an object of consumption. An object only becomes an object of consumption when it is made to function as a sign within wider symbolic structures, in relation to other signs.³⁵ At the point where the consumer decides to buy a cool Mazda over a boring Honda, the car becomes an object of consumption, as it serves to signify in relation to other objects; it is traded, then, beyond use-value and exchange value, on sign value.³⁶ Thus, to say that experience is being consumed in the practice of tourism is to say that the experience of places is traded on sign value, on how certain sights and destinations fit into a symbolic system of signification. An American tourist, for example, might choose to go to France because it is romantic, or at least more romantic than Germany or Mexico, and may even choose specifically to stay in Paris because it is considered more romantic than Normandy or the south of France (or because he/she doesn't know much about the south of France). Or, the tourist may choose to spend a day (or a week) at Disneyland instead of Universal Studios, SeaWorld, or Six Flags. There are plenty of other examples, but the point is that the tourist does not just seek out his/her destination based on how it fits into the dichotomies of work/leisure, ordinary/extraordinary and here/there (which are themselves based on systems of signification), but also on how one "there" stands in relation to another "there," to another "there." That is to say, tourist objects are consumed based on their symbolic positions in relation to other tourist objects, and other consumptions of experience.

Just from this short discussion of the tourist commodity and tourism as a consumption of experience, it would appear that tourism is a practice with clear structures and conventions.

³⁴ Jean Baudrillard, "The Ideological Genesis of Needs," in *The Consumer Society Reader*, ed. Juliet Schor and D.B. Hold (New York, NY: New Press, 2000) 57-80.

2000, 60

³⁵ Ibid 59

³⁶ Ibid 60

MacCannell outlines the structure of tourism in treating tourist experiences as “cultural productions.”³⁷ In his formulation, there are three main aspects of any cultural production or consumption of experience, whether it’s a roller coaster or an opera: he calls them the model, the medium, and the influence.³⁸ The first part, the model, is an idealized representation of a concept or “aspect of life.”³⁹ The model could be based on widely circulated cultural images (as seen on TV, film, the internet, etc.), past experiences, literature, or anything of the like. Regardless, MacCannell uses it to mean an “embodied ideal,”⁴⁰ which is to say, the model is the ideal upon which the experience is based, and the experience is expected to somehow reflect, embody, or live up to it. This is tied to the influence, which MacCannell describes as “the changed, created, intensified belief or feeling that is based on the model.”⁴¹ The model and influence are inseparable, as the influence is the effect that the model is supposed to have; opera, one could say, is supposed to involve beauty and cultured-ness. In between the model and the influence, supposedly bringing them together, is the medium; this is the thing itself, the actual performance of the opera, or the parade, or the fight, or whatever. The medium is supposed to be able to mediate the model and its influence. That is to say, the performance of the opera has to fit into what the model of what the spectator thinks of as opera, as well as convey the pleasures, effects and influences that opera is supposed to, or imagined to, convey.

In tourism, then, the physical place, and the tourist’s experience of it as the object of tourism, is the medium. The model, in tourism, is the tourist’s understanding of the place he/she is experiencing or consuming. Unless the tourist has already visited the place, this understanding comes primarily from widely circulated and mediated images of the place. To go back to the

³⁷ MacCannell 23.

³⁸ Ibid 23-25.

³⁹ Ibid 23.

⁴⁰ Ibid 24.

⁴¹ Ibid 24.

example of the American choosing to vacation in Paris because it is romantic, the model is this understanding of Paris as romantic, based on popular images and representations of Paris across a wide range of media. Meanwhile, pleasure is often (though not always) the influence in tourism; the experience of Paris should be romantic because romance is pleasurable. This understanding of the structure of touristic practice in terms of a medium matching a model is of crucial importance, for it reveals the way in which the subjectivity of the tourist, more so than the object of tourism, determines the content and meanings of the tourist experience. The aforementioned American tourist experiences the city of Paris – its visual landscape, its sounds, its people – in terms of his/her model of the city as a romantic, quintessentially French or European place. In the same way that the performance of an opera must conform to the spectator's understanding of what an opera is, the tourist object, the medium, is constituted and consumed in terms of the model for what the place is (as well as what a tourist experience is). The materiality of the tourist object, or the way in which "locals" live in and understand the place, is only significant for how well it matches the tourist's model of the place; thus, an American tourist looking to experience "Paris: city of love" and an American tourist looking to experience "Paris: city of high architecture" could both be equally satisfied by the actual experience of the same sights in Paris. Or, Disneyland could be just as satisfying for the tourist looking to experience the Disney magic as for the ironic "post-tourist" looking to mock the artificiality of consumer culture. The tourist site or object is thus something of a Rorschach test for the tourist: he/she will see what he/she is positioned to see.⁴² Again, the tourist object

⁴² There is, of course, room for exception, and there are certain sights that a tourist cannot force to fit a model; public urination, an all-too-common sight in Paris, is hard to view as romantic. This will likely not prevent the tourist from experiencing other parts of Paris as romantic, and likely will not prevent the tourist from continuing to understand the essence of Paris as a city of romance.

functions like a sign insofar as its physical materiality works to signify the set of mythical meanings and associations that make up the model.

It would appear, then, that tourism involves a specific way of seeing; John Urry argues that tourism is structured through what he calls the “tourist gaze,” a mode of seeing objects in physical space that simultaneously creates them as objects of tourism and as symbols representing some kind of reality. Urry borrows his terminology from Michel Foucault’s concept of the gaze, opening his study with a quote from *The Birth of the Clinic* about the medical gaze.⁴³ The Foucauldian gaze has to do with the way in which seeing and being seen is a constitutive activity; for example, in the excerpt that Urry uses, Foucault discusses how the act of a doctor seeing a patient works to constitute and classify the body of the patient and its characteristics (i.e. is it normal or abnormal, what diseases does it have, does it work properly, etc.). The important point of this is that gaze constitutes that which is being seen; that is, it makes the seen object into what it is, measuring, classifying and identifying the seen thing according to a structured set of norms. To gaze upon a tree, for example, not only turns that piece of material reality into something called a tree, but a specific type of tree, perhaps an oak or an elm. More seriously, gazing on humans constitutes them in certain ways, as male or female, freakish or normal. This is, obviously, a thoroughly political process, wrapped up in Foucauldian relations of power, position, discourse, and domination. For a white to gaze on Frantz Fanon in his essay “The Fact of Blackness,” for example, was to constitute him as a black man.⁴⁴ The gaze, then, appropriates its object into a system of knowledge, defining it and making it speak and exist as the thing it has been made to become.⁴⁵

⁴³ Urry 1.

⁴⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York, NY: Grove, 1967), 111.

⁴⁵ Furthermore, in Foucault’s panoptic society, in which a disembodied social gaze is totally pervasive, subjects self-discipline, constituting themselves under this imagined gaze. In this way, being under the gaze constitutes

Urry is right to assert that tourism is structured through a tourist gaze; after all, tourism is often synonymous with sightseeing, or sightseeing is often implied as part of tourist practice. Tourists go to Paris to visually experience a beautiful and romantic city, or they go to Tunis to see the Arab world, despite the fact that romance, Arabness, worlds and cities (to name a few things) are not things that are necessarily visually observable. Put another way, the objects of tourism cannot just fit the models at play in tourism, but instead have to be made to fit; Paris has to be seen *as* romantic by the tourist. In tourism, the act of seeing works as a gaze, constituting its object and making it into what it is. A comparison to the act of watching a movie is, once again, appropriate: watching a film also involves a structured gaze, in which a procession of images projected onto a screen is made into a story, and in fact an entire separate world. The story-world of a film cannot just exist – in fact, it does not exist – but has to be made to exist in the act of the viewer viewing the film. Just as the audience of a film takes a limited set of images and makes them signify an entire story-world, so too does a tourist take a limited set of visual stimulation in material space and turn it into the experience of an entire place, country, or culture. We can see, here, the imaginative and constitutive element of tourism – it takes an organization of physical reality as a set of symbols upon which an idealized model of a place or a culture can be imagined. This is the essence of the tourist object as what MacCannell calls a medium.

Unfortunately, Urry does not so much define the tourist gaze as describe it and chart its development over the last several decades. He does, however, identify several different types of tourist gazes that exist and have existed, arguing that differences in the social position of the tourist or the social milieu of the tourist's culture affects the character of the gaze. This is

subjectivity, but I am more concerned with the way that the act of gazing constitutes that which is being gazed upon for the gazer.

consistent with the analogy to watching a film, in which the meaning of a film might change based on social differences between audience members and gazes; differences in genre, in fact, cater to various gazes.⁴⁶ A few examples of different tourist gazes are the “romantic gaze,” which turns an object or a vista into an item of transcendent beauty, the “collective gaze” that requires a throng of people gathered at a site to designate it as a pleasurable place to be, and the “mediatised gaze,” which designates a site as worth consuming and experiencing because it has been famously mass-mediated.⁴⁷ A tourist visiting the old *Star Wars* set in the Tunisian desert would deploy the mediatized gaze. Urry also devotes separate sections to seaside resort tourism, which brings together the romantic gaze and the collective gaze, and heritage tourism, in which the tourist can imagine that he/she is experiencing history by engaging with designated historical sites and museums. And still other tourist sites depend almost exclusively on a sense of spectacle; Petra in Jordan is an example that comes to mind, although that site is also wrapped up in models of heritage and the mediatized gaze (it featured prominently in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*).

This idea of the mediatized gaze deserves further attention, as it underscores the importance of media in tourism. The models to which tourist objects are made to conform are based primarily on images of places circulated through circuits of mass-media and mass culture, most notably through film and television, but also through magazines, novels, travel guides, and pretty much anything that represents a place. Urry writes that “anticipation is constructed through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce the gaze.”⁴⁸ In a recent example from my own life, I must confess that watching episodes of TNT’s “Memphis Beat” made me want to visit Memphis and

⁴⁶ *The Expendables*, for example, was designed for a different viewership and gaze than *Stomp the Yard*.

⁴⁷ Urry 150-151.

⁴⁸ *Ibid* 3.

experience what appears, in the city represented by the show, to be a thriving blues scene. If I were to visit Memphis, the place represented in the show would almost certainly make up part of the model for my experience of the city. This illustrates two crucial components of the meaning-making structure of tourism: first, tourist sites have to be pre-seen through a set of images circulated in everyday life. Second, the tourist often looks to penetrate the image, to enter the world of the image. This is, in a way, what I mean when I say that a tourist object mediates a model: that it allows a tourist to experience the world represented in a set of two-dimensional images in three dimensions, and with more than just visual stimulation.

Urry demonstrates this practice of “tracking down the image” in his explication of the uses of photography in tourism. He has several points to make: first, that photographing an object is to somehow appropriate it into a power/knowledge relationship. “Photography tames the object of the gaze, the most striking examples being of exotic cultures,” he writes.⁴⁹ Next, he points out that “photography *seems* to be a means of transcribing reality. The images produced appear to be not statements about the world but pieces of it, or even miniature slices of reality...It is thought that the camera does not lie.”⁵⁰ This is in spite of the fact that the act of photography often involves trying to find the right object, the right angle, and the right framing to make for a perfect, beautiful picture. With this in mind, Urry writes, “The power of the photograph stems from its ability to pass itself off as a minaturisation of the real, without revealing either its constructed nature or its ideological content.”⁵¹ Finally, after describing how photography makes everyone into an “amateur semiotician” capable of determining whether certain objects effectively signify “real Italia” or “ye olde England,”⁵² Urry points out that

⁴⁹ Ibid 127.

⁵⁰ Ibid 127.

⁵¹ Ibid 128.

⁵² Ibid 128.

photography betrays a hermeneutic circle of much of tourism, as the practice of photography in tourism is oftentimes a process of “tracking down and capturing” the images of places that have already been mediated to the tourist through brochures and mass, pop-culture media,⁵³ thus simply reproducing them as really real.

This brings us to one of the most important conventions of the practice of tourism and the tourist gaze: the construction of authenticity. Tourism trades on the notion of authenticity, and all of the aforementioned conventions of tourism add up to the imagined condition that the tourist is somehow experiencing the “real thing,” or getting as close to it as he/she can.⁵⁴

MacCannell titles this “staged authenticity,”⁵⁵ a useful term how that it illustrates the way in which such authenticity needs to be constructed through convention. MacCannell details these conventions, arguing that the staging of authenticity happens through the construction of what he calls “front” and “back” spaces.⁵⁶ Front spaces are those intended for some kind of audience to attend and experience a performance; back spaces are supposed to be the sites of real life, where a person (objectified by the tourist) goes about his or her life as he or she normally would.

Authenticity in tourist experience, then, is based on penetration of back spaces, the observation of life and culture that is not self-conscious or performed. For a space to be considered a site for the experience of authentic culture, it must be conceived of as a back-space, measured against an imagined front-space.

Back spaces, however, can be just as performed and constructed as front spaces; the Tunis medina is an example of a tourist site taken by the tourist as a kind of back space, where

⁵³ Ibid 129.

⁵⁴ What the real thing is, though, depends on the type of tourism, or the model at play; at Disneyland a tourist could imagine themselves as getting as close to the Disney world as possible, while a tourist in Japan could imagine that he/she is as close to Japanese culture as he/she can get.

⁵⁵ MacCannell 91.

⁵⁶ Ibid 92.

the landscape allows the tourist to imagine the he/she can get off the beaten path and observe the real lives of the locals. But the tourist in the medina requires visual markers to signify the backness of the space – dirty, maze-like streets, small shops jammed full of scarves and jewelry, people in “traditional” dress – thus illustrating how backness and authenticity can be thoroughly constructed and performed.⁵⁷ This idea of front and back spaces and staged authenticity also plays into the idea of penetrating the image. For a tourist to deploy the mediatized gaze and imagine that he/she is entering and experiencing the world of an image (or a world imagined from images) requires the tourist to move into an imagined back space on the other side of the screen.

Authenticity and Global Imagination

It is this construction and experience of authenticity that makes tourism important to the idea of global imagination. Tourism obviously does not play an indispensable role in the construction and imagination of a globe – after all, one does not have to travel to imagine a globe, and there are plenty of widely-circulated images that can serve as symbols upon which the globe can be imagined – but tourism does lend the authority of authentic experience to the process of global imagination and to particular iterations of the imagined globe. The primary difference between the function of mediated images as signs in global imagination and the function of tourist experiences as signs in global imagination is that tourist experiences are endowed with an added sense of authenticity and authority; it is one thing to see pictures of the

⁵⁷ The Tunis medina does not actually represent the “real” Tunis or Tunisia; in fact, the population in the medina has steadily been declining over the years, and many of the shopkeepers live outside of the medina.

Pyramids of Giza, and another thing to say “I have seen the Pyramids of Giza.”⁵⁸ As Urry’s argument about photography illustrates, tourist practices lend a sense of authenticity to tourist objects, as if to say “There it is, reality is this way, the camera does not lie.” In this way, tourist objects and the images produced by tourism function as symbols, allowing a reality to be imagined and constituted on top of them; a photo album of a vacation privileges specific images as particularly able to represent the whole experience. Urry demonstrates how this symbolic constitutive capacity extends even to bodies themselves, as dancers dancing the Hula, or samba, or the Maori haka are taken as symbols made to represent an entire cultural reality. He writes, “The performers in such dances become signs of what the tourist audience believes them to be...with Maori and Hawaiian cultures the dance *is* the culture, swamping out all other signifiers and being recognisable across the globe.”⁵⁹ Thus, tourism is itself a structure through which the symbols of global imagination are mediated and, even further, concretized so as to create a globe. Tourist sites become, in a way, imagined bricks in the construction of a globe.

Put another way, tourism provides a seemingly authentic encounter with the “there” of global imagination; the here/there dynamic in transnational tourism runs parallel to the here/there of global imagination. The tourist’s experience of “there,” though, is endowed with more authority than the image-based representations of the “there” that can also serve as symbols in the process of global imagination. The tourist gaze (like the tourist camera, in fact intertwined with the tourist camera) is not supposed to lie, and so the tourist can say, with at least some degree of authority, “I have seen the world.”⁶⁰ It would appear, at this point, that it is only

⁵⁸ Even though, in all likelihood, the tourist sought a spot from which to see the Pyramids which would offer the view of the Pyramids most like the popular images of them, without the inclusion of all of the tourist ‘junk’ that has grown around the site.

⁵⁹ Urry 156.

⁶⁰ It seems appropriate to note that, in looking to increase her foreign policy credibility, Sarah Palin took several public trips abroad. The idea was not to change the imagined globe promoted by Palin, but rather to lend her version

international or global tourism that is significant in the process of global imagination, but this is not true; tourism does not only turn physical experience of the global “there” into symbolic fodder in the process of global imagination, but also allows tourists the authentic experience of globally significant “here” sites. An American tourist in New York, for example, could visit and photograph the United Nations and say “I have been there,” or a tourist in Washington D.C. could stroll down Embassy Row, associating the differences in size and architecture between embassies with their position in global political dynamics. Or, as I will dwell on extensively in my fourth chapter, an American tourist could visit Ground Zero and imagine that he/she is getting as close as possible to an event that was pivotal in America’s collective process of imagining the globe and its characteristics.

None of this is to say that tourism is a means of discovering the authentic, true global reality through the experience of tourist sites (nor is it to say that it isn’t); tourism, as a practice that aids in the construction of a globe, is more likely to reinforce already existing versions of the imagined globe. MacCannell and Urry point out that tourist spaces and objects are made to fulfill the models and the anticipation of pleasure that already exists before the touristic encounter. Going back to the example of Hula, performance of the dance itself, consumed by the tourist as the medium between the model and its anticipated pleasure, has to conform to the tourist demands, or model. Meanwhile, tourists are likely to photograph scenes that mimic or reproduce already existing images of a place; a tourist, as Urry’s amateur semiotician, will attempt to capture romantic Paris, or might photograph that in the Tunis medina which most closely resembles the bustling Arab market portrayed in *Casablanca*. Even beyond the visual, the tourist often goes in search of the experiences that he/she has already imagined to be typical,

of global politics more authority and legitimacy, so that one could say, “Sarah has seen the world. She must know what she’s talking about.”

or necessary, to the real experience of a place; you *have* to sit in a Parisian café, or you have to *have* to haggle with a tricky Arab shopkeeper over the price of a rug. In this way, the practice of “tracking down the image” in tourism, as well as the structure of making tourist objects mediate models, often has the effect of reproducing and reinforcing existing images and tropes that also function as symbolic coordinates of global imagination. The idea of tourism, then, is not to authentically experience something completely unknown, but to experience that which is already known and represented in as authentic. By nature, tourism favors and reinforces existing and dominant representations and imaginings of the globe and its places.

I would like to end this section on tourism and the global imagination with a discussion of Urry’s contention that, under contemporary global capitalism, the tourist gaze has increasingly become integrated into everyday life. “There is what I have termed the ‘end of tourism’ in the general ‘economy of signs,’” he writes.⁶¹ Urry is referring, here, to the emphasis on trade in signs that has emerged as a definitive feature of contemporary capitalism; he writes that the social and economic movements of modern-day global capitalism “have unpredictably elevated ‘tourism’...from the very margins to a central place within this emergent global order.”⁶² Thus, the tourist gaze is not deployed solely on holidays – it is now at play on the road, in the movie theater, and in shopping malls. This is, in a way, what Jon Goss was outlining in his unofficial guide to the Mall of America when he focused on the way that dreams of travel are embedded in the visual commodity aesthetic of the mall⁶³: the partial disembedding of the tourist gaze and the tourist mode of seeing and consuming from the actual practice of tourism, and its incorporation into the aesthetic of everyday consumption. It also suggests that the process of seeing and

⁶¹ Urry 161.

⁶² Ibid 161.

⁶³ Jon Goss, “Once-Upon-a-Time in the Commodity World: An Unofficial Guide to the Mall of America,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89, no. 1 (1999): 45-75.

imagining the globe has taken on some of the characteristics of seeing as a tourist; Urry mentions that the spread of the tourist gaze has created a situation where every corner of the globe has found a way to create a touristic niche for itself.⁶⁴ As John and Jean Comaroff detail in *Ethnicity, Inc.*, the branding of cultures and places for tourist consumption is starting to become an ubiquitous strategy for economic development, and is in fact a strategy of cultural survival.⁶⁵ That is, various groups around the world have worked to merge their cultural aesthetics with the aesthetics of tourist consumption in an effort to preserve their cultures. I have said that tourism helps in the process of imagining a globe, but it also seems possible that Americans see and imagine the globe as tourists, even without leaving their homes. Whether or not this is true, it does seem as though the places of the globe might be self-disciplining accordingly.

⁶⁴ Urry 161.

⁶⁵ John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

CHAPTER THREE

The Terrorist Interruption

Having theorized the role of tourism in the process of global imagination, I will now do the same for terrorism: whereas tourism aids in the process of global imagination, helping to build the imagined globe, global terrorism works to violently interrupt the process in an effort to generate new realities and possibilities. Terrorism, though, has proven notoriously difficult to define, and scholars, politicians and military personnel have been plagued, in one way or another, by the adage, “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” This is particularly frustrating in the face of the shocking and abominable violence and destruction that terrorism has produced, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. Even when discussing 9/11, though, it is difficult to concretely define terrorism. Nonetheless, if the amount of time and resources that nations around the globe put into counterterrorism is any kind of indication, terrorism seems to be one of the more significant transnational practices, or phenomena, of our time. In this section, I will produce a working understanding of terrorism and its impact on culture before analyzing, in terms of global imagination, what happened on September 11, and what new social and cultural formations the attacks helped to generate. I argue that terrorism works to interrupt collective social imaginative process, and that the 9/11 attacks functioned to interrupt the American processes of narrative and global imagination by radically reordering the images of the symbolic matrix through which global reality is

constructed. The result has been a tendency to collectively imagine a globe in which the United States is constantly a victim of the shadowy entity called *the* terrorists.

Under-defining Terrorism

The sticking point for any discussion of terrorism is that, as of yet, there is no generally agreed-upon definition of terrorism. Between academics, governments, international organizations and private businesses, there are thousands of definitions of terrorism floating around. Even within the United States government, different agencies and branches employ different definitions of terrorism: the Department of Defense has defined terrorism as “the unlawful use of – or threatened use of – violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives,”⁶⁶ while Title 22 of the United States Code uses “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents,”⁶⁷ which is a different definition than the one employed by Title 18 of the same document.⁶⁸ To make things more complicated, these definitions are often in flux, as illustrated by the change in the definition employed by the White House national security strategy: in September 2002 it used the definition “premeditated, politically motivated violence against innocents,” but a few months later, realizing that this would include actions officially undertaken by the United States, it adopted the language, “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ George Leaman, “Iraq, American Empire, and the War on Terrorism,” in *The Philosophical Challenge of September 11*, ed. Tom Rockmore, Joseph Margolis and Arment T. Marsoobian (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 14-15.

⁶⁷ *Annual country reports on terrorism, U.S. Code*, title 22, sec 2656f (2010).

⁶⁸ *Definitions, U.S. Code*, title 18, sec. 2331 (2010).

⁶⁹ Leaman 15.

Meanwhile, from the academic end, sociologists, philosophers and security studies scholars have offered definitions such as David Rodin's "Terrorism is the deliberate, negligent, or reckless use of force against noncombatants, by state or nonstate actors for ideological ends and in the absence of a substantively just legal process,"⁷⁰ and Bruce Hoffman's definition of terrorism as "the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change."⁷¹ Even further, some of the more contentious debates about the definition of terrorism revolve around very specific characterizations, like whether or not violence against property can be considered terrorism, whether or not state-actors can engage in terrorism, or whether or not an act has to be illegal or clandestine to be terrorism.

I do not wish to wade too far into this swirling debate that has developed around defining terrorism by introducing my own supposedly authoritative general definition, but I would like to make some observations and, in the process, move toward a working understanding of what terrorism does. First, it is worth noting that part of what makes defining terrorism so difficult is that the connotation of the word "terrorist" has become particularly polemical and toxic, practically synonymous with evil. The problem, of course – at the very least for Americans, but likely for others – is that nobody wants to be associated with terrorism. As Igor Primoratz writes,

The one thing that is clear in [current] usage is that terrorism is a bad thing – nothing to be proud of or support. Virtually no one today would apply the word to oneself and one's own actions, nor to those one has sympathy with or whose actions one supports. As the hackneyed cliché has it, one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. This suggests there is a double standard at work, of the form 'us versus them.'⁷²

⁷⁰ David Rodin, "Terrorism without Intention," *Ethics* 114, no. 4 (2004), 755.

⁷¹ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York, NY: Columbia, 2006), 41.

⁷² Igor Primoratz. "Terrorism: What is it and can it ever be morally justified?" *Arena Magazine* 71 (2004), 27.

In other words, the term itself is thoroughly politicized, a kind of linguistic weapon; hence the changing of the White House definition. The highly political nature of the common usage of the word “terrorism,” then, is what allows the word to resist definition; the myth of definition, especially in certain academic circles, is that it can remove the meaning of a word from politics and shut out alternatives. In most instances, this is acceptable; it doesn’t bother me, for example, that defining a sandwich as a lunch food makes it seem less legitimate for me to eat it for dinner. Defining terrorism in a way that would include U.S. actions, though, is an obviously different story, and it illustrates the futility of attempting to depoliticize terrorism enough to define it.

On a related note, many definitions of terrorism dwell on the characteristics of the agents of terrorism. In some cases, this can be a solution to the “nobody wants to be a terrorist” issue; to bring up the White House definition again, the revised version was functionally identical to its predecessor, except for the clause at the end stipulating that terrorism is carried out by subnational groups, thus absolving the United States of any possibility that it has engaged in terrorism. This tendency to specify the agents of terrorism in the definition of terrorism, though, has led to a proliferation of definitions that make it seem as though the essence of terrorism, or the ability to classify something as terrorism, lies not in the action but in its actors. By the White House definition and those similar to it, if the 9/11 attacks had been officially undertaken by the government of the United Kingdom, or even MI6, they would not have been acts of terrorism. This should seem absurd. Some on what Rodin calls the “Agent-Focused” end of terrorism studies, such as Walter Laqueur, sidestep this conundrum by focusing on legitimacy; “Terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted,” is one definition that Laqueur has offered.⁷³ Bringing legitimacy into the picture, though, just opens up a whole new can of relativity; by this Laqueur definition, we could say that

⁷³ Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, (New York, NY: Little Brown and Co., 1987), 3.

whether or not the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 – specifically the “Shock and Awe” strategy – constituted terrorism depends on whether or not you take the action to be legitimate. For the U.S. government, it was a military action. To the former Iraqi government, it was terrorism.

I am not trying, here, to make a statement about the moral ambiguities of terrorism. I am instead trying to point out that terrorism has much more to do with reception than intention – that is, terrorism is only meaningful in social context, as a practice with social effects. There is, in fact, something to be said for removing intention and actors from the equation when studying terrorism and culture. To draw an analogy to another ism, it sounds ridiculous to try and define racism by its actors, as though someone from Minnesota might legitimately declare, “Racism is an action undertaken by people in the South in which...” Thus terrorism, in a manner similar to racism, should be identified as a social phenomenon and analyzed in terms of its functions within a social system. This is not to say that terrorism exists and happens independent of any kind of intention, or that intention is entirely irrelevant when discussing terrorism, but rather to say that terrorism, as a practice and a phenomenon, revolves around receptions and effects. After all, one thing that is clear from much of the writing on the subject is that terrorism is violence with an object(ive). Terrorists are trying to do something (hence the tendency in many definitions to include the target of terrorist actions), and the identity or motivations of the agents of terrorism can be known or unknown to different effects. With this in mind, I propose that the most productive way to move forward is to under-define terrorism, starting with a very wide definition and then naming its characteristics, attributes, and tendencies while acknowledging that these do not necessarily universally define the “ism.”

I will begin this process of under-defining terrorism by declaring that terrorism is a type of violence; this is, I believe, an uncontroversial statement, and is implied in every definition of

terrorism that I have ever come across.⁷⁴ Also, as I have already articulated, something can only be labeled “terrorism” if it happens in some kind of social context, if the terrorist attack creates meaning – it follows, then, that terrorism should be characterized as violence that has some sort of social meaning or impact. Put another way, terrorism is violence which works to alter social and political realities. It cannot be asocial. When an author like Carsten Bockstette refers to terrorism as “political violence,”⁷⁵ then, this is more or less what is meant: that terrorism is violence with a goal, violence that looks to do some sort of social work, or change some situation. It would be too broad, though, to label terrorism as political violence and leave it at that; there is a reason that two separate terms exist, and making them equals just muddies the waters for the analysis of either phenomenon. The relationship between terrorism and political violence is something like the relationship between Coca-Cola and soda: all Coca-Cola is soda, but not all soda is Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola is, however, probably the most iconic brand of soda. It is important, though, to use the term “political” widely here, in reference to all realms of social power; if it is deployed in the traditional sense, associated primarily with functions of state, it can severely limit the understanding of terrorism, keeping it squarely in the realm of anti-state activities. While terrorism often takes on an anti-state function, this is not the whole case; blowing up a celebrity is as equally a political statement as blowing up a lawmaker.

What distinguishes terrorism as a specific type of political violence is that it involves a mass audience. Think about it this way: if the CIA assassinates an American citizen (maybe because he/she possesses some sort of information which could threaten U.S. security) and then successfully makes it appear to the entire world that the person died in some sort of freak accident, it would certainly qualify as political violence, or state terror, but not as terrorism. If,

⁷⁴ Material violence, that is.

⁷⁵ Carsten Bockstette, *Jihadist Terrorist Use of Strategic Communication Management Techniques* (Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany: George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2008), 8.

on the other hand, the CIA were to assassinate the same person on live TV (I can't think of why this would happen, which is probably good), it would qualify as both political violence and terrorism. This brings up the callous but instructive question, "If a terrorist explodes in the woods and no one ever sees it, hears it or hears about it, is it terrorism?" Frankly, no, it's not terrorism. As I have stated, what distinguishes an action or an event as terrorism is its social effect; an act with no bearing on social situations cannot qualify as terrorism. Further, an act must reach a mass audience in order to qualify as terrorism; to draw another example, a mob hit known about only within the relatively small mafia-world, even though political and directed at an audience to some effect, would not qualify as terrorism.⁷⁶

So how is it, then, that terrorism separates itself from other forms of political violence and reaches its mass audience? There are two answers to this question: spectacle and symbol. Taking on the first of these, terrorism reaches a mass audience by generating a spectacle. I use the term "spectacle" less in Guy Debord's sense of the word (although Debord's spectacle is not disconnected from terrorism) and more in the typical sense: a spectacle is something – an image or an event or an image of an event – that demands an audience, forcing eyes to look at it and not allowing them to look away. That terrorism is spectacular seems to me plainly evident in the types of violence typically categorized as terrorism; when you browse the "Global Terrorism Database" by attack type, your top five choices are "Armed Assault," "Assassination," "Bombing/Explosion," "Hijacking" and "Hostage Taking (Barricade Incident)."⁷⁷ Thus, terrorism reaches a mass audience by generating an event or image of an event so violent that it absolutely must command the attention of a wide swath of people – it is no surprise, then, that terrorism would become one of the most iconic isms of the current media-saturated American

⁷⁶ Or it would not qualify as the kind of terrorism that I am concerned with, terrorism that works on mass culture.

⁷⁷ Global Terrorism Database, "Browse By Attack Type," START, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/BrowseBy.aspx?category=attack> (accessed 1 April, 2011).

moment.⁷⁸ It is often the case that the more theatrical and spectacular that terrorist violence is, the larger its impact will be. Spectacle is, in this context, the difference between terror and terrorism; the way that various authoritarian governments in places like Latin America have “disappeared” thousands of people in an effort to quell dissent through fear thoroughly qualifies as terror. Spectacle and subsequent mass mediation, though, is what separates terror from terrorism.

Terrorism also makes use of symbols. I will be straying slightly into the realm of intention here, but just to illustrate how terrorism works through symbolism. The business of altering realities and socio-political possibilities is obviously messy business; the impossibility of social actors removing themselves from the arena of social power relations engenders the impossibility of engineering social causes and effects, and the uncertainty of what effect on society a certain action will have. The effects of random spectacular violence cannot be predicted with any certainty. Symbolic violence, or violence that involves itself heavily in systems of signification and the axes of socio-linguistic order, appears as a buffer against this uncertainty – by committing acts of violence against symbols that are already laden with signified meaning, terrorists can hope to guide the development of reality as the terrorist act is absorbed. Thus it makes sense that terrorists often work to guide the narrative of their violence by identifying themselves, and that terrorists with a grievance against the United States would attack a U.S. Marine post in Lebanon; truly random terroristic violence is typically only undertaken by anarchists, who themselves became an iconic trope in late 19th century Europe. Even the *sicarii*, an offshoot of the Zealot revolt against Roman occupation of the Levant that is

⁷⁸ I don't say global moment because it is debatable whether or not the globe is media-saturated. There is a tendency, I think, to assume that because so much of the world can be so overwhelmingly mediated to Americans, the globe is saturated in media. It's more likely, instead, that the West is saturated in mediations of “global images.”

considered by Laqueur to be the first terrorist movement,⁷⁹ made use of symbolic violence: the *sicarii* would publicly assassinate Roman officials in the midst of large crowds with a distinctive type of short sword, the *sica*.⁸⁰ In this way, they simultaneously committed violence against symbols of Roman rule while establishing a symbolic, iconic, and narrative consistency to their own movement with the *sica*. Thus, it is worthwhile to characterize terrorism as symbolic violence. This means that, in contrast to military struggle, the material damage of terroristic violence is not the point; it is the symbolic impact of terrorism, its effect on structures of knowledge and imagination, which makes it effective.

Again, I realize I just spent a good amount of time on intention, but it was necessary to demonstrate how symbol and symbolism are key to how a terroristic event affects a social situation. It may seem simple: essentially, the specific target or object of terroristic violence influences how an act of terrorism affects a social situation, or how the event itself becomes a narrative or message. This is, however, crucial: because an automobile is a different type of cultural symbol than a building (or because a car in the countryside is different than a car next to an urban café), blowing up one thing or the other can have vastly different influences and consequences in a social situation.⁸¹

But even if we accept that terrorism makes use of spectacle and symbol to reach – and, at its most effective, constitute – an audience, it may not be entirely apparent how exactly this translates into an altered socio-political situation or reality. I have already hinted at the answer, but allow me to make it clear that terrorism’s use of spectacular, symbolic process alters realities by affecting the process of social imagination. I have already touched on imagination, but for the

⁷⁹ Walter Laqueur, “Excerpt from *A History of Terrorism*,” in *Confronting Fear: A History of Terrorism*, ed. Isaac Cronin (New York, NY: Thunder’s Mouth, 2002), 4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ I have been dwelling on blowing things up only for the sake of consistency – obviously terrorism takes on many forms, and each one can have different consequences in different situations. The possibilities are endless.

sake of clarity, allow me to recap and provide some examples: the way I am using it, imagination is the process by which a consistent reality is built upon a system of symbolic coordinates. The classic example of imagination is how when a subject sees three sides of a cube, he/she assumes that the other three sides exist, even though they are not visible. Essentially, imagination finishes reality and fills in gaps, so that we do not have to empirically experience everything in order to make sense of it. Another example: you're in a small, liberal-arts college English department. It's a long hallway with rows of doors on both sides, each with a placard next to it with a professor's name. Do you need to open each door in order to guess, roughly, what is behind it? Or could you stand in front of a door and know, before opening it, that you will find a desk, chairs, a computer and a bookshelf full of books? At the very least, you can be sure that you won't find a collection of grazing farm animals. This is the work of social imagination, to provide a consistent and predictable reality, both in and beyond physical experience.

But let's go back to the door. You're walking down that English department hallway, you're on your way to meet with a professor to talk about your ideas for a paper due in a couple of days, you see the door, you start to think about what the professor's reaction would be like if you sat across her desk and asked for an extension and then the door explodes, sending shrapnel and orange flame in all directions – at this point, are you still thinking about that extension? And is it possible that you will never see doors the same way again? This illustrates the fundamental function of terrorism: to interrupt the process of imagination. Scale is the only difference between my example and an actual instance of terrorism – by using spectacle to reach a mass audience, terrorism works to interrupt *collective* processes of imagination in order to alter a social or political situation. In such a context, Mike Davis' argument – that the threat of the car bomb is “producing the most significant mutations in city form and urban lifestyle” of our age

and has enabled the “enfranchisement of marginal actors in modern history”⁸² – starts to make sense. One’s ability to imagine urban space – or rather, the urban reality that one can possibly imagine – changes dramatically if all cars can also be bombs. For another example, take the actions of the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction) in the 1970’s, which was based primarily in Germany but also leaked into neighboring European countries: the RAF went around blowing up cars and committing random shootings at supermarkets in an effort to disrupt the “ideological numbness” of the German people and alert them to the (perceived) fact that Germany was still a fascist entity.⁸³ The failure of the RAF to achieve its actual stated goals is a topic that would require much more space and dedication than I can offer here, but what is worth mentioning is that the actions of the RAF did send German social and political reality into a crisis for a small amount of time, which is understandable when there is suddenly a possibility that going to buy cheese could get you blown up or gunned down.

9/11: The Terrorist Interruption and its Aftermath

With this functional framework in place of how terrorism works and what it does, I will now turn to what happened, culturally, on September 11, 2001. I am less concerned, here, with how the attacks were planned and what exactly happened when – consistent with the framework I have established, I am instead interested in how the 9/11 attacks were mediated and received. The starting point for any discussion of the reception of the 9/11 attacks has to be media; after all, while obviously many people in New York physically witnessed the destruction of the Twin Towers, most of the rest of the people in the world who experienced 9/11 did so through their television screens, as a media event. Marion Herz, quoting Klaus Theweleit, notes that the “real

⁸² Mike Davis, *Buda’s Wagon: A Brief History of the Car Bomb* (New York, NY: Verso, 2007), 7, 11.

⁸³ Žižek, Slavoj, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (New York, NY: Verso, 2002), 9.

location” of the event was not only Washington and New York, but also the living room and “the heads of the TV audience.”⁸⁴ Indeed, echoing the national trauma of JFK’s assassination, it is not uncommon during a conversation about 9/11 to recall exactly where one was when they heard about the attack, and then when they watched it on TV. It is thus impossible to address the immediate impact of the 9/11 attacks outside of the processes of media.

One 9/11 phenomenon often brought up was the initial moment of disbelief and actual confusion about whether or not what was being shown on TV was what was actually happening, as though there were a possibility that images on the screen were fictional, or part of a movie.⁸⁵ Caroline Knapp, in an essay published on September 20, 2001, writes that this feeling could only be summed up as “stunned.”⁸⁶ While I cannot say that I have done any kind of official polling, I feel I am reasonably safe in assuming that there are very few people out there, particularly very few Americans, who would say that they were not shocked or stunned when they witnessed the 9/11 attacks. The event was, for Americans, simply bewildering; people were used to fictional images of spectacular violence, not realities of spectacular violence. Herz tries to make sense of this collective state of “confusion or even delusion” in media terms, writing

The new quality of such terrorism exists then not so much in the extremely competent use of media, to facilitate the broadcasting of messages or images of terrorist acts, but mainly in the ability to turn the TV image into a *medium of terror*, which unites the extradiegetic reality of the spectators with the intradiegetic reality of the incident, and which suspends the distinction between fictionality and factuality.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Marion Herz, “Prime Time Terror: The Case of *La Jetée* and *12 Monkeys*,” in *Media, Terrorism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. Anandam P. Kavoori and Todd Fraley (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 54.

⁸⁵ Herz 53.

⁸⁶ Caroline Knapp, “Consciousness on Overload,” in *Afterwords: Stories and Reports from 9/11 and Beyond*, ed. Salon.com (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 2002), 42.

⁸⁷ Herz 54

At the end of the article, Herz describes the ability of filmic media, as it is currently constructed, to “interweave our reality with its own” as “nothing more than one of the inner charges that was detonated on 9/11 from the outside and which exploded in a collective psychosis.”⁸⁸ By her account, the barriers between the audience reality and the cinematic reality were, at least briefly, one of the casualties of the 9/11 attacks.

The analogy to the functions of televisual media is more than anecdotal; as stated before, the process of imagination is fundamental in watching and understanding film and media, and mediated images are crucial to how a (global) reality is imagined. In film, a narrative story-world, or diegesis, is built upon the plot, the actual images themselves presented to the spectator. The work of imagining the diegesis is up to the spectator-subject, but structured collectively so that many people can imagine something very similar from the same plot. Collective imagination, and thus global imagination, works in the same way, but with a larger, more diverse plot and diegesis. Imagine, though, that you are watching *Toy Story 3*, Woody is in the midst of escaping from the day care, and suddenly it cuts to one of the more graphic scenes from *Human Centipede*.⁸⁹ Your first reactions would likely be something along the lines of shock, confusion, and disgust, and then you would start attempting to explain the event: it’s a mistake, or it’s a sick joke, it’s *anything but Toy Story 3*. This is what happened on 9/11, on a much wider scale and with actual human and material stakes: watching the Towers burn for the first time on TV, the first reaction was shock, confusion, and disbelief. This was a mistake, this was a movie, this couldn’t possibly be reality. And no matter what, it could never be exactly like whatever reality was before.

⁸⁸ Ibid 66.

⁸⁹ A horror film in which humans are surgically fused to one another from anus to mouth.

Allen Feldman explicitly analyzes 9/11 in terms of cinematic narrative, arguing that 9/11 generated a kind of “narrative numbness” both during the actual event and in its wake.⁹⁰ Feldman speaks directly to the issue of narrative interruption, writing, “Narratological numbness is not the inability to tell the story, but rather the recourse to axiomatic story forms and plotments that primarily restore our belief in our ability to narrate.”⁹¹ He identifies the repetition of the images of the World Trade Center’s destruction as the first moment of narrative numbness, in which “this repetition cinematically and incrementally trained the viewer’s gaze by reinserting narratological time into the scene of temporal and spatial anarchy and stasis.”⁹² At this point, the 9/11 terror attack had more or less disrupted and discontinued its audience’s ability to imagine a narrative reality – both of a film and of a globe – and had to be re-trained to do so, even if briefly. Thus, 9/11 constituted a terroristic “interruption of the thing-like functioning of society,” that had to be fixed through the reinscription of narrative fundamentals.⁹³ Feldman goes on to identify the dichotomy of good/evil, the Frontier-esque reversion to patriarchal law, and the never-ending crusade by the pure as some of the overly-typical narrative types that emerged as part of the post-9/11⁹⁴ narrative numbness.⁹⁵

In psychoanalytic terms, then, 9/11 was a traumatic event. To call 9/11 trauma seems obvious, but in Lacanian psychoanalysis,⁹⁶ trauma is the interruption of the Symbolic Order, or the experience of the Real, that which defies inclusion into the Symbolic Order; this is not to say that the traumatic Real is some otherworldly thing that exists outside of language and

⁹⁰ Allen Feldman, “Ground Zero Point One: On the Cinematics of History,” *Social Analysis* 46, no. 1 (2002), 112.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.* 113.

⁹⁴ “Post-9/11” only in the sense that it happened after the attack itself, but Feldman is insistent that one of the most important aspects of how 9/11 is framed is the concept of Ground Zero, a preserved and eternal nothing-space (Feldman 112).

⁹⁵ Feldman 113-114.

⁹⁶ And Freudian, but in different terms.

representation that comes into the subject's reality, but rather to say that the traumatic Real is generated by the subject's inability to inscribe an event into systems of representation and language (or, perhaps, to understand it as an event).⁹⁷ This interruption of the Symbolic Order through the experience of something that defies inscription into it, then, interrupts the subject's ability to imagine a cohesive reality; it is through the Symbolic, after all, that the subject imagines cohesive realities. Film, or televisual media, functions in much the same way: the audience imagines a cohesive diegetic narrative, or reality, through a set of structured, consistent, and predictable conventions. The sudden presentation of new conventions (like the aforementioned cut to *Human Centipede*) acts like trauma the viewer's ability to imagine a cohesive diegetic reality. On 9/11, the traumatic nature of the image – that is, its resistance to inscription into a pre-existing Symbolic Order, and thus reality – wreaked havoc on the ability of Americans to imagine cohesive reality, starting with the temporary suspension of the ability to imagine a narrative from televisual media.

Perhaps the most-remembered effect of 9/11 was the feeling amongst Americans, especially in the few days and weeks immediately following the event, that everything had changed. Salon.com's anthology, *Afterwords: Stories and Reports from 9/11 and Beyond*, has an entire section titled "Nothing Will Be the Same."⁹⁸ The chapter includes Janet Fitch declaring that she'll never wear high heels again,⁹⁹ Cole Kazdin describing the proliferation of "terror sex" in the immediate aftermath of the attacks,¹⁰⁰ and Stephanie Zacharek declaring that the absence

⁹⁷ Anke Geertsma, "Representing Trauma in Post-9/11 Fiction: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*" (MA diss., Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2007), 9.

⁹⁸ *Afterwords: Stories and Reports from 9/11 and Beyond*, ed. Salon.com (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 2002).

⁹⁹ Janet Fitch, "No More High Heels," in *Afterwords: Stories and Reports from 9/11 and Beyond*, ed. Salon.com (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 2002), 39.

¹⁰⁰ Cole Kazdin, "Sex in a Time of Terror," in *Afterwords: Stories and Reports from 9/11 and Beyond*, ed. Salon.com (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 2002), 47.

of the Twin Towers is “a presence in itself.”¹⁰¹ Caroline Knapp describes the aftermath of 9/11 as “consciousness on overload,” writing, “This is more than an ordinary brain can process, and so the mind is left to flit from one sensation to another. It cannot land on just one, it cannot absorb them all. Which is why the neurons seem to be firing from all directions.”¹⁰² But how did it get this way? Why is there a collective sense of a post-9/11 *world* but not a post-Katrina world? Did everything really change?

To answer these questions, we must return to the concept of global imagination. As I have stated, global imagination is the process of imagining the globe as a cohesive totality based on a structured network of images and symbols. It relies on a measure of consistency and structure to those images and symbols. What if, though, the order of those symbols were somehow radically rearranged? This is, in effect, what happened on 9/11. Slavoj Žižek, in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, writes,

It was before the WTC collapse that we lived in our reality, perceiving Third World horrors as something that was not actually part of our social reality, as something which existed (for us) as a spectral apparition on the (TV) screen – and what happened on September 11 was that this fantasmatic screen apparition entered our reality. It is not that reality entered our image: the image entered and shattered our reality (i.e. the symbolic coordinates which determine what we experience as reality).¹⁰³

The world seemed like it had changed after 9/11 because, for many Americans, it quite literally did. With the symbols upon which the globe was imagined violently rearranged, a new globe, a new reality, had to be imagined. Or rather, the old global reality didn't work.

¹⁰¹ Stephanie Zacharek, “King Kong’s Home Away from Home,” in *Afterwords: Stories and Reports from 9/11 and Beyond*, ed. Salon.com (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 2002), 64.

¹⁰² Knapp 43.

¹⁰³ Žižek 16.

Is this not more or less what all terrorism works to do? The RAF sought to interrupt the flow of German reality in order to create a new, socialist social reality. IRA terrorism sought to alter a national political reality to conform more easily to a specific type of Irish social imaginary, and it functioned within a wider system to further separate the Catholic and Protestant social imaginaries, defining them against one another. The difference, though, is that while RAF and IRA terrorism functioned primarily to alter bounded national imaginations – although IRA terrorism has become a symbol of its own within global imagination, as evidenced by black taxi tours and “Troubles Tourism”¹⁰⁴ – 9/11 affected the symbolic coordinates upon and through which global imagination happens.

A crucial dynamic in this process of interruption and rearranging is the aforementioned function of ‘here’ and ‘there’ in global imagination. The key symbolic reordering of 9/11 was that it took images of horror normally associated with other areas of the globe and stuck them in Manhattan. The established, imagined distinction that, “The real horror happens *there*, not *here*,”¹⁰⁵ was not functioning properly, as the horror had been placed here. This is, in effect, what made 9/11 an event that affected *global* imagination: its reorganizing of images and symbols that were crucial in constituting not an imagined nation or community, but an imagined globe. The process of imagining this globe had to take place, after its images were misplaced, on a new constellation of symbolic coordinates. It is through this lens that we can understand Zacharek, writing 10 days after 9/11, “I’m always aware of my location in relation to the ruins...It’s a new point on our compass, a necessary addition to north, south, east and west.”¹⁰⁶

Here/there was not the only dynamic of global imagination that was employed in the

¹⁰⁴ K.J. Donnelly, “‘Troubles Tourism’: the terrorism theme park on and off screen,” in *The Media and the Tourist Imagination: Converging Cultures*, ed. David Crouch, Rhona Jackson, Felix Thompson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁰⁵ Zizek 13.

¹⁰⁶ Zacharek 65-66.

terrorist attacks of 9/11. The very mechanisms through which the imagined globe was constructed and sustained were made to thoroughly disrupt and rearrange the symbolic coordinates of global imagination. I am thinking, here, primarily of mass-media spectacle. 9/11 as an affective event was, of course, dependent on mass-media, on the images of the burning and/or collapsed Twin Towers being broadcast constantly. There is a disquieting similarity here between the 9/11 attacks and heavily-mediated, spectacular events like the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics: both worked to create something from which the audience, the subject, or the target could not look away. Žizek comments on how the replayed images of the planes striking the Twin Towers borrowed heavily from the conventions of Hollywood cinema; he even goes so far as to draw a parallel between the mise-en-scene of the 9/11 images and a scene from Hitchcock's *The Birds*.¹⁰⁷ He goes on to say, "For us, corrupted by Hollywood, the landscape and the shots of the collapsing towers could not but be reminiscent of the most breathtaking scenes in big catastrophe productions."¹⁰⁸ The terrorism of 9/11, it seems, managed to thoroughly hijack the channels through which global imagination and its symbolic coordinates were joined, so much so that it made use of the formal qualities of the arrangement of images upon which the globe is typically imagined. Even the channels of tourism – airplanes – were imagined into weapons.

So what exactly was created in the wake of the 9/11 terroristic interruption? Jean Baudrillard, in *The Spirit of Terrorism*, calls 9/11 a "terroristic situational transfer"¹⁰⁹ which brought an "irreducible singularity to a system of generalized exchange"¹¹⁰ (that is, that standardized political economy and culture of the globalized world was contradicted). But what,

¹⁰⁷ Žizek 15.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Verso, 2002), 9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid 52.

to use Baudrillard's terms, in the situation transferred? What changed? First of all, it may seem obvious, but 9/11 introduced terrorism and terrorists as major categories of Americans' global reality. For Americans, before the 9/11 attacks, terrorism was something that occasionally happened; every now and then, planes were hijacked, perhaps for money, perhaps to demand the release of some sort of political prisoners, and things were blown up. I do not want to say that there was a nonchalant attitude toward terrorism, but it occupied the same type of spot in the imagined globe as murder or kidnapping – tragic as it was, it happened. After 9/11, though, terrorism in the imagined globe shifted from something that happened to a threat that existed. That is, terrorism took on an ontology in the collective American imagination. It began to occupy the same slot that communism had occupied before it – it was not a practice, but a whole mode of being, a global entity. After 9/11, one could declare a “War on Terrorism,” though fighting it required turning already-existing entities (Afghanistan and Iraq) into terrorism-things.

At the same time, the related entity of “the terrorist” emerged. Whereas in the pre-9/11 world, terrorism was something that someone engaged in for some purpose or another, in the post-9/11 world there *are* terrorists. “Terrorist” has become an inalienable ontological category; if you engage in certain activities that resemble terrorism, you are a terrorist, and you always will be a terrorist. This parallels Foucault's sodomite, as outlined in the first chapter of *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*: Foucault argues that, before the emergence of a scientific gaze on sexuality, sodomy was simply various acts of sexual deviancy that people engaged in. The movement of scientific knowledge into sexuality, though, created a discourse of sexuality wherein those who engaged in sodomy became *sodomites*; the same happened with the category of *the* homosexual.¹¹¹ The post-9/11 imagined globe is a globe that involves *the* terrorists. This point

¹¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, NY: Vintage, 1990), 43.

allows for some explanation for Guantanamo Bay, and the difficulties of shutting it down. Guantanamo resembles a Foucauldian mental institution, in that it houses bodies that are imagined as completely unfit for the rest of the world, inherently dangerous in fact. The difficulty with closing Guantanamo is this: if you have bodies that are unequivocally, inalienably and permanently terrorists, how can you simply release them to continue being what they are?

Is it possible that it has always been this way? After all, we live in a world where murderers tend to always be considered murderers, and rapists tend to always be considered rapists, so it seems possible that perhaps I am misunderstanding the situation, and terrorists have always been determined as an inalienable identity. To quell this possibility, I turn to arguably the greatest action movie of all time: *Die Hard*. I would like highlight the difference between the terrorists battled by Bruce Willis in the original 1988 film and the 2007 sequel, *Live Free or Die Hard*. In the original *Die Hard*, Bruce Willis' character, John McClane, fights a group of terrorists who have taken hostages in a high-rise office building. The goal of the terrorists, led by Alan Rickman as Hans Grüber, is to steal several million dollars from a safe in the building. This demonstrates the pre-9/11 distinction of terrorism as something more akin to a criminal act, as something that just happens. In fact, preventing the terrorists from achieving their goals is not presented as McClane's motivation for fighting the terrorists; for the audience, the money offers no stakes, as indicated by the end of the film where the money is blown up. Rather, the stakes, and thus the narrative tension, reside in the fact that McClane's wife is one of the hostages, and the sociopathic Grüber is willing to kill hostages in order to get what he wants. Interestingly, for the audience watching *Die Hard* in 2010, there is little to indicate that Grüber and his gang are terrorists; they appear more as suave, well-dressed and well-educated criminals with German accents. And yet, in the movie, they are referred to as terrorists.

Contrast this with the fourth film in the franchise, 2007's *Live Free or Die Hard*.

McClane is, once again, battling terrorists, this time cyber terrorists, headed by a creepy Timothy Olyphant, who have apparently hacked the entire United States and are bringing the country to its knees – “It’s a fire sale,” as Justin Long’s character puts it. The difference between the villains of the films is striking; whereas Hans Grüber was a murderous and stylish sociopath willing to kill anyone to pull off his heist, Olyphant’s Thomas Gabriel is represented as more introverted and fundamentalistic, driven by an irrational desire for some kind of revenge against a system that has spurned him. In the first film, McClane was fighting to save a specific person’s life; in the second film, McClane appears to be driven just by a desire to do good and protect the United States from a seemingly unstoppable force willing to bring down the entire system.

The distinction between the sociopath and the fundamentalist, as represented in the films, is a significant one. The sociopath is generally understood to be selfish, willing to get what he or she wants without regard for the normal rules of society. In theory, however, a sociopath like Hans Grüber could be convinced not to do something, provided he were convinced that there was a more desirable alternative; in this sense, the sociopath like Grüber is represented as rational, perhaps even as rationality unhinged, without the boundaries of social norms. With the fundamentalist, though, there is absolutely no room for rationality. He or she is devoted to something and cannot be stopped. It makes sense, then, how the two movies end: McClane tries to save Grüber from falling out of a building at the end of the first film, while at the end of *Live Free or Die Hard*, McClane has to make a sacrifice, shooting through himself,¹¹² to kill Gabriel, because Gabriel will always be a threat as long as he lives. The transformation of the terrorist as a trope and a category is evident here: the terrorist, in the wake of 9/11, has gone from a rational

¹¹² Don’t worry, despite dealing himself what should be a fatal wound, McClane inexplicably survives without even going to the hospital. The discord between the narrative and realism echoes the Afghanistan and Iraq experience in almost too perfectly.

participant in an act of crime¹¹³ to a type of person who has always been, and will always be, that type of person.

This is very similar to some of what Daya Kishan Thussu calls the “mythologies” of the War on Terror, obviously influenced if not outright generated by 9/11.¹¹⁴ Thussu explicates five main myths,¹¹⁵ but I would like to focus on those of Islamic Terrorism and Madness. The myth of madness is obviously an old one, but also an extremely relevant one. The Gabriel character, in *Live Free or Die Hard*, is built almost entirely upon the myth of madness (note here that fundamentalism is often regarded as a type of madness). Beyond infecting the movies we watch, though, this myth has also played a pivotal role in the imagined globe; for example, would Saddam Hussein have been regarded as a threat to American security if he had not been designated, represented and mediated as an al Qaeda-sympathizing megalomaniac? Meanwhile, Thussu’s identification of the myth of Islamic Terrorism is essentially in agreement with my assertion that “the terrorist” and “Terrorism” have been inserted into the collective American and Western imaginations as central categories or tropes.

Finally, lest we get absorbed into the more esoteric aspects terrorism’s impact on collective structures of knowledge, meaning and imagination, let us not forget that 9/11 made the Iraq and Afghanistan wars possible. Terrorism does not just interrupt and rearrange the ways in which people understand and imagine the world – it subsequently alters the ways in which people act in the world. This is what I mean when I say terrorism affects social and political situations or possibilities: it has very concrete, material impacts on what things can be done by the target-audience (and those who must interact with them) and how they can be done. When

¹¹³ “We don’t negotiate with terrorists” is a meaningful phrase only if it is possible to negotiate with terrorists.

¹¹⁴ Daya Kishan Thussu, “Televising the ‘War on Terror’: The Myths of Morality,” in *Media, Terrorism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. Anandam P. Kavoori and Todd Fraley (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 8.

¹¹⁵ The myths of Islamic Terrorism, Madness, Nuclear Threat, Atrocities and Morality

the world seems to change, the acceptable parameters of action within the world change as well. 9/11 did not produce the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But before 9/11, the idea of sending troops into Iraq or Afghanistan to institute regime changes in the name of homeland security would have been unthinkable, completely incongruous with the state of the imagined globe, and outside of the realm of possibilities for action within that globe. But for Americans after 9/11, the invasions were not only thinkable and possible – they were doable.

CHAPTER FOUR

Tourism of Terrorism at Ground Zero

The headline on a September 13, 2003 article in *The New York Times* reads, “Look Up, and Trade Center’s Story is Readable Again.”¹¹⁶ The article describes how placards at Ground Zero detailing the history of the World Trade Center – which had been placed there for tourists and then taken down after sympathetic graffiti had made them impossible to read – have been put up again, only this time seven feet above the sidewalk, where nobody could write on them. Though the placards are gone today, their example encapsulates what Ground Zero tourism does: it works to produce a readable and explicable 9/11, an event that fits into the conventions of narrative, while simultaneously denying certain types of engagement with the event. Thus far I have argued that tourism plays a significant role in the process of global imagination and that terrorism works to interrupt the process of global imagination, focusing on how the 9/11 attacks interrupted how Americans imagined the globe and what kind of a globe they imagined. In this section, I explore the intersection of tourism and terrorism, specifically tourism of terrorism, as it takes place at Ground Zero, the most famous site of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and one of the most popular tourist sites in New York City. I argue that Ground Zero tourism reifies 9/11 as a tourist object, containing and managing the events so as to facilitate the imagining only of a very specific globe, a globe in which America is the innocent victim of all the evil in the world, and not a productive agent of world conditions. Through a reading of the tourist sites and engagement with other primary texts and primary sources about Ground Zero, I focus primarily

¹¹⁶ Glenn Collins, “Look Up, and Trade Center’s History is Readable Again,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2003.

on how representational strategies of authenticity, isolation, freezing and renarration in Ground Zero tourism work toward this end, while also paying attention to narratives of American innocence at play throughout.

My analysis draws on readings of the literature surrounding Ground Zero, as well as on observations made during a one-day tour last December of four different Ground Zero tourist sites: the Ground Zero Museum Workshop, the Ground Zero site itself, the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site and that Tribute WTC Visitor Center. Before delving further into the meaning-making strategies of the Ground Zero tourist infrastructure and their effects on the process of global imagination, I would like to provide a brief description and history of each of the sites, as well as offer a short account of how Ground Zero has changed and will continue to change as a tourist site.

My Ground Zero tourist-experience began at 11 a.m. sharp at the Ground Zero Museum Workshop, which is located in the trendy Meatpacking District of Manhattan, a respectable distance away from lower Manhattan, where the Twin Towers once stood. The museum, which opened in 2005, is a one-room collection of Ground Zero artifacts and photographs taken during the Ground Zero recovery by photographer Gary Marlon Suson. According to the museum, Suson was the “ONLY one in the world allowed to shoot photos next to the firefighters.”¹¹⁷ As the script for the audio tour says, “[Suson] was asked to remain a secret to the media while he was there shooting, never to sell or release any of the images until the Recovery ended, not to shoot human remains,” and to donate a share of any money he made from the photos to 9/11-related charities.¹¹⁸ Tickets were originally sold for \$15, but since the museum has grown more popular, they are \$25 and must be bought well in advance of the date on which a tourist might

¹¹⁷ Gary Marlon Suson, “Ground Zero Museum Workshop audioguide script,” Introduction, recorded August 2006 (acquired 28 December 2010). Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

want to visit the museum. The museum itself is a single room in an apartment building, no more than 1,000 square feet, filled with Suson's photos and various artifacts from Ground Zero that were either picked up by Suson at the site or donated to the museum. Prints of Suson's photos cover all of the walls in the room, and the artifacts are presented either in enclosed-glass display cases or in small, dirt-filled insets; among the artifacts are pieces of glass from the World Trade Center (repeatedly referred to as very rare), a piece of one of the planes that hit the World Trade Center,¹¹⁹ and beer cans that somehow survived the collapse of the towers. Nearly every photograph, artifact or display case comes with an accompanying audioguide narration, which gives the visitor all sorts of information ranging from how Suson took the shot to stories about the actual firefighters in the shots to small factual anecdotes. This is the main portion of the museum experience, about an hour of people staring at the walls while the loudest sound in the room is the shuffling of feet. Once visitors are finished with the audioguides, they can then purchase prints of Suson's photos or just leave.

From the Meat Packing District, I rode the subway to the Ground Zero site itself, which is by far the most frequented tourist site of the four I visited. This is despite the fact that there really is not much to see; right now, Ground Zero is a construction site surrounded by tourists. There are high fences surrounding the site, with nylon banners attached to them, making it difficult to see much of the fenced-in area. Nevertheless, even a day after a major snowstorm, the perimeter around the Ground Zero site was crowded with tourists, the sheer number of which caused traffic problems on the streets going around the site. Many tourists at Ground Zero walk the perimeter of the site, taking pictures along the way of the cranes and the skeletons of new buildings that are visible above the banner-covered fence. The banners are not blank, though,

¹¹⁹ In a somber speech, visitors are asked not to photograph this item because a previous visitor, whose wife was likely vaporized when the plane hit the building, regards the piece of metal as the last remnant of his spouse.

and feature images and renderings of what Ground Zero will look like when the construction is finished. Some of these prints actually appear more like advertising for the new World Trade Center than anything else, with several encouraging businesses to invest in the project, while other banners direct tourists to the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site adjacent to Ground Zero on Vesey St.

Following the instructions on one of the banners, I stopped next at the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site. According to its website, a tourist can “Visit the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site to learn about the plans for and progress of Memorial and Museum currently being built at the World Trade Center site, view real time images of the construction progress and participate in the creation of the Museum by sharing your 9/11 story.”¹²⁰ It is essentially a small museum, not much larger than the Ground Zero Museum Workshop, but significantly more crowded due to the fact that it is free and open to the public. The museum features exhibits about the plans for the Ground Zero memorial and the 9/11 Museum currently being built on the site. A large white model of the plans for the new World Trade Center site occupies the center of the main room. The museum also provides a timeline of the events of 9/11, which I will address later. About half of the square-footage is devoted to the gift shop, the only significant gift shop to be found in any of the four sites that I visited; a visitor can buy a number of souvenirs, from FDNY teddy bears and NYPD baseballs to books of 9/11 photographs and DVD’s of *World Trade Center* and *United 93*, both Hollywood films about 9/11. According to the website, the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site received its one-millionth visitor in the summer of 2010, a little less than a year after the museum opened in August 2009.¹²¹

¹²⁰ “Visit Preview Site.” National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center website. http://www.national911memorial.org/site/PageServer?pagename=New_Visit_Preview (accessed 19 March, 2011).

¹²¹ Ibid

My last stop was the Tribute WTC Visitor Center, located on the other side of the Ground Zero site from the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site, on Liberty St. The September 11th Families' Association runs the Tribute WTC Visitor Center, which is essentially another museum, the largest of the three I visited. The museum puts an emphasis on the victims and the survivors of the 9/11 attacks; according to the website, "Tribute WTC Visitor Center offers visitors to the World Trade Center site a place where they can connect with people from the September 11th community."¹²² A visitor at the museum walks a set path through five exhibits, or galleries, each with a different title and focus: "World Trade Center: Community Remembered," "Passage Through Time: September 11th," "Aftermath: Rescue and Recovery," "Tribute," and "Voices of Promise." Each gallery features a mixture of artifacts and quotes from people who experienced the attacks on the World Trade Center. Like the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site, the Tribute WTC Visitor Center also provides a timeline for the events of 9/11, and a large white model of the former World Trade Center occupies the center of the room in the first gallery. Admission for the Tribute WTC Visitor Center is \$10 per person, and according to the website the museum has hosted around 300,000 visitors annually since its inception in 2004.¹²³ Visitors can also pay to take a guided walking tour around the perimeter of Ground Zero.¹²⁴

Finally, I will briefly cover what tourist sites have existed at Ground Zero in the past, and what Ground Zero will offer the tourist in the future. Tourists began visiting Ground Zero almost immediately after the attacks.¹²⁵ They were initially denied any kind of view of the site,

¹²² "About Us," Tribute WTC Visitor Center website, <http://www.tributewtc.org/aboutus/index.php> (accessed 19 March, 2011).

¹²³ "More about the Building of the Tribute Center," Tribute WTC Visitor Center website, http://www.tributewtc.org/aboutus/overview_more.php (accessed 19 March, 2011).

¹²⁴ I was unfortunately unable to take one of these tours.

¹²⁵ Debbie Lisle, "Gazing at Ground Zero: Tourism, Voyeurism and Spectacle," *Journal for Cultural Research* 8, no. 1 (2004), 3.

partially because of fears about security¹²⁶ and partially because the recovery operation was still pulling bodies out of the rubble. After the recovery operation finished in 2002, though, an observation platform was built overlooking the Ground Zero site in order to channel the large numbers of people who were showing up.¹²⁷ Around the same time, the aforementioned placards narrating the history of the World Trade Center were put up on the wall surrounding the Ground Zero site. They were soon removed because graffiti made them illegible, and then re-placed on the wall, seven feet above the sidewalk. Other than the platform and the placards, the biggest tourist draw in the area was the *Here is New York* exhibit, which was a collection of 9/11-related photographs. The photos were sent to the curators from all kinds of people, artists and non-artists alike, then printed to equal sizes and hung on strings in the gallery. *Here is New York* published a book of those photographs, which is for sale in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Center, but the exhibit no longer exists at Ground Zero.

As for the future of Ground Zero as a tourist site, the memorial will be dedicated on September 11 2011, the ten-year anniversary of the attacks. The memorial, which is currently being built on the Ground Zero site, will feature two square infinity pools marking the footprints of the Twin Towers, with the names of those who died in the attacks etched into the sides. The entire area will be full of trees, separating the space from the concrete urbanism of the rest of lower Manhattan. There will also be a museum, the majority of which will be underground, allowing tourists to get close to the footprints and foundations of the fallen Twin Towers. It is worth mentioning, as well, that a new tower, the One World Trade Center, is being built on the site.

¹²⁶ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 211.

¹²⁷ Lisle 3-4.

This chapter will provide an analysis of the meaning-making functions tourist sites at Ground Zero, how tourism of terrorism at Ground Zero represents and constitutes the events of 9/11, and how that influences the process of global imagination. The specific ways in which 9/11 is represented at Ground Zero tourist sites – through strategies of isolation, freezing, and re-narrating – as well as the pervasive narratives of American innocence spun throughout the sites, contains and manages the event in such a way that it is prevented from fitting into any other imagined globe than one in which the United States is positioned as an innocent, benevolent entity in the globe.

Before delving into the details of the representational strategies at work at Ground Zero, it would be worthwhile to position myself and discuss the different reasons that people have for visiting the site. I came to Ground Zero as someone who experienced 9/11 as an adolescent, through a television screen in Wisconsin. Anything I knew about New York at the time I had learned through pop culture and television shows, and I had never even heard of the Twin Towers; in a sense, they only existed to me once their destruction had been thoroughly mediated. Undoubtedly, many people experienced 9/11 much like I did, but just as many, if not more, experienced the event differently. For many, a recognizable icon of Western trade and society was destroyed on that day. But most notably, many people had a more personal connection to the event: New Yorkers and former New Yorkers watched familiar pieces of the New York landscape fall on 9/11, and many people could only speculate in those first few hours and days about whether their friends or family members had survived. Thus, we must keep in mind that for many of the tourists at Ground Zero, 9/11 is not only a moment of spectacular symbolic violence that seemed to alter the realities of the globe, but also to varying degrees represents a moment of intense personal loss.

But whether they are visiting the site of a friend's death or the site of historically significant mass violence, the vast majority of American tourists at Ground Zero do have something in common: they all experienced 9/11 as a traumatic event.¹²⁸ That is, the event interrupted their ability to imagine a globe upon an organization of images and symbolic coordinates, or, in a more general sense, interrupted the processes of imagination and mediated narration. As argued in the last chapter, 9/11 interrupted the process of global imagination by taking an image of horrific mass violence – typically ascribed to the Third World – and placing it in the United States. Such a radical rearrangement of the symbolic coordinates through which reality is imagined and constituted should most certainly be read as trauma; after all, as Žižek alludes to, traumatic encounters with the Real always happen in and through the realm of the Symbolic, and the experience of images that refuse to fit symbolically into an existing reality is, by nature, traumatic.¹²⁹ Put simply, disruption of the symbolic order is practically the definition of trauma in Lacanian psychoanalysis. This trauma, though, was collective; 9/11 was a heavily mediated event, and it upset an arrangement of symbols that functioned on a collective scale. That is, more or less, to say that we all had experienced roughly the same organization of global images by watching the same news programs, or the same movies. 9/11 should be read as collective trauma, then, not only because it was a widely witnessed media event, but also because it affected images and symbols that were engaged by the majority of Americans in the collective process of global imagination.

From this vantage point, it is apparent that the act of visiting Ground Zero is not just an entertainment or leisure activity, but also a means of engaging with and working through

¹²⁸ Except for those who are too young to remember or those who had not been born yet. This is a very small portion of Ground Zero tourists, those who are visiting the site of a historically-significant but unremembered event. Ground Zero, for these kids, might only be as interesting as a Pearl Harbor monument is to a 30-year-old. Or, their Ground Zero tourist experience might be exclusively what defines 9/11 for them.

¹²⁹ Žižek 2002, 16.

collective trauma. It is certainly true, at the very least, that Ground Zero is a tourist site because it was the site of a collectively traumatic event. Beyond this, though, as the headline that began this chapter indicates, Ground Zero tourism is supposed to be able to make 9/11 readable; keeping in mind the traumatic nature of the event, it becomes clear that the representation of 9/11 in the Ground Zero tourist sites is a means of working through the trauma, re-inscribing it into a symbolic order, making it fit consistently within a cohesive reality. The three primary representational strategies at work at the tourist sites – isolation, freezing, and re-narration – thus appear as specific treatments of the traumatic that work toward the assimilation of the traumatic event into a cohesive reality; put another way (or a way that has already been said), they manage and contain the experience and memory of 9/11 so that it can function as a symbolic coordinate in the imagining of (global) reality.

At this point, Ground Zero tourism does not seem entirely unlike the kind of “narrative therapy” that is sometimes used in the treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. At the same time, tourism of terrorism at Ground Zero also resembles the psychoanalytic “talking cure,” wherein the experience of the traumatic Real is dealt with through work in the realm of the Symbolic.¹³⁰ In a way, Ground Zero tourism cannot help but be a talking cure; insofar as it works to represent a traumatic event in a way that is meaningful and fits into a reality, it necessarily does some of the work of psychoanalytic trauma therapy. The point to take from this discussion of trauma, though, is that Ground Zero tourism is fulfilling multiple roles at one time: it works to represent a traumatic event so as to re-inscribe it into a symbolic order through which a cohesive reality is imagined, provide a comforting experience to those for whom 9/11 was a day of personal loss, and offer a thoroughly satisfying consumable touristic experience. In asking, as anyone should, why 9/11 appears in Ground Zero tourism the way that it does, part of

¹³⁰ Geertsma, 9.

the answer is that the representational strategies of isolation, freezing and re-narration are a means of addressing a traumatic event.

The American tourists at Ground Zero have one other thing in common: they are all addressed by the sites as tourists. That is, no matter whether you come to Ground Zero conceiving of yourself as a tourist or a mourner or an academic, the event of 9/11 is presented to you through the conventions of tourism. This is not unrelated to the role of Ground Zero tourism as a means of dealing with trauma; there is a collective gaze at play for the tourist at Ground Zero – mixed with Urry’s heritage gaze and mediatized gaze – which not only constitutes the site as a desirable tourist object, but also as a site for collective mourning and the working-through of collective trauma. The constitution of Ground Zero as a tourist site and a tourist object, though, requires further interrogation.

Authenticity and the Tourist Commodity at Ground Zero

While it may seem obvious, Ground Zero tourism first manages the terroristic event of 9/11 by turning it into a tourist object. This may seem like a uselessly tautological statement, but a tourist object is, first and foremost, a commodity; that is to say, Ground Zero tourism treats the events of 9/11 as a commodity. This point is apparent, if absolutely nowhere else, in the way that visiting Ground Zero, and particularly getting the full Ground Zero experience, usually involves some sort of exchange or monetary transaction. But on a deeper level, 9/11 was an event, not an object; thus, in order to be consumed as a commodity, there must be some process of reification, wherein a moment in history actually becomes a thing. As I have discussed in the second chapter, this process of reification and commodification is necessarily built into the practice of tourism, which is ultimately a consumption of experience. Insofar as Ground Zero is

a tourist site, then, it works to reify the events of 9/11 in such a way as to make them consumable. The spatial relations of the sites, their representations of 9/11, and the narratives generated throughout the touristic experience all work toward making the terrorist attacks into a consumable thing, a commodity.

The mode of consumption called tourism, though, has specific conventions and characteristics, and the tourist sites at Ground Zero take on the characteristics of the tourist commodity in several important ways. First, there is what MacCannell refers to as the staging of authenticity. The Ground Zero Museum Workshop offers the most striking example of the construction of authenticity: visitors to the museum are immediately told through their audioguides that “the images that you see around you are unlike any images in the world,” and that, because Suson was the “only one in the world” allowed to take photographs during the recovery that “these images are one-of-a-kind.”¹³¹ The audioguide narration for a picture of several firefighters digging tells the viewer that “this is as close as you can get to seeing the front lines of the digging.”¹³² In fact, many of the audioguide narrations that accompany the pictures dwell primarily on the rarity of the photo; for a photo of a fireman digging in the dirt, the whole narration reads,

Port Authority Police Officer Jimmy Cronin digs for victims. Images up close like this were unheard of during the Recovery, so when Mr. Suson released the collection to the NY Times, this was one of the first ones they chose to publish. It is simple in nature, but there are literally no images in existence like this of the men digging from just inches away.¹³³

¹³¹ Suson, introduction.

¹³² Suson 7.

¹³³ Suson 39.

At the same time, the very presence of artifacts in the museum works to construct a sense of authenticity and closeness. The presentation of the artifacts on display – particularly the opportunity to hold and touch some of them – mediates to the tourist the sense of having penetrated the scene of the event; it signals, in a way, that the subject has found a way to move from the front-space of their living room through the television screen and into the hidden (and impossible) back-space of 9/11. This effect is supplemented by the inset-artifact displays in which various objects that Suson picked up from Ground Zero – magazines, gloves, shovels, computer keyboards and religious items – are carefully arranged on a bed of dirt and dust to represent the ground at Ground Zero.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, the audioguide narrations continue to contextualize the artifacts presented in terms of their authenticity and real connection to Ground Zero; “This is an actual American Flag used during the recoveries,” starts one of the audio narrations of a folded flag in a display case.¹³⁵ The whole narration for another display case, this one full of chunks of glass, reads,

Word Trade Center window glass, the rarest thing to find at Ground Zero. 99% of it was turned to powder. Here are different pieces, displayed exactly as they were found, still with the dirt from Ground Zero on them. Higher floors had thicker glass so as to withstand the strong winds.¹³⁶

The mention of the dirt still on the glass is particularly telling: the value of the pieces of glass, under the tourist gaze, lies in how physically connected they are to the material of the tragedy, so much so that if visitors were allowed to touch them, they could actually be touching human remains from the 9/11 violence. Marita Sturken has written about how the meaning of dust is

¹³⁴ It is worth noting that, if you look at Suson’s photographs, most of the ground at Ground Zero was just dirt and dust. The display cases do not represent the ground as it was, but rather how it is imagined: as densely packed with objects (and meaning).

¹³⁵ Suson 35.

¹³⁶ Suson 46.

complicated by its toxicity;¹³⁷ in the context of how it is used in the museum, though, the most important aspect of the dust is that it condenses the materials of 9/11. In fact, many of the artifacts displayed in the museum are more or less insignificant trash, made worthy of their display cases only because they were at Ground Zero. To the average tourist, though, these are three-dimensional pieces of a violence that has only ever been experienced in two dimensions.



Figure 1: Display cases in the Ground Zero Museum Workshop.

Finally, the form of the museum itself works to generate a sense of authenticity by providing a multi-dimensional and multi-sensory experience for the tourist-customer. Several of the photos are themselves presented in three dimensions, with certain figures cut out from the print and then raised slightly. The audioguide supplements for several of these photos, such as the one of FDNY chaplain Christopher Keenan, actually play back audio recordings of the scene portrayed in the picture, thus mediating a sense of authenticity by immersing the audience member in a three-dimensional, audiovisual representation of the scene. This is enhanced by the option provided to the subject, unlike in a movie theater, to actively move through the space and choose the scenes with which he/she would like to engage. Despite the museum's declared mission to be part of the healing process after 9/11, the ultimate value in visiting the place, from

¹³⁷ Sturken 180.

a tourist point of view, is this multisensory experience. The combination of visual, audio and tactile representations of Ground Zero, imbued with the sense of authenticity, really does promise to allow the tourist to get as close as they can get to the event itself, certainly much closer than their television screens have ever allowed.

An important aspect of MacCannell's concept of staged authenticity, the construction of front and back spaces, is most concretely visible at the actual Ground Zero site: a high fence covered with vinyl banners surrounds the construction site, separating it from its surroundings and making it very difficult to see much of anything beyond the fence. There are several points of access at which the banner does not cover the barrier, thus making it possible for tourists to get a glimpse of the work being done, but these points are also accompanied by clear "keep out" markers – including but not limited to key card access, barbed wire, and a slew of official and improvised "Do Not Enter" signs – that mediate to the tourist that beyond the fence is a place which they are not permitted to go. This creates an interesting conundrum wherein the desired object of the tourist gaze is deliberately withheld but not hidden; in fact, the very structures which work to withhold the object from the tourist's sight also work to mark its presence.

This physical arrangement, in which the tourist is thoroughly notified of the presence of their desired object¹³⁸ while simultaneously denied access to it, actually works to generate a sense of authenticity by designating very clear front and back spaces. The tourist occupies the front space, on the outside of the fence with all of the other tourists, while the authentic Ground Zero occupies the space on the other side of the fence, made all the more real because it is positioned exactly where authentic tourist objects are supposed to be positioned: in a back-space, where tourists aren't supposed to be allowed. Again, the difference between hiding and

¹³⁸In addition to the barrier and its signs, tourists can also see cranes and buildings which are under construction. It is also impossible not to hear the construction.

withholding is important; the banners are partially see-through, and thus function more to obscure the work being done behind the fence than to hide it. Tourists visiting Ground Zero are obviously well aware that some sort of construction is happening, but they cannot actually watch it happen, creating less of a sense of mystery as an aura of authenticity.



Figure 2: view of the Ground Zero construction site from Church and Vesey.

This arrangement is almost a textbook demonstration of the idea of *trompe l'oeil* as it is theorized by Lacan and Žižek. In the Lacanian formation of *trompe l'oeil*, the act concealing or veiling indicates the existence of something being concealed or veiled; Lacan illustrates this through a reference to the fable of the painting competition between Zeuxis and Parrhasios, in which Zeuxis paints grapes so life-like that the birds peck at them, but Parrhasios wins the competition by painting such a life-like veil that Zeuxis says to him, “Now show us what you have painted behind it.”¹³⁹ Žižek elaborates on Lacan’s example in a discussion of the veil in Islam, writing about the fable, “The illusion resided in the very notion that what we see in front

¹³⁹ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1998), 103.

of us is just a veil covering up the hidden truth.”¹⁴⁰ This is exactly what is happening at the Ground Zero construction site: the erection of the barrier around the site obscures the view of the Ground Zero site, working as a veil, indicating the presence of an authentic something through its concealment. One could imagine the tourist at Ground Zero saying, “Now, take down this fence and show me the real thing!”

Of course, there are areas of visual penetrability in the fence (in fact, the banners themselves are partially see-through), but even at these points, construction equipment seems to obscure the view of the real site. The irony, though, is that construction equipment does not obscure the site – it is the site, but it utterly fails to conform to the model-image of Ground Zero as a site of violence and sacredness. The real thing that the tourist seeks is nothing, or is not available; thus, the tourist can only imagine its authentic presence through its concealment. This is, as Lacan puts it, “a triumph of the gaze over the eye.”¹⁴¹ This is still reminiscent of Žižek’s comments on the veil in Islam: “What if the true scandal this veil endeavors to obfuscate is not the feminine body hidden by it, but the INEXISTENCE of the feminine? What if, consequently, the ultimate function of the veil is precisely to sustain the illusion that there IS something, the substantial Thing, behind the veil?”¹⁴² The same could be said about Ground Zero tourism: the fence endeavors to obfuscate the inexistence of a meaningful, sacred thing at the Ground Zero site, creating the illusion that there is such a substantial 9/11-thing behind it. At this point, we can see that the fence is critical not only to the production of the authentic, but also the reification of 9/11 as a thing that tourists can get close to at Ground Zero.

¹⁴⁰ Slavoj Žižek. “A Glance into the Archives of Islam.” Lacan.com, 2006, <http://www.lacan.com/zizarchives.htm> (accessed 16 April 2011).

¹⁴¹ Lacan 1998, 103.

¹⁴² Žižek 2006, emphasis in original.

The mediation of authenticity is a crucial aspect of nearly all tourism, but it is especially important at Ground Zero, where the tourist seeks to enter the world of a media event and experience it as even realer than it was on the television screen. Similar to how Disneyland mediates the magical world of Disney to the tourist on its grounds and on its rides – allowing the tourist subject not only to engage with the Disney world but to immerse themselves in visual, audible, tactile, spatial and arguably gustatory ways – so too must Ground Zero, as a tourist site, allow tourists to immerse themselves in a world beyond the screen.¹⁴³ Debbie Lisle, writing about the viewing platform that was built at Ground Zero in 2002 and has since been dismantled, argues that tourists come to Ground Zero looking to “escape mediation and touch ‘the real’”¹⁴⁴ – in her view, the viewing platform gave tourists an opportunity to see the destruction of Ground Zero in real life, just in case they had not quite believed it on the television screen.¹⁴⁵ Lisle is about half-right; while I have a hard time believing that many people came to New York because they needed to confirm that 9/11 had happened, the act of visiting the site does involve an aspect of going beyond the screen or the page in order to “really” experience Ground Zero in a way that is more materially substantial than experiencing 9/11 as a media event. Again, the mediation of authenticity at Ground Zero looks to allow the tourist to experience 9/11 not as a media event, but as an object.

Isolation and Reification

There are several representational tendencies and moves made by the tourist sites at Ground Zero which enable them to mediate this kind of immersive authenticity; I will start with

¹⁴³ Obviously Ground Zero does not strictly parallel Disneyland; Disney, after all, produces both the multisensory, immersive Disneyland experience and the two-dimensional media products around which Disneyland is based. Ground Zero tourism, in contrast, is not centrally controlled, and obviously did not produce 9/11 itself.

¹⁴⁴ Lisle 3.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid 8.

the sense of isolation. The idea of isolation is important in understanding the nature of commodification and consumption, and thus is important for understanding tourism; Marx wrote that the commodity is by nature fetishized, that the conditions of its production are hidden when traded. If a commodity such as a tourist attraction is to be consumed, it too obviously must be removed from the conditions of its production. For tourism based on an event, this becomes complicated; Ground Zero is a tourist site because of the violence of 9/11, which would, at first glance, appear to be the conditions of its production. True, Ground Zero was created soon after the planes hit the Twin Towers, but that is not the end of the story; Ground Zero existed at that point, but still had to be produced into a tourist attraction. Practices of isolation, both physical and symbolic, undergird the production of Ground Zero as a tourist site/object.

This makes sense both in terms of MacCannell's theory of staged authenticity and Urry's concept of the tourist gaze; taking Urry first, if tourism functions like a gaze and works to constitute the object of its gaze, this would necessitate a kind of removal of that object from systems of meaning which do not suit the tourist's conception of the object. Take, for example, the presence of a rake in the Ground Zero Museum Workshop: for the tourist, the rake would be nothing if it were lying on the ground at the construction or the recovery site, and it would probably not get a second (or first) glance if it were in a tool shed, even if it were the official Ground Zero recovery tool shed which is mentioned in one of Suson's audio narrations.¹⁴⁶ Up against the wall in the museum, though, it is an artifact; to put it into MacCannell's terms, the rake can only mediate the influence of an authentic encounter with Ground Zero and the 9/11 recovery once it has been removed from its everyday context.

Though I have already touched on it, the fence surrounding Ground Zero is one of the most blatant examples of Ground Zero being literally isolated from its urban surroundings. The

¹⁴⁶ Suson 56.

barrier works to mark and bound Ground Zero in a way that makes it easy to encounter as a tourist; on one side is Ground Zero, and on the other side is lower Manhattan, despite the fact that when the towers fell and much of lower Manhattan was covered in dust, such an easy distinction was less possible. As I have previously covered, this separation of Ground Zero from its surrounding urban space – both spatial and also temporal, in the fact that it disavows a moment in time when more of lower Manhattan was a crisis zone – allows the site to function as an authentic object of tourism. But it goes further than authenticity – the barrier does not just mediate Ground Zero as an authentic object, it in fact *makes the object*. The dirty secret of Ground Zero as a tourist site is not that it is difficult to see anything, it is that there is *nothing to see*; a street-level view through the Ground Zero construction site reveals nothing of note, a few trees and an otherwise typically urban space. It is easy for the tourist to look through the site and still think that somehow he/she is missing “it,” that the real thing is being obstructed. In fact, the real thing is clearly visible, but so fails to conform to the tourist’s model that it appears that the real thing is out of view. Thus, it is the barriers which allow the tourist to engage Ground Zero as a tourist *object*; because of the barriers, a tourist can imagine that there is something on the other side.¹⁴⁷ In this context, the logic behind the 9/11 memorial under construction in the Ground Zero site is fairly clear: a caption on one of the memorial renderings in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site reads, “A forested public plaza of nearly 400 trees will create a contemplative space separate from the sights and sounds of the surrounding city.”¹⁴⁸

Among cultural forms and organizations of knowledge, the museum provides perhaps the most obvious example of isolation and reification. I have already mentioned how the rake at the Ground Zero Museum Workshop only takes on meaning as an artifact of 9/11 once it appears in

¹⁴⁷ I try to avoid clichés, but this is a classic example of the Emperor having no clothes.

¹⁴⁸ 9/11 Preview Site. 20 Vesey St., New York, NY 10007 (visited 28 December 2010).

a museum, so I will not spend much time on the ways in which removal is embedded in the museum form. I will, however, point out that the museum is a critical location and form through which tourists experience Ground Zero. It would be impossible to list all of the items, even just between the Ground Zero Museum Workshop and the Tribute WTC Visitor Center, that have been isolated from their contexts in order to become museum pieces, or tourist objects. One particularly striking example, though, is the way that missing posters appear in the Tribute WTC Visitor Center; these items already involved an element of removal, as Sturken writes, because they took pictures of happy fishing trips or backyard barbeques and turned them into depictions of the likely dead.¹⁴⁹ Sturken writes that these flyers individualized the violence of 9/11, denying the collective trauma of the event.¹⁵⁰ The museum, though, de-individualizes the flyers and turns them collectively into a representation of 9/11 that is accessible to many tourist subjects. There is also an element of spatial isolation and removal in the Ground Zero museums as well; obviously, the Ground Zero Museum Workshop is in the Meat Packing District. Even more striking, however, is the fact that the Ground Zero museum, which will be accessible from the Ground Zero Memorial, will be largely underground. This means that, for tourists, 9/11 will be represented and explained underneath the urban space in which it happened and upon which it had such a profound and destructive impact.

One of the audioguide narrations at the Ground Zero Museum Workshop starts, This sepia photograph...was shot on Super Bowl Sunday, around halftime. While people around the country were eating chips and pizza and watching football, life had NOT gone on at Ground Zero. We were busy digging for victims.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Sturken 184.

¹⁵⁰ Sturken 183.

¹⁵¹ Suson 82.

This is another type of isolation: in this narration, Suson moves to remove Ground Zero from the rest of the world in a more abstract way by invoking temporality. Obviously, life had gone on at Ground Zero in the sense that time still happened, and it was Sunday, February 3, 2002 at the Superdome in New Orleans as well as at Ground Zero. But by implying a temporal difference between the Ground Zero and the rest of the world – in the latter, life had gone on, and in the former, it hadn't – the narration suggests that Ground Zero was, and is, its own world. A similar move is made in another audioguide narration about the girlfriend of a dead firefighter leaving a shrine for him on Valentine's Day, 2002. "While loving couples all around the country were at romantic dinners celebrating Valentine's Day, this woman quietly gave her fallen firefighter boyfriend a beautiful gift," the narration reads.¹⁵² Again, there is the implication that Ground Zero is a place entirely separate from the rest of the country; the Ground Zero constructed by the museum is a Ground Zero isolated from the rest of the world, turned into a world of its own.

Freezing and Preservation

Related to the process of isolating Ground Zero and the events of 9/11 from the rest of the world is the move to freeze and preserve the events of 9/11. This is another move that is most clearly demonstrated in a museum: on his/her way out of the Ground Zero Museum Workshop, the visitor is confronted by a quote from Suson on the wall above the exit. It reads, "TIME has a way of dulling our memory and people may forget what happened and the valuable lives lost on 9/11. I hope my images will insure that people never forget."¹⁵³ There are several items of note in this statement, the first of which is that the use of the word "memory," as opposed to "memories," indicates that the quote is referring to how 9/11 exists and functions in

¹⁵² Ibid 87.

¹⁵³ Suson 92. The quote printed on the wall comes with an audioguide narration, which is just the quote being spoken by Suson.

the process of *collective* memory and imagination. More important, though, is this idea of never forgetting, which appears in some form or another in each of the three museums. The idea of never forgetting 9/11 involves itself in the discourse of preservation; indeed, if we understand that the photograph captures a split second and then forces that moment to exist forever, unmoving, it appears that Suson, in hoping that his images will make sure that 9/11 is never forgotten, is advocating for a kind of freezing of the event. Consistent with the removal of Ground Zero from normal temporality that some of the audioguide narrations encourage, the goal of “Never Forget” is to freeze Ground Zero in time, preserving the event and moment of 9/11, making sure that it does not have a future of significance beyond the attacks.

Just as isolation is built into the form of Ground Zero tourist sites, so too is the sense of preservation and freezing. At the Ground Zero Museum Workshop, for example, there are several display cases with artifacts from Ground Zero, many still covered with dust from the collapse. The display case, as a meaning-making form, does not function much differently than the screen in that it positions the audience, or observer, as powerless to change the contents beyond the barrier; what is there is there, and presumably will always be there in the same way. In short, the world inside of the display case is a separate world, frozen. There is a parallel here to Sturken’s analysis of disaster-related snow globes: “Snow globes are objects that, like photographs, represent a ‘permanent instant’ in which time is arrested, yet they are also objects in which that instant is meant to be in constant replay,” Sturken writes.¹⁵⁴ I will return to the concept of replay, but the presence of the display cases (as well as the hundreds of photographs) in the Ground Zero Museum Workshop work to arrest the temporality of the event they represent – the World Trade Center attacks – in order to provide the tourist with a “permanent instant” to consume. Sturken also writes about the way in which her 9/11 snow globe, in depicting the

¹⁵⁴ Sturken 3.

Twin Towers as intact while emergency vehicles gather at their base, creates a “mystical temporal moment” that never existed.¹⁵⁵ The same could be said about the display cases in the Ground Zero Museum Workshop: they gather together artifacts that, even before 9/11, were never gathered together.



Figure 3: An arrangement of items in a display case at the Ground Zero Museum Workshop

The process of freezing the moment, at the Ground Zero Museum Workshop, is not always even this subtle; one of the centerpieces of the exhibit is literally a clock stopped at 10:02, the time of the first tower’s collapse. The audioguide refers to the clock as a “non-living witness to the tragedy.”¹⁵⁶ Next to the clock, which is in a display case, is a photograph of the clock where it was found by Suson, in a room in the PATH subway station beneath Ground Zero. Right next to the picture of the clock, and perhaps less subtle in the attempt to temporally arrest the event, is a “Today is September 11” page from a page-a-day calendar, also found in the subway station below Ground Zero. These items are significant, in the tourism and museum contexts, precisely because they are easily recognized indicators of the object-moment. They

¹⁵⁵ Ibid 2.

¹⁵⁶ Suson 57.

explicitly mark and mediate the temporality of the 9/11 attacks, preserving an indication of that moment, while simultaneously denying the continuation of time after the attacks.



Figure 4: The frozen clock in the Ground Zero Workshop Museum

I have, however, been partially ignoring the quintessential medium through which moments are frozen: the photograph. The photograph dominates the museum experience at Ground Zero; obviously, Suson's museum is primarily a collection of photographs that also made to talk, and one of the more famous 9/11 exhibits, *Here is New York*, was a collection of thousands of photographs from 9/11 and the recovery, submitted by professional and amateur photographers, each printed to the same size and hung up on lines. Meanwhile, an entire room of the Tribute WTC Visitor Center is dedicated to pictures of those who died in the attacks. Obviously, the museum is a visual medium, and thus tends to rely on photographic display; in the Ground Zero museums, though, the emphasis on pictures goes beyond the typical demands of the museum form. For example, in the aforementioned room in the Tribute WTC Visitor Center, the pictures are displayed behind glass in large display cases; it is not the pictures themselves,

but that this is a wall full of pictures, that is the draw here. The *Here is New York* exhibit was not entirely dissimilar; true, some of the individual pictures were striking, but just as important was the curatorial aesthetic, in which a room was filled with thousands of images, each the same size, what the museum advertised as “a democracy of photographs.”¹⁵⁷ The point was not only to see the individual pictures, but to see that there were thousands of pictures, the same moment captured and frozen a thousand ways. This abnormal abundance of photographic display at the Ground Zero tourist sites thus works, again, to arrest the moment of the 9/11 attacks, to freeze them, allowing the tourist to consume what was an event in time as a static thing.

The process of preserving or freezing the events of 9/11, though, gets complicated by the nature of the event itself. As argued above, 9/11 was experienced by many Americans as a moment of inexplicability, a kind of zero-moment that was able to interrupt the process of collectively imagining a globe. The events of 9/11, when mediated through the television screen, were able to, albeit briefly, interrupt and throw into doubt the distinction between reality and fiction in visual media, and reduce faith in the ability to narrate. Several writers have also addressed the use of “Ground Zero” as a term; for Feldman, it is “sheer negativity, a wound of absence,”¹⁵⁸ while for Sturken, Ground Zero implies nuclear-scale destruction, a tabula rasa as well as a center point.¹⁵⁹ So how can Ground Zero tourism possibly preserve a moment of absence and nothingness? The short answer is that it cannot; for starters, despite how powerful it was, the moment of destruction and interruption was just a moment. It did not take long for the images of the violence to be inscribed in a system of signification and for narrative and global

¹⁵⁷ Alice Rose George, et al., *Here is New York: A Democracy of Photographs* (New York, NY: Scalo, 2002).

¹⁵⁸ Feldman 110.

¹⁵⁹ Sturken 167.

imagination to be reinstated, albeit in the previously described path of narrative numbness.¹⁶⁰

Thus, since Ground Zero tourism cannot preserve 9/11 as a moment, it instead preserves that which references the destructive moment of the 9/11 attacks: artifacts and photographs are deployed for their varying abilities to reference the violence of 9/11 in a way that generates a sense of authenticity for the tourist subject.

It should not be surprising that images of the towers falling are actually somewhat scarce in Ground Zero tourism; the Ground Zero Museum Workshop features just one such photo, a long-shot of the first collapse taken from the roof of the apartment building that now houses the museum in the Meat Packing District. This is, in a way, another example of *trompe l'oeil* at the Ground Zero tourist sites. The absence of the falling towers works like a veil: the spectacular mass violence of 9/11 is the tourist object at Ground Zero, the real thing, and the withholding of these images actually functions to indicate their *presence*, allowing the tourist to feel that he/she is as close as he/she can get to this real object. It is thus notable that, at the beginning of the Ground Zero Museum Workshop experience, the visitors are explicitly told by an employee that no images of the planes hitting the towers or the towers falling will be shown. The articulation that the object is being withheld (and therefore present), though, works to obscure the fact that the touristic real thing – the violence of 9/11 itself – is not actually present at the site as an object that the tourist can get close to. It is instead a memory that can only be experienced through representation, mediation and language; that is, it exists presently only through the Symbolic realm, not as Real. In the absence of the moment itself – or, perhaps, with the absence of the moment – Ground Zero tourism, in preserving that which functions to reference and evoke 9/11,

¹⁶⁰ And after all, although I am not a physicist, I am fairly sure that preserving a moment in time is still a physical impossibility.

can claim or attempt to be preserving the event itself in a way that reifies the moment, allowing the tourist to consume it.

Thus Ground Zero tourism does not just isolate the site of the 9/11 attacks from their original spatial context; the tourist experiences of Ground Zero represent 9/11 as its own world, removed from space, removed from time, and ultimately removed from history. In giving 9/11 its own spatiality and its own suspended temporality, Ground Zero tourist sites allow the tourist to experience 9/11 as an event as one that had no past (in terms of causality) and no future. Though I have said it before, I will reiterate the point that, subject to tourism, 9/11 becomes a thoroughly objectified, reified commodity for the tourist to consume and experience.

Re-Narrating and Replay

The practice of consuming 9/11 requires an exchange in which the tourist commodity is able to mediate a certain influence for the tourist, allowing the tourist to “experience” the event; to this end, working in concert with the aforementioned processes of removing 9/11 from history and freezing it as a consumable object, is the tendency of Ground Zero tourist sites to re-narrate 9/11. This happens primarily in the museum setting; in fact, one could reasonably assert that the museums near Ground Zero are there to further evoke 9/11, just in case the actual Ground Zero site fails to sufficiently provide the tourist with a satisfactory experience of 9/11. The spatial arrangements of the two museums closest to Ground Zero – the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site and the Tribute WTC Visitor Center – particularly work to immerse the visitor in the experience of the images that surround them. This is due to the combination of the small spaces and the large numbers of visitors in the spaces at any given time. Whereas the Ground Zero site provides the tourist with an auratic, authentic site with which to engage (even if there is nothing really left to

engage), the museums provide tourists the opportunity to immerse themselves in the images and event of 9/11. Indeed, there is no shortage of images and representations of 9/11 in the museums. The museums, then, play the important roles of replaying and narrating (or re-narrating) 9/11, allowing the tourist to feel that they are experiencing the event-object.¹⁶¹ Clearly, the idea of replaying and re-narrating 9/11 is closely tied to the idea of freezing the event, but they are not entirely the same; I have covered many of the examples of freezing, so I will be focusing here on the ways in which the museums at Ground Zero re-narrate the events of 9/11, as opposed to just preserving them. The difference between freezing and re-narration is somewhat akin to the difference between displaying a Confederate uniform in a display case and putting on a Civil War reenactment, insofar as one preserves a piece of the event and one simulates the event for an audience to experience.

Replay and simulation are embedded into the layout of the Ground Zero museums themselves, and the space takes on an aesthetic that has come to be associated with 9/11 and terrorism. As I've said, the museums adjacent to Ground Zero have a fairly limited space, which makes walking through the museum a close-quarters experience; the visitor at either of the two museums will inevitably rub against other visitors, and there are so many people in the small space that it actually becomes somewhat limited. Couple this with the way that the exhibited materials and texts surround the visitor on multiple sides and at sometimes abnormal angles, and suddenly the spatial dynamics of the museums produce a sensory overload. With audio text – which features prominently in both the Tribute WTC Visitor Center and the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site – the museums manage to engage all of the senses but taste. The Ground Zero Museum Workshop also involves an element of sensory overload with the sheer number of

¹⁶¹ There is a difference between experiencing and reliving, and touristic or consumptive experience involves a degree of distance and observation. In the way that Justin Bieber's 3D movie was the ultimate Bieber experience, the ultimate touristic experience is one of contact, not reliving.

pictures mounted in such a small space, along with 100 audioguide narrations, but it offers more movement and less body-contact than the other two museums. This sensory overload, though, is in itself a way of simulating or evoking the tourist's memory of the mediated experience of 9/11; sensory overload induces a sense of shock, stun and numbness as one struggles to process information and surroundings. 9/11, experienced through television screens, also produced states of stun, shock and numbness, and people had difficulty processing the images on the screen, as they seemed to violate the rules of narrative and the separation of the diegesis and the audience-world. Sensory overload does not perform the exact functions of the 9/11 media-event, but it does produce some of the same reactions in the audience. This is emphatically not to say that the museum allows the tourists to imagine that they are in the 9/11 attacks; this goes back to the discussion of authenticity, as the museum evokes the mediated experience of 9/11 in three dimensions so as to give the tourist the impression that he/she has penetrated, or gotten inside of, the mediated image.



Figure 5: The cramped spatial dynamics of the Tribute WTC Memorial Center, on an off-day.

In the same vein, the featured use of screens in each of the museums should be unsurprising; most people at the museums experienced 9/11 through a screen, so if the goal of Ground Zero tourism is to somehow mediate the model or experience of 9/11 to the tourist (who likely experienced 9/11 primarily through television and print media), it makes sense that screens and televisual material would be part of the aesthetic. The Ground Zero Museum Workshop begins with the visitors gathering around a television to watch a video about the museum and 9/11, and there are at least two screens apiece in the Tribute WTC Visitor Center and the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site.¹⁶² In the latter, an entire wall serves as a screen for a projector, featuring a number of materials, including images of the memorial plans and stories from people about their experiences of 9/11. Meanwhile, one of the screens in the Tribute WTC Visitor Center, featured in the “Aftermath: Rescue and Recovery” gallery, essentially plays many of the familiar images of the immediate aftermath of 9/11, including images of firefighters and police coordinating efforts in an ash-covered lower Manhattan, as well as images of construction workers and firefighters clearing debris from the Ground Zero site. True, museums typically make use of audiovisual televisual material, so it is possible that the use of screens to produce a 9/11 experience for the tourist owes more to the museum form than the form of 9/11 as an event; this does not change fact that the screens in the Ground Zero museums mirror the aesthetic of how 9/11 was originally experienced. Whether or not the museums made abnormal use of screens is not the point (although the screen in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site was pretty big) – the point is that, just by virtue of being screens, they can recreate the televisual aesthetic experience of 9/11.

¹⁶² I say at least because, as I mentioned, the museums were packed. It’s possible (though not likely) that I missed a screen somewhere.

The timeline plays a crucial role in the processes of replaying and narrating the events of 9/11. Both the Tribute WTC Visitor Center and the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site provide timelines of the attacks for tourists; one of the five galleries in the Tribute WTC Visitor Center is called “Passage Through Time: September 11th,” and the beginning of the description of the gallery on the museum’s website reads, “Travel through moments in time during February 26, 1993 and September 11, 2001. Experience the events as they unfolded. Hear the voices and see the artifacts and images that reveal how a bright blue morning sky transformed into an evening veiled in the dust of destruction.”¹⁶³ In the context of the destructive and disruptive effects that the images of the 9/11 attacks had when they happened, these timelines appear as not only a means of replaying the images of the event, but as a means of recreating the event in a way that restores faith in the ability to narrate (to borrow Feldman’s terms). Both of the timelines take the images that have been tied in the collective imagination to the 9/11 attacks and place them at various points on a timeline, thus organizing them in a chronology, arc, or narrative. Whether or not the pictures were actually taken at the times marked out on the timeline is unimportant in the viewing experience; all that matters is that they evoke the moments being marked and described.

The importance of the timelines lies in their ability to replay the event of 9/11 with an element of narrative authority. In the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site, for example, the first point on the timeline reads,

Between 7:59 and 8:42 a.m.[:] Four commercial planes depart from three east coast airports for flights across the U.S. Shortly after take-off, each is hijacked by a team of terrorists. The airplanes are intended as weapons in a coordinated attack on targets of high symbolic value for Americans and much of the world.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Tribute WTC website <http://www.tributewtc.org/exhibits/gallery2.php>

¹⁶⁴ 9/11 Memorial Preview Site.

This blurb is a textbook example of an omniscient narrator; despite the fact that none of the attacks have happened yet, the narrator can go into the minds of the hijackers and tell the reader what the intent of the hijackings is, both in the immediate sense (“weapons in a coordinated attack”) and in a wider frame (“high symbolic value for Americans and much of the world”).¹⁶⁵

A similar move is made in the next blurb: it reads, “8:46 a.m.[:] Hijackers, affiliated with the radical Islamist terrorist network Al-Qaeda, crash Flight 11 into floors 94-98 of the North Tower of the WTC.”¹⁶⁶ This narration seems to deny any subjectivity or confusion in the event; obviously, when the first plane hit, the words “Al-Qaeda” were still gibberish to most Americans. In this timeline, though, the narrator knows exactly who is doing what and when they are doing it. While this is partially a function of hindsight, the timeline replays the events in a forward progression, working to recreate the event as different from the way it was experienced. The omniscient narrator in the timeline takes 9/11, which disrupted the proper functioning of narrative itself, and replays it in such a way as to imply that the events actually unfolded in a narrative, that to some universal observer, 9/11 happened in a clear progression with a clear logic. Whether or not some omniscient being could have understood 9/11 as it happened is, again, not the point; the point is that the timeline turns an event which defied narrative into a narrative. The timeline thus renews faith in the ability of narrative, as a cultural form, to represent reality, which establishes 9/11 as a solid base upon which to construct and imagine larger narratives of America and the globe.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ The use of passive voice is also of note. The difference between “the plane is hijacked by terrorists” and “terrorists hijacked the plane” is the sense of victimhood in the former.

¹⁶⁶ 9/11 Memorial Preview Site.

¹⁶⁷ Also of note: you can buy *Learning from History: Timelines and Personal Memories of September 11, 2001* for \$39.95 in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site’s gift shop.



Figure 6: Timelines in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site (left) and the Tribute WTC Visitor Center (right).

This reestablishment of the function of narrative is the most crucial process through which Ground Zero tourism mitigates the trauma of 9/11: by fitting the terroristic event into the conventions of narrative, the timeline establishes that 9/11 can be narrated, or can be symbolically assimilated into a cohesive reality. In psychoanalytic terms, the idea is to reinscribe the traumatic event into the Symbolic Order. The omniscient narrator in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site timeline is particularly instructive in this regard: to narrate 9/11 as though it could have been fully understood as it was happening is, in effect, a means of placing the event under the gaze of the big Other, which guarantees the ability of symbolic structures to represent reality. Thus, the timeline denies 9/11 its traumatic aspect, which was that it defied narrative, interrupted the process of imagination, and did not properly fit into the symbolic structures through which reality is constituted. This is not to say that, prior to visiting Ground Zero, the tourist experiences 9/11 as a lurking, repressed trauma, but rather to say that the explicit narration of the event makes sure to represent the event as thoroughly integrated into a symbolic system through which reality is constituted; put another way, Ground Zero tourism works to de-traumatize the event of 9/11 by presenting its images as part of a narrative system.

It may seem as though replay is actually the antithesis of freezing, that it actually unfreezes the event – after all, the timelines explicitly give a temporal progression to the events of

9/11 – but in fact the opposite is true. In bounding the events of 9/11, the timelines actually replay the event in a way that supplements the preservation of the moment. The timeline in the Tribute WTC Visitor Center provides a good example: the timeline gallery in the museum is a hallway, and moments in the timeline are presented on separate vertically-hanging banners that go down the center of the hall.¹⁶⁸ The wall on the left of the visitor walking through has missing posters on it – there are just a couple at the beginning of the hallway, but they multiply so that by the end of the hallway the wall is covered with them – while on the right wall are various artifacts, including a piece of one of the planes and a dust-covered teddy bear. This space, especially when jammed full of people, immerses the tourist in a 9/11 narrative-world – the banners have quotes from people who both lived through and died in 9/11, as opposed to the omniscient narration of the other museum. The timeline, though, covers only a couple of hours, beginning with 8:19 a.m. and ending at 10:35 a.m. on September 11. Thus, the timeline does not un-freeze the frozen moment, but rather positions the tourist within the frozen moment, constantly replaying the same moment as hundreds of tourists walk through each day. In this way, the immersive replay of the museum experience works in tandem with the frozen moment, allowing 9/11 to be simultaneously preserved and narrated.

Construction of Innocence

These strategies of containment – isolation, freezing and re-narrating – work to undergird the larger narratives of disaster and innocence that emerge from Ground Zero tourism. By “innocence,” I mean to refer to the impossibility of even accidental implication in the event; Ground Zero tourism posits that American actions could not possibly have had any causal impact

¹⁶⁸ An interesting means of recreating the fragmented experience of the event while simultaneously incorporating it into a cohesive narrative.

on 9/11. Allow me to examine some of the ways in which Ground Zero tourism produces a sense of innocence about 9/11: an excerpt from one of the audioguide narrations at the Ground Zero Museum Workshop exemplifies the prevalence of the theme of innocence in Ground Zero tourism. Speaking about two young girls who sang Christmas songs for several firefighters in a diner during the holidays, Suson narrates,

I actually got choked up emotionally, because here we were, all smelly from ground zero, covered in dirt and filth, and we were seeing every day victims and pretty much the result of all that is EVIL in this world – yet right in front of us were the complete opposite. Here was goodness and purity and innocence. These two, pristine, clean little girls that had no clue as to what really happened on 9-11 were singing Christmas songs for us to make us happy. It warmed our hearts.¹⁶⁹

As this quote makes evident, the concept of innocence, although also mediated in subtle ways, is an explicit theme of Ground Zero tourism, particularly in the Ground Zero Museum Workshop. Another one of the audioguide narrations, this one accompanying a display case containing a doll and a makeup compact that were both found at Ground Zero, reads, “The doll represents innocence, and the woman’s make-up case represents beauty. My message here is that our innocent, beautiful world was taken away from us on September 11. It was muddied, dirtied and destroyed, never to be the same again.”¹⁷⁰ Still another photo features a dust-covered teddy bear, with the accompanying narration, “This Teddy Bear is like our country; the Bear, like our country, was beaten up, dirtied and knocked down on September 11, but we got back up, dusted ourselves off and got back in the saddle again.”¹⁷¹ Sturken writes about how comfort-objects like the teddy bear, as a response to national trauma, are connected to the maintenance of

¹⁶⁹ Suson 73.

¹⁷⁰ Suson 62.

¹⁷¹ Ibid 66.

American innocence. “[The teddy bear] embodies the recognition of pain and it offers, above all, the promise of empathy, companionship and comfort,” she writes. “Importantly, the teddy bear doesn’t promise to make things better; it promises to make us feel better about the way things are.”¹⁷²

The explanations of the 9/11 attacks offered by the Ground Zero tourist sites do much to build and sustain a sense of innocence and innocence lost. Again, the Ground Zero Museum Workshop offers some of the most explicit examples. The narration accompanying one of Suson’s more famous photos – a fire truck, covered in ash, with the word “WHY” written in the ash – reads, “It sums up the frustration at an evil and unprovoked attack on innocent people.”¹⁷³ Another narration attached to a picture of a Bible page says, “The reason 9-11 happened is because one culture didn’t understand another culture.”¹⁷⁴ Meanwhile, at the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site, the inscription preceding the timeline reads,

On September 11, 2001, terrorists murdered nearly 3,000 innocent people at the World Trade Center in New York City, at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and aboard four hijacked planes. The events of that day marked the single largest loss of life from an attack on American soil.¹⁷⁵

Each of these narrations of 9/11, as they focus on the causes and actors of the attacks, relies on a dichotomy between evil perpetrators and innocent victims. Suson’s first quote does so openly, but even the second quote, by declaring that 9/11 was a result of a failure of cultural understanding, establishes America’s innocence as a misunderstood culture, which implies that America should properly be understood as an essentially benevolent and innocent entity. And

¹⁷² Sturken 7.

¹⁷³ Suson 37.

¹⁷⁴ Suson 20.

¹⁷⁵ 9/11 Memorial Preview Site.

the preface to the timeline generates a sense of innocence just in its use of the word “murder” (which requires a victim), as well as in its focus on the victims of the attack. Notably, in all of these explanations, 9/11 involved just victims and perpetrators, with no other involved parties.¹⁷⁶

Much of Ground Zero tourism is devoted to focusing on victims, which both produces and implies a sense of innocence. As I have mentioned, in the Tribute WTC Visitor Center, there is a wall of missing posters and a whole gallery filled with pictures of those who died on 9/11. The timeline banners also feature quotes from those who died in the attacks, such as a phone message left by a passenger on one of the flights for his wife. The Ground Zero Museum Workshop, meanwhile, eulogizes many of the firefighters who died, and makes clear in its introductory materials that many of the proceeds from the museum are donated to 9/11-related charities,¹⁷⁷ while the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site discusses how the names of the victims will be inscribed on the memorial pools on the footprints¹⁷⁸ of the Twin Towers. Focusing on victims obviously involves a designation of innocence, but victimhood also implies a duality: in German, *Opfer* (victim) stands in contrast to *Täter* (doer). The best terminology for this binary in English might be victim and perpetrator. The focus on victims in Ground Zero tourism, then, not only generates a sense of innocence, but also creates a narrative of 9/11 that excludes any other possible actors in the event. There were victims of perpetrators, who committed the act of violence for no other reason than the fact that they were, as we have seen, evil murderers.

Each of the Ground Zero museums idealizes and romanticizes the time before 9/11. There are several mentions, in multiple sites, of the weather on 9/11: in the Ground Zero

¹⁷⁶ True, rescuers are a central feature, but they tend to be portrayed as victims as well, albeit more heroic than most of the others.

¹⁷⁷ Suson 1.

¹⁷⁸ For more on footprints, see Sturken 199-205.

Museum Workshop, a photo of a newspaper from a subway car beneath Ground Zero has an accompanying audio narration,

If you look closely, you will see the weather for that day was mostly sunny with a high of 29 degrees celsius. There wasn't a cloud in the sky that morning & the sky was ocean blue. Little did anyone know what a tragic day this would turn in to [sic].¹⁷⁹

Meanwhile, the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site features a photograph of the New York skyline with the caption, “About 15 Minutes Before First Plane Hits World Trade Center, September 11, 2001.”¹⁸⁰



Figure 7: Picture in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site of New York several minutes before the attacks.

As we have seen, the Tribute WTC Visitor Center also mentions the weather, but more interesting is the exhibit dedicated to life at the World Trade Center (obviously before the attacks). The exhibit features quotes from those who used to work in the World Trade Center, as well as video materials depicting the World Trade Center as a kind of international festival-

¹⁷⁹ Suson 55.

¹⁸⁰ 9/11 Memorial Preview Site.

space, complete with ethnic dance performances for children.¹⁸¹ “Innocence is something created after the fact, rather than an original condition to be recaptured” writes Sturken about the mediation of comfort and innocence after national trauma.¹⁸² Given the way that the Twin Towers were regarded by New Yorkers as bland and somewhat ugly, the inscription of the World Trade Center as a fun, lively and home-like place seems to resoundingly affirm Sturken’s comment. The arches in the Twin Towers were not quite as majestic, the World Trade Center was not quite as welcoming and fun, and the weather was not quite as perfect until after the towers fell.

This pervasive theme of innocence at the Ground Zero tourist sites is made possible by the portrayal of 9/11 as a disaster, an inexplicable tragedy. Very little is done, in the museums or at the Ground Zero site, to explain why 9/11 happened; the “evil murderers” narrative really is all that the sites have to offer. At one point, in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site, the blurb about the plans for the museum at Ground Zero reads, “Together with the Memorial, the Museum will complete the twin missions of commemoration and education, and will be an authoritative source for both the history of 9/11 and understanding its meaning and implications in the context of world history.”¹⁸³ Just after a break, though, it continues, “The Museum’s core exhibitions will be located at the base of the WTC site, incorporating the archaeological remnants of the original WTC and the Twin Towers.”¹⁸⁴ Essentially, while the museum will claim to authoritatively explain 9/11 in the context of global history, it will actually offer little more than the authentic remnants of the World Trade Center that many of the museums have already enshrined. In short, 9/11 will continue to be presented as an inexplicable tragedy, or disaster. This designation of the

¹⁸¹ Also of note is that a large, pure-white model of the former World Trade Center stands in the center of the room, making visitors walk in a line around it.

¹⁸² Sturken 17.

¹⁸³ 9/11 Memorial Preview Site.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

event as a disaster contributes to the discourse of innocence by denying any possibility of human or historical causality, not entirely different than a natural disaster; like a hurricane, there will be no historical logic in the 9/11 created by Ground Zero tourism, only random violence.¹⁸⁵

As I have already hinted, it is the objectification of the event – its removal from history in order for it to be consumable for tourists – which allows for 9/11 to be portrayed as a disaster. Ground Zero tourism turns 9/11 from an event into an object with clear spatial and temporal boundaries that can be experienced and consumed by a tourist. The creation of boundaries – such as the temporal packaging of the event into two hours on a timeline, experienced in a matter of minutes – limits the extent to which the event can be interrogated, particularly in terms of causality. The simple declaration of the *Here is New York* exhibit encompasses the spirit of tourism at Ground Zero; the museums and the Ground Zero site, as tourist sites work together to ultimately say “This is 9/11.” The event is removed from history; as the portrayal of the idyllic pre-9/11 New York and the timelines indicate, Ground Zero tourism turns 9/11 into something different than the history preceding it, something that began when the hijackers took over the planes. As a reified tourist commodity, 9/11 cannot be a moment with history, or with conditions of production; it is just there, as a consumable thing. And as far as synonyms for mass violence without history or production go, disaster and tragedy are some of the best.

In a related vein, innocence is not only a narrative at Ground Zero tourist sites, but a subject-position built into the practice of tourism itself. I have thus far focused primarily on the narratives of innocence generated in Ground Zero tourism, and less on how the structure of tourism generates this sense of innocence as well. As I have stated, tourism ultimately provides a commodity for the tourist to consume; the tourist-position is thus akin to the consumer-

¹⁸⁵ Or, at best, a designation of Al-Qaeda terrorists as responsible, with no attention paid to Al Qaeda’s history, or why the attack might have happened when it happened. Instead, as it is now, 9/11 will be portrayed as the time when the evil, murderous bad guys got us.

position, so the relationship between a tourist and a tourist object is akin to the relationship between a consumer and a commodity. That is to say, tourism positions its subject similarly to how commodities position consumers: in a place of innocence. Commodity fetishism, particularly under the consumerist paradigm, not only masks the conditions of the commodity's production, but also disavows any involvement on the part of the consumer in the production of the commodity; the commodity appears to be just there, and the consumer can consume it.

Tourism works in the same way: the object of tourism – whether it is an entire culture, a country, architecture or an event – is simply there, condensed, congealed, bounded and objectified so that the tourist can come along and experience/consume it. He/she, as a tourist, is imagined not to have any part in the production of the object, even in a place like Disneyland, where the object appears as it does solely for the sake of fulfilling tourist desires. It is for this reason that Sturken employs the term “tourists of history”: she is looking for a term which adequately captures the degree of distance between subject (American citizen) and object (history) necessary to fuel the production of American innocence and exceptionalism in the American historical imagination.¹⁸⁶

For her, in the same way that the innocent-consumer position can allow an American to buy a Hummer – you buy it to keep you safe on the road, despite the fact that it is large vehicles like Hummers that make the roads unsafe – the tourism of history can allow American imperialist adventures to carry on in the name of security, despite the fact (or at least possibility) that such U.S. military actions as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan can actually make us less secure.¹⁸⁷

Ground Zero Tourism and Global Imagination

¹⁸⁶ Sturken 12, 17.

¹⁸⁷ Sturken 86-90.

So how does this all affect the process of global imagination, the ability to collectively imagine a globe upon a set of symbolic coordinates? Let us recall the relationship between tourism and global imagination: tourism provides some of the materials and images upon and through which the process of global imagination happens. The tourist object, though, as a symbolic coordinate in the imagining of a globe, is endowed with the authority of authenticity; the tourist can imagine that he/she has experienced the real thing, that he/she has a concrete, substantial experience or knowledge of the tourist object. The tourist can say of the tourist object, "I have seen the way it really is," so that the object's symbolic place and shape in the process of global imagination is more defined than it would have been had the tourist not consumed or experienced it.

This is the role of Ground Zero tourism in the process of global imagination: to give the tourist an authentic experience of a real 9/11, so that it works as a more defined, concrete symbolic coordinate in the process of global imagination. In defining 9/11, though, Ground Zero tourism simultaneously limits the possibilities of what kind of an imagined globe the event could fit into or facilitate; as a symbol involved in the process of global imagination, the 9/11 of Ground Zero tourism is defined primarily in terms of its experience, as opposed to its production. The remnants of 9/11, the images of terror and the dust-covered artifacts presented to the tourist at Ground Zero, *are* 9/11. For the tourist at Ground Zero, 9/11 is the thing that, as the timeline says, began between 7:59 and 8:42 a.m., the thing represented by the photographs in the museums, the thing that is hidden behind the fences at the Ground Zero construction site, the thing whose essence exists in the display case with the dust-covered teddy bears and shards of glass, the thing which produces images and narratives of loss, victimhood and innocence. Why? Because the Ground Zero tourist sites, keeping with the tourist mode of production and

consumption, have constructed a sense of authenticity; for the tourist, Ground Zero tourism is as close as you can get to the real, authentic 9/11.

Clearly that the lack of history in the version of 9/11 mediated by Ground Zero tourism – that is to say, the 9/11 defined solely by the images and material remnants of what happened between 7:59 and 10:35 a.m. on September 11, and not the circumstances which produced it or the events which ensued from it – carries over, at least partially, to the way in which 9/11 functions symbolically in the process of global imagination. Take, for example, the claim in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site that the Ground Zero museum would be an authority on the causes and impacts of 9/11 in the context of world history. This sounds informative and worthwhile, but in the ensuing explanation of the museum, and the other plans detailed throughout the preview, the focus stays exclusively on preserving artifacts and memorializing victims. This seems counter-intuitive, as at the very least, an analysis of the impacts of 9/11 should mention the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; after all, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan more or less in response to 9/11, and the chance that Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein were friends was one of the justifications for Iraq. But, as it turns out, neither war appears anywhere in any of the Ground Zero tourism sites. The reason for this is fairly straightforward: the Iraq and Afghanistan wars are politically charged items, and tourism is supposed to be a non-political practice.¹⁸⁸ A tourist at Ground Zero might tell you that they came to be close to be close to the event of 9/11, not get lectured about politics. Thus, it is the tourist-mode itself which removes the event of 9/11 from history and politics; the tourist gaze demands that its object is non-political, and materials that cannot be easily de-politicized, like ongoing wars, appear as antithetical to the practice of tourism. Due to the authority of authenticity, though, this lack of history inflects 9/11's symbolic

¹⁸⁸ In the same way that reading the newspaper (a commodity itself) is supposed to be non-political: obviously it's not, but there is a discourse of objectivity built around it that allows one to imagine the news as non-political.

function in the process of global imagination; experiencing 9/11 as devoid of history and politics as a tourist in contact with the authentic makes it easier for 9/11 to exist as history-less tragedy in the process of global imagination.

It may appear that, because this discussion has focused on how the form of the 9/11-symbol aids the production of a discourse of American innocence, that Ground Zero tourism has more to do with national imagination than global imagination; after all, the tourist sites at Ground Zero hardly even seem to acknowledge a world beyond the United States, and American innocence clearly has to do with America. Let me take the former first. The nature of 9/11 as a global event hardly needs repeating: no matter how you slice or spin it, 9/11 represents a moment in which a transnational terrorist group attacked the only global superpower, witnessed by millions around the world. True, other than a few minor pieces in the museums about various nations sending their comforts and condolences to the U.S. after 9/11, the Ground Zero tourist sites do not make much mention of the rest of the world outside of the United States. This does not mean, though, that Ground Zero tourism portrays 9/11 as a solely national event. The global nature of the event is actually implied in the narration of the events of 9/11 offered by the Ground Zero tourist sites¹⁸⁹; the declarations that “the reason 9-11 happened is because one culture didn’t understand another culture,”¹⁹⁰ and that “the events of that day marked the single largest loss of life from an attack on American soil”¹⁹¹ imply a global aspect of the event. They explain and narrate 9/11 in terms of the here/there dynamic (also manifested as us/them) which undergirds the process of global imagination.

Given, then, that there is an implied global background at Ground Zero tourist sites, the pervasive narratives of American innocence appear as a means of positioning the United States

¹⁸⁹ Which could reasonably be condensed into something along the lines of “Evil murderers attacked us.”

¹⁹⁰ Script 20.

¹⁹¹ 9/11 Memorial Preview Site.

within the imagined globe. This is not to say that the narratives of American innocence spun in Ground Zero tourism somehow do not actually address America or Americanness; they do, but in a decidedly global context. That such strong sentiments and declarations of American innocence would show up in tourism of an inherently global event as 9/11 should speak to the importance of the discourse to the process of global imagination. Put simply, American innocence is a *global position*. Ground Zero tourism works to constitute and propagate this position first by providing space and material for the narrative of innocence to prosper. This in turn inflects the symbolic function of 9/11, allowing it to be a point upon which the narrative of innocence builds. This narrative of innocence then affects and constitutes how America is imagined as a category or entity in the imagined globe, positioning America and Americans as benevolent actors on the world stage. 9/11 serves as proof, in a sense, that America is after all a victim of the worst of global violence, not the perpetrator. Essentially, Ground Zero tourism, and the way that it inflects how 9/11 exists and functions as a symbol in the process of global imagination, enables the positioning of America as an innocent actor in relation to global history and politics; that is to say, America is understood to be free of guilt or complicity in the production of any negative conditions in the world.

It is important to note here that while Ground Zero tourism does build its own 9/11, it does not build its own globe. It can certainly contribute to the process of global imagination; as I have said, the 9/11 constructed in Ground Zero tourism influences, if it does not outright define, how 9/11 appears as a symbolic coordinate of global imagination, and the contours of that symbolic coordinate do affect what kind of a globe can be imagined. At the same time, it can spin narratives and constitute positionalities that also have a strong impact on how the imagined globe appears; the fact that the rest of the world is more or less disavowed in much in Ground

Zero tourism, making it seem as though the planes came from nowhere, coupled with the pervasive sentiments of innocent victimhood, work to position America as an entity somehow removed from the globe, exceptional in its isolation from global history and absolved of any hand in creating the conditions which may have influenced 9/11. Still, these functions of Ground Zero tourism do not amount to the construction of a globe itself; that job is, by nature, collective, and requires innumerable sources of symbolic production. Ground Zero tourism, though, only affects a few of those symbols, guiding the ways in which they can function in the process of global imagination.

Ultimately, Ground Zero tourism works to choke off the all other possibilities of how 9/11 can be read. Let's go back to the placards with which I started this chapter; the placards told the story of the World Trade Center, from the 19th century to 9/11. Placed at eye-level, they soon became so covered in graffiti – mainly from tourists and visitors expressing their grief and sympathies – that they had to be removed, eventually re-placed seven feet above the sidewalk, so as to prevent anyone from reaching the placards and potentially inscribing their reactions on them. In this instance, the form of the tourist attraction was specifically designed to prevent a particular type of engagement with the object; it was, essentially, to say that *there is only one way that this story can be told*. The rest of Ground Zero tourism echoes this situation, to varying degrees. In constituting 9/11 as a tourist object intertwined with narratives of American innocence, Ground Zero tourism creates a situation in which there is only one story which 9/11 can tell, only one way that it can function symbolically in the process of global imagination. In removing 9/11 from history, Ground Zero tourism erases the possibility that 9/11 could serve as a point from which to consider how the global system produces certain conditions that could lead to such shocking violence. In wrapping 9/11 up in the narrative of American innocence and

exceptionalism while simultaneously seeming to portray the authentic “real thing,” Ground Zero tourism chokes off the avenues of engagement with 9/11 that might lead one to question whether America has truly played a benevolent role in global history and politics. 9/11, as it is represented and constructed in Ground Zero tourism as a history-less disaster, can only fit into one globe, the one in which the evil terrorists are out in the world, trying to destroy the innocent and benevolent United States because they hate our freedom. This is a world where imperialism and humanitarianism are not antithetical, an imagined globe in which the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world attacking a poor and war-torn country like Afghanistan – what Robin Williams refers to as “Operation Extreme Redundancy”¹⁹² – in the interest of self-defense somehow seems to make sense.

Zizek describes America’s post-9/11 collective position in relation to an imagined globe as such: “Out with feelings of responsibility and guilt towards the impoverished Third World, *we* are the victims now!”¹⁹³ For the tourist at Ground Zero, 9/11 appears as authentic evidence of this claim.

¹⁹² Robin Williams, *Live 2002* (Sony, 2002).

¹⁹³ Zizek 47.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that tourism of terrorism at Ground Zero, through strategies of isolation, freezing, and re-narration, represents 9/11 in such a way that it only fits into an imagined globe where America is a victim and a benevolent actor in the world. There is, however, a lingering question here: does it have to be this way?

No. True, the representational strategies at play in Ground Zero tourist sites do function as a means of working through the collective trauma of 9/11. But while it might be tempting to see the representation of 9/11 as a history-less disaster as unfortunate but necessary to the process of dealing with collective trauma, such a view is sorely misguided. Working through trauma involves the inscription of an experience that defied representation into a Symbolic Order, so that it fits into an imagined cohesive reality. Narrating or representing 9/11 as part of global history, as an event with causation and effects, would not only be an adequate means of overcoming trauma; it would potentially do so much more effectively than Ground Zero tourism does now. If, at Ground Zero, 9/11 were explained as a global event produced by certain conditions, would this not represent a clear inscription into a symbolic system, and even a narrative of history? There would be no harm in allowing tourists to learn, at Ground Zero, what al Qaeda is and where it came from. In fact, situating 9/11 as part of the world, as opposed to a world of its own, would even more thoroughly give the event explicability and symbolic consistency by placing it into a wide narrative of global reality.

So why, then, does 9/11 appear the way it does at Ground Zero? Because it ultimately has to conform to the conventions of tourism and, by extension, consumption. Ground Zero

tourism provides the tourist with both comfort and a means of working through collective trauma. Overcoming trauma, though, does not require comfort; in fact, comfort can be antithetical to the process of overcoming trauma (similar to how happiness is just the unsustainable denial of desire).¹⁹⁴ This need for comfort, then, has less to do with Ground Zero as a site of collective trauma, and more to do with the site as a tourist object, an object to be consumed. Thus, Ground Zero represents a site in which the cultural forms of tourism and consumerism – specifically what Sturken calls “comfort culture”¹⁹⁵ – are unified with and complimentary of the political economic form called imperialism, representing 9/11 so as to provide affirmation of the imagined globe in which America is justified in whatever actions it may undertake in the name of fighting the terrorists.

I would like to punctuate this thesis by suggesting some directions for further study on this topic, and ending with a final statement on why this thesis matters, why we should care about how 9/11 is represented in Ground Zero tourism. First of all, I believe that the concept of global imagination merits further examination, both on theoretical grounds and as an analytical tool. It has been critical to my arguments about tourism and terrorism, which hopefully can be useful contributions to the understanding of both phenomena. The idea of the globe as an increasingly important background unit for social life deserves attention on its own; I believe this should be posited, more thoroughly than I have done in this thesis, as one of the major social and cultural effects of globalization. It would be interesting, for example, to theorize both the general and the specific ways in which class and identity affect the process of global imagination. Additionally, the idea that how we collectively imagine and construct global reality could affect American political-economic and geopolitical actions in the world is an important

¹⁹⁴ Zizek 2002, 58.

¹⁹⁵ Sturken, 6.

one, and one that has the potential to be useful for historical analysis as well as critical intervention in current situations. Further exploration, particularly in the realm of media and cultural studies, of how the globe is mediated and represented through popular culture and mass media would also be a worthwhile endeavor.

Meanwhile, Ground Zero is fertile ground for further study. It would be immensely informative, for example, to attempt some kind of ethnographic study of tourists at Ground Zero. This would be important, first of all, for the study of tourism, as it would likely shed light on the relationship between the tourist and the tourist object. It would also supplement my thesis to assemble some data about the ways in which different tourists take different meanings from Ground Zero (or the ways in which they don't). This kind of work, though, would be thorny and difficult; doing proper ethnographic work with tourists might prove tricky due to the nature of tourism itself, and the fact that the average tourist at Ground Zero does not spend more than a few hours at the site. Additionally, ethnographic work at a site of collective trauma has the potential to get messy, both in terms of ethics and in terms of analysis. Working with ethnographic data from tourists at Ground Zero might require the psychoanalyst's eye, which focuses on dream-work, or the process of articulating. Again, the challenge of such work would be to do it thoroughly with a tourist who has tickets to a showing of *Billy Elliot* in a couple of hours.

A deeper historical analysis of Ground Zero is also needed, not only to intervene in the a-historical representation of 9/11, but also to build a greater understanding of how Ground Zero has come to exist as it has and why. A historical study of Ground Zero would chart the way the site has developed since 9/11, keeping track of how the urban landscape has changed, what tourist sites or infrastructure have come and gone (with particular attention to museums, exhibits,

and street-merchants), and the contentious debate about what to do with the space. Sturken's chapter on the development of the memorial plans is an invaluable piece of a more complete historical understanding of Ground Zero as a meaningful site.¹⁹⁶ Ground Zero will continue to change, though, so work that continues to chart this change would be valuable. A study is also needed of the production culture of Ground Zero; that is, what groups are behind the production of the Ground Zero tourist sites, who are the people who make up these groups, and what stake do they have in the politics of representing 9/11? A detailed comparison of the sites produced by the Port Authority and the sites produced by the families of 9/11 victims, for example, would be important to the understanding of why and how Ground Zero tourist sites appear the way they do.

There is also much room for comparative analysis of the tourism of trauma. There is likely much to be gleaned from the differences and similarities between Ground Zero and the Holocaust Museum, or between Ground Zero and an Apartheid museum. This kind of work could be interesting for what it reveals about the different ways in which trauma is dealt with and mitigated in different cultures, and also potentially for what it might reveal about how different cultures deal with trauma in the same way. A comparative analysis would also allow for a more definitive, generalized statement about the dynamics of creating a tourist site out of mass violence and trauma. There is also room for a consideration of the colonial and postcolonial aspects of tourism and, specifically, the tourism of violence and disaster. In comparing the representational strategies between Ground Zero and an Apartheid museum in South Africa, for example, it would be worthwhile to consider whether the Apartheid museum caters more to foreign tourists. This line of inquiry also could lead into a productive examination of the conventions of comfort culture, and the extent to which these conventions travel and hybridize.

¹⁹⁶ Sturken 219.

So finally, why should we care about the relationship between tourism, terrorism, and global imagination at Ground Zero? In addressing how kitsch objects prevent certain types of engagement with 9/11, Sturken writes, “A teddy bear is not an innocent object.”¹⁹⁷ The same goes for Ground Zero tourism: far from being innocent, it ultimately helps to facilitate the acquiescence of imperialism. When we are discussing global imagination, we are discussing nothing less than the production of reality and its social, cultural and political-economic possibilities. I should state clearly that terrorist attacks on 9/11 were the most horrific violence I have ever seen in my life, and I hope to keep it that way. At the same time, 9/11 should also serve as a point from which to investigate and evaluate the place that America occupies in the world, as both subject to and constitutive of global conditions. Terrorism is disgusting and it is inhuman, but it is also by nature fraught with immense possibility, even the possibility of peace. Zizek wonders whether, in the wake of 9/11, “America will finally risk stepping through the fantasmatic screen that separates it from the Outside World, accepting its arrival in the Real world, making the long-overdue move from ‘A thing like this shouldn’t happen *here!*’ to ‘A think like this shouldn’t happen *anywhere!*’”¹⁹⁸ At Ground Zero, such a globe is nearly impossible to imagine.

¹⁹⁷ Sturken 13.

¹⁹⁸ Zizek 49.

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